

# Huntley Headlines

Friends of Historic Huntley

Fall 2025

## Fall Annual Meeting and Presentation by Professor Cynthia Kierner on *19th-Century Exploding Steamboats*

Saturday, October 25, 2:00 p.m.  
**FREE**

Martha Washington Library  
6614 Fort Hunt Road, Alexandria

FOHH's membership will gather at the **Annual Meeting** to elect board members, review FOHH's annual financial statement, and hear a presentation by **Professor Cynthia Kierner of George Mason University on the phenomena of 19th-Century Exploding Steamboats** and their impact on cultural perceptions of and responses to what we refer to today as "disasters."

Thomson and Betsey Mason lived through the paradigm-changing introduction and development of steam for new modes of travel. Steamboats and, later, railroads radically changed the way people and their goods moved by water and land. Distances that had previously required months or weeks to traverse could be travelled in days.

However, the great benefits of steam also came with substantial risk. The new technology was not always subject to the full mastery of those seeking to harness it. Boiler explosions accompanied by a harrowing loss of life were a common subject of 19th-century public discourse. As Betsey



*Steam Boat Washington, Alexandria Gazette & Daily Advertiser (Alexandria, VA) 18 Apr. 1820, p. 4. Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/item/sn83026170/1820-04-18/ed-11.*

Mason observed to her youngest daughter, "I see a good many accidents from steam by rail & water."

Professor Kierner will chronicle and explore America's experience with steamboat explosions. The subject is of interest both for its history and as a cautionary reminder, as we find ourselves living through ever-increasing climate disasters aggravated by fossil fuel use.

For more information, call 703.768.6987 or email [info@historic-huntley.org](mailto:info@historic-huntley.org). ❖

## Carolyn Gamble Receives Elly Doyle Award

Carolyn Gamble, FOHH's secretary since 2013, was the recipient of an **Elly Doyle Park Service Award** on September 13, 2025. Conferred by the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA), the award honors volunteers "for outstanding contributions to Fairfax County parks." Congratulations, Carolyn!

Carolyn has a long association with FCPA through her professional and volunteer work with Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) and Historic Huntley. From 1982 to 2012 Carolyn was a member of the HMP staff, serving as site manager for most of that time and overseeing the restoration of Historic Huntley in preparation for its opening to the public in 2012. Since her retirement from FCPA, Carolyn has continued her association with both HMP and Historic Huntley as a passionately dedicated volunteer.

Carolyn's nomination for the Elly Doyle award was based on her work in marking this year's 50th anniversary of HMP and the 200th anniversary of Historic Huntley's construction. Over the course of a year, she assembled, researched, and drafted captions for almost 100 photos and documents relating to the natural and cultural histories of HMP and Historic Huntley.

*continued, page 2*

## President's Column

by Todi Carnes

As we continue to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Historic Huntley's construction, please congratulate yourself on helping the site in reaching that bicentennial milestone! From the beginning, the preservation of Historic Huntley for the public's benefit has been a citizen-led effort. Marguerite Amlong, matriarch of one of the last families to have privately owned Huntley, led the way by alerting local officials to Huntley's surprising survival as an intact federal-period compound worthy of public notice, support, and study.

While sympathetic to the merits of preserving Historic Huntley, local officials were reluctant to take it on. As they backburned the site in favor of other projects, precious surrounding acreage was sold off to private development. For a while, it looked like the villa and other structures might follow suit. Thanks to citizen advocacy, ultimately formally embodied in the Friends of Historic Huntley, the core of the Historic Huntley site was acquired by the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) and mostly restored in appearance to the Mason-family ownership period.

I say "mostly restored," because the property's wonderful ice well remains unrestored and closed to the public. It is not known exactly how the Masons

used the ice well nor, indeed, the site as a whole. Now even parts of the site that have been restored are in need of maintenance, as reflected by the badly peeling paint on the pillars of the villa's main porch. There also is still ongoing work to be done in the areas of historical research and public outreach.

As chronicled in prior editions of this newsletter, FOHH launched the Fair Parks Initiative (FPI) in 2022 to seek a greater share of Fairfax County's general funds for the FCPA in hopes that Historic Huntley's unmet needs could one day be satisfied. A significant increase in FCPA funding was gained through advocacy and citizen support. Unfortunately, we now find ourselves in a challenging economic environment. Additional funding seems impossible. As we fight to avoid cuts and to keep prior gains intact, we ask that you continue your support for the parks.

As Historic Huntley enters its third century of existence, it does so as a publicly owned property—as one owned by you, the taxpayer. You have become a part of its history as much as those in prior generations who lived, worked, and otherwise maintained relations there. So, again, congratulate yourself on the remarkable accomplishment of Historic Huntley's endurance into the 21st century—and help us to see that it survives into the 22nd! ❖



Carolyn Gamble leads a tour in December 2024 of Cold-War-era anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) battery remnants on former Mason lands now in Huntley Meadows Park. Photo by Liz Train.

## Carolyn Gamble

*continued from page 1*

At her own expense, she had the photos and captions mounted for display and personally installed them as an exhibit across several walls of the HMP auditorium.

Among other things, the exhibit addresses the natural and built features of HMP and Historic Huntley; the organizational work of the FCPA, individual staff members, and volunteers in making those properties accessible to the public; and the rise of friends groups in conserving and supporting these sites.

Carolyn also created and sent out a request for oral histories from past and present staff members and volunteers, and received at least 35 responses. In

*continued, page 3*



At the Elly Doyle awards ceremony, from right to left, Elly Doyle Award Recipient Carolyn Gamble; Alan Cutler, Carolyn's special guest; Historic Huntley and HMP Park Manager Karen Sheffield; and HMP Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator Brooks Long. Photo by FCPA Photographer Melodie Stehling.

## Happy Birthday Huntley!

In a happy alignment of milestone celebrations, 2025 marks **200 years** since the construction of the now-historic federal villa compound of Historic Huntley and **50 years** since the farmlands once associated with that villa were transferred from federal to county ownership, becoming today's beloved Huntley Meadows Park. This year also marks the **75th anniversary** of the two sites' common owner, the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA). This **momentous tri-versary** was publicly celebrated as part of **Huntley Meadows' annual Wetlands Awareness Day on May 4**.

Officials made speeches and presented state and local resolutions honoring the anniversaries. Three large sheet cakes were consumed and reminiscences among past and present staff and volunteers filled the air.

This photo collage highlights two of the three cakes and presentation of a Fairfax County Board of Supervisors resolution commemorating the Huntley anniversaries. From left to right: Franconia Supervisor Rodney Lusk, FCPA Executive Director Jai Cole, FCPA Board Chairman Kiel Stone, and Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Chairman Jeff McKay. Photos by Erica Hershler. ❖



## Carolyn Gamble

*continued from page 2*

preparing for these projects, Carolyn relied upon her 43 years of personal history and relationships.

Funding for Historic Huntley — and all Fairfax County parks — has been a deeply felt concern of Carolyn's. It resulted in FOHH launching the Fair Parks Initiative (FPI) in 2022, which has brought together a number of friends groups to support increasing the share of Fairfax County's budget devoted to parks. Since its inception, the FPI has helped to turn around declining and stagnant funding. As a result, the parks received more than a million dollars in increased taxpayer support over FY 2023 and FY 2024. In FY 2025 and FY 2026 the parks received some protection from budget cuts proposed by the Fairfax County Executive to mitigate a challenging economy.

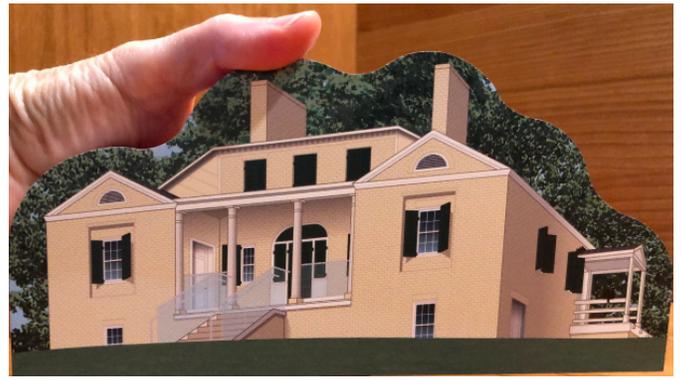
For decades, Carolyn has devotedly worked in support of HMP, Historic Huntley, and Fairfax County parks. The Elly Doyle award is a public recognition and display of gratitude for that work. Thank you, Carolyn, many times over! You have become an indelible part of HMP and Historic Huntley history, and that is a story we enthusiastically celebrate. ❖



*FOHH Members-Only Tour of Woodlawn, August 16. Photo by Carolyn Gamble.*

## Free Anniversary Gift Available for FOHH Members at Annual Meeting

Commissioned in celebration of Historic Huntley's 200th anniversary, a miniature wooden replica of the villa has been crafted by The Cat's Meow Village through a donation funded by a FOHH fan. You can pick up your replica (one free per FOHH membership while supplies last) at FOHH's annual meeting on October 25, 2:00 p.m., at Martha Washington Library. The replica is available only in person at the annual meeting; reservation for later pick-up is not an option. Should there be any replicas remaining, notification as to their future distribution will appear in next spring's newsletter. ❖



*The Huntley villa looking refreshingly cool in winter 2025. This image captures the carriage-way side of villa, with the west side-porch featured head-on. Photo by Todi Carnes.*

---

## Used Books and CDs for Sale

FOHH's sales of used books and CDs at the Huntley Meadows Park Visitors Center benefit Historic Huntley. Subject matter includes **local, regional, and Virginia history and cookbooks; historic life ways; the Civil War; and historic American architecture.** CDs are mostly classical music, with occasional **historic recordings, historic site audio tours, and sounds of nature.** To donate books or CDs, contact Todi Carnes at [todicarnes@verizon.net](mailto:todicarnes@verizon.net). ❖

---

## Upcoming FCPA Programs at Historic Huntley

For more information and to register, call 703.222.4664 or go to [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes). Preregistration is required for many programs. A tip for finding **ALL programs** at Historic Huntley. Under **Direct Search**, click on **Find Your Class**. Enter the following: Search text: **Historic Huntley**; Category of activity: **All Categories**; Place: **Historic Huntley**; Month: **All Months**; Day of the week: **7 Selected**; Age range: **All Ages**

- **Citizenship in the Nation Merit Badge** (10-17 years) • October 20, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Code: 38A.M70F; October 21, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Code: 38A.3HZL

This program satisfies most of the requirements to earn the badge. Scouts must complete all pre-work before the start of class. Pre-work and program details available at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/scouts](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/scouts). Scouts unable to complete all requirements may receive partial credit from their merit badge counselor. \$48

- **Civil War at Huntley – Division and Endurance** (16-Adult) • November 12, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., Code: 4NZ.L061  
Fairfax was as divided as the nation in 1861. Yet these divisions help to explain how Huntley endured the war. Examine Huntley through the Civil War and the experiences of the Mason family, their neighbors, and an occupying army. Includes a tour of Historic Huntley. \$10

- **Mason Tea** (Adults) • November 15, 1:00 to 2:30 p.m., Code: 87A.JEX9  
Enjoy an afternoon tea, circa 1830, much as Betsey Mason would have, with the gleam of polished silver and proper tea etiquette. Sample a menu of tasty treats appropriate to the period in an historic setting as you brush up on your tea history. Includes a tour of Historic Huntley. \$35

- **Enslaved Lives and the Legacy of Slavery** (16-Adult) • November 19, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m., Code: BF1.5MUV  
Join a historian for a tour of Huntley that examines the relationship of the Mason family to slavery and recovers insights into the lives of the Humphrey family and other enslaved people whose labor maintained Mason wealth and social status. \$10

## Join Friends of Historic Huntley today!

Support Historic Huntley by joining this group of history- and historic preservation-minded people. Members receive the newsletter, an invitation to a members-only event, and a 10% discount on FOHH merchandise. FOHH is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Membership dues and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. With your volunteer efforts and financial support, we can make a difference!

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Tel \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

*Huntley Headlines* and event notifications are emailed to members.

Current and past issues of the newsletter and event information can be found at [www.historichuntley.org](http://www.historichuntley.org).

- \$15 Individual     \$20 Family     \$10 Student/Senior  
 \$150 Lifetime Membership     Additional donation \_\_\_\_\_  
 **New Member**     **Renewing Member**    **Total enclosed** \_\_\_\_\_

### I'm interested in volunteering in the following area(s):

HH (work with staff at HMP):  Docent  Greeter  Special Events

FOHH:  Fundraising  Program Planning  Public Relations  Research

**Send completed form with check payable to *Friends of Historic Huntley* to:**

FOHH, P.O. Box 7241, Alexandria, VA 22307-0241

Questions? [info@HistoricHuntley.org](mailto:info@HistoricHuntley.org)

*Huntley Headlines* is produced by Friends of Historic Huntley, a local citizens group formed to preserve Historic Huntley and related cultural resources through advocacy and education.

**Board of Directors:** Todi Carnes, President • Robbie McNeil, Vice President • Carolyn Gamble, Secretary • Jere Gibber, Treasurer • Erica Hershler, Publicity • Charlotte Brown • Peter Christensen • Patty Young • Todi Carnes, HMHOA Representative

**Emeritus:** Susan Escherich • Harry Glasgow

**Advisors:** Barbara B. Ballentine • Susan Hellman • Phyllis Walker-Ford

### Contact changes:

Please send your email or mailing address changes to [info@HistoricHuntley.org](mailto:info@HistoricHuntley.org) or **FOHH, P.O. Box 7241, Alexandria, VA 22307-0241.**

## Tour Historic Huntley: Saturdays, 10:30 a.m. and 12:00 p.m., through October 25

Discover a view for all time during a tour of Historic Huntley, with its vistas, voices, and stories, many reflecting the American quest for freedom. The tour includes the unfurnished late Federal-style circa 1825 villa, farm outbuildings, stories from the Huntley community, and an unparalleled view of Hybla Valley. A Fairfax County Park Authority site, the property is on the National Register of Historic Places, the Virginia Landmarks Register, and the Fairfax County Inventory of Historic Sites.

The villa is a short walk up a steep hill. An ADA compliant cart is available on request; please contact us in advance. The grounds are open from dawn to dusk from April through the end of October.

For tours, advanced registration is recommended. Purchase tickets at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/historic-huntley/hours-tour](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/historic-huntley/hours-tour).

\$10, adults; \$8, seniors, youth, students; free for children up to 4. Check in at the lower house adjacent to the parking lot at 6918 Harrison Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306. For more information or to schedule a private tour by appointment, call 703.768.2525. ❖

### Huntley-Related Web Sites

[www.historichuntley.org](http://www.historichuntley.org)

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/historic-huntley/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/historic-huntley/)

[www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org](http://www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org)

## FRIENDS OF HISTORIC HUNTLEY

P.O. Box 7241  
Alexandria, VA 22307-0241

[www.historichuntley.org](http://www.historichuntley.org)  
[info@historichuntley.org](mailto:info@historichuntley.org) • 703.768.6987