

*Friends of Thomas Balch Library*

# *The CHRONICLE*

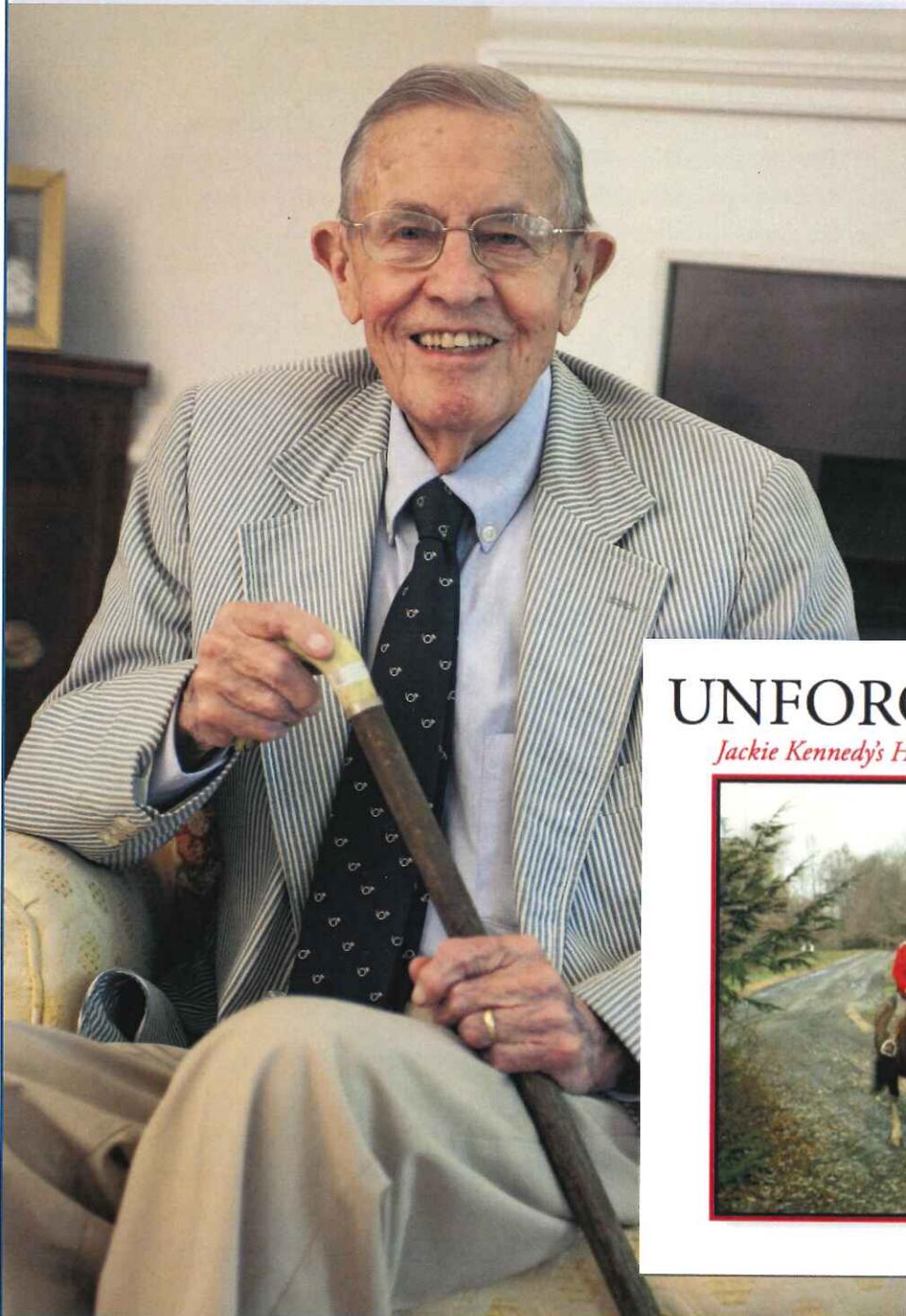
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Friends Open Year with Debut of Henry Allen Oral History Video, Elect 2016 Board, and Launch New Mobile-Responsive Website

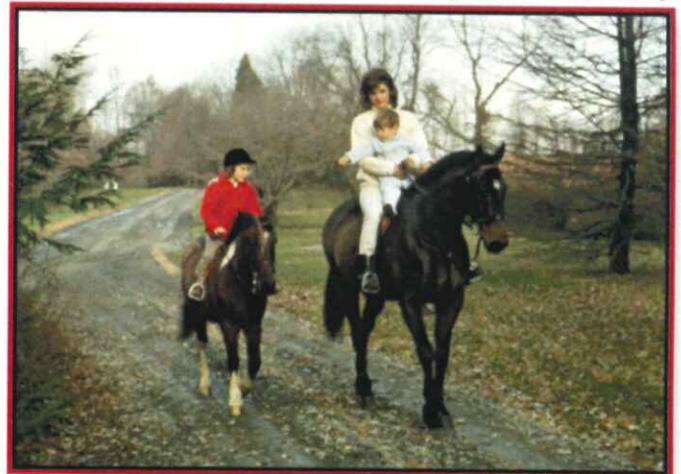
## **With Friends' Video, Howard Allen Surely Will Not Be Forgotten**

Just as he captured First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy and her children, John and Caroline, in his poignant photographs, Friends of Thomas Balch Library captured Middleburg photographer Henry Allen in an oral history completed just days before his death on November 6, 2015, at age 95. (More...page 4)



## **UNFORGOTTEN TIMES**

*Jackie Kennedy's Happy Days in the Virginia Hunt Country*



HOWARD ALLEN

**FRIENDS OF THOMAS BALCH  
LIBRARY, INC.**

P.O. Box 2184  
Leesburg, VA 20177  
www.balchfriends.org

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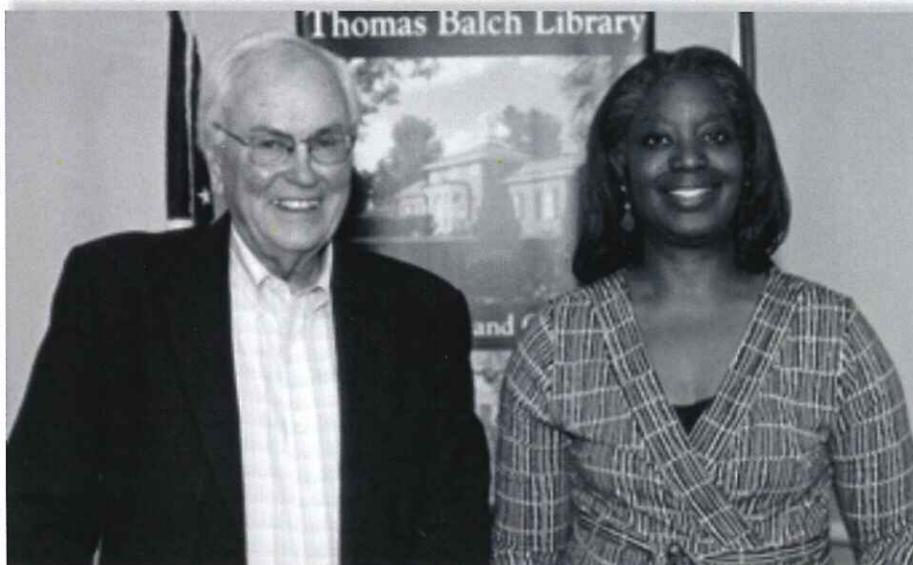
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**Congratulations to Donna Bohanon and Al Van Huyck**

(above right and left), who were honored at the 23rd annual Loudoun History Awards on November 9, 2015, for their contributions to preserving Loudoun's past through collection of county documents and memorabilia, preservation of historic landmarks, visual arts, writing, and long-time commitment to local history organizations.

**Donna Bohanon**, a member of the Black History Committee of the Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, has made many contributions to documenting, preserving and promoting Loudoun County's African American history. She worked with Loudoun County Public Schools on the remembrance event for the former Douglass Elementary School prior to its demolition and the permanent exhibit on school desegregation in the new Frederick Douglass Elementary School. She has represented Loudoun County and the Black History Committee at numerous conferences and seminars, most recently speaking on the topic of "Activating Interest in African American History" at the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership's annual conference. Through her efforts, Loudoun County's African American history is a recognized and celebrated part of the County's heritage.

**Long-time historic preservation activist Al Van Huyck** served on the Loudoun County Planning Commission from 1996 to 2003 and as board member and vice president of the Preservation Society of Loudoun County. He was a co-founder of the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition. Over the years, he has helped to create the policy framework that exists today in Loudoun County that protects Loudoun's great historic places. Through the Coalition, Van Huyck was instrumental in the creation of the County's Heritage Commission and in amending the County's Heritage Preservation Plan to preserve and protect Loudoun's network of rural roads. In 2013, he was named Preservationist of the Year by the Loudoun Preservation Society.— Adapted from *The Blue Ridge Leader* with permission

## Heritage Bus Tour Debut Is a Big Hit!

After more than a year of planning and practice, the Friends' Black History Committee (BHC) launched its Heritage Bus Tour, on the bright Saturday morning of November 14, 2015. At 8:30 AM, the 22 enthusiastic "tourists," together with Project Coordinator Alicia Cohen and BHC presenters, gathered at the Library to board the tour mini bus. Starting out in Leesburg, Loudoun native Mary Randolph pointed out several historical sites including the fully accredited yet long-segregated Douglass High School.

**Next visit,** the Quaker Village of Waterford, home to both free and enslaved African Americans in its past. At a visit to the Second Street School, dedicated to the education of local black children, we heard from alumni Almeta Johnson, Vera Lewis and John

Middleton, a special arrangement by Louis Jett. Final stop in the village, the Union Cemetery, led by local historian Bronwen Souders. We viewed the burial sites of several U.S. Colored Infantry Soldiers identified by their headstones or American flags.

**Traveling** through Purcellville, Louis Jett, a resident, provided a brief narrative on important sites: Carver School, Emancipation Grounds, and the "color line." Continuing on to St. Louis, Phyllis Cook-Taylor discussed the work of black men in the horse industry, and Banneker Elementary School, another important educational institution. In Middleburg, we were delighted to relax and enjoy lunch as guests at the beautiful Salamander Resort. After our break, Ms. Cook-Taylor continued her presentation with

additional sites in Middleburg at "Bureau Corner," pointing out the churches and community center she attended as a child.

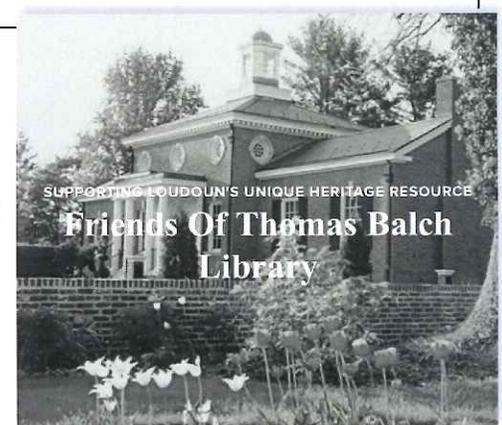
**At Oatlands** Plantation, Lori Kimball, programming director, led us through the mansion, discussing the history of the former owners and the work of their enslaved families. At our final community, Gleedsville, church historian Leslie Wright and Lauren Wilczynski shared the history of this African American-built community and the Mt. Olive Methodist Church (now Unitarian-Universalist Church). From the participants' written feedback, the heritage tour exceeded expectations!

**This first tour** was supported in part by a grant from the Loudoun Credit Union, and a second tour is being planned for June of 2016.

## Redesigned Friends Website Connects with Community, Offering User and Mobile Friendly Navigation Tools

Type [www.balchfriends.org](http://www.balchfriends.org) into your browser and prepare for a surprise! Gone is our legacy site, and in its place you'll find a colorful, easy-to-use, mobile-responsive resource that you can access anytime on your computer, tablet, or smart phone. Guided by Board president Don Cooper, members Susan Webber and James Lucier, IT Committee Chair Phil Lo Presti, and Library Director Alexandra Gressitt, Laura Longley created the new site. She built it on Squarespace, a unique content management system.

The site may look and feel different, but all of the information you've found most helpful over the years is there, as well as membership forms, book shop order lists, contact forms, and information on our endowment. Please take a moment to visit, bookmark the site, and share it with your friends!



*New Friends website home page*

## Spotlight on Friends and Events

### Screening of Howard Allen Oral History Video Is Highlight of Friends' First Gathering of the New Year



*Clockwise from bottom left: Video creators Sarah Huntington, Drew Babb, and Patty Rogers-Rennner with Howard Allen.*

**The Friends new oral history video** featuring the late Middleburg photographer Howard Allen received a standing ovation from the audience and words of thanks from his family members at its premiere at the Annual Meeting on January 10.

Introduced to the audience by two of the film's creators, Sarah Huntington and Drew Babb, Allen's daughters, Betsy Davis and Page Allen, answered questions about their father, his friendship with First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, their riding adventures with Caroline Kennedy, and their father's book, *Unforgotten Times: Jackie Kennedy's Happy Days in The Virginia Hunt County*, published in 2013. (Allen liked to tell friends that he had to be the oldest, first-time author in history.)

**The Allens have been active** in Middleburg life ever since Howard and his late wife, Nancy, moved there from Winchester via Washington, D.C., in the 1950s. Nancy opened The Fun Shop, a local institution, in 1956; Howard maintained his studio there. Today the shop is run by Page and Betsy, who also serves as the town's mayor. "Interviewing Howard Allen was one of the highlights of my career as a photographer," said Huntington. "He was one of the most elegant and charming people I've ever met, and I am so glad that we did this video when we did."



*Howard Allen's daughters: Betsy Davis, left, and Page Allen.*



*Mark Davis, Betsy's husband, and family friend Kate Sharp Carey.*

# News from Friends of Thomas Balch Library

## Friends Elect New Board for 2016



### Meet the Friends of Thomas Balch Library 2016 Board

Front row, from left, Francis Fera (secretary), Dr. Donald Cooper (president), James Lucier, Patty Rogers-Renner, and Lee Lawrence (vice president). Back row, from left: Sarah Huntington, Sharon Parker, Susan Webber, Dorothy (Dot) Shetterly, Perry Epes, Donna Bohanon, Ron Rust, Richard Gillespie. Not pictured: Brock Bierman, Jeffrey Bolyard (treasurer), William Ray, Suzi Worsham.



*President Don Cooper and retiring board member Ann Daye.*



*LouEtta Watkins*

*Featured Winter Programs: Sunday, February 21, 2016 at 2 PM*

## Marilyn Elizabeth Thornton Shares Letters—and Loudoun's History— From Her Grandfather's World War I Trunk

**As we celebrate** the 100th Anniversary of World War I, Marilyn Thornton, granddaughter of All Colored Infantry Regimental hero Edgar Thornton will share an epistolary trove of family history while providing well-documented context for events referenced in her book, *Letters from Edgar's Trunk: Tell Them All to Write*.



*Soldiers of the 369th American Expeditionary Forces All Colored Infantry Regiment return from service in France. (National Archives)*

This account of civilian life in Loudoun County and Edgar's experience as an African American soldier is told through more than 100 letters between 1916 and 1919.

**James Edgar Thornton** was a member of the legendary 369<sup>th</sup> American Expeditionary Forces All Colored Infantry Regiment that fought on the front lines in the Argonne Forest under French command. His entire family was

connected by conscription; when Edgar was drafted, his brother and brother-in-law also were called into service. Throughout his tour of duty, Edgar's wife, his mother and father, brothers and sisters, other family members, neighbors, and friends wrote to him, and Edgar wrote back.

**Thornton will discuss** the

book and talk about what she learned through her research. Marilyn Thornton holds a master's degree in Fine Arts from Catholic University of America. She was Assistant Professor of Art at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, and Adjunct Professor of Art at the University of the District of Columbia.

*Thursday, March 3, 2016 at 10 AM*

## Researching World War I Records

If you have family members who served in World War I, this seminar is one you won't want to miss. A fire in St. Louis at the National Personnel Records Center in 1973 destroyed approximately 80 percent of the

personnel records of Army officers and enlisted personnel discharged from November 1, 1912, to January 1, 1960. This lecture, led by Constance Potter, describes selected records from the National Archives that

provide information on individual soldiers, as well as other online resources. Constance Potter retired from the National Archives in 2014 after working for 30 years in reference.

## Linda Slothouber Explores the Complex World of English Estate Owners in "Jane Austen, Edward Knight & Chawton: Commerce and Community"



*Jane Austen's brother Edward Knight*

**When Jane Austen's brother Edward** inherited the estate of wealthy relatives, he took their surname, Knight, and control of property scattered across five English counties. Jane spent her most productive years as a novelist living in a cottage Edward owned in the village of Chawton in Hampshire. From this vantage point, Jane observed Edward's approach to managing his estates and learned about the concerns and activities of wealthy landowners, knowledge that is reflected in her novels.

In *Jane Austen, Edward Knight & Chawton*, gleanings from original estate books, bank records, letters, and other sources inform the most detailed portrait to date of Jane Austen's brother. His life story illustrates how landed gentry made their money, tried to ensure the prosperity of their heirs, and interacted with workers on their estates. The author introduces people Jane Austen knew and wrote about during her years in Chawton, and she discusses how the facts of village life intersect with fiction. During her presentation, she will describe approaches used to research the lives of individuals who left few personal records.



*Chawton House, circa 1905*

**Linda Slothouber is a board member** of the Jane Austen Society of North America and the 2013 recipient of the Society's International Visitor grant, which enabled her to live in Chawton, Hampshire, and conduct research into its social and commercial history. Having completed a career as a management and technology consultant, she writes about work and business in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and about artifacts and buildings surviving from that time.

Books will be available for purchase. You can visit Chawton House online at [www.chawtonhouse.org](http://www.chawtonhouse.org). Learn about Chawton House Library for the study of early women's writings and the pivotal role played in its establishment and ongoing development by Dr. Sandy Lerner, owner of Ayrshire Farm in Upperville.

*Thomas Balch Library Director Alexandra Gressitt develops and presents the wide range of public programming offered by the Library. Programs sponsored by Thomas Balch Library are held in the Library's downstairs meeting room and are free unless otherwise noted. Due to limited seating, we recommend registering in advance by calling 703-737-7195. For updated news on events, visit the Library's website at: [www.leesburgva.gov/ThomasBalchLibrary/publications](http://www.leesburgva.gov/ThomasBalchLibrary/publications) or find the Library on Facebook.*



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P.O. Box 2184  
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## Winter Programs & Exhibits

### Programs and Events

*Letters From Edgar's Trunk* - Marilyn  
Thornton 2/21/16 - 2 - 4 PM

**Researching World War I Records**  
3/3/16 - 10 AM

*Jane Austen, Edward Knight & Chawton* -  
Linda Slothouber 3/6/16 - 2 - 4 PM

**Ulster Historical Foundation Seminar:**  
**Finding Your Irish and Scots-Irish Ancestors**  
3/9/16 - 9 - 4 PM

*Eagle Marks on American Silver* - Catherine  
Buttery Hollan 3/3/16 - 2 - 4 PM

*Researching Court Records* - 4/7/16 - 10 AM

### Coming This Spring

*Dark Days in Our Beloved Country: The Civil  
War Diary of Catherine Hopkins Broun* by  
Friends Vice President **Lee Lawrence** - 4/17/16 -  
2 - 4 PM

### Tours and Exhibits

**A Walking Tour of Civil War Leesburg** -  
3/19/16 - 10 AM - 12 PM

### Margaret Mercer Room Exhibits

February - Frederick Douglass Elementary  
School Art Class Projects

March - Frederick Shafer Pottery Exhibit-  
William Whitmore

### Lower Level Meeting Room Exhibit

January - March: "Olden Times" - photographs  
by Dora E. Ramirez

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[www.balchfriends.org](http://www.balchfriends.org), or find us on Facebook.