In our last issue, we started a new feature that spotlights one member of the Manassas Museum Associates (MMA). We thought this would be a fun way for you to get to know your fellow members. This month, the spotlight is on Don Libeau! Here, in his own words, is what Don wanted to share with all of you.

I love chasing history and finding it, then sharing it with family and anybody that will listen to my discoveries. Being a long-time resident of Manassas, I have heard those stories from the “old timers” and observed for myself. I grew up from the 1940s to the present hearing many of those stories spoken by local residents, family members, town politicians, farmers, store keepers, dairymen, pilots, etc.

I was born in Washington D.C. at Columbia Hospital with my twin sister, Dot, but we arrived two months early. We both weighed in at 5 lbs total! Dot and I were new residents of D.C. until we got heavier and were ready to come to our Manassas home in September, 1944.

My family background was farming and brick/stone masonry. I also earned my associate degree in Drafting and Design at Richmond Polytechnic Institute and later an Industrial Arts teaching degree at V.P.I. After completing a term of service in United States Army from 1966-1969, I moved back home and began a 30-year teaching career in the Prince William County School System.

In 2010, Ann Walser Harrover Thomas introduced me to the Manassas Museum Associates team and all the opportunities that are available at the museum. In the past 10 years I have been busy with the MMA team: fund raising, Christmas events and building various items needed at the museum. Presently I am representing the MMA team on the Jennie Dean Memorial Campaign Committee as an educational liaison to Jennie Dean Elementary School, creating and compiling various activities for the awareness of Jennie Dean’s legacy and what she

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During the last year, I’ve spent quite a bit of time going through the Museum’s document collection, looking for just the right pieces to put on display in our new *Consider the Source* exhibition. This was hard work. First, there were hundreds of pieces to consider. Secondly, I wanted to pick things that we have not used previously. Finally, I tend to get side tracked when doing this kind of work, reading all the different letters and examining the various receipts and letterheads, long after I have already selected the piece for display. It’s a curse faced by most curators, I suspect – getting bogged down in looking through the collection.

In all of my searching and reading, I found one letter that has a great connection to current events. Of course, I’m talking about our struggle with COVID-19 and what that means for our community and the world at large. This particular letter was written on October 10, 1918 from Manassas resident Mary Adams to her brother Taylor, who was serving overseas in France during World War I. After starting her letter with the usual greetings, she writes:

> John has been stationed at Quantico about two weeks ago but he can’t get home as he is in quarantine. There is quite a great deal of influenza in the camps around here and also among the people in town and Washington. They have closed schools and places of amusement.

In another letter, written a few weeks later, Mary mentions:

> The Spanish Influenza has just taken this country and nearly everyone has it or has had it. It is not so bad itself but complications set in and nearly always cause death. The men at Camp Meade are quarantined and every day there’s a big death list. Surely hope you haven’t had it over there and never will.

Written to local resident Taylor Adams in October 1918 while he was serving overseas in France during World War I, this letter details the effects of the influenza pandemic in Manassas.
When Northern Virginia entered Phase III of reopening, we were thrilled to be able to welcome visitors back inside the museum and expand our summer program offerings! After three months of engaging our audiences through social media, it was exciting to be able to offer opportunities for them to once again interact in-person with our collection and the rich history of Manassas.

We have developed a robust and diverse slate of programs scheduled for the rest of the summer, so please mark your calendars and come join us!

Programming during a pandemic has presented a unique set of challenges, but we’ve put our collective Parks, Culture, and Recreation heads together and have come up with innovative and workable solutions for social distancing, signage, marking clear entrance and exit pathways, and ticket reservations.

**African American Film Series at Liberia**

On July 17th, we kicked off an African American film series on the grounds at Liberia House, honoring the over 80 enslaved people who once lived and worked there. Our first film, *Harriet*, was sold out. This movie showcases the incredible courage and tenacity of Harriet Tubman as she escapes enslavement and goes on to become a conductor on the Underground Railroad, escorting over 300 enslaved people to freedom.

*Harriet* at Liberia was sponsored by the Prince William County NAACP, and we partnered with the local Black-owned business, Popcorn Monkey to offer ticket holders a 10% discount on popcorn.

Join us on August 21st for the movie *Loving*, which tells the story of Richard and Mildred Loving and their landmark Supreme Court case that invalidated Virginia laws prohibiting interracial marriage. The final film in this summer series will be screened on September 18th--stay tuned to find out what it will be!

**Stories of Preservation and Progress**

Another popular program that has returned for the summer is Stories of Preservation and Progress. On July 29th at Liberia House, Master Gardener Nancy Berlin led a talk about the work being done on the garden there. Reservations were required in order to attend in person, and the talk was also live streamed on the Parks Culture and Recreation Facebook page. It was a great talk and the video has now been viewed over 550 times! Visit @manassascity.org/leisure
cityofmanassasleisure on Facebook to view it yourself.

The next program in this series will be held outside at the Museum on August 26. Melyssa Webb will discuss the work being done to restore headstones at Rose Hill and City Cemeteries. On September 30th at the museum, Pastor Savage will discuss the rich history of First Baptist Church, which dates back to 1872.

Front Porch Talk

One of the programs I’m personally looking forward to the most is our revival of our Front Porch Talks at Liberia House. On September 12, Linneall Naylor, descendant of the enslaved Naylor family of Liberia House will be in conversation with Colleen Blessing, descendant of Robert King Carter. If you haven’t seen my Juneteenth conversation with Ms. Naylor on Facebook you can watch it here: facebook.com/cityofmanassasleisure/videos. Ms. Naylor is a dynamic speaker and has a wealth of information about her family and their complicated relationship to Liberia House. She also has a large family that loves to come out and support her, so we expect this to be a popular program!

All Programs are Free — Reserve Your Spot in Advance

All programs are free but require registration so that we can plan for social distancing. If you’d like to join us, please reserve your spot in advance at manassasechoes.com.

Associates Spotlight

Our Associates are critically important to the work we do at the museum and we are glad that Don Libeau is part of their team.
Greetings from the Manassas Museum Associates! These past few months have been very different for us – as well as all of you. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have not met since January, but we continue to support all the activities of the museum.

We have remained active with fundraising for the Jennie Dean statue. If you have not already done so, please consider contributing. Just visit our Go Fund Me page at www.gofundme.com/jennie-dean-memorial-campaign to make your donation online. We also accept checks made out to the Manassas Museum Associates and dropped off at the Museum. Your donations are tax deductible.

In addition to the Dean campaign, we also purchased a much-needed portable sound system for the museum. The system includes a microphone and small hand-held speaker that staff can use when putting on programs and events that have large crowds. This type of support, while small in scale, is critical to meeting museum needs that are not covered by other sources. Your support of the Associates is what makes all this possible.

Finally, the museum is once again open and we encourage you to visit. The staff has put many social distancing measures in place so you can enjoy the exhibits safely. We hope to resume our regular meetings again soon but until then, please stay safe and healthy!

Pat Beuch, President

Of course, Mary Adams is writing about the Influenza Pandemic of 1918-1919 that killed 50 million people worldwide, including 675,000 in the United States. With no vaccine or medicine to treat the sick, the reaction of communities then was much the same as now – quarantines, the use of disinfectants, reducing the size of social gatherings and closing businesses, churches, etc. Now, here we are just over 100 years later, having what are likely the same conversations our ancestors did about how to go about our daily lives. Letters like these are great reminders that history can, in a way, repeat itself.

The first letter quoted is now on display in Consider the Source, a new exhibit that opened on June 15. This show will remain on view throughout the summer, so there will be plenty of opportunity for you to see it. We look forward to seeing you at the museum – from an appropriate social distance! – very soon.
We missed you! We’ve got a new look and some new items to reintroduce you to the shop. Visit our Facebook page at facebook.com/cityofmanassasleisure/ to see how we are keeping you safe in the museum and gift shop.

Shop our many new items in-store or online at manassasechoes.com