



THE ALEXANDRIA ORAL HISTORY CENTER
OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA
CITY OF ALEXANDRIA



Oral History Interview

with

Linda Lovell

Interviewer: *Francesco De Salvatore*

Narrator: *Linda Lovell*

Location of Interview:

Lloyd House, 220 N Washington St, Alexandria, VA 22314

Date of Interview: *8/16/2023*

Transcriber: *Louisa Caldroney*

Summary: *Linda Lovell reflects on volunteer experiences including how the Office of Historic Alexandria has grown and evolved and the benefits of volunteerism.*

Notes:

Table of Contents and Keywords

Minute	Page	Topic
00:22	3	Introduction
00:24	3	Early childhood and family memories
05:45	4	Growing up in and the history of Danville, KY
09:59	5	Primary and secondary school experiences and classmates
14:34	6	Initial interest in science
17:40	7	Siblings
25:16	8	College experiences and challenges for women in scientific fields
35:57	10	Post-college professional experience and move to Northern Virginia
36:36	11	Alexandria in the 1970s
39:23	11	Initial volunteer work with Historic Alexandria Docents
42:57	12	Volunteering at The Apothecary
47:22	13	History of The Apothecary and preservation efforts
53:14	14	Volunteer experiences at Gadsby's Tavern
1:00:16	15	Volunteer experiences at other historical Alexandria sites
1:02:14	16	Friendships made through volunteering
1:05:10	16	Evolution of the Office of Historic Alexandria
1:10:23	17	Hopes for the Office of Historic Alexandria in the future
1:15:25	18	Benefits and rewards of volunteerism

General	Volunteering; Sciences; Historic Alexandria Docents; Office of Historic Alexandria
People	Margaret Harlow; Kathleen Kelly; Jean Federico; Lance Malamo
Places	Danville, KY; Louisville, KY; Ursuline College; Bellarmine University; The Apothecary; Gadsby's Tavern Museum

Introduction

Linda Lovell [00:00:00] My name is Linda Lovell. I am 78 years old. It is August 16th, 2023, and we are at the Lloyd House.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:00:13] Great. My name is Francesco and it's August 16th, 2023, and we are at the Lloyd House. Hi, Linda.

Linda Lovell [00:00:22] Hello, Francesco. How are you?

Early childhood and family memories

Francesco De Salvatore [00:00:24] I'm good, I'm good. And I wanted to start, can you tell me, like, just describe memories from when you grew up?

Linda Lovell [00:00:32] Well, I was actually born in San Antonio, Texas, but only lived there for 2 months. I was born on an Army Air Corps base at that time and my father was sent to Germany, and my mother and I got on a very long train trip to go back to a small town in Kentucky and we stayed there until- which is where my both parents were from, Russellville, Kentucky and we stayed there until my father returned and then we went to live on the campus of what was then Valparaiso Technical Institute. My father got an engineering degree and we moved to Danville, Kentucky, where I grew up. Danville is a still small town in the center of Kentucky, a very, very old town.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:01:33] Uh huh. Uh huh.

Linda Lovell [00:01:34] And very historic. That's probably what gave me my first interest in history is because of all the history that is in, uh, Kentucky, in Danville.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:01:46] Uh huh.

Linda Lovell [00:01:46] And so then, I lived there until I went to college.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:01:54] Hmm. Hmm. Great. So, can you maybe describe what- it sounds like your Dad brought you guys around a little bit, and so, like, what was his occupation?

Linda Lovell [00:02:04] My father was an engineer.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:02:06] Okay.

Linda Lovell [00:02:06] He was what was termed a communications engineer. We actually moved to Danville because they were starting a radio station, which still exists, and he was the engineer for that when it was put on the air. And we first lived in an apartment above the radio station. And I actually, I guess the first time I talked into a mic was one of the people had a children's show, and sometimes I was the child who helped. Sometimes I would say birthdays, various people's birthdays, children's birthdays in the neighborhood. I would help Uncle Ray do that.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:02:53] Uncle Ray. Was Uncle Ray not actually your uncle?

Linda Lovell [00:02:55] No, he was not my uncle. That's pretty soon-I believe that might have been what the show was called, *Uncle Ray's Children's Hour* or something like that. I really don't remember. So, and then as more members entered my family, as little brothers were born, we moved into other areas in in Danville and my father actually changed jobs. He became a microwave technician when microwaves were coming into existence, and he, they would use towers to communicate along a gas pipeline that was owned by what was then Texas Eastern. It went all the way from Texas to New Jersey, and there were five towers within the state of Kentucky that my father needed to make sure were all operating correctly and so that was his job until he retired.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:04:01] Wow. What's his name?

Linda Lovell [00:04:03] His name was Henry.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:04:06] Henry.

Linda Lovell [00:04:06] Yes.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:04:06] Great. Can you maybe describe your mom?

Linda Lovell [00:04:09] Yes. My mother was very outgoing. So, my parents grew up together. It was the captain of the football team, married the head cheerleader, so it was that kind of thing. They were young when they got married and they, she was very outgoing. She was an excellent cook, an incredible seamstress. Almost you would compare her to a tailor. She made gowns for me to wear to dances. She made all my clothes. She made coats. She made jackets for my brothers. I mean, that was, she was that kind of a seamstress. Just incredible. The only non-homemaking job she had was for a short period of time. She was a bookkeeper at a bank, but she only had a high school degree. She did not go to college, and she was never particularly well. She was anemic and things like that. She was prone to fainting. So, I learned very early on what to do and sadly, she did develop cancer and that is what she died from it at the age of 52, quite young.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:05:32] How old were you when she passed?

Linda Lovell [00:05:35] I was 30.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:05:38] Okay, much later.

Linda Lovell [00:05:39] My brothers were quite young, 22 and 23.

Growing up in and the history of Danville, KY

Francesco De Salvatore [00:05:45] Um, so maybe can you describe Danville for us?

Linda Lovell [00:05:50] Sure.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:05:51] For those have never been to Danville, and...

Linda Lovell [00:05:52] There are many Danvilles.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:05:53] Certainly weren't there when you were living there. Can you describe it for us?

Linda Lovell [00:05:57] So Danville is a very old town. It's celebrated its 200th anniversary when I was in high school, so I'm not sure exactly when it was established, but it's quite old. It's the second oldest town in Kentucky. It is where the constitution for the state of Kentucky was written. There's a park and there dedicated to that. So, it was not made the capital of Kentucky because it is not located on a river and that was transportation at that time was where your rivers. So that's why the Frankfort is the capital of Kentucky because it is on the Kentucky River. It is very much in the bluegrass, in the middle of horse farms. It's a very pretty little town. It only has even now about 14,000 people. School started today there. But probably one of its most famous citizens was Ephraim McDowell, who was a frontier surgeon, and his is one of the statues in the Capitol building from the state, the other one being Henry Clay. So, but it's still very small. It has a brass band festival every first weekend of June. Has a college, very old college. Centre College is there. Centre College is one of the first colleges west of the Alleghenys, also had a law school, so it's very old, goes back into the 1800s. It is noted for having beat Harvard back in the 1800s in football. So that's how old that the town is. Um, it is, as I say, surrounded by horse farms and not too much tobacco anymore. But they, it was, of course, that kind of farm as well. Has some beautiful old, uh, antebellum homes and pre-war, so pre-Civil War homes, but goes all the way back to before the War of 1812. And, you know, because it was part of Virginia, of course, and Danville was established before.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:08:43] Was your home, a historic home?

Linda Lovell [00:08:46] No, no, no, no, no. Very ordinary house.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:08:50] But you were around all those historic homes?

Linda Lovell [00:08:54] Yes. I mean, they were within walking distance. There was in fact, it was used, the town was used as a movie set for a Civil War movie called *Raintree County*, which starred Elizabeth Taylor, Montgomery Clift, Eva Marie Saint, Agnes Moorehead, Lee Marvin before he was Lee Marvin, actually. I can't think of anybody else, and they took over the town for about five months throughout the summer and what, but they were using it actually, they were using it, passing it off, as I think, Indiana. But they used some of the backgrounds of the old buildings. Elizabeth Taylor was like a had come visiting her relatives who lived in this house and Montgomery Clift was a Union soldier that fell in love with her, and then she disappears, so.

Primary and secondary school experiences and classmates

Francesco De Salvatore [00:09:59] Great. What are some of your favorite memories growing up in Danville?

Linda Lovell [00:10:05] Oh, I think probably the, my classmates. I had a unique, it was a unique sort of education experience. I went to a very small Catholic school for one through eight, and there were only eleven people in my class. So, it was like having a, almost like having a private tutor and some of us realized later in life, because you didn't question a nun, that when we would be finished with something, she would just take that piece of paper that we'd and she'd put another one in front of us and you didn't question, you just started working on that and if you finish that one, a third piece would come. And this was in say, it could be on math, it could be on English, whatever was

you were studying at the time. And what she was doing, which some of us later realized is she was putting, some of us were getting things that we had not yet studied, and she was trying to see how far we could go, could we figure this math problem out, could we figure this out and that, and so she was silently pushing some of us while letting those that were at the at a certain level just continue on, but not saying, oh, I'm now giving to the smarter kids this, this and this. And so, by the time we got to high school, a number of us that were in that grade were placed in the advanced programs, is what college preparation is what they were calling, college preparatory is what they called it at that time, and so we qualified to be placed in that and even my public high school class was very small. It was only 82 people. So, and we, that class was smart.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:12:21] Can you describe some of your classmates? Like who were they?

Linda Lovell [00:12:25] So just, you know, basic people. We did produce out of that class a young man who became a nuclear physicist at now it's escaping me, the place in Tennessee that has that kind of work. It'll come to me at one time. We had several who became college professors. We had, they had, they were, we've considered ourselves to be nerdy because we only had 1 guy that could really play, 2 that could really play on the football team. The rest, the rest were a little on the, you know, more intellectual side. But we read, you know, books. I mean, we were reading *Doctor Zhivago*, and we were reading *War and Peace*, and we were reading books that might have been above our level. We were learning calculus. We were in math class because we were just, you know, we were ahead of things like that. We had around the wall quizzes for our finals in chemistry and physics and if you answered the question, you got to move up, and that was how your grade was based. So maybe that's why, you know, that class ended up producing 4 chemists, microbiologists, doctors, medical doctors, dentists, pharmacists. As I said, college professors. We did have, we would be graduating and going into college as the Vietnam War was beginning and we did have 1 young man that did go into the military and sadly, he did perish during the war and his name is on the Wall, Vietnam Wall. Very, very good looking. Ronnie was handsome.

Initial interest in science

Francesco De Salvatore [00:14:34] What do you think drew you to the sciences at a young age?

Linda Lovell [00:14:41] I would almost say, because for me it was easier than English and composition, writing and composition. I think my father had a little bit to do with that. One memory from my childhood that that question just brought to my mind was that on- when my parents moved to Danville, they liked to play canasta. Canasta is a card game that was very popular at that time, and you had to add up the points of the cards in your hand and do what they call meld, and then you started and that would, then you started a different stage of game. So, they didn't know anybody and just playing with the two of them was not that much fun. So, my father actually taught me how to add and subtract in my head when I was 3 so that I could play with them. I still can do that easier than almost on a paper. So, I think maybe he sort of, you know, started that why he thought I could do that at 3, I don't know, but he did. He taught me how to do that, and they read to me so I actually could read before I went into first grade as well. But and I can spell almost anything. I just don't write well, and so I think that it was just, and I mean, then that was obvious in high school, you know, I couldn't compose a theme. Those were B minuses, whereas my math classes and chemistry and physics were all A's. So, it was just obvious that I should major in something scientific when I went away to college.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:16:41] Were you drawn to history at all during that time or?

Linda Lovell [00:16:44] Yes, I liked history. I mean, I didn't, you know, couldn't really write about it. But I and I think a lot of sciences people are drawn to history because it's facts. Until, of course, some of the facts are disproven. But and of course, in science, it's facts, and I think that there's a logic, some sort of a logic to history. But it is, I did enjoy the facts and I was always enjoyed reading about history, and of course, as I mentioned, the little town I grew up in was had a lot of history to it. So, we always celebrated, they still do. Constitution Day will be celebrated next month, and they'll have a big thing, reread certain things on Constitution Square and a number of things like that, so.

Siblings

Francesco De Salvatore [00:17:40] This is not related to this, but you haven't talked about your siblings, can you maybe?

Linda Lovell [00:17:47] Oh, my brothers?

Francesco De Salvatore [00:17:47] Can you describe your siblings really quick?

Linda Lovell [00:17:49] So I was 7 years old when the first one was born and he was a very handsome little boy. He had a full hair, head of dark hair, and he was, his name was Stephen. And he was like having, since I was 7, it was like I had a living doll to play with and so and then right away, my mother was expecting another baby, and that was not quite as easy as Stephen was, it was another boy. But they were, that was when the RH factor was beginning to be noticed in blood and my mother, as it happens, was mistyped, because later in life a job that I had, I could do that kind of thing and so I typed her myself and she had been mistyped for years. So, what they did with my younger brother, the youngest one, was to take all of his, give him a transfusion when he, just after he was born, and it wasn't really necessary, but he was, he grew fine. It did not bother him and in fact, at one time the younger brother was 8 inches taller than the older one. So, he grew up very tall. He was 6 feet by the time he was 12 and they played a lot of sports. They were in Little League baseball, and they were in football and in fact, Kenneth was so big that they really wanted him when he went into 8th grade to play on varsity high school football but he's a November. He was born in November, and he would have been 12 and my mother didn't want him in the locker room where he might hear things that she was not ready for her 12 year old to hear. So, she said absolutely not and that was the time when you could enter 1st grade at five. I was 5 when I went into 1st grade. And so, he was 5 when he went to 1st grade, so 12 by the time he got- but then he was when he was a freshman he did play varsity high school and he was all-American varsity high school and went to college on that kind of a degree. Sadly, he passed away in a car accident when he was 24.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:20:41] Hmm. I'm sorry. What are some of your favorite memories with him?

Linda Lovell [00:20:47] Oh, I took care of them. I was there, you know, being that much older, I was their babysitter. One of the funny things is I remember I took them, I would be the one taking them to the movies and so we would go to Martin and Lewis, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis movies and my brother Stephen would, and he still does to this today, he would fall on the floor laughing so much, and of course, I would be embarrassed by that, whereas Kenneth would just sit there and occasionally smile and that was his sense of humor as opposed to the other one. My brother still likes the Chevy Chase and the *Dumb and Dumber* and those kind of movies he still enjoys, whereas

the rest of us, it's like, no, we're not going to those kind of movies. Yeah, but my brother went on to have a very good, my brother Stephen, went on to have a very good career in sales. He's, he inherited my grandfather on my father's side charm and he's very charming, and that helped him in his business and so he is now retired, living in Danville. He's been married for quite a number of years. My sister in law was a surgical nurse, she's now retired as well and they're traveling together. He has 2 children and 2 granddaughters, and he is currently the girls' high school golf coach, mainly because his granddaughter is on the team.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:22:41] Yeah. It sounds like you, being the oldest, were in some ways in a caretaker role and you mentioned that your mom also had some health struggles.

Linda Lovell [00:22:54] Yes.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:22:55] Yeah. Well, what was that like for you?

Linda Lovell [00:22:57] So I was, yes. I mean, I learned to cook very early. I can, I still, I think that's why, you know, I still enjoy making my dinner. And of course, all good chemists are good bakers because it's just, you're following a recipe and maybe that's just the other part that drew me to the sciences. There's a lot of science in cooking, and so my grandmother was a good cook, my father's mother, I never knew my mother's parents and they had passed away. Well, my mother's father was still living, but he died when I was about 3 or so, and then-but yes, no I cooked often and did take care of them and did laundry and learned how to iron sitting on it, standing on a box so I could reach the ironing board and yes, very much so. The one thing I did not learn how to do, I never mowed the lawn. I never did anything like that outside because either Daddy or my brothers did that and so I didn't do that kind of thing, but anything else. Except I was never a good, I never was a good seamstress. I did not know how to sew well, but I do do and enjoy doing counted cross embroidery. There's a little bit of math to it and I enjoy doing that and I do that, but I could never sew well, not like Mother could.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:24:41] It's alright. Sounds like you're doing a lot of other things.

Linda Lovell [00:24:44] And I became the town babysitter of little boys. Yes, and all of which now are my Facebook friends, which I find interesting. Yes. Well, I think all the mothers thought that if I could handle my 2 brothers, I could handle theirs. So, I was the-yeah, and they, like I say, there's a ton of them that are now Facebook friends with me still and I keep in touch with them.

College experiences and challenges for women in scientific fields

Francesco De Salvatore [00:25:16] So that's great. That's great. So, you obviously went to college, so can you describe where you went to college and your experiences?

Linda Lovell [00:25:25] So I started out at a Catholic college called Ursuline. It was in Louisville, Kentucky and the reason I was sent there was that my mother had a cousin whose daughter had gone there and also a man that worked with my father, his daughter had attended that college. So that's how they knew about it and my parents thought I would be better off at a smaller college rather than the University of Kentucky. And so, I was accepted there, and I was majoring in medical technology because at that time that was a good job for a woman to have after she graduated. So, I was majoring in that and then after-

Francesco De Salvatore [00:26:24] What time period was this?

Linda Lovell [00:26:26] This was, I started in the fall of 1962 and freshman year, 2nd semester, after one of the- my chemistry classes, my chemistry professor comes up, a man, and says, I need to speak to you after class, and he said the same to another girl, which I, which usually that's a bad indication. And I knew by that time I had already made an A, you know, after the 1st semester and I knew that Colleen was smarter than me and I'm thinking, wonder what this is about. So, we waited of course, and he said that he thought that we were in the wrong area, which is a poor way for him to have started out, because what he next said was, I think that the two of you should be following a degree in chemistry. So, I said, and considering the age back then that his next statement was, I will talk to your parents if you need me, because your parents more or less at that point decided where you were going. You didn't have a big, you didn't tour colleges at that time. And so I, my question was, can I get a job and he said, yes, you will have no problem getting a job and so this next statement was, we here at the girls college do not have a degree in chemistry so next year, the two of you will be going to the boys college, Bellarmine University. That point, Colleen and I looked at each other and almost at the same time said, you may have to speak to our parents because now you're sending us to a boys school. So next, in the fall of 1963, Colleen and I started at Bellarmine University as the first 2 women to start there. It was just a small school as well. There were only at that time between 300 and 400, and so our classes were small. What was not anticipated, I do not believe, by either the priest that ran Bellarmine or the nuns that ran Ursuline was the fact that our class schedules needed to fit in. And at that time, you got a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry, which meant you were taking philosophy courses as well. So I have a minors in mathematics, but I also have a minors in theology and philosophy. And philosophy, if you're a science person is not the easiest thing in the world. Logic is fine because it's logical, it's mathematics, but anything else is like, really? So some- so our classes, we didn't just take the science classes at Bellarmine, we ended up having to take others. So and it together in our chemistry class, we at least had each other and then when the men started, when the guys started accepting as it was, we had them as well. But I ended up being like the only girl in a rational psychology class and some of these boys had never been in class with a girl. They had also only been to boys Catholic schools from grade 1. So I have a different thought on certain matters, a different perspective was unusual to some of them. It wasn't, it was never where I felt like I wasn't being listened to or where I felt like there was a problem. What the-a most amusing problem was they had to turn was a finding a bathroom. But there were women who were on staff or faculty, so there was one, you just had to find it. And then pencil sharpeners were up. Colleen was about 5 feet, I'm taller than that, but Colleen could not reach the pencil sharpener, and so that was one of the amusing things that would happen. A couple of other like in one of my chemistry classes, I they would give you an unknown and you had 2 weeks and you had to follow certain procedures in order to identify that unknown. So I received my unknown, it was a clear liquid. I unscrewed the cap and I said, oh, I know what this is, and the professor says you can't know what it is. I said, well, yeah. I said, it's a mixture of ethanol and alkaline glycol and they went, what? I said it's ethylene glycol, it's a mixture of the two of them and they go how do you possibly know that? I said, it's fingernail polish remover, and I could see one of the male chemistry professors who had never taught a woman before, he goes to his colleague and he goes, make sure we don't ever give them write that down, no fingernail polish remover to the girls. So, so it was sort of interesting for them as well, from their point, from their point of view.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:32:49] Wow. How did it feel for you to be, you know, 1 of 2 first women, 1 of the first women at that college feel for you?

Linda Lovell [00:32:58] It was a little intimidating at first, but not really after that. I think that all my experiences by being the town babysitter of little boys sort of got me used to, you know, handling that kind of a situation, not that they were any younger than I was, and some, of course, were older. The first time walking into the cafeteria and silence came about that was interesting. But, you know, you got used to it.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:33:33] Uh huh. Great. And what was your major? Like what did you graduate with again?

Linda Lovell [00:33:38] A degree in chemistry. It was in chemistry.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:33:41] So what year did you finish?

Linda Lovell [00:33:43] 1966.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:33:45] Okay, and so what happens after that?

Linda Lovell [00:33:48] So I started interviewing for potential jobs during my senior year and it was a time when you could go to an interview at Dow Chemical, which I did, and they could say, well, yes, you do have all of the credentials, but you're a woman. So after we train you in this, this and this, you'll get married, you'll have a child, and you'll leave, and we'll have put all this money into training you. And there was no law that said they couldn't say that to me and so they basically didn't consider you. The federal government, however, was looking for women scientists. There were a number that were hired between 1966 and I would say 1972 because of the Vietnam War. We were not, we could not be drafted. And while a number of my classmates would get the diploma one day and their draft notice the next day. Now, a lot of the chemists that I was in class with, they were sent to medical school. But, you know, 3 different government agencies actually reached out to me to be hired and, um, I chose, it was the Food and Drug Administration. Um. Or was it? No, it was National Institute of Health, not Food and Drug, National Institute of Health. What was then called the Bureau of Standards, it is now the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the crime lab at the FBI and I accepted the crime lab at the FBI. So that is what brought me here.

Post-college professional experiences and move to Northern Virginia

Francesco De Salvatore [00:35:57] And so what-when you when you moved here, did you, what area did you move to?

Linda Lovell [00:36:01] I lived in Northern Virginia, and I lived in an area of Alexandria not too far from where I'm now living. I lived there for about 3 to 4 years and then moved into the area which is now Crystal City in Arlington County.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:36:22] So what was the area you moved into in Alexandria when you first came?

Linda Lovell [00:36:26] In Alexandria it was near Seminary Towers, Seminary Hills.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:36:31] Okay.

Linda Lovell [00:36:32] Near, off of Braddock.

Alexandria in the 1970s

Francesco De Salvatore [00:36:36] Yeah. Can you describe your first impressions of Alexandria when you first moved?

Linda Lovell [00:36:41] So Alexandria was not at that time, was not anywhere near what it is now. It was economically distressed. It was a place where you would- the hotel the was still the Mansion Street Hotel [Mansion House Hotel]. I believe that's the name of it, was still in front of the Carlyle House. All of its windows were broken out. It was where homeless people slept. It was also a good place to get drugs apparently. So it was very, very, it was undergoing urban renewal in some places in order to try to bring the economy back. But it was very economically depressed at that time and when you went out on a date, you really didn't come here. You more or less went into the, just into Georgetown in the District of Columbia.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:37:44] Mm hmm. What are your specific memories of Seminary when you moved there? What did it look like?

Linda Lovell [00:37:51] It looks more or less what it looks like now because Seminary Towers were there and Seminary Hills where I and two other people shared a place is still there. It still basically looks like it did then. Yeah, it hasn't changed much.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:38:10] How would you describe it?

Linda Lovell [00:38:12] I think that what was a high school then, Hammond was a high school then, is now a middle school. But it's was one of the first, like, multi-story buildings that I'd seen because, of course, there weren't those where I grew up and not that many in Louisville at the time that I was in college, 4 to 5 stories was about it so anything over that height was. Now I lived in Seminary Hills, which was 3 floors, we went up by a staircase. So yeah, and it was within walking distance of what now you would call or was that there? There was a shopping center and I'm not, I don't know if that's now the shopping center that's there at King. That would have been a little further away. Yeah. Geography is not one of my great things.

Initial volunteer work with Historic Alexandria Docents

Francesco De Salvatore [00:39:23] Got it. And so when did you first come to learn about OHA?

Linda Lovell [00:39:28] So the Office of Historic Alexandria, I'm not too sure existed then. When I was looking for something to volunteer in, something maybe to meet people outside of work as well. And I saw an advertisement in the paper for the Historic Alexandria Docents, HAD, and they were looking for volunteers for various museums, sites in the city of Alexandria and they were going to have an orientation on a Saturday morning and so, I came and attended that orientation and they said, that's you, you joined HAD [Historic Alexandria Docents] and they HAD [Historic Alexandria Docents] were over even the Lee boyhood home got its docents from that organization.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:40:29] What year was this?

Linda Lovell [00:40:33] I'm not sure. I would say it would have been in the early 1980s and because it would have been after the Bicentennial, because Carlyle House, the hotel was about to come down

and Gadsby's Tavern Museum had been handed over to the city from the American Legion who owned it.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:41:04] And so where did you end up volunteering?

Linda Lovell [00:41:07] So I ended up volunteering at Gadsby's Tavern Museum. I thought that I would probably want to volunteer at the home of, boyhood home of Robert E. Lee but the ladies there were older than my mother and were well, my mother had passed by then, but were older than she would have been and everybody at Gadsby seemed younger. The director of the museum was a man called Carl Nold, and he was, I think about my age maybe a little older but not that much older and it was just a younger crowd and so I ended up giving tours on Saturday mornings and also helping with various events, ended up and eventually maybe when the Office of Historic Alexandria was formed, they, the Historic Alexandria Docents stopped as an organization and the museums were recruiting volunteers. And in a way that was good but it wasn't that good because it sort of got, you know, you didn't want to, you know, oh, I give better tours. You know, The Gadsby, Gadsby is a better place to give tours than, say, the Lyceum or and that, you know, that was created a little bit of friction that shouldn't have been there. But then, of course, it did become a little bit more organized and you could move to from museum to museum.

Volunteering at The Apothecary

Francesco De Salvatore [00:42:57] Can you describe what the Apothecary was like when you first volunteered?

Linda Lovell [00:43:00] So the Apothecary did not, was not owned by the city until 2005 and I was actually asked because I was a docent for some time by then at Gadsby's and had been president of the Gadsby's Tavern Museum Society and had done a lot of and had done research. So I was asked by a couple of the staff people who knew my background in science to, if I would switch over and give tours at the Apothecary and by that time I had retired. So it was able for me, I was able to do things during the week day and so, I was actually the first docent once, at the museum when the city took over.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:43:54] Got it. What was it like before 2006, when you were volunteering there?

Linda Lovell [00:43:59] At?

Francesco De Salvatore [00:44:00] At the Apothecary. Were you not volunteering at the Apothecary before?

Linda Lovell [00:44:05] No.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:44:06] You're at Gadsby's, right?

Linda Lovell [00:44:07] Yes. Yes.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:44:08] Yeah, yeah.

Linda Lovell [00:44:08] I was not volunteering there. They didn't, they were not giving tours there until, they were trying to renovate and get up to code in order to give tours. So, some of us were given a behind the scenes tour when the city took over, hoping that we would become docents. And they, some of us had backgrounds in science that they were giving the tours to. And so, they were still doing I believe they were still doing the archiving of the artifacts at that time and some of us were helping with that as well and so this was 2005, 2006. 2006 is when they started actually giving tours. So they had been giving tours in the 1930s and in the 1940s, I'm assuming '50s, but then definitely not in the 1990s and I do not believe they were giving tours in the 1980s at the Apothecary because it needed quite a bit of renovation work.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:45:29] Walk us through that transition period. What did you see being done, what changed? You know, like what, you know, as a volunteer, what were you seeing?

Linda Lovell [00:45:39] So, definitely putting in like repainting, getting back to the original colors of the retail shop, doing that, redoing that. Doing a little more research work on exactly what kind of medicines they had been using. There were people giving tours who were pharmacy professors and, you know, had been and they were able to help with talking about what had been the medicines and what hadn't been. So I think it was and it was a lot developing your own tour, it still is today at the Apothecary. No one really has a set tour. You each develop your own tour and what you like to talk about. Some people like to talk about the family history. Some people like to talk about the selling, how you, how things were advertised and how things were sold. It was a business, so what were the business history of the building. I generally, my tours because of my background, I generally talk about the what these were used for as medicines and the kind of medicines that they, how they gave their medicines, you know whether it was herbal based and how they would give you your medicine, and so I talk a little bit about that and, but and I do add some of the family history because it is important, of course.

History of The Apothecary and preservation efforts

Francesco De Salvatore [00:47:22] What are some of your, what's your favorite things about the Apothecary?

Linda Lovell [00:47:29] I think, I think its history is fascinating. I mean, the fact that it was a business from 1792 till 1933 and then its continued history of being saved, that there were enough people in the community of Alexandria in 1933 to be concerned that the buildings would be torn down, that they would be taken over and they actually managed to get enough money together to purchase the buildings at a public auction and there was a man who thought he would, who would like to have started a apothecary pharmacy museum on the Mall. That did not come about, but he was instrumental in keeping all of the artifacts, the bottles, the mortars and pestles, all of those in place until it happened that he could not move and then he gave them to the museum as well. He thought they should be kept since that, you know, and I forget his name. We do have that all in the in the documentation. It opened as a mus- and the fact that it opened as a museum in 1938, I think is fascinating. It may- it's a very unique museum.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:49:05] What else do you know about this pre-history to the Apothecary before OHA's time?

Linda Lovell [00:49:11] So I do know that a woman that was there during the daytime hours had been somebody who had worked with Food and Drug. So she was another scientist with and also

there was a group that used to meet and help clean some of the bottles and the mortars and pestles and things like that and help catalog them. So there was a group, I don't know the exact names, but I do know well, one that I knew that did it has passed away. But there were groups that did that and they would meet. Another person to talk about the pre-history and how the transition of the building would be Al Cox because he was the city architect historian at that time and he very much helped to preserve that building. And the fact and not only the retail, the original retail building built in 1804, but the building that was built in 1815 at 105, which has the pulley system intact and still has the wheel in the attic, that is still something that architect historians like to see. So that, you know, it's fascinating on that too. You could give a tour just talking about the architecture.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:50:51] Right.

Linda Lovell [00:50:52] So I do know that there were the Landmark Society that began that saved the buildings. They became the Landmark Society. They were established in 1935. There are documents that with the state that established them. There were two, two of the names that always come out to me are a Mrs. Burke, as in Burke and Herbert Bank and Rebecca Ramsay Reese, who was a D.A.R., Daughter of the American Revolution. She was also engaged in keeping other historic sites in Alexandria. Her name will also be brought up at Gadsby's and you'll find her name in in the records there, and so they established all of these organizations. They later changed their name to from Landmark Society to the Friends of the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary. That was what their name was when they owned the building and then when they gave it over to the city. And I do know a couple of other people that you could still talk about with that is that apparently it was rather a big discussion in at city council that people believed it would be a they'd just pour money into it and the city would get nothing out of it. And Marion Van Landingham and Del Pepper were two that just stood their ground and we have to keep this kind of historic and we have, you know, we cannot let this go to and, you know, just let it go to ruin, we have to keep it and so they were the ones that persuaded the city council. And of course, it's become one of the most popular museums and its gift shop is very, very lucrative. So, yeah.

Volunteer experiences at Gadsby's Tavern

Francesco De Salvatore [00:53:14] Talk a little bit about when you started volunteering at Gadsby's in the 1980s.

Linda Lovell [00:53:18] Yes. So I.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:53:20] That experience.

Linda Lovell [00:53:20] I basically gave tours on Saturday and some of the things that we would do would be to um, oh I know another woman and I sat out on a bench in front of Gadsby's and churned, made like we were churning butter and would talk to people to try to get them to come in. But we would give the regular tour. One of the things that we would always get asked about and when you were given your orientation, Jean Federico would definitely tell you that you were not to talk about the female stranger unless specifically asked because she only wanted historic facts to be told on your tour. So it was only the facts that were told and at that time, the facts were that the smaller building, the City Tavern, was built in 1770 and the City Hotel built in 1792, both by John Wise. And so, and we would talk about that this was Mistress Hawkins' Tavern. She ran this tavern and talk about her and the Revolutionary War, etc., etc., and then go through and into the, take people up to the dormer bedrooms, go through into the ballroom, talk about George Washington,

Thomas Jefferson had his inaugural banquet. So we would talk about that and I can't remember exactly what year it was, but there was a all volunteers, all docents were to meet in the ballroom on a Saturday morning for a huge announcement. Dendrochronology, which is the aging of wooden things, boats, buildings, had been done on the City Tavern. It turns out it was not built in 1770, it was built in 1785. It so changed, dramatically changed the interpretation that to the expense because it was a costly thing to do dendrochronology, it was done twice. Another core of wood was taken from a rafter to prove that this was not done. But no, it came back with the same results. So you had to change your entire tour at the beginning and talk about a tavern being built in 1785? yeah, 1785 and then and talk and Mistress Hawkins' Tavern, as it turns out, was at the side, was on Cameron Street, and that was one of the reasons why the dendrochronology was done, because there were various writings in research that said that Mistress Hawkins' Tavern was entered from the street that led to the pier and that was Cameron Street. So that was always the confusing and there were got to be more and more diaries and journals of people who had been there and they had entered through that door. So it had been there so that that Mistress Hawkins' Tavern was taken down when John Gadsby extended the hotel on Cameron Street and it was called the Green something, I think Green something and that's when Mistress Hawkins' Tavern was torn down, so. So that dramatically changed your tour. So we had to change our tours and then I stopped giving tours that much. My job changed dramatically. So talk a tiny little bit about my job. The, in the middle 1980s, the technique of DNA analysis was beginning, and it was beginning forensically as well as medically, and the lab that I was in was one of the forerunners of it. So it entailed a great deal of work, sometimes even working on weekends. So my volunteering became less and less because of everything I had to do with my job and because but that was an extremely fascinating thing to be involved in from the beginnings through to what and not through to what is now become because I'm retired. But it was a very fascinating part of being in the work. So it wasn't that I was that upset that I wasn't volunteering and everybody that I was volunteering for quite understood that I was not going to be as available as I once was.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:58:57] What were some of your favorite experiences volunteering at Gadsby's or at the Apothecary?

Linda Lovell [00:59:02] So I enjoyed with the, at the Birth Night Balls, doing special things like that. Some of my fun things that I enjoy at the Apothecary is giving tours to science classes, giving tours to students. There's I believe, still a school in Maryland that's a high school that has pharmacy classes and they, before our COVID break, they definitely would bring their classes over. I know they have brought since classes have been coming back, they've also brought over and I enjoy giving those. It's mainly, it's still a Catholic girls school and I enjoy giving them. And I've also given special tours. I will be giving a special tour this afternoon to a group of pharmacists from Poland. So I enjoy and I don't, I do am asked to give those tours often.

Volunteer experiences at other historical Alexandria sites

Francesco De Salvatore [01:00:16] What have been some of your other volunteering experiences over the years?

Linda Lovell [01:00:20] So I also volunteer, I spend most Tuesdays at the archaeology museum and I do not do any kind of digging for archaeology or cleaning of artifacts. I simply talk to the tourists and talk about the artifacts. I occasionally still help out at Gadsby's but not quite as often. I do volunteer at the Lyceum for special concerts or other events, talking about the history of the Lyceum. I also volunteer occasionally at the Lloyd House when there are things such as Cider

Festival or other kinds of things, talking about the history of the Lloyd House. I also volunteered this past Saturday at the Friendship Firehouse Festival, and I manned the booth for the Offices for Historic Alexandria, talking about everything that could be done there and one of the fun things about that was I got to hand out plastic fireman hats to all the little kids. I did charge them, they had to give me a smile. So, that was one of the, that's one of the nice things, to, to go along with that. Interestingly, I was getting ready to go to Archaeology yesterday which was a Tuesday and apparently the Torpedo Factory didn't have any power yesterday, so they said don't come.

Friendships made through volunteering

Francesco De Salvatore [01:02:14] You know, you've mentioned loosely some of the friends you made through volunteering.

Linda Lovell [01:02:18] Yes.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:02:19] Can you tell us specifically who they were and where and.

Linda Lovell [01:02:22] So.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:02:22] What they mean to you?

Linda Lovell [01:02:23] Yes. So I ended up meeting quite a number of friends, men and women, through, some of them ended up being single women such as I am myself. And we after we all retired from our various jobs. One was a commander in the naval, in the United States Navy. One was-

Francesco De Salvatore [01:02:55] What's their names?

Linda Lovell [01:02:56] Oh, Peggy, Margaret Harlow was the retired Navy commander. A woman named Kathleen Kelly worked for the Voice of America. She was a human resources officer for them. So she had quite a interesting career. She even traveled sometimes in that career and she would tell us about it. And Kathy worked a lot on, sat on various society boards and also she was one of the people that did research and special events for mainly for Gadsby's, but also for the Apothecary. And Laurie Scattergood was a stewardess for American Airlines, and she volunteered. She was one of the initiators of the Gadsby's Tavern Museum Society, and the four of us ended up being women that also we like to travel together, along with another woman, Priscilla Wiener, who occasionally she has traveled with us as well. And she was someone who was on the boards of the Gadsby's Tavern and did help out at special events such as some of the special fundraising events would be Antiques in Alexandria in which we would have antique dealers come in to the ballroom and they would, you'd bring by your antiques and they would appraise it and so that was a fundraiser, that was for the society. But the societies always give, their money is for the museums. So that's, you know, it's we would have book sales. So a lot of these people would work at those and not really be a guide, a docent that was a guided tour but developed lifelong, lifelong friendships with these people.

Evolution of the Office of Historic Alexandria

Francesco De Salvatore [01:05:10] Great. I'm curious, can you describe how you think the Office of Historic Alexandria changed over time?

Linda Lovell [01:05:15] Oh, it's changed dramatically and Jean Federico was excellent, I believe she's still with us.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:05:25] Who was she, can you can tell us for people who don't know?

Linda Lovell [01:05:29] Jean Federico was a woman that was head of, I believe she might have been the first head of the Office of Historic Alexandria. I would not sure about that. But she was when I first started giving tours and not too sure what kind of- I don't, there were certain museums that were not under her venue at that time, such as the Boyhood Home would not have been. And but she was very much a person who believed your tours should be about the facts that are known and she was but a very good advocate for historic Alexandria. Very intelligent, very smart, very um, just a very good advocate with city council, etc.. She was replaced by Lance Malamo, another very competent, very good person who did an excellent job. There were more museums by that time under the venue of Lance. I believe he was there when, um, the, uh, the Apothecary became part of the Office of Historic Alexandria, one of the city museums. So he again, excellent, very bright. One of the good things he did that I was very happy about, those of us that helped with, um, festivals is, he redid the kitchens in both the Lloyd House and the Lyceum so that they were more manageable. And I think that also helped their rental capacity to be used by people for wedding receptions, things such as that. Um, also the, um, I was just thinking of somebody that I should mention that has passed away and her name is escaping me. Uh, she was a volunteer for years, and we have a award named after her. It's definitely at archaeology, the award and her name is now escaping me.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:08:02] Helen Miller? Not Helen Miller.

Linda Lovell [01:08:04] It's not. No, no, no. Oh phooey. Anyway, it might come back to me. I can see her face. But she was a woman who was very-we lost when she passed away. We lost a woman who not only would help doing research for all of the museums, but she would be sitting it in the library, on the Barrett Library and if people were looking for genealogy she knew where to find it. It was just, she was amazing in that kind of thing. And but and then, of course, Lance was replaced by Gretchen. Lance had started to bring a more unified structure to the, um, museums that are under the city and by that I mean that so to not pit one museum against another in order so that you could volunteer at more than just one museum, to have staff oversee more than just one museum and not be totally dedicated to that. In fact, they started that with combining the director for Gadsby's and the Apothecary Museum and so and then that just, you know, came on. Gretchen now has quite reorganized and been able to get more funding so that staff is full time and not part time and has benefits and that is excellent, very much needed. And also to bring a more unified structure, I think, to all the museums, and that is continuing.

Hopes for the Office of Historic Alexandria in the future

Francesco De Salvatore [01:10:23] What are your hopes for OHA [Office of Historic Alexandria] going forward?

Linda Lovell [01:10:27] Well, I would hope that it would continue on this path and even bring even more. We need more volunteers. So it's nice to have a director of volunteers over all of the staff. I also and I've pointed this out to members of city council that to publicize and very much impress on the Alexandria, the education programs that are being put out by all the museums that the museums have, museum educators that are on staff that they have multiple classes that are specified to certain age groups, that these are things that I think that should be publicized. They are free to all of the

Alexandria City school systems. Some of them can, are mobile and can be brought to a school. For instance, dendrochronology, the science, that's a STEM project. That is something that can be brought out to this, to the school system and the museum educator Emma Richardson at Archaeology, she can bring that to a school system, and to the school systems that are not in the city of Alexandria it is a minimal fee. I would, but I would hope those programs would grow and be as well- and that they should be better publicized and I think now with putting them under the museum educators under a single and putting them all together, I think that can happen.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:12:22] Right. I'm curious. Can you describe what the, like whether it's Gadsby's or the Apothecary or just any of the historical sites, what do they mean to you?

Linda Lovell [01:12:33] Well, I think just the fact that we've preserved them all is I think that's just- the Apothecary is so unique to have had a business that was went from 1792 to 1933 and be able to talk about it in a building that was a part of that business from 1804. It's just remarkable that you can do that. To be able to be in Gadsby's and stand in a ballroom where George Washington danced, where Martha Washington, where Thomas Jefferson had his Inaugural Ball, not just this might have been a place. No, this was the place where they sat and danced and ate and I think that all of that that is preserved, of the new editions of Freedom House, to be able to tell that story is, it's a sad story, but it is part of the history of Alexandria and it needs to be told. And the research that's gone in to that building to now the research that and renovations that will continue on that building, those are things that need to be still told. The Robinson Library that that has been kept and that that story is told to when it amuses me, and I think it would amuse a lot of people now that a young African-American going into a public library and taking a book and sitting down at a table and that would be against the law or something that he would be thrown out of. I mean, wouldn't you love every young man today to walk in or a teenage boy of any ethnicity to walk into a library and take out a book and sit down at a table and read it would be fantastic. And so I think that, you know, that's something that, you know, needs to be told and retold. And what we've done for the commemorations of the two sad lynching victims, that that has been able to be story to be able to be told and commemorated annually and I really think that that's a good way that the Office of Historic Alexandria is moving and that they've taken all of the various properties that have come under the venue, how they're saving those.

Benefits and rewards of volunteerism

Francesco De Salvatore [01:15:25] That's great. Is there anything I haven't asked you that you want to mention?

Linda Lovell [01:15:32] I would just mention, ah, I would just hope that people who may see this or may hear it, not see it, hear it, might think about how many, what you can get from volunteering. And you can meet new friends. You can meet friends that you will travel with. You might, you know, you can have these friends, you can learn things from these friends because they had different lives than you had, they came from different backgrounds. They came from, one of my friends I've already mentioned her, Kathy Kelly, another very excellent seamstress, actually started she wanted to be a seamstress on Broadway. She wanted to make Broadway costumes and her mother thought that that just was not something that would be a good idea. So she actually set up an interview for Kathy, who came from near Philadelphia, a town in Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia, set up a government job, so that's how Kathy got her government job in human resources. But Kathy's cousin, whom we've all met, did pursue a job in costume design and has worked on Broadway and has worked on various and so through, you never know who you're going to meet through some of your volunteer

friends. And we've also met people like Peter Pennington, who is retired Royal Navy, who is a resident of Alexandria and who also volunteers in at certain times. He volunteered for when the commemoration of the War of 1812 and everything that how it affected Alexandria and in 1814 and gave a different perspective and when ships started being found, he was very good because he could talk about the various parts of ships and he and his wife have become friends. So, you know, I would encourage people, you never know who you're going to meet. And if you just stick with your neighbors or who you work with it, you know, you might limit yourself on who you can meet and who you can travel around the world with.

Francesco De Salvatore [01:18:11] I think that's great advice. That's great. Well, thanks for speaking with me today, Linda.

Linda Lovell [01:18:15] Thank you very much, Francesco.