

SEPTEMBER 2025

# CITY CONNECTION



## Marking Liberia's 200th Birthday

When Liberia House was built in 1825, Manassas did not exist. The 1,600 undeveloped acres given to Harriet Bladen Mitchell Weir to establish a home for her family on what is now City land held promise as a working farm. The farm had to be self-sufficient since the nearest sizeable town was Brentsville, the county seat 16 miles to the south.

The year was significant as the United States celebrated its 50 years of independence. Huge crowds turned out to see Revolutionary War hero Marquis de Lafayette as he toured nearby Fauquier County and ventured across 24 states in the young country. Here in what was then Prince William County, 46 percent of the 9,419 residents in the 1820 census were enslaved.

Over its 200 years, Liberia would be a family home, a successful plantation--thanks to the labor of its enslaved--a school and post office, a Civil War headquarters, a dairy farm, and again a family home. As we mark Liberia's 200th birthday this year, we remember the people who walked its grounds, the soldiers who encamped there, the

Presidents who visited, and the important role Liberia played in history.

It all began when Harriet, her husband William James Weir, their four young children, and eight enslaved people moved into Liberia, then known as the grand "Brick House" and considered a mansion in its day. The Weirs would have six more children in the next 15 years, and lose three more infants. The number of enslaved also continued to grow. By 1860, at the dawn of the Civil War, more than 80 enslaved labored at Liberia.

The Weirs had a prosperous farm growing grain exported to England, raising Merino sheep and other animals, and opening the Liberia Mathematical and Classical School, a boarding school for young men, in the 1840s. They had a post office and store on the property, owned Milford Mill in present-day Bristow where they ground grain, and managed to convince the newly-formed Orange and Alexandria Railroad to locate on their property by selling it as much land as it needed for \$1.

It was those railroad lines that brought warring armies to Manassas during the Civil War. Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard made Liberia his headquarters in 1861, and the Weir family escaped to a new home in Fluvanna County. Confederate President Jefferson Davis was said to visit Liberia after the Confederate victory at the

Battle of Manassas (known as Bull Run in the north) in July of 1861.

By March of 1862, after the Confederate army moved south, General Irvin McDowell claimed Liberia as his Union army headquarters. In June of 1862, President Abraham Lincoln took the train from Washington to visit McDowell and his troops. Local legend says that President Lincoln ate ice cream on Liberia's back porch, and there may be some truth to the story. It seems McDowell had a well-known love of ice cream, and owed money for the ice used to make ice cream.

Although most of the Union army left the area later in 1862, some of the soldiers that remained wrote their names on Liberia's walls. Many of those signatures have been preserved, and descendants of some of those soldiers have been able to visit the house.

Throughout the war, it was the enslaved Nelly Naylor and her family that cared for Liberia. The Weirs gave her 12 acres of land at the war's end, "in consideration of the love and affection to their former servant."

The town of Manassas grew out of the scarred landscape, and in 1888, Liberia was sold to Robert Portner, who owned Annaburg Manor. The Portners never lived at Liberia, but established a dairy farm there known as Annaburg Farm and Valaer Creamery, which

**See Liberia on Page 3**



*Liberia House and Grounds at 8601 Portner Avenue*



Para español, escanee el código QR  
[www.manassasva.gov/conexion](http://www.manassasva.gov/conexion)



# A Moment With The Mayor



**Mayor Michelle Davis-Younger**

We made it through the heat of summer and can look forward to enjoying all that fall has to offer. September is Hispanic Heritage Month, and I always enjoy meeting so many of you at the Latino Festival to celebrate the amazing diversity in our City. Don't forget to mark your calendar for First Fridays, Harris Pavilion concerts, festivals on the Museum lawn, movies

and events at the City of Manassas Community Center, and the Fall Jubilee on October 4.

This summer's "Mid-Day Meet Ups with the Mayor" at lunch time were an absolute success and I want to thank all my surprise speakers and those residents who came to share and to offer some great suggestions to help us improve the way we deliver service to you! I am working on a plan to continue these meetups during the winter, but virtually, to give more of our neighbors the opportunity to join in the conversations.

Speaking of conversations, we have been having lots of them, as we gathered your feedback on the 2045 Comprehensive Plan Update, the Rail-With-Trail idea, the Downtown Mobility Hub proposal, and the potential for an affordable housing development in Downtown. We look forward to seeing your responses and discussing these ideas in Council

meetings this fall. We also expect to have more discussions about the Olde Towne Inn property development this fall. Please visit [www.manassasva.gov/meetings](http://www.manassasva.gov/meetings) to see Council, Board and Committee agendas, and—better yet—come to a Council meeting and let us know what's on your mind during Public Comment time.

If you or someone you know is a promising young Osbourn High School junior or senior, apply for the Mayor's Youth Council by September 30. Youth Council members address and advise elected officials and business leaders from employers like Micron and UVA Health. Members also learn about local government boards and commissions, and the budgeting process, and can earn school CTE credit, learn leadership skills and have experience that looks great on college applications. Visit [www.manassasva.gov/MYC](http://www.manassasva.gov/MYC) to apply.

Until next time, take care and be kind to one another!



**Council Member Sonia Vásquez Luna**

Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated annually from September 15 to October 15 and was established in 1968 to honor the rich history, vibrant culture, and invaluable contributions of individuals with ancestry from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America, as proudly indicated by the National Hispanic Heritage Month (NHHM).

Our state takes pride in its profound history of Hispanic engagement, with Hispanics tracing their heritage and

## Council Update: Sonia Vásquez Luna

remarkable contributions going back an impressive 500 years, nearly a century before Jamestown. In Manassas, Hispanics make up approximately 43% of the population, equivalent to around 18,400 individuals of Hispanic or Latino origin who bring their unique spirit to the community. Additionally, over two-thirds of the students in the Manassas City School system (~70%) identify as Hispanic/Latino, a testament to the community's diversity and strength.

As the first Hispanic council member, I aim to promote community engagement and help bring others to the table by volunteering locally, serving on city boards and commissions, supporting schools, and utilizing resources on our website. Hispanics are currently thriving in various sectors, including entrepreneurship, government, and blue-collar jobs. There are numerous examples of the strong work ethic,

dedication, love, and support that we can offer our community at all levels.

Creating and supporting safe spaces for people to celebrate and share their cultural heritage is another vital aspect, as diversity is a key strength.

As part of my effort to empower the Latino community, I strive to provide information and expand access to Spanish-language resources for residents and businesses, promoting integration, prosperity, and full participation in society. We facilitate cultural exchange through various festivals and events, fostering interaction and understanding among diverse cultural groups.

Today, I invite you to support a local business, where many immigrant residents are working on the American dream! Consider attending an event listed on page 4 as we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, showcasing Manassas's inclusive spirit, because Manassas has something for everyone!



# A Message from the City Manager



**City Manager Steve Burke**

As we prepare for the end of summer and beginning of autumn, the City of Manassas will be celebrating history in September. Beginning on Friday, September 5, our Manassas Museum

will host the *Give Me Liberty: Virginia & the Forging of a Nation* exhibit through October 22nd. This temporary, traveling exhibit is a partnership between the City, Prince William County, and the Virginia Museum of History and Culture that focuses on events throughout the revolutionary period in Virginia. Visitors will be able to experience Patrick Henry's famous speech, as well as travel through an early tavern and print house to see how our country began its independence.

You can also explore the history of the Liberia House at an exhibit at our Museum as the building turns 200. The exhibit provides details about its construction, use during the Civil War, and the City's preservation of the site.

The City will host a day to recognize the 200th year for the Liberia House on Saturday, October 11 that will include tours, music, and demonstration of how life at the property evolved through the years.

Music at the Pavilion will end its season in October, so please visit the calendar on the City's website so that you can enjoy a great evening while the music continues.

Our Farmers' Market will also continue on Thursdays and Saturday, so please visit and enjoy the best of the fall offerings.

The ArtFactory is hosting a number of great shows in September with information available on our website.

## Liberia

*Continued from page 1*

operated into the 1930s.

In 1947, I.J. and Hilda Breeden purchased the property, and made the house a family home for their six children. They sold much of the land around Portner and Mathis Avenues for residential and commercial developments. They also changed the appearance of Liberia House by adding a large front porch and a small pond. In 1986 they donated the house and 5.6 acres to the City, and the City purchased an additional 12.6 acres to protect the site for future generations.

When extended family moved out of the house in 2001, Liberia needed extensive renovations, beginning with roof, window, and brick mortar replacement, and wall repair to fix

water damage. The porch was removed and replaced with a porch that matches the one in the earliest known photograph of Liberia in 1862. Peeling wallpaper was removed and a conservator repainted walls in colors that were revealed during a paint analysis. The stairway and basement were shored up, and the surrounding landscape was restored to look more like it did in the 1860s.

Today, Liberia, at 8601 Portner Avenue, is open for free summer Saturday tours and special events like the free October 11th 200th Celebration. The grounds, and an expanding network of wooded trails, are also open from dawn to dusk for recreation.

## Mark Liberia's 200<sup>th</sup> & the Nation's 250<sup>th</sup>



### Liberia 200th Celebration

**October 11, 10 AM - 4 PM; Free**

- Learn the art of Quilling with artist Stephanie McGee
- Play popular 19th century games like hoop rolling, dominoes, and checkers
- Experience live music with Joe Baione, Andre Marshall, and early American brass band, *The 8th Green Machine*
- Explore the basement, attic, and grounds on a guided tour
- Enjoy a scavenger hunt of the house and grounds

**Give Me Liberty: Virginia & the Forging of a Nation** exhibit from the Virginia Museum of History & Culture at the Manassas Museum September 5 – October 22

**Virginia 250 Mobile Museum**

***Out of Many, One*** at the Manassas Museum - October 19-22

## NOVEMBER 4 IS ELECTION DAY

- **Early voting** begins Friday, September 19 and ends Saturday, November 1 at 9025 Center St., Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM - 5 PM; on Saturdays, October 25 and November 1 from 9 AM - 5 PM; and on Sunday, October 19 from 11 AM - 5 PM
- **Drop Box** available 24/7 behind 9025 Center St.
- Friday, October 24: **Last day to register to vote** or change your voter registration.

- Friday, October 24: Last day to request an **absentee ballot by mail**.
- Tuesday, November 4: **Election Day** - All absentee ballots must be returned to the Voter Registration Office or Precinct drop box locations by 7 PM to be counted.
- Friday, November 7: **ALL absentee ballots must be post-marked** on or before election day and received in Voter Registration Office by noon.



# THE CITY OF MANASSAS HAPPENINGS

For more information: [www.manassasva.gov](http://www.manassasva.gov)

**Farmer's Market** - Thursdays at the Harris Pavilion/Saturdays at the Prince William Commuter Lot from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Stonewall Park Pool** - September 1 (Labor Day): Final day of the season; September 5 from 4 to 6 p.m. - **Dog-o-pool-ooza**

Mondays and Tuesdays beginning September 2 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. - **Toddler Drop In with caregivers** at the City of Manassas Community Center, 8750 Sudley Road (CMCC)

Tuesdays from 5 to 7 p.m. - **Lego Club** for ages 5-13 at the CMCC

Fridays from 8:30 to 10 p.m. / Saturdays from 2:30 to 4 p.m. - **Open Gym** at the Boys & Girls Club

**Acoustic Tuesdays at the Harris Pavilion**, September 2 - Zack Jones Duo; September 9 - Shane Gamble Duo

September 1 - **Labor Day Holiday**-City offices are closed

September 4 & October 2 at 11 a.m. - **Toddler Story Time** at the MCL

September 4 & 18 from 5 to 6:30 p.m. - **Arts and Crafts Night** for all ages at the CMCC

September 5 from 6 to 9 p.m. - **First Friday: Flashback Friday** in Historic Downtown

September 5 & 6 at 7:30 p.m. - **Every Brilliant Thing** at the ARTfactory

September 6 from 8 a.m. to 12 Noon - **Household Hazardous Waste Drop Off**, 8305 Quarry Road (electronics no longer accepted)

September 6 at 9 a.m. - **Manassas Walk for Cystic Fibrosis** at the Harris Pavilion

September 6 at 7 p.m. - **Saturday Night Concert with the U.S. Navy Band** at the Harris Pavilion

September 7 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - **NVA Thai Food & Culture Festival** on the Museum lawn

September 11 at 5 p.m. - **Movie Night: Lilo and Stich** at the CMCC

September 7 at 11 a.m. - **Suicide Prevention Out of Darkness Walk** at the Harris Pavilion

September 12, Oct. 10 & 17 from 5 to 8 p.m. - **Fresh Music Fridays with Nikki Franklyn** at the Harris Pavilion

September 12 from 6 to 7 p.m. - **Bingo for ages 18+** at the CMCC

September 13 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. - **Old Town Manassas Art Show & Fall Craft Fair** on the Museum Lawn

September 13 at noon - **Manassas Museum Gallery Talk** on *Give Me Liberty: Virginia and the Forging of a Nation*

September 13 at 7 p.m. - **Saturday Night Concert with the Silver Tones Swing Band** at the Harris Pavilion

September 14 from noon to 5 p.m. - **Arts Alive!** family arts festival at the HPAC

September 14 at 3 p.m. - **Sunday Funday Concert: Dulcetones** at the Harris Pavilion

September 15-October 15 - **Julio Zee Berríos exhibit** at the Manassas Museum

September 15-October 15 - **Teen Hispanic Heritage Month Poetry Contest** at MCL

September 15 at 7 p.m. - **Town Hall Meeting** at City Hall

September 18 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. - **Museum at the Farmer's Market**: paper flowers

September 19-21 - **Mornings at Seven** play at the ARTfactory

September 19-28 - **Little Shop of Horrors** at the HPAC

September 20 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Downtown- **Edgar Rohr Memorial Car Meet**

September 20 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - **Manassas International Food Festival** at the Harris Pavilion

September 20 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - **Old Town Manassas Oktoberfest** on the Museum lawn

September 25 at 5 p.m. - **Movie Night: Captain America Brave New World** at the CMCC

September 26 from 5:30 to 7:30 - **Parents Escape Night** for ages 5-12 at the CMCC

September 27 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. - **Manassas Latino Festival** at the Harris Pavilion

September 27 from 11 a.m. to noon - **Drop-In Hispanic Heritage Craft Hour** at the Manassas Museum

September 27 at 3 p.m. - **Movie at the CMCC** showing *Encanto*

September 28 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. - **International Food & Culture Festival** at the Prince William St. commuter lot

September 28 at 3 p.m. - **Sunday Funday Concert: Washington Balalaika Society Orchestra** at the Harris Pavilion

**City of Manassas Community Center: CMCC**  
**Hylton Performing Arts Center: HPAC**  
**Manassas City Library: MCL**

## Get Social!

Visit the City at [www.manassasva.gov](http://www.manassasva.gov)

-  [www.facebook.com/cityofmanassas](https://www.facebook.com/cityofmanassas)
-  [www.instagram.com/cityofmanassas](https://www.instagram.com/cityofmanassas)
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-  [www.youtube.com/manassascityva](https://www.youtube.com/manassascityva)
-  [www.bit.ly/WhatsAppManassas](https://www.bit.ly/WhatsAppManassas)

To contact the City of Manassas Connection newsletter, email [lotten@manassasva.gov](mailto:lotten@manassasva.gov)

## City of Manassas and Manassas Public Schools

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