

SAVE OUR
SEMINARY



AT FOREST GLEN

SOS NEWS

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SOS News is the newsletter of Save Our Seminary, the nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the historic National Park Seminary and engaging the public through education and advocacy since 1989.

SOS Awarded 2011 Montgomery Prize for Historic Preservation

On December 3, Save Our Seminary was awarded the 2011 Montgomery Prize for Historic Preservation, Montgomery County's highest honor in this field. In presenting the honor, Montgomery Preservation, Inc. (MPI), cited SOS's more than 22 years of continuous effort at the local, state, and federal levels to preserve and reuse National Park Seminary. An engraved silver tray and a certificate were presented to SOS and will be displayed in our office.

This award and others honoring projects throughout Montgomery County were presented at MPI's annual awards ceremony held at the historic B&O railroad station in downtown Silver Spring. A frequent train stop for both the Seminary girls and the recuperating soldiers at Forest Glen, the station was an appropriate venue for the preservation award to SOS. In addition to several long-time SOS board members present to receive the award, the station was filled with other enthusiastic preservationists congratulating SOS on its well-deserved honor.



Long-time SOS board members (front) Steve Devoney, Bonnie Rosenthal, Linda Lyons, (rear) Peggy Gervasi, Sue Fedor, and Nan Lowe receive the Montgomery Prize from the MPI executive director.

SOS members at the event felt very strongly that they were representing the many more people who helped save the National Park Seminary site over the years and enabled its rebirth. Our congratulations and thank you to everyone who supported this effort and to everyone who continues to support Save Our Seminary so that we can work to ensure the Seminary and its history for the future.

Programs for 2012 Season

SOS is pleased to present our third year of programs in the ballroom at the Seminary. These programs are open to all NPS residents, neighbors, and the general public to share the history and beauty of the property. SOS members are admitted free to the programs; there is a \$5 per person charge for all others. Program details will be announced closer to each program date and will also be posted on our website at <http://www.saveourseminary.org>, but here's a preview:

March 14 - Naughty and Nice: More Stories from the Seminary Girls

Hear about good times and bad at the Seminary in the students' own words. Letters, diaries, and alumnae interviews provide colorful stories about boys, sneaking out, drinking, sunbathing, and even a murder!

May - Date and topic to be determined

September 12 - Sculptures Then and Now

The Seminary's outdoor sculptures are a wonderfully varied mix of subjects, styles and materials. The task of restoring them and returning those in storage to the campus has begun. This program will highlight statues and other artifacts in their original location and condition, and as they are today.

November 14 - Who Were The Students of NPS?

One of the most frequent questions to SOS is "Did anyone famous go to school here?" The answer is YES! We'll tell you who they were and let you know what happened to these students after graduating from NPS.

Take a Tour in 2012

If you haven't taken one of the regular SOS monthly tours in a few years, this year would be a good time to come and see the progress on the sorority houses while viewing the buildings and grounds that are completed—and hopefully the start of redevelopment on the remaining buildings such as the gym. The tours include the ballroom and former dining room as well. See the [Tours](#) page on our website for the tour dates from March through November, on the fourth Saturday of each month plus three Sundays.

Site Happenings

Winter months are usually quiet around the Seminary site, but the owners of the pagoda and chalet were busy painting their houses until the weather got too cold. Now the pagoda looks as good as it did when SOS first restored the original exterior colors of black, red, and green in 1999. The owner of the Swiss chalet, in addition to stripping off all the old exterior paint and repainting it a medium gray with off-white trim, has removed much of the badly deteriorated porch surrounding the house so that it can be replaced in the same style. The American bungalow owners just received the final approvals of their renovation plan, so construction activity will soon begin there.

Treasures in the Archives

SOS acquired a delightful surprise addition to our archives this winter—a photo album of a National Park Seminary student, Pauline Stiles, from 1903 to 1905. The surprise was that it came from Scotland, by way of Dunkeld Cathedral, which had received it anonymously for their Christian Aid fundraising. In the album, however, was a letter from SOS in 1995 to a relative of the NPS student thanking him for the loan of the album and asking if the family no longer wanted the album, SOS would be very grateful to receive it for our archives. A trustee of the cathedral found SOS via the Internet and offered to send us the album so that it could reside in “a good home.” SOS gladly accepted the album and in return, made a contribution to their Christian Aid fund.

Filled with photos of the students and the campus, this album is a valuable resource to document the early history of the Seminary. It reveals a time long gone, but a place that we can still experience today because of the preservation efforts of SOS.



The pagoda under construction in 1905, from Seminary student's photo album

Living in Family History

Passing through the hallways of the Main Building at National Park Seminary on a wet, chilly day, it's hard not to daydream a little about the young women who lived and learned here so long ago. You can almost see them rushing inside after class to warm themselves and dry their umbrellas by the fireplace and catch up with friends. Maybe they're comparing notes on a class assignment or planning for some upcoming school-wide event. Or you might imagine them exchanging stories about last week's dance in the ballroom. For two of today's residents, though, envisioning school days at the Seminary isn't just an exercise in imagination – it's also part of family history.

Ginger Nuessle is approaching her two-year anniversary as a resident in President's House. When she moved into a condo on the third floor with her long-time partner Carol Blimline, she was excited about becoming part of this beautiful, historic community and living in the place where members of her family were students.

Ginger knew that her mother and her twin aunts -- known in those days as the Hoover Girls -- attended the Seminary during the early 1930s, and she knew some stories but few specifics. “People in my family were military, and that made them kind of the opposite of hoarders because they moved around a lot,” she explained. “Families that stay in one place for a long

time may collect trunks full of things that connect them to their family's past, but for families that have to pick up and move their household every few years, collecting anything extra just isn't practical."

Now that she's at the Seminary, and especially since her recent semi-retirement, Ginger is a woman with a mission – to search out the missing pieces of her family history. She is a new member of SOS's Board and has volunteered her time and skills to help organize and catalogue the large and growing collection of historic documents in SOS's archives. She sees this project as a way not only to learn about and share information with her family, but also to make these documents available to other families seeking information about ancestors who passed through here.

Now, as she walks these halls, Ginger is building an ever-stronger connection to her family's history. And every now and then, she hears a familiar voice that seems to be channeling her mother. It often says, gently, "Are you really going out wearing that?"

Eleanor Dougherty, who moved here from Arizona just a couple of months ago, knew that her grandmother and great-aunt, Cora Penelope and Annie Louise Alexander, attended a girls' boarding school in the DC area just before World War I. Although they grew up in Texas and later moved with their family to Los Angeles, they had spent 1912-1914 in this area when their father, William Alexander, a lawyer and judge, was appointed trade ambassador. She knew that the school they went to had the word "national" in its name and, after some searching, concluded that it must have been the National Cathedral School. But when a visit to that school in 1998 turned up no records of her ancestors, she put aside her search.

Fast-forward to August 2011. Eleanor is back in the DC area, preparing to move here permanently and riding around with her son, Damian, looking for a place to live. As they turned into the Seminary, her eyes were drawn to the sign by the entrance and to one word in particular: "National." While she and her son were touring potential condo units, she learned a bit of the history of the Seminary. It was then that they realized this was the school her Grandmother Penelope had talked about in her stories of growing up at the turn of the century.

"Everything just clicked into place," she said. "I knew that I had found Penelope and Louise's school at last." That feeling turned to certainty when a search through the SOS archives turned up proof in a yearbook and other documents. Eleanor then found in her own boxes Annie Louise's graduation program and a school alumnae directory. She also found one of the sister's dance cards from the Annapolis Naval Academy with partners' names neatly written in and her least favorite dance, the one-step, Xed out.

"When I walked inside and saw this beautiful place, I knew I had to live here," she said. Now she lives and works from her new home on the first floor of President's House, surrounded by trees, history and warm family memories.

Newsletter Going Green

If you are receiving this newsletter via U.S. mail, we'd like to encourage you to provide us with your email address so that we can send our quarterly newsletter to you electronically. This will help us save time and money for printing and postage, and provide you better quality photos along with the articles. Other than the newsletter, SOS emails are very limited to time-sensitive announcements of programs and news. We will not share, sell, or rent your email address without your permission. We would appreciate you sending your email address to info@saveourseminary.org for the first time, or to update an out-of-date one, if you are reading a printed version of this newsletter. Thank you for helping SOS go green!