

## The Fielder Flash

Arlington Historical Society  
October 2024 Newsletter



### Our Venues

**Fielder Museum** | 1616 W. Abram Street  
**Knapp Heritage Park** | 201 W. Front Street  
**Arlington Heritage Memorial Grounds** | 600 W. Arkansas Lane

### Contact Us

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### A note from the editor



**Jason S. Sullivan, 10-31-24**

Newsletter Editor

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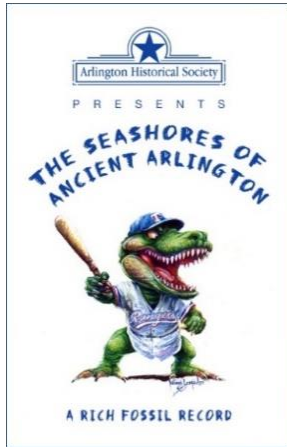
This month's newsletter features an article by AHS Board Member Nancy Bennett about **Jennie Ross Cobb**, the first known native woman photographer in the country. I enjoyed learning about her (and her ties to Arlington) and included some photos to accompany Nancy's article. We also have a quick recap of Mayor Ross' annual State of the City address, info about the Meadowbrook Park Centennial Celebration, and a look back at the 1998 fire that destroyed the historic J. D. Cooper home. Plus, there's continued coverage of our popular fossil exhibit.

### Upcoming Events

- **November 11**—Vietnam Plaque presented at Veterans Park, 11:00 AM
- **November 16**—Centennial Celebration at Meadowbrook Park, 12:00 PM to 6:00 PM
- **November 16**—Art Sahlstein: Fossil Presentation, Fielder Museum, 2:00 PM
- **November 21**—Texas Authors Book Club, Fielder Museum, 6:30 PM
- **November 29**—Last day for "The Seashores of Ancient Arlington: A Rich Fossil Record" exhibit at Fielder Museum || **Extended again due to popular demand!**

## **Arlington Historical Society & Community News**

### **"The Seashores of Ancient Arlington: A Rich Fossil Record" continues**

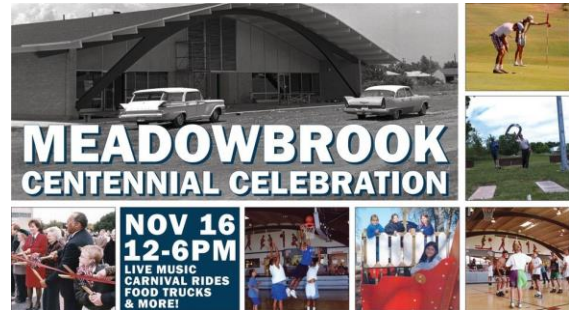


Visitors just can't get enough of the fossil exhibit at Fielder Museum. It's been one of our most popular exhibits in years, bringing many first-timers and groups to the museum. That's always exciting and gratifying. The fossils are a fascinating part of Arlington's history. And good news—we've extended the exhibit again due to popular demand! Come out and see it.

Plus, we've invited **Art Sahlstein** back for an encore fossil presentation and Q&A on **Saturday, November 16th**. The event starts at 2:00 PM, but we open at 11:00 AM if you want to get there early and browse the museum. His previous talks had a full house, and we expect this one will, too. See you there!

### **Meadowbrook Centennial Celebration – Saturday, November 16th**

This will be a great event! It's family-friendly, free, and open to the public. There will be carnival rides, live music, food trucks, historical displays, and more, celebrating the 100th anniversary of Meadowbrook Park, which opened in 1924.



In addition to being Arlington's first park, it had the city's first public outdoor pool and the first golf course. The park is well-loved by many.

### **Mayor Ross' annual State of the City address**

Mayor Jim Ross spoke on October 30th, highlighting his vision for "Tomorrow's Arlington." The presentation began with a highlight reel of Arlington's previous year. Highlighted were the Texas Rangers winning their first World Series, General Motors celebrating its 70th anniversary and 13 millionth vehicle produced, the Arlington Museum of Art moving to the Entertainment District, the grand opening of the Lowes Arlington Hotel and Convention Center, the opening of downtown's remodeled Fire Station #1, and much more. It was a busy year for Arlington.

Mayor Ross then outlined plans and ideas for the future. He frequently used the phrase—"Can you imagine?"—imploring residents to dream of the future and the opportunities it would bring. Generally, his speech hit five topics: job growth, economic development, tourism, transportation, and better infrastructure and amenities for residents. He added that redevelopment and doing more with less will be critical as Arlington continues to grow.



**Jennie Ross Cobb (1881-1959): Cherokee, photographer, preservationist, trailblazer**

by Nancy L. Bennett - October 9, 2024

My introduction to Jennie Ross Cobb came unexpectedly at Fielder House. As I was getting ready to close the house one afternoon a gentleman arrived, apologizing for the late time. He had a question. *Why was there nothing on the Arlington website about Jennie Ross Cobb?* My reply was, who is she? Both, as it turned out, were good questions.

The answer to his question has yet to be determined. The answer to mine was/is simple but complicated. The basics follow, but there will be much more to come.

First and foremost, she is a Cherokee, born in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, in 1881. [Known then as the Indian Territory.] She is the great-granddaughter of Principal Chief John Ross, who guided the Cherokee people through the Trail of Tears. She is known in wider circles as the first known native woman photographer in the country, having found an early interest in the art.

What does she have to do with Arlington? In 1905, she married a land surveyor from Dallas. In 1928, they moved to Arlington with their daughter Jenevieve. In the 1930s, she and her daughter owned a flower shop called the Flower Market.

What is the most notable thing I think she did while living here, and why should she be remembered? Briefly: She wrote the essay and was the primary reason that the Arlington Garden Club won a \$1,000 prize from Woman's Home Companion in 1932 to place a rose garden, which she and her daughter designed, in the newly formed Meadowbrook Park.

In 1952, after the deaths of her husband and daughter in the 1940s, she took her two grandchildren back to Tahlequah to help the Oklahoma Historical Society restore the Murrell Home, which she had lived in and photographed as a young woman.

After her death, she was buried at Rose Hill Cemetery, just up the road in Fort Worth, with her husband and daughter.



*Jennie Ross Cobb – circa 1945*

**Epilogue (by Jason Sullivan)**

Nancy's article was a great introduction to Jennie Ross Cobb. Like many, I was unaware of her or the contributions she made. Although not widely known or recognized, she left an influential legacy. November is National Native American Heritage Month, and I plan to post more info and photos about her on our Facebook page. Be sure to check it out. I've also included a sample of her work on the next page. There's honesty and intimacy in her photos, and they're quite original.

### Jennie Ross Cobb – Photo Collection

The Oklahoma Historical Society has 21 of Ms. Cobb's surviving photos in their collection. Her time as a photographer was brief, and it's believed that most of her photos were from 1902 to 1905. Nonetheless, as seen in these photos, she showed promise as a photographer.

Karen Shade, who researched Cobb's work for a 2020 exhibit, had this to say:

*"She may be considered an amateur photographer, but that shouldn't imply a lack of skill or quality. We see in the nearly two dozen images definitively attributed to her [that] Jennie had the eye of a true artist. The perspective, framing, and lighting in several images demonstrate a real talent."*

To see more of Jennie's photos, visit this link:

[Jennie Ross Cobb Collection](#)



### **J. D. Cooper Home destroyed by fire, 1998**

A few hours after midnight on Halloween 1998, the historic J. D. Cooper home caught fire. Believed to be a teenage prank that quickly escalated, flames soon engulfed the large, wooden structure. Dozens of firefighters battled the blaze in the darkness. Ultimately, the fire destroyed the roof and charred the second floor, causing smoke and water damage to the interior and many of its antique furnishings.



Officials questioned a suspect, but there was a lack of evidence, as often is the case with arson.

*J. D. Cooper Home – November 1998, shortly after the fire  
(Photo Credit: Neil Tucker)*

Although there was an initial rally to repair or restore the home, the task and cost proved too great. Safety hazards, including asbestos and lead-based paint, and the nearly \$1 million price tag complicated the issue. There were disagreements on what to do with the building, how to do it, and who should pay for it. Finally, after nearly two years of sitting idle in its fire-damaged state, salvage efforts were permitted to commence. The remains of the 120-year-old structure were demolished soon after.

The memory of the house lives on, though. Cooper's great-grandson Neil Tucker and his wife, Becky, later built a replica of the house in North Arlington, and restored pieces of the original were used as part of a law office on Abram Street. A portion of the stair railing upstairs at Fielder Museum is also from the Cooper House.

As one of the oldest structures in Arlington, the cherished building had sentimental and historical value. The fire resulted in a tremendous loss for the community.

J. D. Cooper (1841-1917) was one of Arlington's earliest pioneers and is Cooper Street's namesake. He built the home in 1878, located near Cooper and Abram Streets. The house remained in the Cooper family until the 1950s when it was donated to the City of Arlington. The structure was moved to Meadowbrook Park, serving as a city library until 1961. The Arlington Woman's Club then took over the lease; they utilized and maintained the building until the fire.



The impressive two-story home with Colonial Revival architecture had a towering frame and was distinguishable by its beautiful white columns on the porch. It had elegance and grandeur. The house was recognized with a Texas Historical Marker in 1965 for its architectural and historical significance. The marker is now displayed at the Fielder Museum in our Cooper Gallery.