

## **The Fielder Flash**

Arlington Historical Society  
November 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, 11-30-24**  
Newsletter Editor  
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This month's newsletter features a look back at Arlington Downs, a look at a new documentary about General Motors in Arlington, tributes to police officer James Johnson and firefighter Don Hogg, a Veterans Day recap, info about Wreaths Across America, and invites to holiday festivities at Knapp Heritage Park. I especially enjoyed the GM documentary and highly recommend it.

### **Upcoming Events**

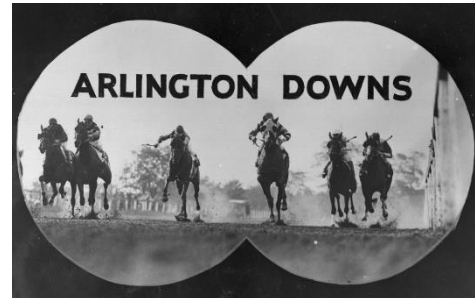
- **December 7-8**—Kringle Village & Front Street Christmas Market at Knapp Heritage Park, Saturday (noon to 8:00 PM) and Sunday (11:00 AM to 4:00 PM)
- **December 12**—Christmas Tree decorating and choir performances by AISD students at Knapp Heritage Park, 6:00 PM
- **December 14**—Wreaths Across America at Arlington Cemetery and Parkdale Cemetery; 11:00 AM

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

### **Arlington Downs: 95 years since the first race (November 1929)**

Thundering hooves. Cheering spectators. Thrilling races. Outstanding facilities. Arlington Downs.

From 1929 to 1937, Arlington Downs was a well-known and popular horse racing track. For a time, folks could legally gamble on the races, bringing great excitement, interest, and thousands of spectators to the track. The site helped put Arlington on the map for tourism. The facility was later used for rodeos, auto racing, fairs, and other events until it was torn down in the late 1950s. Nonetheless, the memory of Arlington Downs remains.



### **"The Heartbeat of Arlington" documentary—available to watch now on YouTube**

This year marked two notable milestones for the General Motors Arlington Assembly plant. They celebrated their 70th anniversary and produced their 13 millionth vehicle—a 2024 Cadillac Escalade-V.

City officials officially proclaimed July 26th as General Motors Day in Arlington. Stakeholders, community members, GM employees, and city officials attended the celebration.

The 70th anniversary culminated with the City of Arlington releasing a new documentary on its YouTube channel. "*The Heartbeat of Arlington*" looks at how the GM plant came to town, its resilient spirit, and its lasting impact on the community. It contains archival footage, news clips, photographs, interviews, and a behind-the-scenes look at operations to help tell the story.



The documentary features commentary by former Arlington Mayors Richard Greene and Elzie Odom and Arlington Historical Society members O.K. Carter, Geraldine Mills, and Doland Maner. Victor Vandergriff, son of Mayor Tom Vandergriff, is also featured, among others.

Getting the GM Plant was a pivotal moment in Arlington's history. Their arrival paved the way for the Great Southwest Industrial District, Six Flags, the Texas Rangers, and likely even the Dallas Cowboys. Indeed, Arlington would be a much different city today without GM, and we're fortunate that they have stayed here for 70 years as part of our community.

The documentary is available on the City of Arlington's YouTube [channel](#).

### **James Johnson | End of Watch: November 23, 1930**

James Evan Johnson was born on August 16, 1908. The Johnson family moved from West Texas to Arlington around 1926. James attended Arlington High School and later began working as a night watchman for the Arlington Police Department. He was with the department for a short period when tragedy struck.

While Officer Johnson ate breakfast at an Arlington restaurant in the early hours of November 23rd, a citizen reported a disturbance. Johnson responded to the complaint and went to the suspect's home. The two briefly exchanged words, with the man suddenly firing shots at him.

Johnson's funeral was held the following afternoon at the Presbyterian Church in Arlington. Mourners filled the church. Professor John A. Kooker and Mayor William G. Hiatt performed the eulogies, praising the young man's life. After the service, his casket was transported to Parkdale Cemetery on a fire truck accompanied by a motorcycle police escort.

The Arlington Journal newspaper quoted Justice of the Peace Charles G. Johnston, who spoke highly of Officer Johnson. He remarked on the young man's smiling disposition, clean thinking, noble actions, devotion to his duty as a peace officer, and exemplary moral character. He concluded by saying, *"The life of this young man should be an inspiration to others."*

Arlington pays tribute to Officer Johnson with a street name, a memorial sign where the incident occurred, and a plaque at Heroes Park. Members of the Arlington Police Department gathered earlier this month to observe the anniversary.

We remember James Johnson's dedicated service to Arlington with appreciation and gratitude.



James Johnson

### **Don Hogg | Last Alarm: November 19, 2009**

We also pause to remember firefighter Don Hogg, age 49, who passed away on November 19, 2009. He served the Arlington Fire Department for 23 years.

Donald "Don" E. Hogg was born in Dallas in 1960. He always dreamed of becoming a firefighter. Don was an Eagle Scout and graduated from high school in Richardson. He attended Texas A&M University and received a recreation parks degree. He met his future wife, Jennifer, in college through Campus Crusade for Christ. They married soon after she graduated. Their son, Dylan, was born in 1993.

Hogg owned a remodeling business after college but decided to pursue his dream of becoming a firefighter. He joined the Arlington Fire Department in 1986.

Throughout his career, the department recognized his exceptional service with honors, including Rookie of the Year, Firefighter of the Year, the Medal of Valor, and the Chief's Five Standards Award. Don was instrumental in developing the HAZMAT Team in 1988 and served for 21 years. He sought challenging assignments and was well-respected by his peers.

Mr. Hogg further served by being a board member for Midlothian Parks and Midlothian Amateur Baseball Association. He volunteered in the community, and his family were active members of the Midlothian Bible Church.

Tragically, while responding to a call and caring for a patient, Hogg contracted an illness. He passed away shortly after, with burial at Sardis Cemetery near Waxahachie. Family and friends remember him as a man of great character, along with his integrity, compassion, and kindness.

In 2017, the roadway leading into Fire Station #6 at 2620 S. Collins Street was ceremoniously named FF Don Hogg Way in his honor. He is also honored at Heroes Park in Arlington, an area with city police and fire memorials.

We remember Don Hogg's dedicated service to Arlington with appreciation and gratitude.



Don Hogg

## **Arlington honors its Veterans**

### **Veterans Day Ceremony**

The 17th annual Veterans Day Ceremony commenced at Veterans Park. It was a patriotic morning, with the Presentation of Colors, the Pledge of Allegiance, a performance of the National Anthem, and guest speakers. Notably, the ceremony also included the Commemoration of Vietnam KIAs from Arlington.

The City of Arlington and the Arlington Historical Society dedicated the "In Memory of the Fallen" plaque, listing the names of those from Arlington who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam. The plaque is currently displayed at the Fielder Museum, and we invite you to come by and see it.



Geraldine Mills and Arlington Mayor Jim Ross are shown here with the plaque.

### Texas Veterans Day Parade

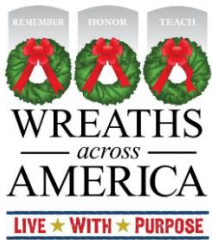
The inaugural Texas Veterans Day Parade in Arlington occurred in the city's Entertainment District later that day. With patriotism and pageantry, the parade honored service and sacrifice. Red, white, and blue were the colors of the day as folks enjoyed the parade, live music, a drone show, and a flyover by Bell Helicopter.



*Photo Credit: City of Arlington*

### Holiday Events

#### Wreaths Across America returns to Arlington on Saturday, December 14th



First observed in 1992, this is a unique and poignant event to honor Veterans. Over 3,000 cemeteries participate across the U.S., including our Arlington Cemetery and the adjacent Parkdale Cemetery—where 877 Veterans are interred. Volunteers will place a live balsam fir wreath at every Veteran's headstone. The Lucretia Council Cochran Chapter, NSDAR, coordinates the event in Arlington. Visit the Wreaths Across America website to sponsor a wreath, sign up to volunteer at the event, or get more info—[www.wreathscrossamerica.org](http://www.wreathscrossamerica.org).

#### Kringle Village & Front Street Christmas Market at Knapp Heritage Park

Mark your calendars for **December 7-8** for the Front Street Christmas Market! This will be a fun and festive event for the whole family. Admission and parking are free. Rumor has it that Santa might stop by.



#### Event Details

- **What:** 3rd Annual Front Street Christmas Market, featuring up to 50 unique vendors, AND the Kringle Village with holiday cheer, decorations, entertainment, refreshments, and more
- **When:** December 7th (noon to 8:00 PM) and December 8th (11:00 AM to 4:00 PM)
- **Where:** Knapp Heritage Park || 100-300 block W. Front Street, Downtown Arlington
- **More info:** [www.moyaartevents.com/front-st-christmas-mrkt](http://www.moyaartevents.com/front-st-christmas-mrkt)

#### AISD holiday festivities at Knapp Heritage Park

On **Thursday, December 12**, stop by Knapp Heritage Park from 6:00 PM to 9:30 PM. AISD students will decorate Knapp's Christmas Tree. Then, starting at 7:00 PM, enjoy choir performances of your favorite Christmas carols. The Arlington Historical Society will be serving cookies and hot chocolate. In addition to the Christmas Tree, Knapp Heritage Park will have plenty of lights and decorations to admire. It should be a fun, festive, and merry evening. This event is free and open to the public.