Annual Meeting and Program—Sounds from the Ballroom Horn
SOS will kick off 2020 with our annual meeting on Wednesday, March 18, at 7:30 pm in the Ballroom. After this short meeting, we will learn about the recent restoration of the historic Auditorium Orthophonic Victrola horn installed after the Ballroom was built in 1927.

Mark Lynch, a recorded sound historian, will present the history of this unique Victrola, and Dave Zeller of Techniarts Engineering will discuss the process to revive this very rare horn. Of course, you’ll also hear the amazing sound from this almost 100-year-old machine and its history at the school. RSVP to the SOS email or phone if you can attend the meeting and program.

Tours and Events for 2020
As we have for many years, we will continue with our monthly guided tours of the National Park Seminary campus on the 4th Saturday of the months March through November. The 2-hour tour starts at 1 pm in front of the gymnasium building.

Our big event of the year will be our popular Historic House Tour to be held on Sunday, May 17, when you can visit interiors of select sorority houses, condo units, and other NPS spaces. Tickets for this tour to support SOS’s mission will be available in late April on our website.

On September 23, we’ll present a program about the faculty and staff of the school with some personal stories from their family members.

Holidays were always well-celebrated at NPS, and Halloween was a popular one. We’ll celebrate on October 25 with a spooky walk through a virtual Glen, games, music, and other family fun in the Ballroom.

When the leaves are off the trees in November, we’ll have a special tour of the real Glen so you can see up close this green space at NPS with its historic features.

Mark your calendars now for this year’s SOS tours and events!

Treasure in the Archives
Although the Victrola horn still exists, we wondered what happened to the console. From historic NPS photos, we know the operating unit was located behind one of the brick columns on the main Ballroom level in a large wood cabinet.

While searching for something else, SOS found the answer in the National Park Seminary Alumnae Association newsletter from December 1928. In the early morning of
November 2, the girls smelled smoke and found the Ballroom thick with it. A watchman discovered the large Victrola console, nicknamed “Big Bertha,” was on fire!

Even though an elaborate fire sprinkler system had been installed at the Seminary, a sprinkler was not close enough to the cabinet to be activated. It was determined that the fire was caused by a short circuit in the Orthophonic and resulted in the total loss of the cabinet and equipment.

Thereafter, only a small Automatic Victrola was used to play recorded music in the Ballroom.

Impact of Beltway Expansion on the National Park Seminary Glen

For now, the widening of the Beltway that includes the northern boundary of the Glen has been postponed as a result of opposition, including from SOS.

However, the planning and regulatory processes for the widening are proceeding. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) must comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which requires them to consider the effects on historic properties for projects they carry out, approve, or fund.

These agencies have requested SOS’s response to the potential plans that affect NPS, which include moving the Linden Lane bridge slightly east, the railroad bridge slightly west, and the length of the Beltway between these two points deeper into the property.

Besides this encroachment on the natural landscape of the Glen, specific built features would be adversely affected, most notably the stone and concrete abutment of the former walk bridge, the bridge first built for access to Ye Forest Inne from the train station.

Also affected would be several stone retaining walls, remnants of original footpaths, an early pump station, and a former county road, all near the current Linden Lane bridge. The Italianate Villa and the very large statue of Minerva next to the Villa would most certainly be adversely affected by the increased noise and pollution as a result of the train tracks being moved closer to them.

SOS is in the process of preparing comments to FHWA/SHA regarding these adverse effects, and plans to serve as a consulting party to work towards avoidance of the effects, or, if necessary, appropriate minimization and mitigation of those effects.

Call for Volunteers

To make the May 17 Historic House Tour happen, we need extra people to welcome and direct guests at each of the homes. If you would like to help SOS at this tour, please contact us at 301-589-1715 or info@saveourseminary.org. For giving of your time, the tour will be free to you!