

SAVE OUR  
SEMINARY



AT FOREST GLEN

# SOS NEWS

Summer-Fall 2020

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SOS News is the newsletter of Save Our Seminary, the nonprofit organization dedicated to communicating the history of National Park Seminary and promoting preservation and public enjoyment of its buildings, artifacts, and landscape since 1989.

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## **Seminary Stories – A New Video Series**

During 2020, SOS could not offer our monthly on-site tours or our regular programs in the Ballroom due to COVID restrictions. However, because it is important to stay in touch with our members and the public, we initiated a series of short videos called [Seminary Stories](#). Each video is 5-15 minutes in length and focuses on a specific topic.

The subjects have included cleaning graffiti from the statue of Justice, unique artifacts from our archives, a look at the three presidents of the school, finding the lost mermaid sculpture, and a NPS student who became a prominent architect. All of these Seminary Stories are available to view on our [website](#) and on our [YouTube channel](#).

We look forward to producing more of these informative history tidbits. If you have any topics you would like us to consider, please send them to [info@saveourseminary.org](mailto:info@saveourseminary.org).

## **African Americans at NPS: The School and Army Years**

On September 23, SOS Board member Anne Brockett gave our first live public lecture via Zoom, and it is now available to view on our [website](#). Focusing on the stories of African Americans who worked at the NPS campus and lived nearby, she reminded us of what it was like to be black in Maryland before desegregation. The school never admitted black students and the Army was segregated during its most active occupation during WWII, yet both relied on African Americans as essential workers.

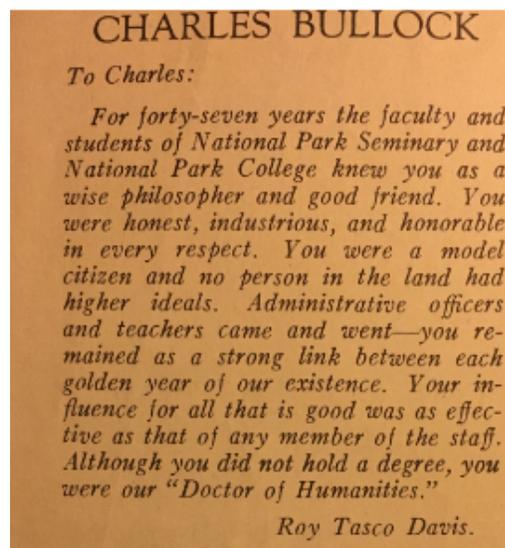
The school employed black kitchen and cleaning staff, landscapers, laundresses, seamstresses, farmers, and others. These jobs were multi-generational – parents and then their children found employment here and some transitioned employment from the school to the Army. Like most black soldiers, those posted at Forest Glen were members of a Colored Service Company, laborers relegated to work as mechanics, cooks, or building and landscape maintenance crews. The Army constructed a separate mess hall, warehouse, barracks and recreation building for

these soldiers bordering the railroad tracks. These facilities housed around 200 black soldiers, many of whom were bused to and from Forest Glen to work at the main Walter Reed campus in DC because they were not allowed to be housed there.

After sharing memories from the Garrett and Scott families, each with eight children growing up on campus, the program concluded with a memorial to Charles Bullock, the beloved postmaster at the Seminary. Mr. Bullock started working at the Seminary in the 1890s and remained there until 1942 when the school closed. He and his wife Mattie lived part-time in the school's former gas house across the street from the main campus.



"Charles with the mail" from 1917 student scrapbook



Clip from NPC Alumnae Bulletin 1944

## The Glen

This past summer and fall SOS reviewed and commented on the State of Maryland proposal to **widen the I-495 Capital Beltway** that borders the northern portion of the NPS property which is the Glen. The proposed plan is to move the railroad tracks on the east and the road bridge on the west closer into the Glen and extend the highway between those two points further into the Glen. This proposal would destroy a historic stone retaining wall and the earliest bridge abutment, as well as increase the erosion and pollution that is already adversely affecting the Glen. While the focus of SOS is on the impact of this proposal on the historic built elements of the Glen, we also commented on the less obvious negative effects on the natural parts of the Glen. There is significant local opposition to the state's plan, so the next steps are to be determined.

Some good news for the Glen is that **SOS was granted funding** in large part from Preservation Maryland and the Maryland Historical Trust to determine the feasibility of stabilizing and preserving the Grand Staircase, Grotto hillside, and the bridge adjacent to the Spring. These three historic elements are the most threatened and deteriorated

built elements in the Glen. We are expecting the study to provide a plan and budget to make these features safe and usable so they may be accessed and enjoyed.

To enlighten the public on the history and features of the Glen and to share the extensive research SOS has conducted, Gene Rich, the SOS Vice President and Chair of the Glen Restoration Committee, presented a live **virtual tour of the Glen** on November 15. He used historic and current photos to make a long loop through the Glen, showing those features which have been lost and those that still exist, albeit in an altered or deteriorated state. Now you can take this tour at your convenience on our [website](#). We are hoping that in 2021 it will be safe enough to take a tour of the Glen in person!

### **Ballroom Windows**

SOS was very fortunate to receive a grant in early summer from the Maryland Historical Trust for \$100,000 to contribute to the restoration of the Gothic-shaped stained glass windows in the Ballroom. The windows have reached a precarious state where many are bowed out or in and/or the wood sash is cracking or broken. Since part of one of the windows had already collapsed, the need for restoration was urgent. Work on 53 of the windows has started, and the project is expected to finish by May 2021.



Partially collapsed ballroom window

### **Help S O S**

In this challenging and stressful year that has adversely affected many, **SOS has not been immune**. Although we were not able to have in-person tours or events, we created other ways to keep connected and continue our mission of preserving and communicating the history of National Park Seminary. Through the wonders of technology, we were able to produce five short [stories](#) and two longer [programs](#) on specific topics and make them available to everyone on our website. We also presented a virtual walking tour of the NPS site through past and present photos to two private organizations.

We were not able to hold our popular Historic House Tour scheduled for this year, however, which **eliminated our major fundraiser**. We would be most grateful, therefore, if you are able to make a donation or pay your outstanding dues for 2020 now. You may easily [pay online or send us a check](#).

Another way to **contribute** to SOS is with **your time, interest, and skills**. We always welcome members who wish to take a more active role in saving the seminary and that is best done through our committees or a particular project. There is something for everyone! Our committees include Collections, Communications, Education, Events, Glen Restoration, and Sculpture. Check out the [description](#) of each committee and then [contact us](#) if you are interested in getting more involved.

If you are still **shopping for holiday gifts**, you can support SOS at the same time by buying our history book National Park Seminary at Forest Glen, An Enduring Legacy at our online [Store](#). It's especially good for those who are interested in history and/or architecture, or to share with others about the unique historic place where you live if you are a resident.

**As we come to a close of 2020, SOS wishes everyone  
happy holidays and a better year in 2021.**

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