



13 MINUTE READ

Clifton in the American History Film Project



from Clifton Living - July 2019
by sweetbaypublishing



CLIFTON IN

THE AMERICAN HISTORY FILM PROJECT

EXHIBITION 2019





By Kimberli Costabile & Heidi Zenyuh Photography by Janet Wamsley

What is more patriotic than students making and sharing films about each other's hometown history? A short film on Clifton's history was among three films added to a national exhibition and permanent archive called American History Film Project (AHFP). It will be online in July at www.americanhistoryfilmproject.org and on the AHFP YouTube channel. Using the keywords Kids Film History brings up the social media links.

Nothing beats seeing one's work on the big screen, however. So in June the junior historian who made the film had a chance to walk the red carpet for the DC area premier and eat red, white and blue cupcakes.





Helena Zenyuh, 11, who is a rising Cadet in Girl Scout troop #797 based in Clifton at St. Andrews on Union Mill Road, chose to interview four local leaders about Clifton history. Her mother Heidi Zenyuh said the daughter fell in love with Clifton history after several scout field trips in the area. While other people her age might have chosen to do historic cosplay and don historic attire, or use stop motion photography and dolls, Helena decided to approach her topic journalistically and ask serious questions. She spoke to a historian, former mayor, current Virginia delegate, and local business leader about what formed Clifton's past and where that might lead in the future. And Mr. Nickum, Ms. Khosravi, and Mr. Peterson seemed comfortable answering those questions.

"Our exhibition encourages youth to interview their elders about local history and record local stories (oral histories) or the local angle on a national event," AHFP executive director and Fairfax Station resident Kimberli Costabile explained. "We are not as concerned about film-making technique as we are about starting a dialog between youth and local historians."

Parents and family members are allowed to jump in and help, and some people do like to add dramatic flare, but it is not required. We require students to list primary and secondary research sources, music used, and add to the rolling credits the names of all who helped. Helena approached Clifton history from four different angles. That was an impressive start. Since there is so much history in Clifton, she can go a bit further next year, or other students can explore other Clifton stories.





Martha Barnes, president; Doortje LeGrande, secretary; and Kimberli Costabile, executive director, stand in front of the Angelika Film Center marquee just after the 5th annual exhibition of the American History Film Project (AHFP).

Martha Barnes, AHP Founder, and her mother. Heidi and Helena Zenyuh pose on the red carpet at the Angelika Film Center just after the American History Film Project Exhibition June 1.

After receiving medals during the American History Film Project exhibition, students from Clifton, Burke, Centreville, Fairfax, Annandale and Falls Church pose in front of a flag given to Martha Barnes in honor of her father who served in WWII. The annual exhibition gathers students grades K-12 who take part in group or solo efforts to document their hometown history. Their films will be archived on www.americanhistoryfilmproject.org, putting their hometowns on a digital map. Students in 9 other states have participated in the past five years, and interest is growing. Beginning in 2019, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts may also earn a badge for their efforts if the film is done under supervision or approval of their leader.





Patriotic cupcakes, ribbons and medals are all set for the awards reception.

THE
American
History
FILM PROJECT





According to Martha Barnes, the founder of AHFP, the American History Film Project is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit that seeks to help students develop a yearning to learn by providing a creative outlet to showcase the finest films made by students about their respective locations. The goal of the project is to teach students that they are an integral part of their community and history.

ABOUT HELENA

Helena Zenyuh first fell in love with Clifton history while attending St. Andrews School on Union Mill Road in Clifton. After moving to Centreville, she continued to attend activities at St. Andrews Church, including Girl Scout Troop #797, for which she completed this film as a Junior Girl Scout and rising Cadet. She is now in 5th grade at St. Timothy's Catholic School where she is on the honor roll and plays basketball, lacrosse, and competes in swimming year-round. In February at the Potomac Valley Jr. Olympic qualifying meet, Helena finished 1st in four different races in the Girls 10 and Under category. Last year she broke her summer pool's record for 25 meter butterfly in the 10 & under group.

Helena chose film-making as her subject for a "Make Your Own" badge at the Junior level of Girl Scouts. Several topics were tossed around, but the American History Film Project seeking students to capture local history really piqued Helena's interest. Once she discovered more about the American History Film Project, Helena knew she wanted to explore Historic Clifton, Va.

Based out of St. Andrews in Clifton, Va., Helena's Girl Scout Troop 797 had spent a lot of time in Historic Clifton. In particular, the troop had raised money from the community, purchased native Virginia Blue Bells and planted them at the edge of the Clifton Creek near the Red Barn as their Bronze Award project to help save endangered bees. The troop completed the project on Earth Day in 2018.

Located near the place where the troop planted the flowers was Tim Hugo's Clifton office, and he had put the troop in touch with all the right people to make the planting project happen. Realizing Tim Hugo knew many people in town and knew much about Historic Clifton, Helena interviewed him first. He then suggested Margo Khosravi as a great neighbor and historian of the area. Wayne Nickum was also suggested as a knowledgeable source, since he was a former Mayor of Clifton. Also, Tom Peterson has been instrumental in maintaining the attraction of Peterson's Ice Cream in Historic Clifton. It's a wonderful gathering spot for locals and visitors with delicious food and handcrafted ice cream. Tom Peterson's commentary on the recent revitalization of Historic Clifton area was insightful.

See the interviews at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QI1NbTK1tPI>. This film clip was one of several played at the American History Film Project's red carpet event at the Angelika Film Center in the Mosaic District Fairfax, VA on June 1st, 2019.