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Alexandria’s State Legislator Frank Hume

In the late 1800s, Frank Hume hosted Fourth of July celebrations at his estate, Warwick. The grounds were decorated with United States flags, and at twilight guests enjoyed pyrotechnics and the firing of a cannon on the front lawn.

Hume’s civic engagement did not confine itself to July 4th fireworks. He represented Alexandria for two terms as a Virginia state legislator.

Hume was born in Culpeper and was a commissioned officer in the Confederate Army. After the war, he made a fortune as a partner in the Poole

& Hume wholesale grocery business in Washington, D.C. He then served in the Virginia State Legislature from 1889 to 1901, declining to run for a third term.

Perhaps surprisingly, given his role in the Civil War, Hume won the endorsement of the African American newspaper The Washington Bee as he ran for political office in 1890.

The paper endorsed Hume in an unsuccessful Congressional run in its Oct. 25, 1890, edition, saying, “There is no man more respected in the State of Virginia than Hon. Frank

Hume.” The Aug. 19, 1899, edition of the Bee encouraged its Alexandrian readers to vote for Hume, saying:

“Mr. Hume is the Negro’s friend although a Democrat. ... Mr. Hume is far above those men who from time to time have oppressed the Negro.”

Another Washington paper, The Daily Critic, acknowledged Hume’s support in the African American Alexandrian community in its Nov. 4, 1890, edition, writing, “The colored voters seemed to be solid for Hume.”

After declining to run for a third term in 1900, Hume re-

turned to running his wholesale grocer business. He died in 1906, after a prolonged bout of kidney and stomach issues. Today, Warwick Village stands on the former property of Frank Hume, a unique legislator in Alexandria’s history.

This year’s Alexandria and USA Birthday Celebration is at Oronoco Bay Park, 100 Madison St. on July 12 from 6 to 9:45 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, please visit alexandriava.gov/Birthday.

Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.