

The Pittsylvania Packet

Summer 2007

Number 65



Pittsylvania Historical Society, Chatham, Virginia

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**Summer Pittsylvania Historical Society
Membership Meeting
Monday Evening, July 16th, 2007 at 6:30 PM
Callands, Virginia**

by Mary Catherine Plaster

The Pittsylvania Historical Society wishes to invite members and guests to our Monday, JULY 16th MEETING AT CALLANDS, which is planned for 6:30 – 8:30 PM, and will be an occasion for information about TAX CREDITS/GRANTS FOR HISTORIC DESIGNATIONS and a “watermelon feast”. (In case of rain, the event will be held inside the courthouse/gaol.)

The Callands Historic Landmark site includes the 1767 Clerks Office (restored by the Chatham Garden Club) and the Debtors Goal/traditional (1st) Courthouse of Pittsylvania County (restored by the Pittsylvania Historical Society).

Attendees may wish to bring a folding chair, although we intend to provide seating as well as “how to’s” & “ask questions” — presented by the Virginia Departmentt of Historic Resources and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. At this time also, there is expressed interest from other agencies that may assist with any questions/considerations by land owners.

To get to Callands from Danville drive north 11 miles on Franklin Turnpike (Rt. 41) to (dead end) right on Rt. 57. Then (across from Callands Fire Dept) left on Rt. 969, the Sago/Museville Road. The Callands site is just around a curve (3/10 of a mile or so).

From Chatham it is about 10 minutes west on Rt. 57 (Depot St.) then right on Rt. 969, the Sago/ Museville Road.

Saunders/English Family Reunion
August 4th, 2007

The descendants of William Robert Saunders (1850-1918) and Daniel Thomas Saunders (1844-1927), two brothers who married two sisters, Pike and Keren English, will hold a reunion on Saturday, August 4th at 12 noon at Mt. Ivy Christian Church, which is located at 5120 Scruggs Road (Route 616) in Franklin County, near Smith Mt. Lake.

Bring a dish to share. Drinks and paper products will be furnished. For further information, contact Linda Yeatts Brown, 1713 Prodan Lane, Virginia Beach, VA 23453; (757)430-6789 or lybrown@cox.net.

27th Annual Callands Festival
Saturday, October 6th, 2007

The annual Callands Festival will be held all day on Saturday, October 6th, 2007. Expect to experience a fun day of crafts, food, and historical demonstrations!

There are still a limited number of slots open for craft vendors. If you wish to sell your wares, please write Mack Doss, 2314 Franklin Turnpike, Oak Ridge Court B9, Danville, VA 24540.

New Guide to Virginia Historical Markers
Available at Pittsylvania County Libraries

A recently published guide to Virginia history has been added to the collection of the Pittsylvania County Library. Copies of *A Guidebook to Virginia's Historical Markers*, compiled by Scott Arnold, are available in all branches of the Pittsylvania County Library system as well as the bookmobile.

The book was published this year by the University of Virginia Press in association with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. The copies were given to the library in memory of Paul J. Harold, a former president of the society, by his children.

PHS Member Larry Aaron Authors
New Book *The Race to the Dan*

The Halifax County Historical Society, in cooperation with Warwick House of Lynchburg, has just published *The Race to the Dan* by Pittsylvania Historical Society member Larry G. Aaron.

This year Virginia celebrates its 400th anniversary since the establishment of Jamestown in May 1607 when Captain John Smith brought the first settlers to Virginia's Chesapeake Bay shores. Nearly two hundred years later, a little-known retreat in 1781 during the American Revolution led to the British surrender at Yorktown, a small village only 23 miles away from Jamestown. *The Race to the Dan* tells the dramatic story of this retreat and its pivotal role in bringing Virginia full circle from a British colony to an independent state.

What history student hasn't heard of the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, Paul Revere's Ride, the Battles of Lexington and Concord, and Washington's Crossing of the Delaware? These events loom large in America's Revolutionary War history. Yet, the climax of that war played out with British General Cornwallis' troops dogging a ragged and suffering American army in a race that spread across the Carolinas, ending at South Boston, Virginia on February 14, 1781. General Nathanael Greene's Southern Army —

many barefoot and leaving bloody footprints on the ground — marched through winter snows and cold rain, over mud-encrusted roads to reach the Dan River just ahead of the better-supplied, better-equipped, hardened British veterans. As Greene's army escaped across the rain-engorged river on waiting boats, Cornwallis was left stranded and turned back.

British cavalry leader Col. Banastre "Bloody" Tarleton complimented his enemy years later with the remark, "Every measure of the Americans, from Catawba to Virginia, was judiciously designed and vigorously executed." George Washington, who, along with the entire nation, anguished over the retreat, wrote to Greene, "Your retreat before Lord Cornwallis is highly applauded by all ranks."

The retreat across the Carolinas became a heated race the last four days, with the elite British troops rarely out of sight of the struggling Americans. The last of Greene's army had barely crossed the Dan River at Boyd's Ferry at present day South Boston, Virginia, when the British arrived on the far shore. As Greene's army was resupplied and reinforced in Halifax County, he declared, "I have some expectation of collecting a force sufficient in this country to enable me to act offensively and in turn race Lord Cornwallis as he has raced me."

Greene then turned the tables on Cornwallis, recrossing the Dan River and tracking Cornwallis' British force to Guilford Courthouse (now in Greensboro, North Carolina). There Greene's much-strengthened American force, in a bloody battle with Cornwallis' troops, so mauled the British army that Cornwallis retreated to Wilmington and then marched his troops on their fateful journey to Yorktown, where he surrendered.

The Race to the Dan not only brings to light the importance of Greene's Crossing of the Dan River during the Southern campaign of the American Revolution, but also gives this story its rightful place among the great events that gave our nation its independence.

All proceeds from the sale of the book are designated for the Crossing of the Dan Exhibit at The Prizery, a community arts center in South Boston, Virginia. Copies may be obtained from local bookstores, including Chatham Books; the Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History; and from the Halifax County Historical Society, P. O. Box 601, South Boston, Virginia 24592.

Other Local Sources of Information on the Race to the Dan

The account of the Race to the Dan is also narrated by Frances Hurt in her book, *An Intimate History of the American Revolution in Pittsylvania County* (see pp. 18-19 for for ordering details). In addition, Frances authored a historical drama, *The Shirtmen and The Quaker*, based on the events of the Race to the Dan (the play was staged in Chatham in 1976 in conjunction with the United States Bicentennial).

Also in celebration of the Bicentennial, dioramas showing the events of the Race to the Dan were constructed by Blanche Crews and Frances Hurt with the assistance of numerous volunteers. The dioramas have since been renovated and are now on display in the 1813 Clerk's Office.

Bathrooms Added Near 1813 Clerk's Office

by Glenn Giles

The Pittsylvania Historical Society is pleased to announce the construction of bathroom facilities at the 1813 Clerk's Office Museum behind Town Hall in Chatham. The bathrooms are handicapped accessible and will also be utilized by visitors to the adjoining Frances Hallam Hurt Town Park.

A \$10,000 grant from an anonymous charitable trust and an equal match by the Society generated the initial momentum to proceed with the construction project. Donations to complete the funding also came from Chatham First, Inc., the Chatham Rotary Club, other anonymous gifts, and in-kind services from the Town of Chatham. The excellent cooperation between the Town of Chatham and these private groups assured the completion of this long-delayed, but very much needed, facility.

Chatham Town Council also provided funding to have the driveway and parking area paved and to construct a handicapped sidewalk from Court Street to the bathroom with an extension to Frances Hallam Hurt Town Park.

Preservation Prevails

by Glenn Giles

After eight years of frustration, the Pittsylvania Historical Society can finally proclaim partial success in its effort to preserve the 1918 Southern Railway Depot in Chatham. This structure, which was once the social and economic epicenter of the region, had stood neglected since railroad passenger and freight service ceased in 1975. The depot roof was in an advanced

stage of deterioration and all interior elements had been stripped by vandals. The building was scheduled for total demolition on two occasions.

Chatham historian Frances Hallam Hurt solicited funds from several local preservationists to purchase the Depot from Norfolk Southern. Ennis Business Forms donated the adjacent property which was the former Southern States warehouse. These properties provided the matching funds for the Society to seek preservation grants.

The Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors voted to sponsor the preservation project and submitted grant applications for Transportation Enhancement funds administered by VDOT. Grants were finally received and in May 2006, contractors started the demolition of the deteriorated roof. Phase I restoration was completed in March 2007, with the installation of a new burgundy French tile roof. A grant application has been filed with VDOT for funding to complete the interior restoration.

It is still too early to declare a historical preservation victory. However, this once-vital structure now has a chance of being restored to its historical and architectural significance. All Pittsylvania Historical Society members should take pride in their organization, which is chartered to spearhead such efforts.

Advertisement from the Past

Notice[:] The Subscriber, being compelled to raise a considerable sum of money in a short time, offers for sale . . . [t]he Tavern at Pittsylvania court house, now occupied by Mr. Samuel Edmondson, and leased to him for 2 years, with a store-house, and thirty-odd acres of land adjoining.

George Tucker, [Washington, D.C.], Jan. 10, 1824

– from *The Roanoke Sentinel*, Vol. 2, No. 43, Saturday, March 20, 1824, Danville, Virginia.

Picture from the Past



The geese above traveled from town to town in the 1910's or so, advertising a "Goose Grease Salve"

similar to Vick's Salve. The geese (and their handlers) stayed in Chatham about a week in an effort to attract customers and compete with other brands.

Photograph and information from the Glenn Updike Collection, in the possession of the Pittsylvania Historical Society.

The County Flag: Pride of Pittsylvania

written by Mrs. Archie Beverley
submitted by Mrs. Isla Stone and Herman Melton

Discovery of the Flag

It is surmised by county historians that the Pittsylvania Flag was created in 1821. The banner bears twenty-three stars, one for every state in the Union. The twenty-third state, Missouri, was admitted in 1821, so the flag undoubtedly came into being about that time. It was printed in oils on white taffeta. With the ravages of time, many shades of color are observed in the original flag now hanging in the Pittsylvania Court House.

After the War Between the States, the flag disappeared. For years upon years, it was relegated to

legend. In 1919 Mrs. Maud Carter Clement made a wonderful discovery on a visit to the State Library while in pursuit of information for her book, *The History of Pittsylvania County* (see pp. 18-19 for ordering information). Dr. Henry McIlwaine, then State Librarian, mentioned that the library had in its possession something that might interest her. It proved to be the long lost flag of Pittsylvania, which had been discovered in storage at the library. The librarian conjectured that it had been sent for safekeeping to Richmond during the era of Reconstruction.

The flag was sent to Boston for renovation and Mrs. Clement viewed it in the flag's original glory. She exclaimed: "The precious old battle flag must go back where it belongs — Pittsylvania." She appealed to her husband, Hon. Nathaniel Clement, a Member of the Virginia Legislature, to make necessary legal arrangements. He enlisted the support of Congressman Rorer James. A bill was introduced in the Legislature specifying the return of the flag to the County Seat. The Pittsylvania Board of Supervisors reimbursed the State Library for the cost of renovating the flag.

The Board of Supervisors charged Mrs. James S. Jones with the care of the flag. Through the years she guarded it in the museum case in the Courthouse. She faithfully informed the Supervisors of its fragile condition.

Its Restoration

In 1949 Mrs. Maud Carter Clement, while visiting at the Whitmell Farm-Life School, told Mrs. F. C. Beverley, then principal, about the County flag and its past history. Mrs. Beverley immediately went to Chatham to view the flag and was appalled at its fragile condition. Realizing that this was indeed a precious heritage and one that must be preserved at all costs, she at once inquired of several flag companies concerning costs of restoring the flag. The estimates received were prohibitive, so Mrs. Beverley turned to Mr. Hunt Whitehead and Mr. Fred Prince, members of the County Board of Supervisors, for assistance. Mr. Whitehead took the flag to New York but because of its fragile condition he was rebuffed at every turn. Mrs. Beverley then sought the assistance of Major General J. Walter Squire of Danville, and he proved to be an able and willing ally. At her suggestion he took the flag to the Young Art Shop and framed it in air-tight glass for the sum of one hundred and twenty-five dollars. The County Board of Supervisors approved this and assumed cost of the work.

After completion of the work, the flag was returned to the county where it is now on display in the courthouse in Chatham. It was felt that additional value would be gained if replicas of the flag were printed and sold at cost to the county schools and other interested

organizations; this would tend to motivate interest in local history on the part of the youth of the county. The County School Office and the Pittsylvania Education Association cooperated with Mrs. Beverley in this prospect. Thirty-six orders were received and these flags were presented to representatives of the various schools and organizations at the Annual Meeting of the Pittsylvania Citizenship League held in Chatham in April of 1956. At this meeting the original restored County flag was on display and was officially presented to the County Board of Supervisors.

Query: Looking for Hodges' Descendants

I am in possession of some old family pictures, postcards, etc. which belonged to Lena Hodges of Pittsylvania Co., who was born in 1888 or 1889 and died in 1933. She was the daughter of Isham Thomas Hodges. She married John R. Yeatts (Jr.) and had two daughters, Virginia VanDenburg and Mildred Turner. I am interested in locating any of Lena's descendants or other relatives.

Please contact me, Linda Yeatts Brown, at 713 Prodan Lane, Virginia Beach, VA 23453; (757) 430-6789, lybrown@cox.net.

Pittsylvania Historical Society Books

Maud Carter Clement, *History of Pittsylvania County* (Hardcover)
Suggested Retail Price: \$22.

Madelene Fitzgerald, *Pittsylvania Homes and History of the Past*
(Hardcover) Suggested Retail Price: \$18.

Madelene Fitzgerald and Frances Hallam Hurt, *18th Century Landmarks of Pittsylvania County, Virginia* (Softcover)
Suggested Retail Price: \$11.

Gray's Map of Chatham, Virginia 1878 (Frameable Map)
Suggested Retail Price: \$3.

Frances Hallam Hurt, *An Intimate History of the American Revolution in Pittsylvania County, Virginia* (Hardcover)
Suggested Retail Price: \$15.

Herman Melton, *Pittsylvania County's Historic Courthouse: The Story Behind Ex Parte Virginia and the Making of a National Landmark* (Softcover) Suggested Retail Price: \$11.

Herman Melton, *Pittsylvania's Eighteenth-Century Grist Mills* (Hardcover) Suggested Retail Price: \$23.

Herman Melton, *Pittsylvania's Nineteenth-Century Grist Mills* (Hardcover) Suggested Retail Price: \$23.

Herman Melton, *Thirty-Nine Lashes Well Laid On: Crime and Punishment in Southside Virginia 1750—1950* (Hardcover)
Suggested Retail Price: \$22.

Judge Langhorne Jones, *Tales from a Small Town* (Softcover)
Suggested Retail Price: \$5.

* * * *

The Historical Society books are currently available for purchase from the following retailers. Suggested retail prices do not include shipping, handling, or tax.

Chatham Books, 10 North Main Street, P. O. Box 71, Chatham, VA 24531, 434-432-2488, chathambooks@gamewood.net

Danville Museum of Fine Arts & History, 975 Main Street, Danville, VA 24541, 434-793-5644

Mitchells Publications, P. O. Box 429, Chatham, VA 24531, 434-432-0595, 1-800-967-2867, answers@foodhistory.com, <http://www.MitchellsPublications.com>

News and Novels, 3282 Riverside Drive, Danville, VA 24541, 434-793-3407

Shadetree Rare Books, 26 South Main Street, Chatham, VA 24531-0994, 434-432-1400, hhurt@adelphia.net, <http://www.ShadetreeRareBooks.com>