

The Pittsylvania Packet

Spring 2003

Number 48



Pittsylvania Historical Society

Chatham, Virginia

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Please send articles, letters, queries, etc. for publication to:

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You can also contact me at 434-432-0595, or at sarahmitchell@vintagedesigns.com.

Of particular interest at this time are letters to and from Pittsylvania County soldiers in the Civil War, World War I, World War II, etc.; and articles about Pittsylvania County soldiers.

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Happy Spring!

Spring has come to Pittsylvania County! The lovely daffodils and forsythia are in bloom, and the trees are putting out their buds. The small garden in front of the 1813 Clerk's Office is looking quite pretty.

I'm glad to report that the drought mentioned by Glenn Giles in his article on p. 11 has finally broken; Pittsylvania County had snow almost every week for much of the winter, plus several good rains. In fact, the Dan River has reached flood stage twice recently! Tanyard Branch in Chatham has run very high, as well as several other bodies of water in the area.

In other news, the Pittsylvania Historical Society has changed the bylaws governing it to allow for more people on the board. Information on the four new board members is on page 4. We appreciate their willingness to serve!

All are invited to attend the Spring Meeting on April 21st, 2003 at 7:30 PM, and to visit the 1813 Clerk's Office and the Tobacco Barn on May 3rd, 2003 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, when it will be open for Blossom's Garden Party.

- Sarah E. Mitchell, Editor



**Spring Meeting to be held April 21st;
features Kenney Kirkman**

Kenney Kirkman, of Collinsville, Virginia, will present a program on the C. C. C. Camps at the Spring Meeting on Monday, April 21, 2003, at 7:30 PM. The meeting will be held at the 1813 Clerk's Office, on Court Street behind the Chatham Town Office, in Chatham.

Any people who participated in the C.C.C. Camps in Pittsylvania County are especially encouraged to attend.

**New Directors added to the
Pittsylvania Historical Society Board**

The Historical Society would like to welcome four additional members to the Historical Society Board of Directors: Herman Melton, Stephanie Hedge, Chris Smith, and Patrick Touart.

Herman Melton is a former Pittsylvania Historical Society President; author of many books on local history; and frequent contributor to the *Pittsylvania Packet*. He will be assisting with general society duties.

Chris Smith is a writer who recently moved to Chatham from New Orleans, Louisiana. He will be helping out with publicity for the society.

Stephanie Hedge works at Chatham Books. She will be working with the book publication committee.

Patrick Touart is a history teacher at Tunstall High School. His focus will be contributing to the Veterans History Project.

Historical Society resubmits application for Train Station Project Funds

by Glenn Giles

The Pittsylvania Historical Society has been notified by the Virginia Department of Transportation that the \$259,000 Transportation Enhancement Grant to begin the restoration of the Chatham Train Station which was announced at the Summer 2002 Meeting was never approved by the Commonwealth Transportation Project.

The Pittsylvania Historical Society and the Pittsylvania County Administration will resubmit our application for funds in July 2003. Fund recipients will be announced September 2003. We plan to initiate a publicity campaign to inform the public of our restoration project and seek their participation as we proceed with our application.

Virginia Garden Week April 19th through 27th, 2003

The Virginia Garden Week will be held the week of April 19th through April 27th. Homes in Chatham will be opened on April 27th, and homes in Danville will be opened on April 24th.

Homes in eastern Virginia, Martinsville, Alexandria, Roanoke, and many other locales will be opened during the week.

For more information and ticket prices, visit VAGardenWeek.org, or call 804-644-7776.

**1813 Clerk's Office and Tobacco Barn
to open for Blossom's Garden Party,
May 3, 2003**

On May 3, 2003 the 1813 Clerk's Office and the restored Tobacco Barn will be open to the public from 10 am to 4 pm. There will be interpreters at each location to bring information to life for the public. There will be live bluegrass music in the Francis Hurt Town Park from noon to 4pm. Art, craft vendors, food vendors and entertainment for children will be located on Main Street in Chatham.

All this and more is planned in conjunction with Chatham First to celebrate the first annual Blossom's Garden Party, a Weekend of Arts and Flowers. (Blossom is the cartoon skunk logo for the event, described as a cute little lady. We hope none of her real life friends join in the celebration!)

For more information, call Chatham First at 434-432-7721. Every one is invited to join in and have a good time.

**Stanley Family Reunion to be held
June 21, 2003**

The descendants of Isham and Lucy Pendleton Stanley of Southwestern Virginia will hold a family reunion on June 21, 2003 at the Sheva Church of Christ, 4920 Chalk Level Road at Sheva Road, Chatham, Virginia.

Isham Stanley (1835 - 1926) was the son of John Stanley and Malinda Barnard and was in Co. G, 54th Virginia Infantry in the Civil War. He married Lucy Safrona Pendleton (1839 - 1922), and they had eleven children: John William, Thomas W., Abram W., Mary Burwell, Joel Hubbard, Martha

Alice, Rosey Lee, Laury Virginia, Marion Columbus, Isham Barnard, and Charles McDaniel.

Non-descendant relatives are welcome to attend, as well as descendants. For more information, contact Ronda Stanley Gunter Forney, 337 Sheva Rd., Chatham, Virginia 24531, phone 434-432-9011; or Sandra Gunter Holland, 529 Oakhaven, Pleasanton, Texas 76084; phone 830-569-4821; e-mail sandrasuel@juno.com .

HistoricChatham.com features stories, guides, and self-guided tours

HistoricChatham.com is a large website that features guides to Chatham accommodations, architecture, genealogy research, nature, real estate, restaurants, etc.; stories on many of Chatham's historic houses and their occupants; pictures from the past; and much more!

The site is co-sponsored by Historical Society members Phil Mauger, of Out-Staffing, and Henry and Patricia Mitchell, of the Sims-Mitchell House Bed & Breakfast.

<http://www.PittPaths.com> offers information on the natural history of Pittsylvania County

Local naturalist Bill Hathaway now has a website featuring articles on Pittsylvania County's fossils, Indian artifacts, wildlife (snakes, shrews, butterflies, and other assorted creatures), and plants.

Hathaway is a retired Pittsylvania County science teacher and science specialist. His articles are also run as weekly features in Chatham's newspaper, the *Star-Tribune*.

Mitchell Highlights Pringle Myers Artifact Collection at Winter Meeting

by Chris Smith

At the January 20 meeting of the Pittsylvania Historical Society, Henry Mitchell entertained members and guests with a fascinating discussion of early Virginia peoples.

Mitchell's presentation, "Pittsylvania County's Native Americans and Their Artifacts," included a summary of the first European reports of native groups who lived in this area, including the Saponi, Occaneechi, Tutelo, and Saura. Those reports, which date from 1670 to 1732, came from John Lederer, Thomas Batts, Robert Fallam, Gabriel Arthur (of James Needham's ill-fated expedition) and especially Col. William Byrd II.

A highlight of Mitchell's appearance was his narrated display of a valuable collection of local Native American artifacts recently given to the society by the family of Pringle J. Myers, who served as director of vocational education for the Pittsylvania County Schools. Myers (1912-1976), born in Halifax County, collected most of his artifacts near his Halifax birthplace; in the Spring Garden and Dan River school communities where he taught for many years; and on his wife's family's property along the Dan River east of Danville. The collection, which includes points, celts, and corn-grinding mortars, was given to the Pittsylvania Historical Society by Myers' daughters Ann Saffell and Mary Jane Bradley, and his widow Mary Gilbert Myers Simpson, who passed away on January 16, 2003.

Mitchell explained, "The Myers family's intent is to keep Pringle's collection close to its place of origin, so that its educational purpose within the

community can continue."

Mitchell illustrated his presentation with his own photographs and others by naturalist Bill Hathaway of PittPaths.com. The images included artifacts from the John J. Westbrook Collection, now held at the Estelle Womack Museum of Natural History at Danville Community College; the Mrs. Lindsey Moore Collection; and the private collection of W. W. "Bill" Simpson, Jr.

Native Information Contains Surprises

Mitchell's speech addressed some common misconceptions about Native Americans in Virginia. "Many are unfamiliar with these local groups of the early colonial period, and the story of their dispersion and assimilation. A lot of people are surprised to hear that some local families' genealogical lines point back toward the Saponis and their kindred tribes," he said. "In addition, most don't realize the tremendous volume of undiscovered artifacts that remain throughout the area."

He said it is also not widely understood that local native groups had extensive political and geographical connections during the early years of European contact. "They may have been a Stone Age people, but they were anything but static or isolated," he said. Mitchell, a local native and former president of the society, extensively researched local Native Americans for programs during his 1979-1994 stint as planetarium specialist for the Pittsylvania County Schools.

Further Resources Available On-line

Articles and images related to Mitchell's speech, as well as suggested additional reading, can be found on portions of his website including:

<http://www.VictorianVilla.com/sims-mitchell/local/native>

<http://www.VictorianVilla.com/sims-mitchell/local/native/saponi/vamkr>

<http://VictorianVilla.com/sims-mitchell/local/native/redis.htm>

About the Author: Chris Smith was recently elected to the Pittsylvania Historical Society Board. He is a writer who lives in Chatham.

Messrs. *J. W. Whitehead & Son*
To The Town of Chatham, Va., Dr.
1914 W. M. Tredway, Jr., Treasurer.

To Water Rent from 1st day of *April*-----
to *30* day of *June*----- \$ *2* ^{*80*}

Received payment.
W. M. Tredway, Jr. Treasurer.

Important.-- Water rents are payable strictly in advance. Town Ordinance provides that if rents are not paid within 15 days after quarter begins water must be cut off. If cut off it will cost you 50c. to have it turned on again.

1914 Water Rent Bill

Herman Melton provided the above 1914 water bill from the Town of Chatham (it was reduced in size to fit on the page).

In 1914, Messrs. J. W. Whitehead & Son, who owned a store in Chatham, were charged \$2.80 for the water rent from the 1st day of April to the 30th day of June. In 2003, the minimum quarterly bill for water, sewage, and garbage pick-up is \$70.83.

If one failed to pay the water rent within 15

days of the beginning of the quarter, the water would be shut off. The town charged 50 cents to turn the water on again; in 2003, the charge is \$30.00.

The Chatham Treasurer in 1914 was W. M. Tredway, Jr.; today, Catherine Miller is treasurer.



Mama Sent Me To The Spring

by Glenn Giles

Last Year's Drought

The summer of 2002 was extremely dry in Pittsylvania County. It ranked with the driest summers on record. Streams that had existed as long as the oldest residents could recall simply

ceased to exist. It was so dry that just about every homeowner that still had hand dug wells saw them dry up. With the demise of the hand dug wells, another chapter in the struggle to utilize this essential and usually abundant resource came to an end. The source of water from hand dug wells had been around since the county was first settled.

The Need for Water

It is said that beer made Milwaukee famous. It is equally true that great quantities of water made Pittsylvania popular as a place to settle. Pittsylvania County historian, Herman Melton, notes in his great book [now out-of-print] *Pittsylvania's Eighteenth Century Grist Mills*, "the water resources of this county should be the envy of most counties in the United States." He provides testimony to the number of rivers and streams that gave rise to the numerous grist mills in the county. Although grist mills could be considered the first county industry, water power operated saw mills, tanneries, and textile operations. More than a few distilleries, legal and not so legal, were also plentiful in the county.

Farming was the primary occupation of the early settlers and these same abundant water resources served as a magnet that drew them to Pittsylvania County. The rich bottom lands of the large rivers such as the Dan River, Roanoke (Staunton) River, the Pigg River, and the Banister River were grabbed up by those coming first. There they grew their crops and developed large plantations. The land adjacent to the numerous secondary streams and branches was equally in great demand. The first settlers died off and the large plantations were subdivided among their heirs. This fact plus the constantly growing settler influx created the need for more homesteads to be built.

Each new settler needed three essential elements to sustain their basic needs for survival. The first two they satisfied when they constructed a roof over their head and raised enough food to keep them alive. The third need was a source of water. Early farmers needed water for personal consumption such as drinking and cooking; they needed water for their livestock; and then there was a need for water for hygiene requirement such as bathing and laundry needs.

As the farmers were forced to move away from the rivers, creeks, and branches to build their homesites, they had to extract their water needs in some manner from ground water. This is water that is found naturally in pore spaces in the soil or in cracks or crevices in rock. Ground water begins as rain or snow. This water follows one of three paths: (A) Some water evaporates in to the air or is used by vegetation and returns to the atmosphere. (B) Some flows into surface water or soaks into the ground. It then follows various flowpaths and can travel back to the surface as a spring or else it simply recharges the ground water. (C) Some ground water goes deeper into the earth and ends up in large natural storage areas known as aquifers.

Settling Near Springs

The early settler built his dwelling as near to a spring as possible. The spring is a place where the water level of ground water intersects with the earth's surface. This is usually along hillsides, at the base of slopes, or in general low areas. Thus a spring is where you find ground water emerging to the surface naturally.

Springs sometimes occurred with a naturally supplied pooled reservoir. More often than not water only seeped to the surface and a collection

area needed to be created. Some springs were boxed in to prevent surface water from entering and to keep animals and insects out. In these days before refrigeration, springs were a cool place to store butter, milk, and, of course, watermelons. Some utensil such as a dipper or gourd was always left nearby for the family member or travelers to quench their thirst with cool, refreshing spring water.

Hauling water up the hill from the spring almost always became the primary chore for the farmer's kids. This was quite a task, especially on wash day or during canning operations, or at hog killing time. Resourceful settlers were always seeking labor saving approaches to all difficult tasks. My grandparents lived a considerable distance uphill from the nearest spring. My grandfather, Harry Mortimer DeMott, being ingenious and having refined mechanical skills, installed a hydraulic water ram to pump water from the spring to his house. As a youngster, I remember accompanying him when he went to check or repair his water ram. (The details of this ram and rams in general are fascinating and I feel a sequel coming on to tell this story.)

Another way that was devised for bringing water from the spring was through a suspended cable that reached from the back porch to the spring. The cable ran through a series of pulleys and attached buckets allowed the water to be hauled to the house. Henry Mitchell at his website (1) records a conversation with Frank Taylor, longtime Chatham resident, which states, "Old man Scott Carter had 'go-boy' buckets on a cable to his spring and back to his house. This was the spring off Aston Place."

Springs were not always a dependable water source. Drought conditions such as last summer have a great impact on ground water supplies.

During droughts the spring is usually the first flow to dry up. The reason for this is like having a straw in the top of a soda can. If you drink and don't lower the straw toward the bottom you end up sucking air. This is exactly what happens to springs and wells. Ground water levels fluctuate on a seasonal basis, rising in the "wet" months and falling in the "dry" months.

Digging for Water

Farmers were able to secure a more steady water source by having a well dug. This decision usually necessitated bringing in the magical neighborhood dowser. (That also is another story.) The dowser would pick a suitable location for the well. The well digger was then hired to perform his trade. He would hack at the earth with a shortened pick and shovel and use a windlass with a bucket and rope to withdraw the dirt and rock as he dug. He would have kept digging until he reached the water table and water filled the bottom of the hole. They sometimes lined the hole with stones to prevent the sides from collapsing. Most dug wells only extended to the bedrock surface and therefore you are only tapping the perched water table on top of the bedrock. The yield may be only 1 - 2 gallons per minute; therefore the reservoir of water is limited whether being extracted by the bucket or a modern day pump. Most dug wells were 50 to 120 feet deep.

After digging the well, a wooden housing was constructed usually on top of a rock or concrete platform that kept out surface water and acted as a safety feature. A pulley with a rope or chain was mounted on this housing with buckets attached to both ends. The length of the rope controlled the depth that the bucket could be immersed in the well reservoir. Many a child lost the skin from their

tongue when tricked into licking the frost off of the metal well bucket.

Springs Draw Seat of Government

Springs were essential to the early settlers but springs also played a significant role in the establishment of the location of the seat of government for the county. Maud Carter Clement, in her book *The History of Pittsylvania County, Virginia* [see p. 18 for ordering information], writes that in August 1777, the Court of Pittsylvania was removed from Callands to Cherrystone Meeting House Spring. She notes that this spring is situated in the ravine to the north of Depot Hill, and in this ravine were located the first court buildings in Chatham. This site was eventually abandoned for a location higher up on the top of the hill. This only proves that government goes uphill and not water.

Society members Roger Boswell and Henry, David, and Jonathan Mitchell have recently utilized the location of the Clement referenced spring, still in existence between Kemper and Ridge Streets in West Chatham, to try to pinpoint the spots where Pittsylvania County's first courthouse and jail once stood. (2)

(1). <http://www.VictorianVilla.com/sims-mitchell/local/picpast/1900>

(2). <http://www.VictorianVilla.com/sims-mitchell/local/court/cherrystone/01>

About the Author: Glenn Giles is a Pittsylvania County native, and retired chemical engineer. He is also a past President of the Society, and is currently working on the Train Restoration Project.

A Bit of Humor: Quotes from Sam Lovelace

The following quotes come from an undated *Star-Tribune* article titled "On The Humorous Side of Chatham..." and was found in Scrapbook No. 33 of the Glenn B. Updike, Sr. Collection, which is owned by the Pittsylvania Historical Society.

Dr. Ernest Overbey related: Sam Lovelace [born 1846; died 1953] . . . told me he could remember when there were only 19 homes in the town [of Chatham]. He said when he reached a hundred he didn't have an enemy in this world. "How do you account for that?" I asked. "Well, I guess I have outlived them all," was his answer.

Dr. J. C. Overbey of Norfolk told that Sam used to take him hunting when he was a boy, and tried to teach him the art of killing birds. They came back one day and Sam had 10 birds, Jesse two.

Father asked Sam, "What sort of shot is Jess?"

Sam said, "Mr. Overbey, he is a real good shot, but you know he just don't take no aim."

Deadline for Submissions

Please submit any announcements, articles, etc. for the next issue of *The Pittsylvania Packet* by the third week of June.

If you are planning a family reunion that will feature information on your family's history and Pittsylvania County roots, we will be glad to print an announcement (if it can be published in time for the event).

Books, Etc. For Sale

To order, send check or money order to: Susan Worley, 380 Greenbay Road, Chatham, Virginia 24531. All prices include postage.

Maud Carter Clement, *History of Pittsylvania County, Virginia*, reprinted in hardcover. \$24.00.

Maud Carter Clement, *War Recollections of the Confederate Veterans of Pittsylvania County, Virginia 1861 - 1865*, softcover. \$12.00.

Roger Dodson, *Footprints From the Old Survey Books*, softcover. \$12.00.

Madelene Fitzgerald, *Pittsylvania Homes and History of the Past*, hardcover. \$20.00

Madelene Fitzgerald and Frances Hurt, *Eighteenth Century Landmarks of Pittsylvania County, Virginia*, softcover. \$12.00

Frances Hurt, *An Intimate History of the American Revolution in Pittsylvania County*, Illustrated and Fully indexed, hardcover. \$17.00.

Kenyon McCann, *Ride Into Darkness*, Pittsylvania County's first historical novel based on actual 1840 mass murder. Softcover. 217 pages. \$12.50.

Kenyon McCann, *A Cruel Wind Blowing*, Author's sequel to *Ride into Darkness*. Historical novel set in Pittsylvania County. Softcover. \$13.50

Herman Melton, editor, *Old Fast & Perfect: Sketches from the 54 Year Life of the Franklin & Pittsylvania Railroad 1878 - 1932*. 28 pages, softcover. \$3.75

Herman Melton, *Pittsylvania County's Historic Courthouse: The Story Behind Ex Parte Virginia and the Making of a National Landmark*. Softcover, indexed, illustrated. \$13.00

Herman Melton, *Thirty-Nine Lashes Well Laid On*. 400 pages, Hardcover, indexed. \$24.00.

Herman Melton, *Picks, Tracks, and Bauteaux*. Hardcover. \$24.00

Mary Catherine Plaster, editor, *Idle Hens Don't Lay*. Historical Cookbook. Softcover, \$11.93

Gray's Map of Chatham, Virginia 1878. Rare, full color print, suitable for framing. Many names and features. \$3.50.