

The Messenger

January 1994 - Number 27

The Chesterfield Historical Society, P.O. Box 40, Chesterfield, Virginia 23832



Robiou Murder Trial Topic of Annual Luncheon

The winter meeting of the Chesterfield Historical Society will be a luncheon meeting to be held on Sunday, January 23, 1994, at 1:00 P.M. at Ruth's Chris Steakhouse located at Belgrade Plantation at the intersection of Robious and Huguenot Roads.

Our speaker will be Betsy Weaver Brandt whose topic will be "Robiou's Last Crossing". It will be of special interest to our members to have our meeting in the former home of this noted person. You may wish to read about the event before the meeting. See *Chesterfield, an Old Virginia County*, p. 215-216 and

Chesterfield County, Early Architecture and Historic Sites, p.305-306. Mrs. Brandt has researched this 19th century event extensively and will share her knowledge with us at this time!

The lunch menu includes soup, Caesar salad with strips of beef tenderloin, and dessert. For reservations send check by January 19th for \$15.00 per person to the Chesterfield Historical Society, P. O. Box 40, Chesterfield, VA 23382.

We hope to see all of you then!



Belgrade Plantation

Calendar of Coming Events

January 5, 12, 19, 26 Heritage Crafts
Classes: Basket Making, 9:30-11:30,
Magnolia Grange

January 23 Quarterly meeting,
Ruth's Chris, 1:00 P.M.

February 1, 8, 15, 22 Heritage Crafts
Classes: Bobbin Lace Making, 9:30 -
11:30, Magnolia Grange.

March 7, 14, 21, 28 Heritage Crafts
Classes: Beginning tatting, 9:30-11:30,
Magnolia Grange.

March 9, 16, 23, 30 Heritage Crafts
Classes: Intermediate tatting, 9:30 -
11:30, Magnolia Grange.

April 24 Celebration of the
380th anniversary of the incorporation
of Bermuda Hundred as America's first
town, Bermuda Hundred, 2:30pm.

May 1 Plantation Day at
Magnolia Grange.

Committee Chairmen Appointed

The President of the Chesterfield Historical Society is pleased to announce the following committee chairmanship appointments for the coming two years:

Archaeology - Dawn Burns
Bateau - Paul Kreyfus
Bermuda Hundred - Steve Cormier
Cemetery - Margaret Burgess
Civil War Sites - George Fickett
Finance - Samuel Hilbert
Genealogy - Angie Wilderman
Hospitality - Richard Allen
House Tour - Laurie Horner
Journal - Paul Shelton
Library - Lucille Moseley
Magnolia Grange - T. Palmèr Condrey
Membership - Fay Myers Cecil
Messenger - Jennifer Wright
Museum - Dr. George Partin
Picture Collection - Hugh Goodwyn
War Memorial - Baxter Perkinson, Sr.

From the Recording Secretary...

The October meeting of the Chesterfield Historical Society, held on October 24, 1993 at 2:30 PM, was called to order by President Jim Daniels on a beautiful Sunday afternoon at Battery Dantzler.

Jim called for a vote on the proposed amendment to the by-laws that was presented to the membership on Sunday, July 25th, 1993. The amendment follows: "1) The Board of Directors will consist of the officers and nine (9) at-large directors. Initially, all nine directors will be elected to the board. Three of these directors will serve a one-year term, three will serve a two-year term, and three will serve a three-year term. After the initial election, all subsequently elected directors will serve a full three-year term. 2) At-large directors will not be permitted to succeed themselves, but may be re-elected to the board after a one-year sabbatical. 3) The Board of Directors will provide an Advisory Board, whose invitation to membership will come from the Board of Directors. Advisory Board members will serve a three-year term, with no limitation on the number of terms they may serve. It was moved and seconded that we accept this amendment and the motion carried. The amendment will go into effect in 1995.

All of the committee chairmen gave their respective reports.

Jim introduced George Fickett, our guest speaker and chairman of the Civil War Sites Committee, who spoke to the group about Battery Dantzler and the Bermuda Hundred Line, 1864-1865. George gave a very informative talk and afterward we toured the site, and walked to Jim and Robin Daniels' house for refreshments on their deck.

-Submitted by Tamara Puster

Meet the Challenge...

Volunteer!

Call Jennifer Wright at the Society
for details! 748-1026

Thank You

We thank the following persons who have so generously donated gifts to the Society:

To the Museum:

Art Miranian - Boy Scout hat, circa 1920's, and several items for the Country Store exhibit.

Chesterfield Schools- Set of wall charts for classroom use, copyright 1879.

Chesterfield Utilities Dept.- Pig iron from the Cumberland Gap Furnace, found by archaeologist Lyle Browning near Bellona Arsenal and Foundry, circa 1860.

To Our Library:

Helen Creekanore- Book: *The Robertsons of Winterpock* by Joseph S. Gresham and Laurie Horner.

Virginia Department of Transportation - Book: *The Cox's Overseer's Site*, 2 volumes, by Nash, Geier and McCartney.

Dr. Benjamin B. Weisiger - Book: *Old Manchester and Its Environs* by Dr. Weisiger

Cemetery Site Marked at Magnolia Grange

The presence of periwinkle and yucca plants, long known as tell-tale signs of an old cemetery in Virginia, have recently led the Society to the discovery and cleaning up of the probable Winfree burying grounds at Magnolia Grange.

In an early Chesterfield County deed book reference is made to the Winfree cemetery as being on the east side of the house. This site, close to the dwelling with such vegetation, seems likely to be the old cemetery. There are no tombstones, however, the graves probably having been marked with wooden crosses which have long since deteriorated.

In his book, *Chesterfield County, Early Architecture and Historic Sites*, Jeff O'Dell writes "not until the second half of the nineteenth century did inscribed stones become common" in our county. "Most early cemeteries in Chesterfield have no inscribed stones at all; graves are either unmarked, or are marked with simple unhewn boulders." (p. 483)

The site has recently been cleaned up and marked off with rope fencing thanks to Rusty Hopkins, a local youth who contributed his talents to the historic house as a

requirement for his Eagle Scout badge. We very much appreciate Rusty's hard work! He was recognized by WTVR Channel 6 on the 6:00 p.m. news on December 1st.

Over the past few years we have sought to learn more of early nineteenth century life on the plantation as we have placed increased emphasis on the back yard. You will recall that, after extensive archaeological research, we reconstructed the well house and outlined the sites of the original kitchen, smoke house and a slave quarter. Last spring with the assistance of Kathy and Rusty Chain, we planted an herb garden typical of the time using medicinal, culinary, fragrance and insect repellent plants. Now with the marking of the cemetery as another link in the puzzle, Magnolia Grange's long history is slowly being pieced together.

We invite you to come by and see our progress!

Bateau Participates in Washington Re-enactment

Editor's note: The following article was contributed by Society and crew member Nancy Dunnavant. We congratulate the crew of the Lord Chesterfield Bateau on another job well done!!!

The Lord Chesterfield Bateau Committee travelled to Alexandria to participate in the re-enactment of George Washington's journey from Mt. Vernon on September 18, 1793 to the Federal City (Washington D.C) to participate in the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for the laying of the cornerstone of the Capitol.

On Friday, October 22, 1993 we launched the *Lord Chesterfield* onto the Potomac River at the Washington Sailing Marina where we joined the men and boats of the Alexandria Seaport Foundation. Chip Reynolds, captain of the tug *The Jim Purce*, ordered the *Lord Chesterfield* lashed to one side of the tug and another vessel *The Runseian Expeniment* to the other side. With companion vessels the *Gig Jessica*, *The Federalist*, and an Alex class dinghy, we continued on the Potomac to the Alexandria waterfront where living history re-enactors portraying President Washington and his family welcomed the crowds gathered for the occasion.

We were soon joined by "President Washington", his family and guests.

From the Membership Chairman...

We want to thank those members who renewed their membership with a special THANK YOU to those of you who included a donation with your dues payment. Every gift, large and small, is appreciated.

Welcome aboard our new members who have joined us during the period September 15 - December 20, 1993 :

Cecil F. Belcher
Dr. Harold E. Binhammer
Lyle E. Browning
Dorothy A. Caulkins
Lillian A. Dunn
Gloria D. Ernest
James E. Gettings
Gladys H. Gettings
Mrs. David O. Goode, Jr.
Steven D. Groseclose
Rusty Hopkins
Virginia G. Horsman
Laurie L. Jamerson
Thomas N. Jamerson
Irma Kaufman
Patricia A. Murdock
Earl H. Myers, Jr.
Ryan Earl Myers
Robert C. Pace
Debby C. Pace
C. W. "Bill" Packard
William V. Sutton
Joseph John Volpe

Sustaining Members:

Jack and Laurie Horner
Beverly R. Rothert
Oliver D. and Margaret H. Rudy

Membership Alert

In recent months the membership committee has been allocating the majority of its time to updating our records. This task is now completed and my report to you is not favorable.

It was necessary to remove, from our active mailing list, the names of those who had not kept their membership dues current. Our membership count, once close to 1,000, is now less than 800.

As we begin our new year, I ask that each of you please see that your dues are current and join with our committee to solicit new members. In order to succeed we must have your support!

-Fay Myers Cecil, Membership Chairman

Some of the guests were taken aboard the *Lord Chesterfield* and rowed across the Potomac River to the Georgetown harborfront at which time they disembarked to attend a reception in honor of the occasion.

On Saturday, we donned our costumes and joined the parade to the Capitol to witness the commemoration of the laying of the cornerstone for the Capitol. The Scottish Rite of Freemasonry was very impressive! The Masons wore antique aprons and carried the original gavel and the silver trowel used by President Washington in 1793. The ceremony concluded with a fifteen gun salute.

In the afternoon we witnessed the return of the Statue of Freedom to the Capitol dome. Lifted by helicopter, the statue was re-installed on top of the dome.

We all agreed it had been an exciting and interesting time honoring our first president and the Freemasons of which he was a member. Experts have been looking for the original cornerstone. Perhaps some day it will be located and we will see what information was placed in it.

Committee Commentary

The **Picture Collection Committee** reports that its new book, *A Time to Remember*, continues to enjoy strong sales. A book signing at the Old Courthouse on November 7th and booths at both the Village of Midlothian Day and the Chester Festival sold many copies. The authors, Hugh Goodwyn, Arline McGuire, Lucille Moseley, Dr. Robert Wagenknecht, and Jennifer Wright had the opportunity to present autographed copies to each member of the Board of Supervisors at their regular meeting on November 23rd.

The **Bermuda Hundred Committee** has been busy this quarter pursuing its goal of preserving Bermuda Hundred as an historical district. A highway marker will be dedicated at the April meeting of the Society and archaeologist Dr. Daniel Mauer of VCU has been employed to draft and submit nomination papers to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources for designation as a national historic district. Also, the fund raising campaign launched in October for this project has generated more than \$1,000 in gifts so far but more is needed for this worthwhile venture. If you would like to contribute, donations may be

sent here to the Society, Attention: Bermuda Hundred Committee.

The **War Memorial Committee** continues to receive donations for its goal of building a memorial wall around the courthouse green to honor those who served in all wars in which our country - and subsequently - Chesterfield County were involved. Baxter Perkinson, Sr. extends his thanks to "all of you that contributed to the \$17,000 tax deductible Veteran's Memorial Fund..." If you would like to make a donation to this project, your check or money order to the "Veteran's Memorial Fund" can be mailed here to the Society.

Also, the committee recently sponsored the annual Veteran's Day ceremony at the Confederate Monument. The address was given by Horace Mann, III, Colonel, U.S. Army (Ret.) and wreaths were laid by members of Chesterfield County government as well as area organizations. Jim Daniels, president of the Society and Marvin Reed, museum committee member, each laid wreaths for their respective organizations...

The **Hospitality Committee** welcomes Dr. & Mrs. James L. Abbott who are assisting Richard Allen in setting up refreshments for Society functions.

Genealogical research will be a little easier now that the **Genealogy Committee** plans to buy a new microfilm reader that has printing capabilities. Currently, they are transcribing the 1860 census for Chesterfield.

Since last Spring, the **Archaeology Committee** has been working on a new site in the county. The site, a 17-1/2' x 20' brick house foundation with a "V" shaped hearth and a cooling storage pit along the outside of the house, has attracted the attention of the Department of Historic Resources. Some items found have been wine bottles (c.1780's), a tea bowl, creamware and pearlware ceramics, and metal hinges. During the winter months, the committee will meet on Fridays to clean and catalogue artifacts.

Our committees always welcome new members! If you would like to get involved, call the Society at 748-1026 for details.

FROM THE LOOSE PAPERS OF THE COUNTY COURT: A Petition in favor of Mrs. Hubbard

In early nineteenth-century Chesterfield, the elderly often depended upon pensions to provide for themselves. Those without pensions sometimes became the responsibility of the overseers of the poor, and ended up spending the rest of their days in the Poor House. The overseers of the poor were a group of men appointed by the County Court to see to the welfare of the county's paupers and report on the condition of the Poor House, as well as bind out orphans as apprentices. An impassioned letter and petition, dated March 25, 1816, was sent by Edward Johnson in regards to his elderly neighbor, Mrs. Hubbard. It read, in part:

"Mrs. Hubbard, to the natural Infirmities of old Age, has had the misfortune of being considerably disabled a few years past, by being overset in a Gigg when going to court as a Witness, by which accident she has been very lame ever since. She however endeavours to gain a livelihood by honest Industry, and we think a little assistance from the Parish would enable her to live in tolerable comfort in her own house. Notwithstanding the comfortable provision made for distress'd objects at the Poor house, we are persuaded the Gentlemen to whom this is address, will concur with us in thinking that something is to be conceded to the fondness so natural to old People for their own firesides & neighbourhoods, where perhaps they have resided for half a Century, & which are endear'd to them by the recollection of happier Days. -- The Pension which the late Mr. Hubbard receiv'd from the Government, with the assistance of a few charitable Neighbours afforded a bare subsistence to the aged Couple, but that support has entirely ceas'd by the death of Mr. Hubbard; so that there is a certainty that this worthy old woman must suffer the complicated evils of Poverty & old age unless reliev'd by those to whose humanity this is respectfully address."

The court responded to this petition by ordering the overseers to provide twenty-five dollars for Mrs. Hubbard's support, but rescinded the order after only four months.

-Contributed by Paul Shelton

Queries...

Brad Hammer, Deputy County Administrator for Chesterfield County, sends us this request:

Castlewood, the circa 1817-19 home of Parke Poindexter (Clerk of Chesterfield County Court, 1812-1847), recently purchased by the county, has a need for a dining room table and chairs. The preferred table would be a long, rectangular 18th century style of cherry chestnut wood.

If you can help, please call the Historical Society at 748-1026. Thank you

Messenger Staff

Jennifer D. Wright, *Editor*

Contributing Reporters:

Steve Cormier

Lucille C. Moseley

Jeannette Ortiz

Paul Shelton

Donna K. Schneider, *Layout*

New book on Old Manchester Now Available

In his introduction to *Old Manchester and Its Environs 1769-1910*, Benjamin B. Weisiger states that, "I have merely tried to tell the story of what 'Old Manchester' once was and make it interesting to the average reader." His book is replete with stories and pictures of the area of Richmond which was once a separate city also known as Southside or Dogtown. If you are looking for a good book to read during these winter months you can purchase *Old Manchester* for \$22.50 (plus tax) at several local book stores, or contact Dr. Weisiger at 741-5455.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

PHONE: () _____ I am interested in serving on the following committee

- _____ Sustaining Membership (\$100 per yr.) _____ Family Membership (\$25 per yr.)
- _____ Couple Membership (\$20 per yr.) _____ Single Membership (\$12 per yr.)
- _____ Student Membership (\$5 per yr.) _____ Corporate Membership (\$500 per yr.)

Make checks payable to the Chesterfield Historical Society, P.O. Box 40, Chesterfield, VA 23832

**Chesterfield Historical Society
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Chesterfield, Virginia 23832**

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