

The Messenger of the Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia

Number 4

Chesterfield County, Virginia

October 1983

News Notes:

On May 25, 1983, two hundred and thirty four years after the County of Chesterfield was formed, the Chesterfield Historical Society presented the Board of Supervisors with a portrait of the County's namesake, Philip Dormer Stanhope, the fourth Earl of Chesterfield. Lucille Moseley, Vice President of the Society, made the presentation and about fifty Society members were present. The portrait now hangs in the reception room of the Administration Building. It is a copy of the original which was painted by Allen Ramsey and hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in London, England. The Gallery gave its permission for the copy to be made, and it was painted by Mary Ellen Howe.

Work on the Chesterfield cemetery records continues. Over 4,000 graves have been recorded and 150 cemeteries completed.

Angie Wilderman reports that eight reels of microfilm of the marriage bonds found in the County's loose papers have been transcribed. They are recorded on sheets that can be put into a computer in the future. Over 1,000 sheets have been completed, and the bonds are now into the year 1820. If anyone would like to help, please call Angie Wilderman at 748-3281.

The Society would like to say a special "thank you" to Mr. Bailey Wilkinson for sharing the portrait of Parke Poindexter, former Clerk of the Court and owner of Castlewood. The portrait, on loan to the Society, is now hanging at the Old Jail.

Hugh Goodwyn displayed our historical picture collection at the May Festival at Point-of-Rocks Park and again at the July Fourth Celebration at the Court House fair grounds. From September 12-17 the collection was on display at the County Fair. The collection now contains about 200 photographs.

GENEALOGY WORKSHOP

The Historical Society will assist the Chesterfield County Library in sponsoring a genealogy workshop on Thursday evening, November 3, 1983, beginning at 7:00 P.M. at the Central Library. Society members who will teach the classes include: Waverly Winfree, Lee Shepard, Pattie Grady, Anne White, Angie Wilderman, and Mary Ellen Howe. To register, please call the reference department of the Library at 748-1601.

The Historical Society will again have a house tour. Charlotte Farley is in charge of the tour and will need lots of help. Please call her at 794-5027.

List of Officers:

President Judge Ernest P. Gates
First Vice President Lucille Moseley
Recording Secretary Robert Preston Jones
Corresponding Secretary Vera Robertson
Treasurer George W. Moore, Jr.

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—the Editor, Mary Ellen Howe

Our County's Namesake:

Lord Chesterfield

by E. Lee Shepard
Virginia Historical Society

When Virginia's Burgesses considered petitions calling for the division of Henrico County in the spring of 1749 and resolved to form a new county, they searched for an appropriate name to bestow upon their new creation. At the time, many of the colony's highest officials and most prominent planters were familiar with the career and reputation of Philip Dormer Stanhope, the fourth earl of Chesterfield. As a diplomat, lord lieutenant of Ireland, and most recently secretary of state for the northern department, Chesterfield had achieved a high visibility among colonials through the pages of the *Virginia Gazette* and the various London news sheets planters regularly received from their English correspondents and agents. Though Chesterfield had resigned the seals of his latest office a year earlier, his name and reputation still held a lofty niche in the regard of the Virginia colonists. Hence, they readily conferred the earl's name on their newest governmental subdivision.

Lord Chesterfield was born in London on 22 September 1694, son of the third earl and his wife, in turn a daughter of the marquis of Halifax. Neglected by his father, Lord Stanhope was raised and educated by his grandmother, the marchioness of Halifax. After a brief stint at Trinity College, Cambridge, he completed his practical education as a gentleman with a grand tour of the continent (1714). Through the efforts of a kinsman, he was appointed in 1715 a gentleman of the bedchamber to the prince of Wales (the future George II) and in the same year entered the House of Commons as a Whig member from St. German's, Cornwall. His political views were considered liberal and enlightened for the times, and he refused to adhere slavishly to any particular party or faction.

In January, 1726, the third earl of Chesterfield died, and Stanhope succeeded to his father's title and estate. He entered the House of Lords shortly thereafter, where his wit, grace, and eloquence, combined with his friendly relations with the prince of Wales, rapidly thrust him into prominence. His speeches therein were highly polished but forceful, effective, and often scathing in their directness. Even his bitterest enemies would acknowledge his talents and characterize his oratory as "full of wit of the genteel satire, and in the most polished classical style... extremely studied, seemingly ease, well delivered, and universally admired." Yet, it was to be in other arenas that Chesterfield would make his greatest contributions and earn his most enduring laurels.

Upon the accession of George II to the English throne, Chesterfield was elevated to the post of ambassador to the Hague. There he negotiated several important treaties and arranged some impressive marriage alliances. During this period he was also elected a knight of the Garter (18 May 1730). Ill health forced his resignation from the diplomatic post in 1732.

Returning to the House of Lords, Chesterfield resumed his usual independent stance, gradually alienating his old friend George II, the queen, and the powerful head of government, Sir Robert Walpole. Heading the opposition throughout the later 1730s and early 1740s, the earl took a large part in engineering the political downfall of Walpole, and came to head the so-called "Broad Bottom" party with William Pitt, later earl of Chatham. The "Broad Bottoms" came into power in late 1744, and the king was forced reluctantly to offer Chesterfield the challenging post of lord lieutenant of Ireland.

In this new position, Chesterfield proved his worth, despite a very brief tenure. He treated the Irish people sympathetically, and proved himself a "tactful and enlightened statesman." He championed the poor, eliminated much of the jobbery that wracked the bureaucracy, and attempted to relieve public distress through a program of public works. According to one historian, "to his prudent counsels must be attributed Ireland's tranquility at a time when England and Scotland were torn by Civil War." Illness again forced him to relinquish a strenuous office, exchanging the Irish viceroyalty with the Earl of Harrington for secretary of state for the northern department. He remained in this new post less than two years, unwilling to continue in the face of vigorous hostility from the jealous Duke of Newcastle. With his resignation in February, 1748, Chesterfield's official life came to an end. Only briefly did he attend the House of Lords, his last speech occurring on 10 December 1755.



Young Lord Chesterfield

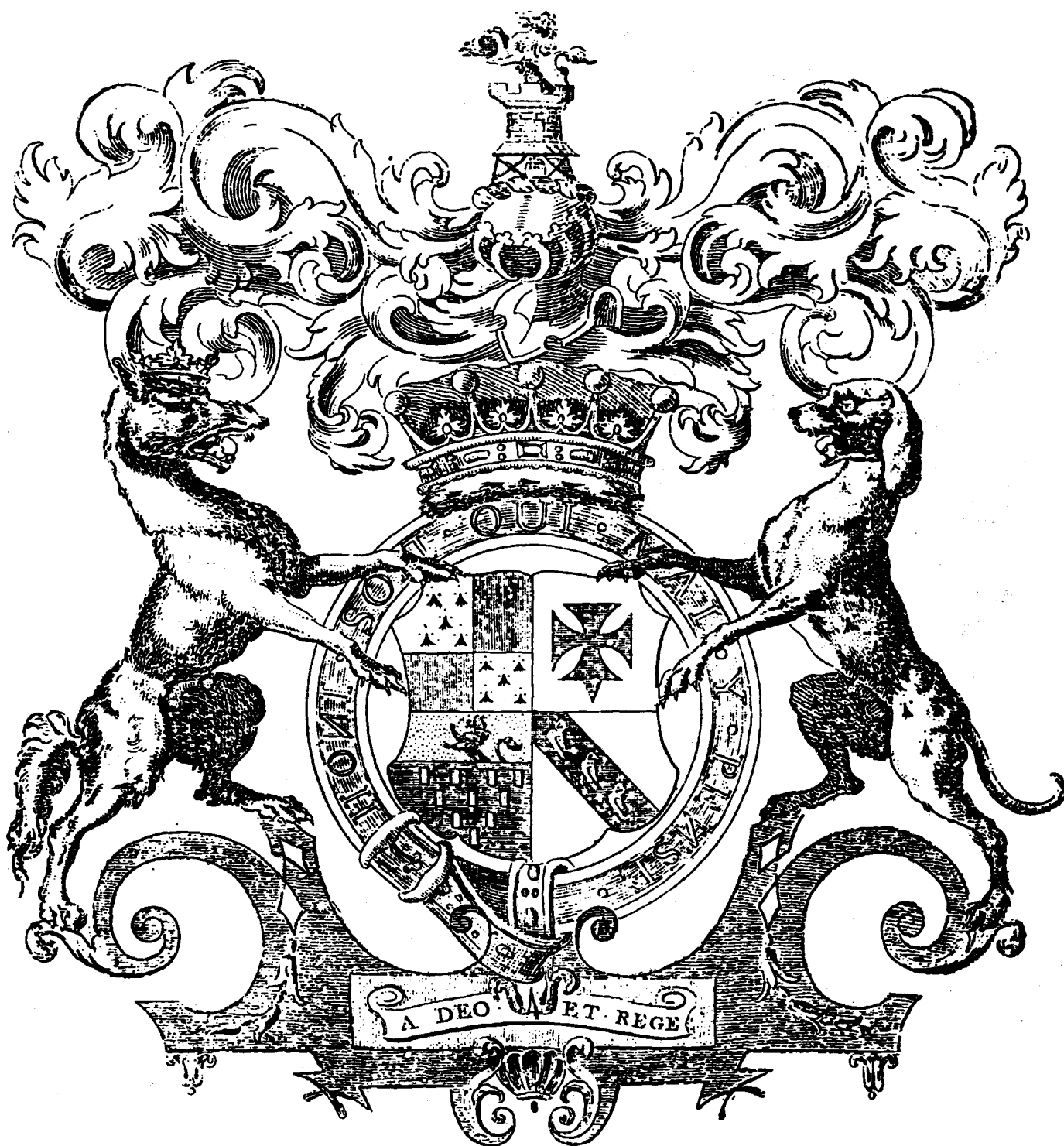
Photo — Courtesy Virginia State Library.

Though his political career first brought him to the attention of our colonial forebears, it was as a gentleman of grace and charm that he was best remembered by later generations and is most commonly thought of today. His wit, tact, and scrupulous courtesy accelerated his advances in political life and won over not a few of his political enemies. At heart he was always the diplomat, both in foreign capitals and in domestic scenes.

We obtain a particularly clear and entertaining glimpse of the charming Lord Chesterfield from the letters he wrote to his illegitimate son, beginning early in the youngster's life. First published in 1774, shortly following the earl's death, his *Letters to His Son* gained immediate popularity and ran through five editions within its first year alone. A number of the *Letters* were reprinted in the pages of the *Virginia Gazette* before the Revolution, and later editions of the complete group could be found in the libraries of many antebellum Virginians.

Epistles of advice and encouragement, the *Letters* firmly but lovingly chart a course of education for the complete preparation of an eighteenth-century gentleman. Beginning with good moral principles and sound religion as a foundation, Chesterfield urged a "perfect knowledge" of the classical languages and ancient authors, a study of the rudiments of science, and careful observation of human nature and human actions.

Though a product of his times and criticized on occasion for some of his more extreme views, Chesterfield can still be read with interest and instruction. His depiction of "the awkward man in society" reads today with as much hilarity as it surely must have engendered in his eighteenth-century audience. His admonition to deal justly with inferiors as well as superiors likewise bears up well over time. "We are all of the same species," he told his son, "and no distinction whatever is between us, except that which arises from fortune."



Du tres Noble et puissant Seigneur, Philip-Dormer Stanhope
Comte de CHESTERFIELD, Baron Stanhope, de SHELFORD,
Ambassadeur extraordinaire et Plenipotentiaire aux ETATS GENERAUX
des PROVINCES UNIES, Gentilhomme de la Chambre du lit de sa
Majeste, Conseiller du Roy en son Conseil Prive, Et Chevalier du tres
Noble Ordre de la Jarretiere, Installe au Chateau de Windsor le
XVIII^{me} Jour de Juin l'An. MDC'XXX.

Stallplate in Windsor Castle of the coat of arms of the fourth Earl of Chesterfield.



The fifth Earl of Chesterfield

Photo courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London, England.

Chesterfield's opinion of women is somewhat less generous. "Women have, in general, but one object, which is their beauty," he declared, "upon which, scarcely any flattery is too gross for them to swallow." They are "more like each other than men; they have, in truth, but two passions, vanity and love; these are their universal characteristics." Yet, he was moved to enjoin that "Civility is particularly due to all women; and remember, that no provocation whatsoever can justify not being civil to every woman; and the greatest man in England would justly be reckoned a brute, if he were not civil to the meanest woman."

Best known for his impeccable social behavior, Chesterfield stressed to his son complementary factors as well. "As you must attend to your manners, so you must not neglect your person," he instructed, "but take care to be very clean, well dressed, and genteel; to have no disagreeable attitudes, nor awkward tricks ... My Lord Bacon says, that a pleasing figure is a perpetual letter of recommendation. It is certainly an agreeable forerunner of merit, and smooths the way for it."

Direct and sustained as was his correspondence with his son, Chesterfield sagely recognized that advice itself must be offered tactfully. "I know how unwelcome advice generally is," he wrote in 1746, "I know that those who want it most, like it and follow it least; and I know, too, that the advice of parents, more particularly, is ascribed to the moroseness, the imperiousness, or the garrulity of old age... I flatter myself... that your reason, young as

it is, must tell you, that I can have no interest but yours in the advice I give you." Truly the death of his son as a young man in November, 1768, was a cruel blow to the earl. A godson and distant cousin, Philip Stanhope (1755-1815), replaced the lost natural son in the older man's affections. The earl began afresh a series of delightful letters of instruction to this new young charge which were eventually published in book form in 1890. To the young Stanhope would fall the title and estate of the earl of Chesterfield on the latter's death in 1773.

If Chesterfield County's early settlers were pleased with their namesake at the time the county was organized, the next generation must surely have praised the choice as well. Lord Chesterfield proved a staunch friend of the colonies, especially in time of crisis. He was virulently hostile, for instance, to attempts to tax the colonies in the wake of the French and Indian War. He believed that the trade offered by the English possessions brought in much more to British coffers than taxation ever would. He spoke out strongly against the Stamp Act—no doubt enhancing his already favorable image in colonial eyes. Calling it a "pernicious measure," he declared that the tax had "given much terror to the Americans." Trade with the colonists "will not be, for some years, what it used to be; and great numbers of our manufacturers at home will be turned to starving, for want of that employment ... and hunger is always the cause of tumults and sedition." "For my part," he added "I never saw a froward child mended by whipping; and would not have the mother country become a step-mother."



The fourth Earl of Chesterfield

Photo courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London, England.

Perhaps most interesting to us, as members of a local historical society, are the earl's comments on history and historians. His emphasis on classical writings and ancient history as a basis for all education is well known. Referring in particular to his friend Voltaire, who had recently authored a *History of the Reign of Louis XIV*, he laid down his ideas of the perfect recorder of a nation's past. Avoiding "those minute and uninteresting details, with which most other histories are encumbered," notes Lord Chesterfield, "he tells me all I want to know and nothing more. His reflections are short, just, and produce others in his readers. Free from religious, philosophical, political, and national prejudices, beyond any historian I ever met with, he relates all those matters as truly and impartially, as certain regards ... will allow him; for one sees plainly, that he often says much less than he would say, if he might."

Although Chesterfield withdrew from active political life after 1755, Virginians continued to catch glimpses of him in the pages of the *Virginia Gazette* and the

Gentleman's Magazine of London. His witticisms were reprinted with relish, and near the time of his death, newspapers frequently reported to the colonists on the state of his health. His passing on 24 March 1773 was genuinely lamented in Virginia.

Lord Chesterfield "argued that the real business of life was the subordination of natural instincts to those external refinements of manner which were recognized as good breeding in the capitals of civilised Europe," one biographer has written. Yet, his "worldliness was in point of fact tempered by native common-sense, by genuine parental affections, and by keen appreciation of, and capacity for, literature. His habitual text was the necessity from prudential motives of self-control and of respect for the feelings of others." Despite the barbs of critics, moralists, and political opponents, Lord Chesterfield's reputation as diplomat, administrator, political leader, and gentleman of the first class remains admirable and well deserved to this day.



Museum News:



When the Old Jail was recently found to have a leaking roof, the Museum Board of Directors requested that the county restore it to its original style. It is pictured above in September, 1983, after the restoration was completed. The lower floor continues to be used for our Historical Society headquarters, and the second floor is now a part of the museum display with the old cells unchanged for public viewing. See the October, 1982, issue of the *Messenger* for a history of the jail.

—Ed Moseley

Report on the Dictionary of Virginia Biography:

The Board of the Virginia State Library authorized its Publication Branch to compile and publish a multivolume *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*. This reference work will contain biographies of all persons known during their lives as Virginians (regardless of place of birth or death) who contributed in a significant way to the history or culture of Virginia or who achieved special distinction in their callings. Persons living at the time of publication will not be included.

The first task of the editors of the *Dictionary* is to compile a list of all Virginians who should be considered for inclusion under the foregoing criteria. Special effort should be made to identify those notable Virginians who have been excluded from earlier biographical reference works.

Members of the Chesterfield Historical Society are invited to aid in identifying persons of local or regional significance who may not be mentioned in the existing standard historical literature. At this stage of the work the complete name and birth and death dates (so far as they may be known) of the persons who may qualify is needed, along with a statement of significance, and a citation of the primary and secondary sources which may contain relevant data.

The *Dictionary of Virginia Biography* will be an invaluable reference work, and we wish to do what we can to assure that no important Virginian from our locality is omitted. We hope all members of the Society will participate during the coming winter in this cooperative effort to identify all the significant persons of Chesterfield who should be considered. Suggestions should be submitted to the Chesterfield Historical Society, *Dictionary of Virginia Biography* Project, P. O. Box 40, Chesterfield, Virginia 23832.

—Waverly Winfree

Report on Henricopolis

by Anita L. Bradshaw

On a high bluff, overlooking the James River, are two silent monuments which commemorate a town that has almost been forgotten. Henricopolis was a busy and active settlement in the early 17th Century. The overgrown and deserted area shows very little of the activity that once took place there.

Several groups and individuals have expressed interest in preserving the site of Henricopolis. Ideas for creating a park on the site have spurred discussions between the County's Parks and Recreation Department and Lone Star Industries, Incorporated which owns Farrar's Island. Henricopolis is a part of Farrar's Island.

Henricopolis was a significant settlement in the New World. It was the site of the second church in the New World and the first hospital (which was located across the river). Another significant element of the settlement is that the first college and university were built there in 1619.

Henricopolis and the adjacent Farrar's and Hatcher's Islands hold potentially unique opportunities for outdoor recreation and historical interpretation. The Dutch Gap Boat Landing would provide a focal point for either land (a walk of a little over a mile) or water access. An interpretive area at the landing would orient visitors to the recreational possibilities for Hatcher's Island and to the historical walking tour to Henricopolis. The trail would follow the James River, with interpretive signs, benches, and picnicking areas along the way.

Discussions are underway hopefully to create a park area for residents and County visitors to enjoy. Perhaps in the near future the grounds of Henricopolis will be no longer silent, but will ring with voices of the past and the present.

[*Editor's note: The Historical Society's June meeting was held on Farrar's Island with a program presented by Judge Ernest P. Gates. Research done by Judge Gates on the site will be published by the Society in the first issue of the Journal.*]

Information Sought:

Katherine King brought her husband's body on wagon to Hanover County circa 1832 for burial on a farm she had bought about 4 miles west of the courthouse. Her husband was James Spottswood Patterson, and sons were John Lewis (1827-1891) married Susan C. Perrin (1828-1897), James Spottswood (1829-1880) married Martha J. Andrews (1828-1891). Need parentage and place of origin of Katherine and James Spottswood Patterson. Keith N. Patterson, Sr., 501 Willomet Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23227.

Articles printed in the MESSENGER are footnoted as to sources of reference. The footnotes are on file with the Society and will be made available to anyone wishing to use them for research.

Communications concerning the MESSENGER may be sent to the Editor, Mary Ellen Howe, 601 Ravenscroft Drive, Petersburg, Va. 23805.

All literary contributions submitted to the MESSENGER and published become the property of the Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia.

The MESSENGER was printed by Dick Haynes of Chester, Virginia.

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