

The Messenger

OF THE CHESTERFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA

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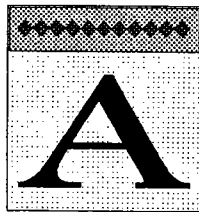
This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

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By: Nancy Carter Crump

Preserved Future



After many delays, the repairs at Magnolia grange have been completed and the house, whose residents were so important to the county's history, is again structurally sound, preserved for future generations.

Three-and-a-half years ago, during a visual inspection of the building, the new Executive Director noticed that the ceiling/floor on the east side of the house between the two parlours (one of which is interpreted as a dining room) was sagging. Concern for the safety of the building, as well as its visitors, prompted a thorough, professionally done architectural examination. It was determined that at some point in the house's history, an original load-bearing wall that divided the two rooms had been removed. The wall had carried the second-floor load, as well as the load of a roof truss; its removal created an opening span between the two rooms that over time had become stressed and potentially dangerous. Thought was given to replacing the wall, but after a period of continued discussion, a decision was reached to retain the opening as part of the house's evolution over time. Chesterfield County officials concurred in this, and plans to install a steel beam above the span between the two rooms were finalized. A contract for the work was awarded to Taylor & Parrish Construction, a company that is well known for its work on other historic structures in the area; they began the repairs in July.

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The Courthouse Gift Shop

If you are looking for unique gifts for special friends or family, then visit our gift shop and examine all the new fall items on display just for you.

—Tamara Puster

Remember us for your Christmas shopping!

Official hours are 10-4, Monday through Friday, with additional hours by appointment. Call the office at 748-1026 for more information.

Library Receives Collection

Our library recently received a complete collection of Midlothian High School yearbooks, 1923 - 1971 through the will of Miss Dorothy Hudson. They begin in the time when the school had only three students in the senior class. The "annuals" tell the history of education in northern Chesterfield County from the time when we were an agricultural community until we became a suburban area today.

Miss Hudson, who passed away on May 15th, had been a member of the Chesterfield Historical Society for many years. She was a graduate of Midlothian High School and Longwood College and, with the exception of her first year of teaching in a one-room school in Powhatan County, spent her entire career of 43 years as a 6th- and 7th-grade teacher at Midlothian. Much loved and highly respected, she touched the lives of thousands of children who were privileged to sit under her tutelage through the years.

We, as a Society, are fortunate to have been remembered by her with this important gift. Her influence will live on through this collection in our library.

The teacher is one who makes two ideas grow where only one grew before. --Elbert Hubbard

Society Offices Closed on Thursdays

The Chesterfield Historical Society offices, library and gift shop in the Historic 1917 Courthouse will be closed on Thursdays until further notice.

Magnolia Grange and the Museum are not affected and will continue to remain open on Thursdays.

This change is necessary due to the re-activation of the courtroom by the Court.

For information, call 748-1026.

Gifts

Thank You!

\$500 matching grant from the Culinary Historians of Virginia for Mary Randolph highway marker.

We thank the following individuals who donated items to our collections during this past quarter:

To the County Museum Collection:

Recent Acquisitions:

Pair of Portraits: Henry Cox (b. 1808) and wife Lucy Wilson Cox (b. 1814), mid-19th century, oil on canvas, one-time owners of Eppington, Gift of Francis C. Baird of Pittsburg, PA, and Edward Codomo, Richmond.

February 1929 issue: The Progressive Farmer, complete, Gift of Mary Lou Wiley, Chesterfield.

1879 edition: McGuffey's Fourth Eclectic Reader, complete, Gift of Mildred Daffron, Chesterfield.

Canvas Sack, 2 pair canvas gaiters, 1 pair leather leggings, belonged to Captain L. C. Lush, 1st Virginia Regiment, Virginia National Guard, WWI, from Clover Hill Plantation, Gift of Susan Poe, Chesterfield.

Indian stone artifact, fossil in stone, Gift of Thad Crump.

Videocassette tapes, from Colonial Williamsburg, "Reflections of Liberty" and "Story of a Patriot", for Educational Study Collection.

Deaccession from the Museum Collection: returned at request of the donor, Lucille Moseley, pair of cotton cards, c. 1850, from her family's farm in Mecklenburg County, Virginia.

To The Library

The Library expresses sincere appreciation to the following persons for their recent gifts of books, manuscripts, and videos:

Baker, Richard T. - History of Old Powhatan Church, Baker Family Bible Records, 1778 - 1836, Spears Family Papers, a collection concerning John Spears, J.A. Spears, and other family members.

Blanton, Mildred - Book, Chesterfield County, its History and Present Condition, 1906, Book, Chesterfield County, Virginia, a History, 1970.

Campbell, David L. - A Genealogy and History of the Family of James Campbell, a Virginia Merchant.

Crump, Nancy Carter - Derwent, Robert E. Lee's Sanctuary.

Cont'd on Page 5



**WELCOME
TO
OUR
NEW
MEMBERS**

The Chesterfield Historical Society wishes to welcome those who have joined us since July, 1997:

- Tracy Allanson
- Tracey Bishop
- Joy Lynne Burton
- Francis F. Carr, Jr.
- Theodora "Teddy" Cogbill
- Linwood W. Davis
- Joan Dows
- Lawrence R. Dows
- Barbara W. Jernigan
- Alva P. Kilby
- Kathie Lyon
- Kennedy Lyon
- Donald W. Mank
- Jessica G. Mank
- Nellie Z. Patrom
- Nancy V. Philpy
- Gene A. Pierce
- Glenna Pierce
- Denise Pierce
- Catherine W. Paulala
- M.D. Stith
- Tom Terbush
- Floyd E. Trail
- Ann Whitt
- George B. Woodhouse
- Rick Young
- Anonymous Member
- Anonymous Member



Library Gifts cont'd

- Daniels, Jim - In memory of Bobby Robertson, Pocohontas' Descendants.
- Farrar, Mrs. Otha - Midlothian School Teacher's Register, 1872 - 1876.
- Foster, Margaret - A Guide to Seventeenth-Century Virginia Court Handwriting.
- Grady, Pattie M. - Book: Virginians and California Gold 1850.
- Horner, Laurie - Book: Yonder Comes the Train Locomotive 4501.
- Hudson, Dorothy and Weaver, Bettie - Video: Remembering Good Times at Historic Bethel Baptist Church.
- Jackson, Anna H. - Jackson Family Bible Records, 1860 - 1988.
- Jordon, Janie Moseley Garraghty - Descendants of Joseph Wilkerson and Allied Families of Bedford County, Virginia.
- Kaufman, Stephen - Autobiography of Rosena Harriot Gregory.
- Moseley, Lucille - A History of Bethel Baptist Church Cemetery.
- Overton, Marguerite B. - Descendants of William Joseph Adkins and Mary Irene Blankenship.
- Phillips, R.W. - Bible Records of the Burfoot, Phillips, Cogbill, Branch and Walke Families, 1774 - 1945.
- Ruffin, Charlotte B. - C. C. C. Memories.
- Reed, Marvin - Virginia, A History.
- von Schilling, Jean - Camp Graham, near Point of Rocks, Virginia.
- Walker, Bryan - Book: Random Thoughts.

Preserved Future, cont'd

The reasons for removing the original wall may never be known. Certainly it would have created a space for entertaining on a grand scale, and if the house was used as overflow space for the tavern operated by the owners of

Magnolia Grange, that may explain why. Double parlours had begun to appear in Virginia early in the 19th century, and by the 1840s and '50s were fairly common, according to



The steel beam is hoisted through the parlour window into the house

Mark R. Wenger, a Colonial Williamsburg architectural historian who has done extensive work on them. Certainly further research on Magnolia Grange, especially its early history and architectural changes, is warranted.

Magnolia Grange photos courtesy of Harold E. Himes

Chesterfield Historical Society Committee Reports

Quarterly Meeting:

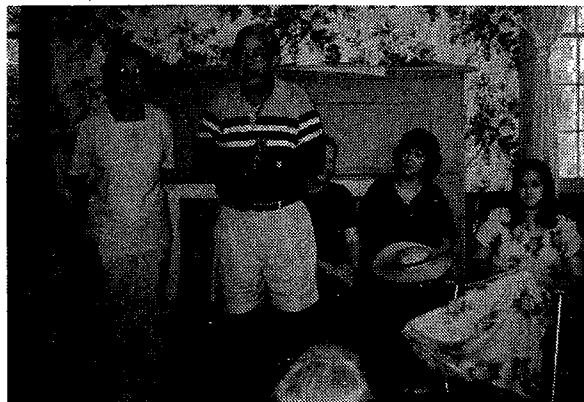
The July Quarterly Meeting of the Chesterfield Historical Society was held at Clover Hill plantation on Sunday, July 27th, with about 75 members and friends attending. Clover Hill has recently been purchased by CHS members, Susan and Lloyd Poe, who graciously opened their house despite restoration work in progress.

There were several presentations given. Julie Vosmik, of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, spoke on the evolution of Clover Hill and its association with the Cox family. Ms. Vosmik was followed by CHS member, Ken Shiflett, who spoke on the mining operation owned and operated by 19th-century Clover Hill owner, Judge James H. Cox. Mr. Shiflett was followed by Palmer Condrey, who commented on his childhood memories of Clover Hill.

New officers and board members were inducted by Laurie Horner.



Among the new CHS board members sworn in at the July meeting were (left-to-right) T. Palmer Condrey, Rebecca Badger, Doris Hancock, Susan Poe, Tamara Puster, and Marshall Pearman.



New CHS president, T. Palmer Condrey, describes childhood visits to Clover Hill



About 75 CHS members and friends attended the July quarterly meeting at Clover Hill

Quarterly Meeting Photos courtesy of Ken Shiflett

Troubled

By: Ken Shiflett

Grounds

Chesterfield County is prestigious, fast growing and very rich in history. Many people that move to the county and even long-time residents are surprised to find that at one time coal mining was the county's main industry and the first in the country.

An occasional newspaper article will rekindle that early period when suburban construction finds mine openings that were never documented. Near loss of equipment and life will generate news. Recently, at Walton Park and Route 60 construction workers uncovered four mine openings; two were undocumented. In Winterpock, forty-two openings have been documented in the last two years. These openings were never recorded on the state inventory of abandoned mines.

Many books and publications have focused on the problems the miners had such as explosions, unabated ground fires, perpetual water problems and a great loss of life, while hidden in the archives of the U.S. Geological Survey are those boring geological reports that most people will never see or read. The geologist who studied the formation and framework of the Richmond (Coal) Basin from within the mines reported why coal mining was actually a failed industry.

In the Piedmont Region (Richmond Area), only a few feet of soil covers solid rock. In the Richmond Basin, it is 3,000 feet before rock (Granite) is encountered. Millions of years ago the region was covered by a large body of water; disturbances caused it to drain; and sediment deposits formed under unstable conditions. Coal formed in distorted troughs on its borders.

In Chesterfield County the eastern border of the basin starts at the Appomattox River and runs through Winterpock and Midlothian. Its total length is thirty-four miles and two to ten miles wide.

Geologists reported that the coal seam was heavily faulted and crushed; in many instances faults displaced the seam by a few feet and up to 600 feet. A fault is a split in the earth that provides a path for water to travel. Rocks from the basement floor of the basin were forced through the coal to the surface. Coal was found in creek beds, hill sides, and also wagon tracks.

Dikes (magma or larva) that also came from the basement floor due to disturbances cut the coal beds turning the coal to natural coke, which is used in making iron. This igneous intrusion also left the stratus surrounding the coal that was thirty to sixty feet thick fragile and fractured.

Faults and dikes were a common occurrence, and the miners called them lines of trouble or troubled grounds. When encountered, the frail sandstone roof would collapse. Much capital was spent on timber and planks for roof support. Over time large amounts of gasses, which could be heard seeping into the mines, would accumulate and cause large explosions. It would take years to clean up the the debris. The fractured coal seam created great expense in keeping the water out.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

The **HISTORIC SITES COMMITTEE** is looking for volunteer interpreters interested in assisting on a bi-weekly basis with



tours at Magnolia Grange and the County Museum. Leading our visitors, both young and old, through our historic sites and interpreting Chesterfield County's rich past can be a rewarding experience for all concerned. With many changes underway at both the Grange and Museum, now is an exciting time to join our volunteer corps. Call **748-1026** for further information.

The **OFFICE STAFF** is seeking individuals to help at the Society's headquarters in the 1917 Courthouse, especially on Monday and Wednesday afternoons and any time on Tuesday. Answering phones, copying, helping with correspondence, assisting in the gift shop, and perhaps even lending a hand with an occasional tour are all part of the job description for **OFFICE VOLUNTEER**. A call to 748-1026, an interest in history, and a desire to give back to your historical society are the traits we seek in our volunteer staff.

Troubled Grounds, cont'd

Mining met with limited success; a lot of money was spent for a small amount of coal. Mining engineers from England and Pennsylvania were brought in, but once a mine failed, it would change hands many times. Incredibly, in spite of all the handicaps, some mines are over a mile long with mazes of tunnels.

In 1890, after 200 years of mining off and on, the Richmond Coal Fields were dying, not only because of ignorance, but because of the many problems the basin presented.

Although the Pennsylvania and West Virginia coal fields had started earlier, The Bureau of Mine Inspection was created in 1912 due to the many deaths in the Richmond Mines.

Coal mining was attempted many times in this century up until 1955, but all failed. Also VPI estimates there are 750 billion cubic feet of gas in the Richmond Basin. Many drill sites dot the landscape as people tried to extract the gasses; all failed as well. The last pumping station was closed in 1996 in Winterpock.

The mining forefathers of Chesterfield County should be memorialized, perhaps with a statue paying tribute to their historic efforts under unusual conditions, and for which many struggled and sacrificed their lives for a failed industry.

