

The Messenger

OF THE CHESTERFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA

Issue Number 56

April 2001

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Chesterfield Historical Society
Online Web Site
Under Front Mailing Label

Tradition

Traditionalists are pessimists about the future and optimists about the past.

—Lewis Mumford

2001chsnl2.pub

220th Anniversary of the Burning of Chesterfield Courthouse

By Dennis P. Farmer

We don't know his name, or how tall he was, or what he thought about that morning in the Virginia countryside. It was spring here in Chesterfield and he had come some twelve miles already this day. A short, heavy rifle and a hunting sword were his defense, along with the skills that a veteran would acquire in a hard fought war, thousands of miles from home. His dark green wool coat, faced with a crimson red cloth, was much worn and showed signs of every camp, march and skirmish that a Yager¹ would have been in.

His eyes would dart left and right, looking for any sign of rebel ambuscade². A quick hand motion and his three companions would step out onto the road leading to the Courthouse. Some distance behind was the sound of horsemen, the vanguard of General William Phillips' division of the British army in Virginia. The long dusty road from Petersburg was called Brander's Bridge Road but across Swift Creek, the old bridge was in flames, torched by the rearguard of Phillips' command.

William Phillips was a rare officer in the army of King George III. He was the only Major General of Royal Artillery who commanded infantry and horsemen as well as his Royal Artillerymen. In the King's service, gunners simply did not lead troops, but Phillips was not the ordinary gunner. Personal friends with Sir Henry Clinton and Charles, Lord Cornwallis, he also made personal correspondence with Sir Jeffery Amherst, the Commander-in-Chief of all British soldiers worldwide. After his capture at Saratoga, as a paroled prisoner, he played cards with Thomas Jefferson.

As for Jefferson and his cause, the Royal army had struck hard at the Virginia patriots. First the traitor, Benedict Arnold, serving as a British Brigadier General, took Richmond on January 5, 1781; then on March 20, Phillips arrived with 2,000 fresh troops to take command

Cont'd page 5

Chesterfield Historical Society Officers

President — Rebecca P. Badger

1st Vice-President - Doris Hancock

2nd Vice-President - Rachel Lipowicz

Recording Secretary - Phyllis K. Bass

Corresponding Secretary - Tamara Puster

Treasurer — G. David Brown

Directors

Beverley Coleman,
Bruce Baker, James Daniels,
Paul Shelton,
Ed Henderson,
Dr. George Partin,
Arline McGuire,
Betty Matthews, Angela Wilderman

Staff

Dennis P. Farmer,
Executive Director

James W. Hollomon,
Assistant Director
Jan Suttentfield,
Administrative Assistant
Tamara Puster,
Gift Shop Manager

Hours of Operation

All Museums
10:00 A.M. — 4:00 P.M.
Monday - Friday
1:00 P.M. — 4:00 P.M. on Sunday
Call (804) 777-9663 for Information

Editor
Mason T. Chalkley

Ettrick Historical Society

Ettrick has a rich history and it needs to be preserved before it is lost. You are invited to join us and see what the past was like and the future can be.

The next meeting will be April 19 at 7:00 p.m. at the Marsh-Anderson House, 21101 Chesterfield Avenue, Ettrick. For additional information please call Mary Ellen Anderson at (804) 526-8367

New Members

CHS extends a warm welcome to the following members who have joined since December 1, 2000

Ms. Joyce Albrecht
Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Anderson (Mary Ellen)
Ms. Diane H. Benton
Mr. Richard K. Burch
Mr. Bruce D. Burton
Ms. Tess Conklin and Chris Green
Mrs. Lois Everet
Mr. and Mrs. Michael R. Henry (Margot)
Mr. Peter Lipowicz, Misses Hana and Nissa Lipowicz
Mr. Raymond B. Norton
Mrs. Emily Golightly Rusk
Ms. Kathie Russell-Walton
Mr. William F. Stevens, Jr.
Ms. Frosty Taylor
Ms. Dorothy L. Walshe



UKROP'S GOLDEN GIFTS PROGRAM

Please remember to save your Ukrop's Golden Gifts receipt when you receive it in the mail and forward to the Society. As always, these funds will greatly benefit the Society and we appreciate everyone's support. **THANK YOU!!!**

The Bon Air Historical Society

cordially invites you to attend
Victorian Day in Old Bon Air
Festival and Sale
Saturday, May 12, 2001
10-3 p.m.

(Bon Air Christian Church on Buford Road)

Director's Message

by Dennis P. Farmer

School tours of the Grange and Museum have started again...one of the sure signs of Spring for historical societies and museums alike. This year we are offering even more than in the past. A new outreach has begun with over 30 classes hosted to date and some 600 children added to our year totals. The tours of our sites were also joined this year by the Virginia Association of Museum's annual conference in Richmond. The only "out of area tour" offered this year was to Eppington and Magnolia Grange. Our reception of VAM guests offered a greater exposure to the rest of Virginia as we displayed two of Chesterfield's fine historical places to other museum staff and volunteers.

Through the Chesterfield Heritage Roundtable, our heritage sites in the county have all received a marketing boost in the form of two matching grants, totaling some \$22,000 for two brochures and a web site which will allow us to reach out into the regional market, as well as increase our own Society efforts. Remember, it is still word of mouth that is our number one tool for getting visitors. You, as a member, are one of the best sources of civic pride in our heritage to promote this.

In driving by Castlewood, some of you will have noticed that the Virginia Department of Transportation has planted a series of oak trees along the VDOT right of way on Iron Bridge Road. This landscaping is part of the 1977 effort on VDOT's master plan for the area on both sides of Route 10 near the Courthouse. Magnolia Grange had its plantings in the Fall of 2000. Reaching up to forty feet when mature, these will improve our overall appearance.

Working with our board, Historical Preservation Committee and Department of General Services for Chesterfield County, we plan repairs and landscaping for both Magnolia Grange and Castlewood this year. I have been recruiting a possible Eagle Scout to undertake this task with careful guidance from both County and Society. All in all, we are continuing the ongoing preservation efforts for our sites for generations to come.

Out On A Limb

Submitted by Angela Wilderman

The Genealogical Records Committee is finalizing the book of marriages. This publication is just under 400 pages and contains the abstracts of consent letters, marriage bonds and ministers' returns, samples of the records as well as samples of ministers' licenses to perform marriages. The abstracts are alphabetized by groom and an index with the following headings: bride, bride (free person of color, general, minister, and place name index). Please fill out the order form and send in your check for a copy.

**Marriages of Chesterfield County, Virginia
Abstracted From Microfilm - 1771-1854**

Pre-publication price until May 15, 2001: \$30.00 plus \$1.35 tax.

After that date, each book will be \$35.00 plus \$1.58 tax.

Postage & handling \$4.00.

Name: _____

Street: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Number of copies ordered: _____

Amount enclosed: _____

Payable to: Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia**Send order form & payment to:****Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia****Attn: Genealogical Records Committee****P0 Box 40****Chesterfield, VA 23832**

If you wish to save on postage and handling by receiving your copy at the Chesterfield Historical Society, indicate here and we will call you upon publication. _____

For further information about the publication, contact angenatree@aol.com

CALL TO ARMS

The Chesterfield County Militia expects to muster in the Fall to meet the invasion of Virginia by the British Crown Forces under General Charles Cornwallis.

If you wish to defend the county from British roguery or would like more information, please contact member Al Hahn at 739-0601.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Rebecca Badger

There are many reasons to be proud of the richness and breadth of our organization. We possess a wealth of talent and expertise to document our existence. Working toward preservation are dedicated volunteers and staff, in tandem with the generous support of gifts and funding from private, corporate and government sources. The collective impact of our historic sites is surely a strong testament to the value of the Society's legacy.

It seems incredible that in only 20 years, all of these attributes have been cultivated and nurtured to such an impressive effect. Join the people who want to celebrate this benchmark. We are planning events this fall and desire your participation in this process to honor our past. Won't you contact the Society's administrative office to lend your talent and spirit?

Burning, cont'd

at Portsmouth. After reforming the Royal troops, the British again advanced up the James River. A column of the Loyalist troops³, the Queen's Rangers under Lieutenant Colonel John Graves Simcoe, assaulted Williamsburg to distract rebel attention from the main attack towards Petersburg.

Simcoe's Rangers rejoined the main Royal force before Petersburg in time for the Battle of Blandford on April 25, 1781. Jefferson had ordered out many of Virginia's militia, including the Chesterfield County militia, to join both State and Continental troops under the command of Major General Frederick William Augustus, Baron von Steuben. The drillmaster of Valley Forge had been appointed to raise new levies⁴ in Virginia and had been appointed as commander by Governor Jefferson. Virginia's militiamen were quickly called up, but many lacked weapons or camp equipment and a statewide shortage of ammunition would affect any defense.

With some 1600 men and two cannon, Von Steuben prepared to hold Blandford and delay the British. Colonel Robert Goode's Chesterfield Regiment was active in the battle that followed. Baron Von Steuben wrote of his plans that "the conclusion was to fight and try the Militia"⁵ While the militia performed with gallantry, the professional British soldiers out fought and maneuvered them, forcing a retreat across the Appomattox River under the covering fire of Captain Lewis Booker's artillery.

With some 150 Whig and 30 British losses, the action proved that the Virginia Militia would fight steadily and that the English invaders were skillful and dangerous foes. The Pocahontas Bridge, a 12-foot by 35-foot wooden construction was a focal point of the battle. The militia used it to retire at the end of the action, and prevented the British from an effective pursuit afterwards. Virginia riders were dispatched to call for reinforcements, powder, shot and more weapons for a new stand, but Von Steuben wisely retired through Chesterfield County towards Richmond and the west, to avoid a second fight without ammunition.

Phillips selected the Chesterfield Courthouse and the Virginia State Navy at Osborne's Landing for his next target. Splitting his command into two divisions, he dispatched one under Benedict Arnold towards Osborne's Landing while marching with the two light infantry battalions, the cavalry of the Queen's Rangers and a half company of Hessian Yagers under his own command towards the Courthouse. Von Steuben's militia retired towards to Courthouse, but many scattered, and the lack of ammunition prevented any real hope of a new stand.

Arnold's command made up of all four British cannon, the 76th and 80th Regiments Cont'd page 6

Burning, cont'd

of Foot⁶, the infantry of the Queen's Rangers, a half company of Yagers, and the American Legion, Arnold's own unit of American Loyalists. These troops destroyed the Virginia State Navy on April 27, 1781 at the Landing, now located at the Dutch Gap Conservation area.

Philips' command, marching via Brander's Bridge road, reached the Courthouse around noon on April 27th. The American defenders, without enough wagons to withdraw all the military stores at the Courthouse, were forced to retire to Falling Creek, south of Richmond. The British began to burn the 160 wooden huts, which provided housing for as many as 2,000 recruits. During the past few months the Courthouse had been used to produce uniform jackets, overalls (long trousers), shoes, cartridge boxes and other vital items for Virginia's soldiers. In addition, flour and tobacco (used to pay for almost anything in Virginia during the war) were stored in the jail and other structures near by.

While the British soldiers burned the huts and other structures, the Courthouse itself was not likely burned, only the interior items and furniture. It must be remembered that the British army was trying to restore lawful Royal authority in the Colonies and that destroying the court building would not be in the interests of the Royal cause. With that the King's men departed, marching to reunite with the rest of the Crown soldiers at Osborne's Landing.

¹ Yager, modern spelling is Jager and the German meaning is "hunter".

² Ambuscade, modern spelling is ambush, a sudden surprise attack from concealment.

³ Loyalists were the people who supported the King also called Tories, after the political party in Britain. Whig's (the opposition party) were supporters of Congress or the rebels.

⁴ Levies were raised here in Virginia from all enrolled militiamen. These troops were needed to replace the crippling losses in the Virginia Continental Line in 1780 due to the capture of Charleston South Carolina. This was Virginia's first draft.

⁵ Where a Man Can Go by Robert Davis, p.146

⁶ Regiment of Foot, the name of a British infantry unit, both of these regiments were Scottish, one a highland unit, the other a low land Scots command.

Chesterfield Courthouse Ceremony April 26th, 2001

On Thursday, April 26th, 2001 please come to Historical Chesterfield Courthouse to join with us in a Ceremony from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. This will feature Revolutionary War Living History units in drill. The Chesterfield Community Band will offer a concert and after some remarks, the County Museum will be open free of charge.

Cemetery Committee

The Cemetery Committee is seeking a lawyer willing to donate a few hours of their time to discuss with the Committee the Code of Virginia as it pertains to burying grounds. If you can give this time, please contact the Society's offices at 777-9663.

FROM THE LIBRARY

We wish to thank the following members and friends for the generosity in giving these books and manuscripts to our library.

Gift of the Bailey Family Foundation: The Bailey Family by Netti Schreiner-Yantis.

Gifts of Carson G. Boshier: Ancestral Vignettes of the Virginia Eubanks by Roger Tate Eubank; George Eubank, a Virginian of the War of the Revolution by Roger Tate Eubank.

Gift of the author: Rev. Augustine Eastin of Virginia and Kentucky by Bill and Phyllis Clendaniel.

Gift of the author: Enon Baptist Church, the First 150 Years by Evelyn L. Cox.

Gift of Jim Daniels: History of the Landers Family in America; The Royal Lineage of Anne West Who Married Henry Fox of Huntington, King William, Virginia.

Gift of Shirley Diller: An Atlas of Virginia by Dr. Steven K. Pontius.

Gift of the author: Farrar's Island, Its Place in Virginia's History, by Walter Jervis Sheffield.

Gift of Virginia Frymier: A History of Central Baptist Church by William D. Dietrick, Jr.

Gift of the authors: An Illustrated History of Forest Hill Park by Lynne Ann George and Monica S. Rumsey.

Gift of Fred Jurgens: A History of the Midlothian Coal Mines by Charles Ray Routon.

Gifts of Donna K. Schneider: Virginians at Home: Family Life in the Eighteenth Century by Edmund S. Morgan; Historical Archaeology by Ivor Noel Hume; Here Lies Virginia by Ivor Noel Hume.

Gift of Angie Wilderman: Scottish Surnames by George Mackay.

Deserving of special commendation is a manuscript recently received from member Terry Owens Roach entitled A Death Register Index of Chesterfield County, Virginia, 1866-1896. A project requiring two years' work, Terry carefully transcribed the information from old handwriting on microfilm at the Library of Virginia. Now printed and arranged alphabetically, it is a valuable resource for genealogists researching this time period in Chesterfield History.

Also of special interest is another manuscript on the Midlothian Coal Mines, as noted above. Written in 1949 by "Charlie" Routon, a much-loved history teacher at Midlothian High School for a Master's Thesis while attending the University of Richmond, it gives a very different perspective on this county historic site. There are many inquiries on this subject in the library, especially as developers takeover more and more land for shopping centers, subdivisions and roads in the Midlothian area.

We thank all of these contributors whose support added valuable resources to our library.

DuVal Family Association Reunion

June 21-24, 2000

Omni Hotel

Richmond, Virginia

Desendants of Daniel DuVal 1

Huguenot Immigrant

Gloucester County, Virginia

Richmond Area Contact: Mrs. Katherine Lewis, 12204 Timbercross Place, Richmond, VA 23233, (804) 360-1087

**CHESTERFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
APRIL QUARTERLY MEETING
TO BE HELD AT 2:00 P.M., SUNDAY, APRIL 22, 2001**

This is a walking tour of the Grove Shaft mine ruins in Midlothian. (Wear comfortable shoes.)

Tours given by: Tom Garner and Dennis Farmer

Parking will be allowed at the Midlothian YMCA, 727 Coalfield Road, with transportation provided to the mine site. Please arrive around 1:45 to allow time to be taken to the site.

Directions:

From Midlothian: Take Midlothian Pike (60) to Coalfield Road (754) and turn left. YMCA is located at 727 Coalfield Road.

From Chesterfield Courthouse: Take 288. After crossing 360 exit get in left lane and go to end. Loop off onto Rt. 76 South (Old Hundred Road Exit). Go to first stop light and turn right onto Coalfield Road. Follow the detour signs turning right onto Woodridge Road at the stop light. The YMCA is on the corner of Coalfield Road and Woodridge Road. Look for designated parking area.

From Hull Street: Follow 288 directions or take Genito Road (604) to Coalfield Road (754) and follow detour directions given above.

Refreshments to be served at the YMCA after the tour.

SEE YOU THERE!

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

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