Historical Society of Western Virginia

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Historical Society of Western Virginia

Amor montium nos movet

(For the love of mountains inspires us)

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The Journal, Vol. XIX, No. 2, chronicles the history of the Commonwealth west of the Blue Ridge. Published by the Historical Society of Western Virginia (formerly the Roanoke Historical Society), P.O. Box 1904, Roanoke, VA, 24008. The price for additional copies is $5 for members, $10 for non-members. The Society welcomes unsolicited material but submissions cannot be returned and the Society is not responsible for damage or loss.

On the cover: Lewis Miller's sketch of the Courthouse Square in Christiansburg in 1831 (See story, page 12)

This issue of the Journal was made possible by
The Kegley Publications Fund

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Above: detail from Lewis Miller's "Fishing at New River." Story, page 12.

Note From the Executive Director

The year 2010 has been a busy year for the Historical Society, and as we enter 2011 we are taking on even more projects. Beginning in January, the staff and board of directors will be participating in strategic planning. As we begin renovations at the History Museum of Western Virginia and complete Phase IV of our capital campaign, we want to set a course of action for the next five years. We will be reviewing all of our operations to see how we can sustain our steady growth and continue to be a good investment of your contributions.

Although we had planned to relocate the History Museum last fall, our new date is June 2011. This move will be temporary, about 18 months, and the History Museum will maintain as many programs as possible, along with a special exhibition called Hometown Stars. Our temporary location will be the Shenandoah Hotel building (the former Twist & Turns location) at Campbell Avenue and Williamson Road.

Jeanne Bollendorf

The collection inventory has progressed steadily with the help of some very dedicated interns and volunteers; we have been able to discover some wonderful gems that will be incorporated into the new galleries. There will continue to be changes ahead, some temporary, some not, and we certainly appreciate your patience as we work through them. There are dramatic renovations ahead for the galleries and displays in the History Museum, and we welcome your contributions to our continued fundraising efforts.

An integral part of our outreach includes technology. Over the coming months, there will be updates to the look and content of our website. We have joined the social networking culture and are now on Facebook. We are working tirelessly on the Virtual Collections project. The digitization of the Historical Society's collections at both the History Museum and the Link Museum is an important aspect of our outreach.

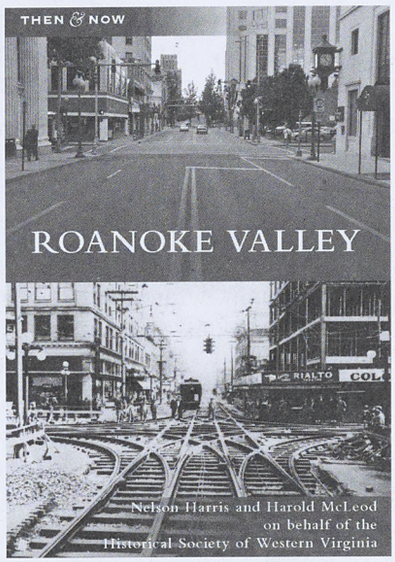
The benefits of putting this information on the Internet are that we can design multiple perpetual exhibitions that don't require physical space; our employees can easily access documents or artifacts that will be used for exhibition, education and research; and researchers and hobbyists from all over the world can connect to our organization and learn about us or become members.

We are looking forward to seeing you. Do drop in!

Jeanne M. Bollendorf
Executive Director

Society Premieres Two Books

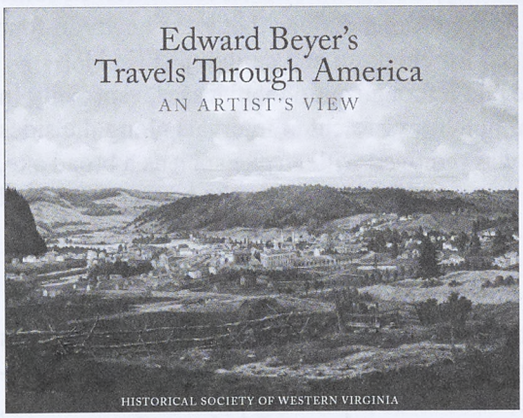
In addition to our Journal, each year the Historical Society publishes books through Kegley Publications and in 2011 we are premiering two new publications. Both books are accompanied by special exhibitions at the O. Winston Link Museum and the History Museum of Western Virginia.



Then & Now: Roanoke Valley (with Arcadia Publishing) is a pictorial look at Roanoke's past compared with images of Roanoke as it looks today, with a foreword about photographer George C. Davis. This book was generously sponsored by the Wachovia Foundation. Harold McLeod and the Rev. Nelson Harris co-authored the book and McLeod served as photographer for the modern-day images.

The historic photographs used in the book, predominantly by George C. Davis, come from the collections of the Historical Society of Western Virginia, the Virginia Room, and the collection of Frank Ewald. After more than a century of development, this region has undergone dramatic change and the book serves as a chronicle of those changes.

Edward Beyer's Travels Through America: An Artist's View (with Blackwell Press) is a special edition of a never-before-published manuscript with an introduction and numerous illustrations of the artist's work. Edward Beyer was a German artist who lived and traveled in the United States in the 1840s and 1850s. He made drawings of many of the springs of Virginia, especially in the rural western part of the Commonwealth, in exchange for free board and $50.



Beyer also supervised the printing of his *Album of Virginia*, produced for sale to subscribers in Virginia in 1856. After personally delivering his *Album of Virginia* to his Richmond subscribers in 1857, he created a "Panorama of American Views," a cyclorama of scenes from his travels, which was exhibited to the German public, accompanied by a narration and exhibited in Meissen, Munich, and Hamburg. Although the paintings of the cyclorama have been lost or destroyed, the original narrative survives as published in German. The Historical Society acquired the rights to the only English translation and has reprinted the narrative with an introduction to the artist and his work, written by George A. McLean, Jr. The book contains many illustrations of Beyer's paintings and lithographs from his travels, some never published.

Defining and Dating Log Buildings in Southwest Virginia

by Michael J. Pulice

Virginia is home to some of the nation's earliest and purest forms of log buildings, since the technology was likely introduced first to the mid-Atlantic states, primarily Pennsylvania and Maryland, by Germanic immigrants in the 17th century. As huge waves of Scots-Irish immigrants also arrived, beginning about 1717, they quickly embraced log construction because it was well suited to the frontier; thus it spread with the flow of mainly Scots-Irish and German migration to the south and southwest via the Great Valley of Virginia.

The first log buildings in Virginia might not have been erected until the western lands were opened up for settlement around 1730, since the English colonists, who arrived earlier, favored post-and-beam and/or masonry construction. It appears unlikely that any log buildings from the first half of the 18th century survive in Virginia, and examples built before the last quarter of the 18th century are extremely rare, especially in southwestern Virginia, here defined as the area south and west of Augusta County.

Log buildings represent a simple but historically important form of construction, a product of once-common knowledge that has become obsolete, and a number of the best and least-altered examples are lost annually. The author has researched log construction for many years and has documented countless log buildings, forming the basis of this article. In order to promote awareness and appreciation, as well as heighten understanding among readers, the major variations and common nomenclature for log structures and their components, as well as some important aspects to consider, are discussed in a concise format.

Hewn Logs

This article focuses on early, hewn-log construction, as opposed to round-log construction, which was rare before the 20th century. Though round logs came into use in Southside tobacco barns in the late 19th century, most early tobacco barns and virtually all other types of barns had hewn logs. Hewing consisted of removing sufficient wood to create a relatively flat surface. For the vast majority of buildings, logs were hewn on both sides, but were not worked on the top or bottom, leaving rounded surfaces, often with bark still attached. However, the bottom and top logs within a structure, referred to as the sill and top plate, respectively, are often hewn on four sides. In some cases, outbuildings situated close to a house were carefully built of dovetail-notched logs that were hewn on four sides, or squared. Squared logs fit tightly together, eliminating the need for chinking and daubing. [Fig. 1]

The tools commonly used in hewing include a typical felling axe and a foot adze. In many cases, especially in the 18th and early 19th centuries, a broad axe was also used. Vertical notches were cut at intervals along the sides of a log with a felling axe, the bulk of the wood between the notches was removed with an axe such as a broad axe, and the log was finished with a foot adze. The adze removed smaller amounts of wood, and in the hands of a skilled worker, would leave a flat and fairly smooth finish.

Log Pens

A log pen may be defined as a single, four-walled unit of logs notched together at the corners. Individual pens were usually connected indirectly, joined together using different methods in order to enlarge a building. The manner in which two or more pens are joined is a chief defining feature, such as how pens are physically connected,

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and their orientation and spatial relationship to each other. Even if the logs are hidden by exterior cladding, individual pens can usually be discerned.

Examples of two or more log pens actually notched together as one are not unheard of, but seem to have been extremely rare. Also uncommon are examples of two full pens built years apart, abutted and connected together, such as the Yeatts House in Pittsylvania County [Fig. 2], and the Howbert House in Roanoke County, demolished in 1999. [Fig. 3] Inside, the rooms were connected by walk-through openings.

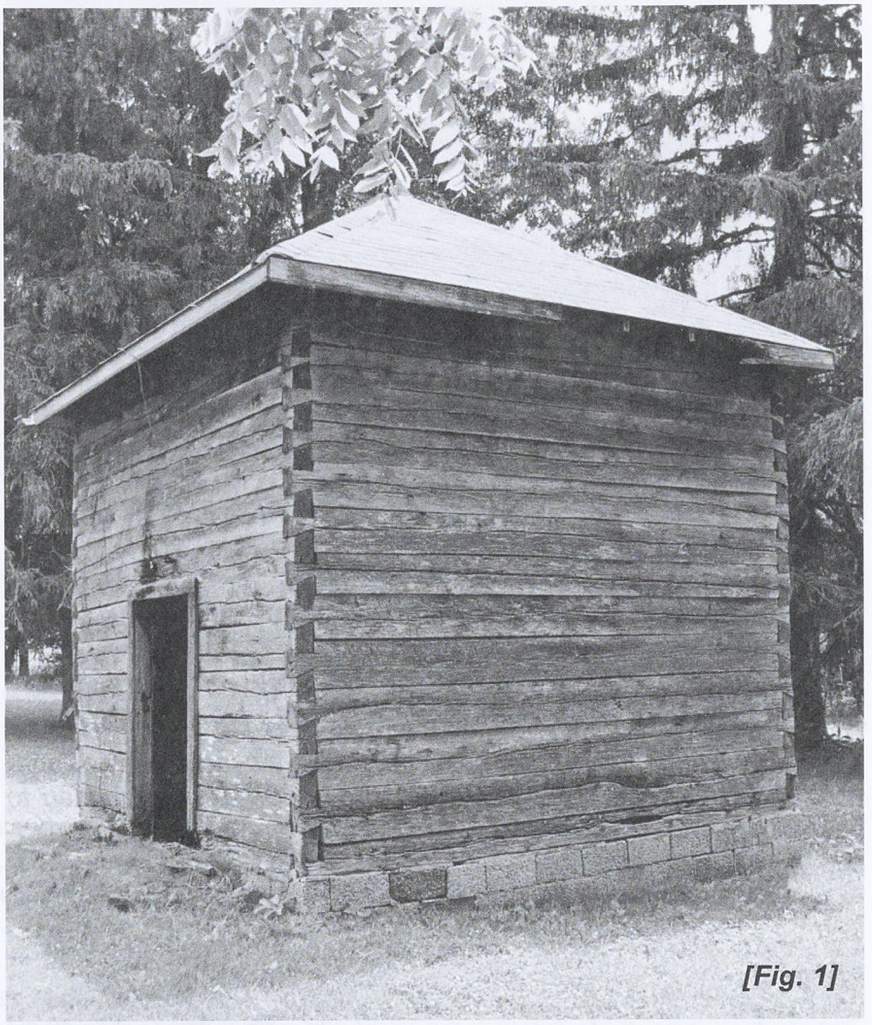


Fig. 1. This striking smokehouse in Pulaski County has half-dovetail-notched logs that are beautifully hewn on four sides to fit tightly together, eliminating the need for chinking and daubing. Similar examples with sawn, rather than hewn logs, are referred to as plank buildings. [All photos by the author, 2005-2009, except where noted.]

Common Log House Configurations

Single-pens are the most common log houses. They can be 1-story, 1 1/2-story, or two full stories in height. A 1 1/2-story house has three or four logs above the level of the upper floor, where the floor joists are notched into the outer wall and are visible from the exterior. A person cannot stand at full height upstairs unless standing away from the eaves, near the center of the room. Virtually all single-pen houses have (or had) an exterior chimney on one end of the building, or on both ends if the pen is divided into two rooms. Two-story pens usually have fireplaces on both floors; 1 1/2-story examples sometimes do as well.

Dogtrot log structures consist of two pens built separately with an open space between them, all under one roof. They were once very common and may not yet be terribly rare, but they are hard to discover because the open space in the middle, called a dogtrot, is almost always framed-in and covered with weatherboards or some such cladding. Dogtrot houses have two chimneys — one at each exterior end. [Fig. 4]

Saddlebag houses are fairly similar to dogtrots, but were perhaps even more common. Instead of an open space between them, two log pens are built on each side of a single, typically massive chimney, with fireplaces in both sides. This arrangement saved the labor of building another chimney and allowed for windows in the end walls. [Figs. 5a and 5b]

Corner Notching

The types of corner notches employed in log pens varied between builders and perhaps cultural groups early on, and some were favored in limited geographical areas. However, notches are generally not indicative of any spe-

Fig 2. The Yeatts House in Pittsylvania County consists of two one-story log pens, built circa 1818 and circa 1830, simply abutted to each other, with a walk-through passage inside – a rare configuration.

[Fig. 3]

Fig. 3. The Howbert House, a substantial, two-story structure demolished in 1999, stood near the intersection of Salem Turnpike and Peters Creek Road in Roanoke. The smaller, V-notched pen (left) was added to the larger, full-dovetail-notched pen using two 8"x 8" corner posts abutted to the original structure. The front- and rear-wall logs of the added pen were then mortised into the corner posts. (Photo credit: Anne Beckett)

cific time period. In most areas of southwestern Virginia, the V-notch is predominant among survivals built throughout the late 18th and 19th centuries. [Figs. 2, 4, 6b, 8a.] It is a relatively simple notch to cut with hatchet and chisel.

The second most common corner notch in southwestern Virginia, the half-dovetail, was the overwhelming first choice of builders in some areas. [Fig. 1.] The half-dovetail was a simplified version of the full-dovetail, which is used in a wide variety of woodwork types, especially furniture. The full dovetail might have been more common in the 18th century than other notches, but it does not follow that full-dovetail-notched buildings are necessarily older than those with other types of notching.

Square notching is much less common throughout western Virginia. Although conventionally thought to have been popularized much later, it became common in the Piedmont region, that includes Bedford, Franklin, Henry and Pittsylvania counties, by the early 19th century. More a lap joint than a true notch, the logs are usually pegged together at the corners, traditionally with a piece of black locust called a trunnel.

Chinking and Daubing

Though today the word chinking is commonly used to mean both chinking and daubing, chinking consisted of sawn or split pieces of wood, or sometimes stones, wedged between two logs. [Figs. 6a and 6b] It served as filler and backing for daubing, which was mud, often mixed with a binder such as livestock hair and/or a quantity of slaked (hydrated) lime. Because the chinking was tightly wedged into place, it also added to overall structural stability and reduced move-

ment and vibration. A heavy coat of whitewash, made with lime, was usually applied to the outer surface of the daubing as a protectant and consolidant.

Fig. 4. Ivy Cliff servant quarters (ca. 1840-50) in Bedford County, provide a good example of a one-story, dogtrot house with square-notched logs.

Log House Interiors

Few log pens were divided into separate rooms, but virtually all had an accessible attic space for sleeping or storage. Whitewash, made with slaked lime, was the most typical wall and ceiling treatment in modest log houses, even after the Civil War. It was applied directly to the exposed logs. Many log and frame houses built before 1850 had vertical, beaded boards on the walls and similar boards on the ceiling. Higher-status log houses were more likely to have plaster walls and ceilings, especially those built later.

Many log houses originally had exterior ladders or stairs to the second floor, since floor space inside was an issue. There are two common types of stairs found inside log houses, both of which required minimal floor space. The hybrid "ladder-stair" was commonly found in modest log houses built before the Civil War. The corner stair, usually "boxed" by a wall with a door, was the most common type found in log houses. [Figs. 7a and 7b]

Non-residential Log Structures

Virtually all types of vernacular buildings in southwestern Virginia were routinely built of logs, including courthouses, churches, schools and mills. Domestic outbuildings built of logs, such as smokehouses, springhouses and granaries, were very common. Large barns became common in southwestern Virginia only after about 1830, but the vast majority of them were built of hewn logs until well after the Civil War. Countless log barns survived well intact until the decline of small-scale agriculture in Virginia during the late 20th century, when many were left vacant and neglected. Undoubtedly, agricultural structures, followed by domestic outbuildings, stand the greatest threats today.

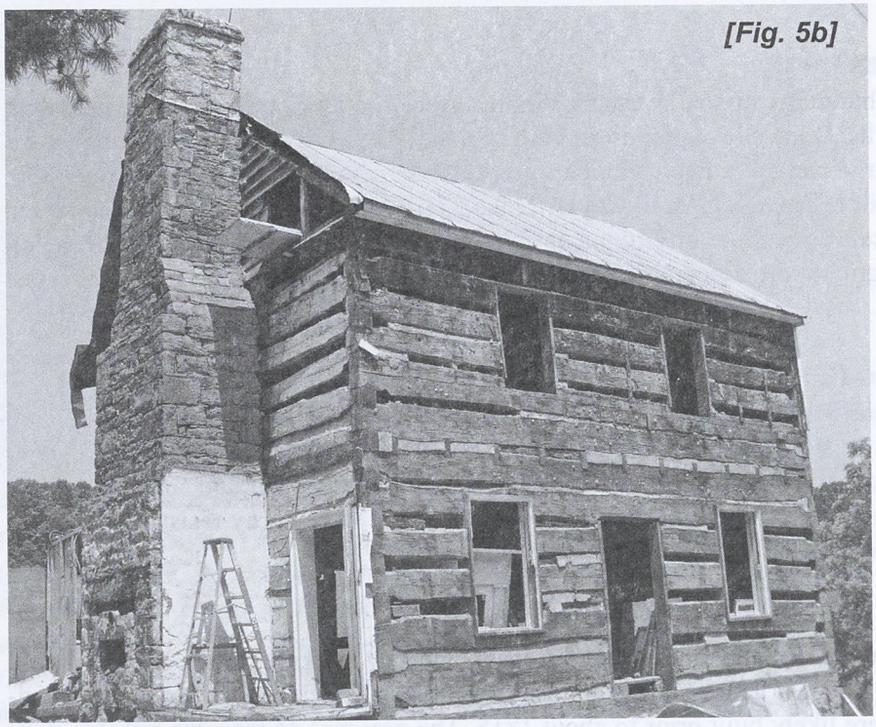
Preferred Tree Species for Log Buildings

In Southwest and Southside Virginia, like many other places, the overwhelmingly preferred species used in log construction was white oak, prized for its strength, decay resistance, relatively light weight and availability. Other commonly used trees include red oak or other oak species, American chestnut, yellow poplar and southern yellow pine. Old-growth pine and poplar trees grew straight and tall with few limbs, and were decay resistant and sufficiently strong; thus logs of these species can still be found in good condition.

Dating Clues

In most any type of historic structure, nails (and other metal fasteners) and saw marks are often strongly relied upon for help in establishing the date of construction. For example, structures in which rosehead or other hand-wrought iron nails are predominant were likely built prior to about 1815. The presence of machine-cut iron nails (with square heads), together with the absence of round-headed wire nails, probably indicates construction dating to the 1815 to 1895 period. Small pieces of wood were sawn by hand, or after about 1800, by water-powered

[Fig. 5a]



[Fig. 5b]

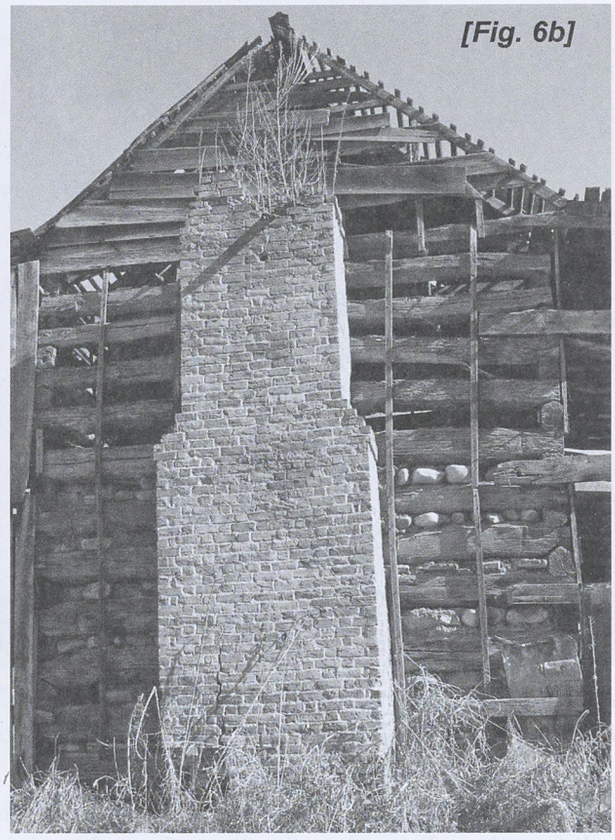
Figs. 5a and 5b. The Stein House in Botetourt County (ca. 1825-1830), photographed prior to, and during disassembly. The house was removed to an unknown location in the county. It was an excellent example of a two-story, V-notched, saddlebag house. Note the fireplace in the exposed side of the chimney.

sawmill with a straight, vertical blade. Radial saw marks generally indicate a post-1830s date. Very often, however, original nails and saw marks are not found in log structures because nails and saws were not needed to build them. If the original floors have been replaced, nail dating is usually not an option. Saw marks may not exist, since floor joists and roof rafters could be hewn rather than sawn, and floorboards were planed, leaving no saw marks.

Most large, heavy, wood members were hewn, rather than sawn, through the 1850s. Nevertheless, other potentially helpful dating clues may still exist, including the presence of hand-planed wooden interior features, such as floor joists and interior wall boards, which often have beaded edges created with a beading plane. [Fig. 8] Hand planing left a smooth, but somewhat uneven surface that is usually visible with angled lighting and easily detectable by hand. Sometimes plaster came as a later improvement, but at times it is clearly part of the original construction. Hand-planing quickly fell out of favor when the steam-powered machine plane became common around 1840. About the same time, lath (nailed strips of wood onto which plaster is applied) became much cheaper due to the increasing presence of steam powered, portable mill saws. Thus, plaster ceilings became more common, and bead-edged floor joists would not have been seen in any case. Before 1840, most lath was split, or riven into pieces by hand, and is easily differentiated from sawn lath.

Dendrochronology (tree-ring dating)

Log buildings, especially when their original architectural features



Figs. 6a and 6b. Two-story log houses, both built between 1830 and 1850, with wood chinking in the left (Craig County) example, and cobblestone chinking in the right (Scott County) example. The daubing has weathered away.

and finishes have been removed or replaced, can be very difficult to date with reasonable accuracy. Dendrochronology (dendro for short), is the only effective absolute dating tool for log structures. However, it is usually costly, both monetarily and in terms of impact to the logs. The sampling procedure, requiring the extraction of a minimum number of either core samples or entire cross sections of logs, may not impair structural strength, but can impact the appearance of logs and the character of a building.

Dendrochronology was developed by foresters as a method for studying annual growing seasons according to tree species. It involves the precise measuring of intervals between growth rings, and comparing the measurements with those from other logs and trees. The tree-ring chronologies used for comparison come from decades of data collected by forest ecologists, climatologists, and others, now compiled in the International Tree Ring Data Bank. By pinpointing not only the year, but the season in which a log was felled, the method can provide accurate construction dates of buildings.

At times, dendro can be worthwhile for research purposes, but the practice should be discouraged for intact, standing structures, especially if intended for the mere purposes of satisfying one's curiosity. Use of the dating clues described above might obviate the need for dendro. Sampling strategies are very important and should not be taken lightly. Moreover, given the hardness of centuries-old logs, the work tends to be difficult and painfully laborious. Each sample must include the outer layer of wood, just beneath the bark, and must have a minimum of 80 growth rings.

The Decline of Log Construction

In much of western Virginia, building with logs remained the most common form of construction until the 1850s. By then, mill-sawn lumber had become widely available and more affordable; yet hewn log construction

Fig. 8. Hand-planed, beaded floor boards, nailed to hand-planed, beaded joists, which suggest a pre-1840 construction date.

continued in rural areas until around the turn of the 20th century. During the interim, the quality of log craftsmanship declined gradually, but noticeably. Log homes came to be viewed as rustic, and owners surely felt stigmatized to some degree. They were then more likely to clad their homes with exterior siding so they would not be conspicuous among new frame houses. As a sacrificial envelope, wood siding proved effective in protecting and preserving many log houses to this day. Nevertheless, the number of survivals has diminished alarmingly in the past several decades.

Threats Against Log Building Preservation

People have forgotten how to repair, or even maintain log buildings. Poor maintenance leads to drainage issues and decay from the ground up, and damaged logs at or near the base of a structure are very difficult to replace. Examples of well-constructed log houses in terminal or near terminal condition are easily spotted in southwestern Virginia, to say nothing of the thousands of deteriorating log tobacco barns across Southside.

Where neglect and deterioration have not destroyed log buildings, there are other foes to be reckoned with, one of which, ironically, is "restoration." Often it is better described as adaptive re-use, in which little regard is given to historical accuracy. Because of the difficulty of replacing damaged logs, attempts to restore log buildings very often involve disassembly and reassembly of the entire structure, which is not a task for novices. On the contrary, such a project is normally fraught with unforeseen pitfalls that require good skills and innovative solutions. Once log buildings are "restored" in this way, their historic value is inevitably compromised.

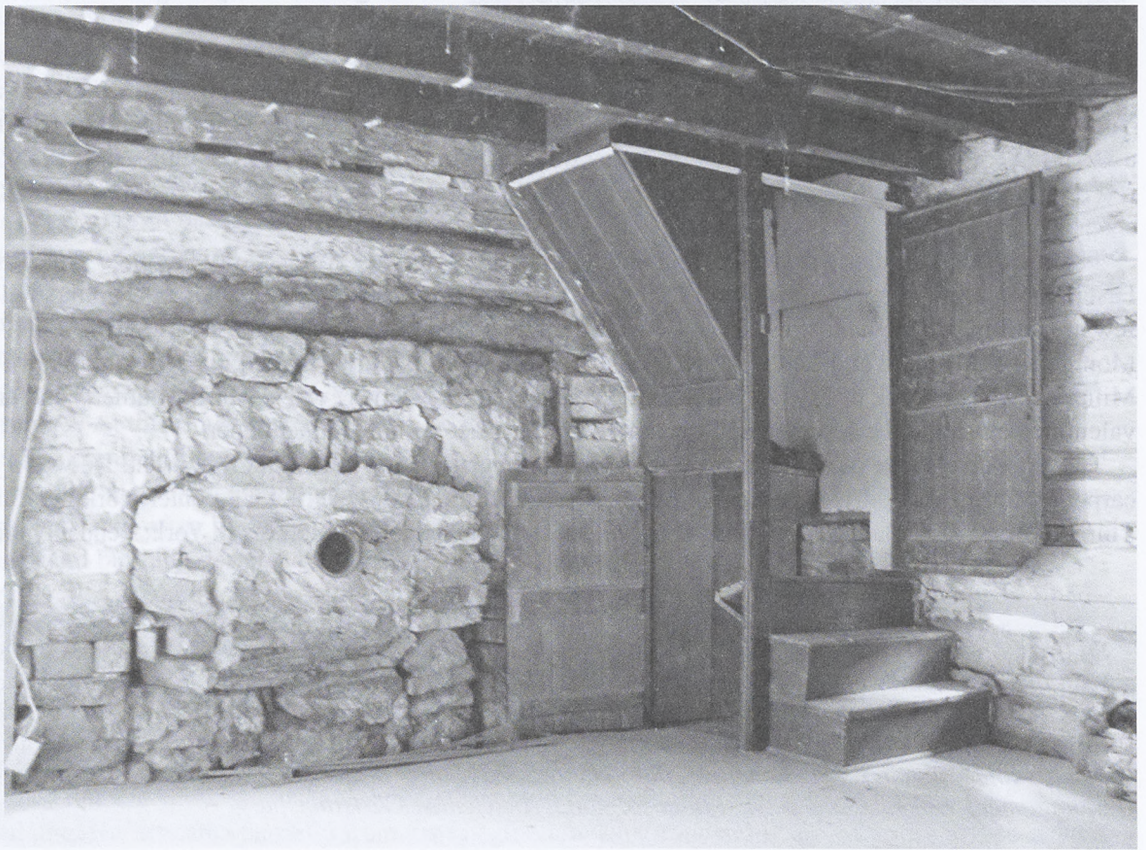
Another aggressive adversary of log building preservation is the business of salvaging of logs for resale, often in the lucrative form of sawn, specialty lumber. Owners of highly visible, vacant or under-utilized log buildings are frequently approached by profiteers scouting for such finds. Log barns are often targeted for their thousands of board feet with few instances of nails. In many cases, owners have few alternatives and are unaware of their building's intrinsic value.

Conclusion

Hewn log buildings are relics of the bygone era of truly vernacular building construction. They are emblematic of the settlement and early growth of the United States, and iconic reminders of the independent spirit of the pioneers. Yet in the flesh, they are ephemeral, generally underappreciated and spottily documented. The reader is encouraged to investigate and document them before a calamity happens; and to make the records available to others by filing them with local historical societies and the state archives at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Opposite: Figs. 7a and 7b. A ladder stair in a circa 1840 house, Botetourt County (top), and a boxed-in corner stair in Pittsylvania County (bottom).

[Fig. 7a]



[Fig. 7b]

Lewis Miller ~

Folk Artist and Chronicler of the 19th Century

by Su Clauson-Wicker

Lewis Miller was not a native of Virginia, but perhaps partly because he saw everything with fresh eyes the artist was fascinated by the scenery and culture of Montgomery County and its surroundings. He created an estimated 170-200 sketches of the South during his fifteen documented trips to Virginia between 1851 and his death in 1882.*(1)* During his Virginia stays, Miller and his Christiansburg relatives would drive through the countryside in a horse-drawn buggy, stopping at caves, villages and overlooks. He came to adopt Christiansburg as the home of his senior years, moving there permanently in the mid-1870s.*(2)* Over five decades and an aggregated twenty years, Miller delineated every place he visited in Virginia in a number of sketchbooks. Their subjects vary from portraits to landscapes to a slave auction and a snake-killing expedition.

Although no evidence exists that Miller ever received formal artistic training, he displayed a natural talent for capturing the quirks, personality and dynamics of a person or place. Miller's position in the annals of American art, however, is not based solely upon his artistic skills, but upon his scope and pictorial accuracy in chronicling the life of rural people in the nineteenth century.

"Historians for many years to come will be deeply indebted to this highly observant Pennsylvania German carpenter whose work establishes for him, beyond a doubt, a position as one of America's greatest folk artists," observed Donald Shelley, executive director of Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village in his introduction to "Lewis Miller, Sketches and Chronicles."*(3)* Miller kept a lifelong pictorial diary, accompanied by text in English, German, Latin or a combination of languages, commenting about everything he saw, momentous or trivial.

Miller had a zest for details, a curious spirit, and the insight of the true reporter. His drawings include a number of major historical events, such as George Washington's funeral procession, General Lafayette arriving in York, Pennsylvania, and the capture of Jefferson Davis disguised in his wife's clothing, all of which Miller probably did not witness. More often, though, he captured the small details of everyday life: the "Franklin" lightning rod on the Christiansburg courthouse, the spear used for gigging fish in 1827, the way apple butter kettles were shaped.

The majority of Miller's original works are held in Pennsylania's York County Heritage Trust, the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond, and the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center in Colonial Williamsburg. A few are still in private hands; in fact, a Lewis Miller sketchbook was sold on eBay as late as 2004. The Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center in Christiansburg is fortunate to have two original Miller sketches, "Rock of My Salvation" and "Monument in Memory of Dr. Martin Luther," and an original valentine painstakingly designed and decorated by the artist on lined tablet paper.

The extensive scope of Miller's work is unmatched by any other American folk artist. He was a journeyman carpenter for at least thirty years, according to a self-portrait, "Lewis Miller Carpenter working at the Trade for Thirty Years."*(4)* He labored on most, if not all, of the major public structures in York, Pennsylvania, during

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This article first appeared in Virginia's Montgomery County, *published by the Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center in 2009. The text and Lewis Miller sketches are used by permission of the Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center, Christiansburg.*

those years. He also displayed great ability as a sculptor of wood. The most outstanding example is a woodcarving from the doorway of his parents' home, a pediment crowned with human heads, animals and birds in crisp pseudo-medieval style. A mantelpiece and a few other examples of carved architectural woodwork by Miller have also been found.*(5)* Miller's other talents were a sense of music, poetry, religion and philosophy, probably inculcated by a classical education under his father.

Lewis Miller: His Life

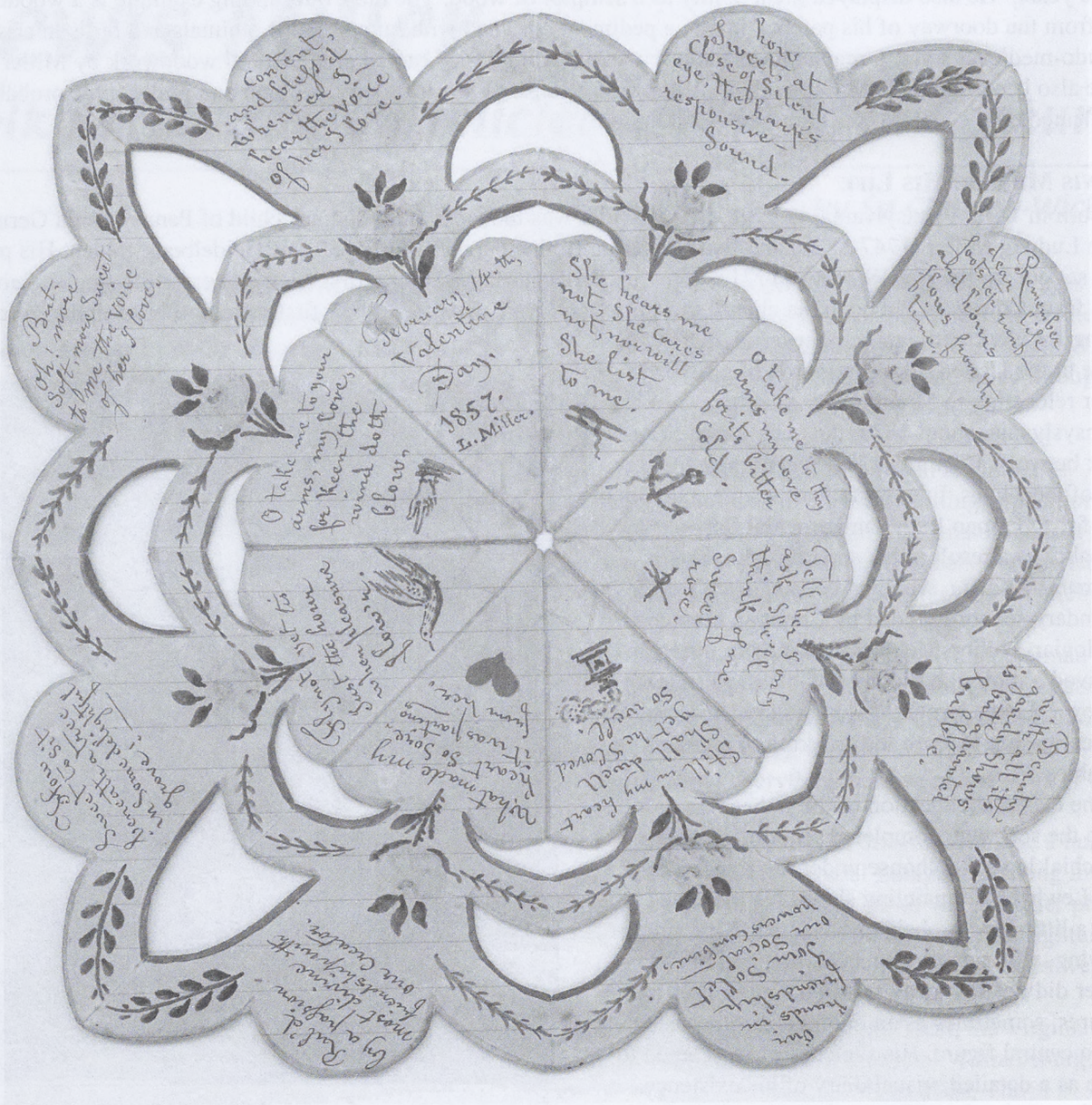
Born in York, Pennsylvania, in 1796, Lewis Miller was the tenth and youngest child of Pennsylvania Germans John Ludwig Miller (1747-1822) and Eva Katharina Rothenberger (1750-1839), of Heidelberg, Baden. His parents set out for the New World in 1771, soon after their marriage. Sailing first from Rotterdam to England and then from Cowes to Philadelphia aboard the ship "Minerva," they spent their first years in Philadelphia,*(6)* competing for work with many other immigrants who came to the United States in search of prosperity. After relocating to Montgomery County, Pennsyslvania, about 1780, the couple moved to York between 1784 and 1787, where they spent the rest of their lives. Lewis's father became schoolmaster of the German Lutheran Parochial School,*(7)* probably as a result of his superior education in Germany. Ludwig, who had been educated at the secondary school founded by Christian humanist theologian Philipp Melanchthon in Nuremberg, received a thorough literary and classical training; however, Lewis wrote that his father also served an apprenticeship to learn the "making of china to set on tables."*(8)*

Daguerreotype of Lewis Miller, dating to c. 1845. (Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center)

The classical education of the father was passed on to the son, who completed schooling in the parochial log schoolhouse under the senior Miller. One Lewis Miller painting shows his father teaching with a little boy, probably Miller, off to the side drawing with pen on paper. Throughout the years, Miller did not shy away from placing himself in his pictures, sometimes as an onlooker and occasionally as the central figure. His sketches often seemed to serve as a detailed, visual diary of his existence.

After graduation, Miller was apprenticed to an elder brother John to learn the "art and mystery" of home carpentering.*(9)* At this time, York was fast becoming a bustling community with several thousand residents, six churches and the political activity of a county seat. Although Miller had many private customers, his name appeared often in orders for payment issued by the York County Commissioners for carpentry work on buildings and building desks, ballot boxes and other items.*(10)*

All along, Miller was sketching, recording the people and events around him, drawing on sketchpads, lined newspaper and handbills. His thousands of images were his journal. He depicted people from all walks of life and different social classes and showed many of them at their jobs: the farmer, the pharmacist, the lawyer, the potter, the candy maker. He drew the tools they used, explained their skills and recorded their interactions with customers, a treasure of information for the study of early American life. An 1809 drawing of Miller's may be the first ever depiction of a Christmas tree.*(11)* More than any artist of the period, Miller showed how rural people lived, what they did and what they valued. Even if he could have afforded a camera, it is doubtful that Miller would have used one. His art came partially from his imagination, capturing simultaneous antics and scenes he



Cut paper valentine with verse and watercolor sketches made by Lewis Miller in 1857. (Montgomery Museum)

knew only from hearsay. He often did this with humor, showing a couple's bed dropping through the floor, a market master seizing short-weight butter from a vendor and prostitutes jumping over the back fence as men pulled down their brothel.

All told, Lewis Miller's "pictorial diary" contains nearly 2,000 drawings, depicting everyday scenes as well as dramatic events. He compiled at least 200 portraits, mostly of York residents.*(12)* His drawings are annotated in black or brown ink, in his own handwriting, sometimes scrawling across the page and crowding close to the drawings. Many times he placed multiple pictures on one piece of paper. Sometimes he would go back years later to add detail and color. His memory appeared to remain sharp until the end of his life. "They are true sketches," he wrote as an old man. "I myself being there upon the places and Spot."*(13)*

Despite the humorous element exhibited in some of his pictures, Miller's art also revealed his serious side,

usually in the annotations. His somber all-is-vanity outlook, influenced by the religious outlook of the time, revealed itself even in the handmade valentine held by the Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center:

> "When true hearts be wither'd
> And fond ones are flown.
> Oh! Who would inhabit this world Alone!"*(14)*

In his "History of War" notebook, he gloats over the "miserable ends" of "heathenish Kings, Emperors and Generals, and all publick officers." He wrote: "[T]hat the people of this world should go to destruction is their own fault, like the children of Israel, for God in Heaven sees over good and bad and puts an end to all."*(15)*

Miller could have packed reams of notebooks with subjects from his hometown of York, but he was filled with a greater curiosity. After the death of his parents, Miller took every opportunity to travel to New York City, Princeton, N.J., and Virginia to visit brothers, sisters and nephews who had moved away. In 1840-41, he toured England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Austria and Prussia. For part of his European sojourn, he had two hometown companions, Henry Hertzog and Alexander Small, but he also went alone on a walking tour of western Europe, visiting museums, art galleries, markets and churches.*(16)* Along the way he penned comments and drawings of what he saw, from the Crystal Palace in London to the bridges and buildings in Heidelberg near his ancestors' homeland. Most of the scenes he drew are accurate replicas of what stands in that spot today; he seemed too filled with awe to make the sorts of commentaries and witty asides that he made in his sketches of York County.

Miller returned to Pennsylvania in the fall of 1841 and resumed his activity as carpenter in York, but with new interest in Europe's past, which he termed "ancient history." His "History of War" sketchbook includes the deaths of kings and the War of 1812; later Miller added images of the American Civil War. He finished the bulk of it in 1851,*(17)* and then, while the Civil War raged in the South, sketched his idea of paradise, New York's Central Park in the winter of 1864. His fifty-six detailed drawings became the "Guide to Central Park."*(18)*

Miller seemed to have returned home from Europe with a sense of wanderlust. In 1847, he sold his home for $1,000, according to the York County Deed Books.*(19)* Upon his retirement from carpentry in 1857, Miller sold his boyhood home on South Duke Street for $1,800.*(20)* It is not known exactly where he stayed after he dispensed with the house, although he spent long periods of time visiting relatives in Virginia before the onset of the Civil War. During all or part of the 1870s until his death in 1882, he lived mostly in Christiansburg, Virginia, at first with his niece, Emmeline Miller Craig.*(21)*

Miller's Christiansburg Years

Miller made the first of his fifteen documented trips to Virginia in 1831, to visit his brother Joseph (1784-1842), a practicing physician in Christiansburg.*(22)* His brother John, from whom he had learned carpentering, had moved to Rockingham County, Virginia, as well.*(23)* During his extended stay in Christiansburg, Lewis Miller seemed to have developed strong ties with his brother Joseph's children: Emmeline A. (1813-1892), Amanda M. (1815-1874), Mary (1818-1873), and Charles (1819-1893). Sketches, poems, letters, valentines and other tokens of affection sent over the years make it clear that he doted on his three nieces and his nephew. Charles was his most frequent traveling companion on trips through the Virginia countryside.*(24)* Lewis spent much of his time wandering alone or with young people, probably because they had the time. Lewis also spent much time with Charles Edie, the son of his niece Amanda Miller Edie, the second wife of Dr. Joseph Spears Edie. The young boy and Miller went on riding jaunts into the countryside, particularly to Salt Pond at a period when it was probably a pond.*(25)*

Miller increased his visits to his sister-in-law, Matilda Charlton Miller (1786-1854), and her children, following Joseph's death.*(26)* He was close to other nieces and nephews as well. The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller collection includes a folded drawing Miller created for Jane Edie (who became his great-step-niece after his niece Amanda Miller married Janie's father, Dr. Edie, in 1832 or 1833).*(27)* The pen-and-ink drawing, embellished with flowers and glued-on panels, seemed styled like a valentine and reads, "Let thy mind, love, be at ease; love, love is here." The drawing was probably made for Edie several years before her marriage to Captain John Crow

Wade on September 18, 1850, and was sold to the collection by Jane Edie's great-granddaughter Jane Crush Brown and her husband Donald of Christiansburg.*(28)*

A later Miller sketch of Lewis and his grown nephew shows a "little Lewis" in the drawing of "The Old Federal Spring, Christiansburg," suggesting Charles Miller may have named a son after his favored uncle. Charles Miller graduated from Washington College (now Washington & Lee University) in Lexington, Virginia, in 1846 and studied at Princeton's Union Seminary, where Lewis Miller visited him several times.*(29)* Charles Miller returned to Virginia to serve as a Presbyterian home missionary in rugged Giles County (1849-51) and as pastor of the Kimberlin Church in Giles County (1853-62). He also taught at Montgomery Academy in Chritiansburg; later in his career he was pastor of the White House Church near Radford, Virginia.*(30)* Charles was pictured in numerous Lewis Miller drawings, often riding next to his uncle.

May 15, 1856 watercolor sketch of the Female Academy in Christiansburg. (Montgomery Museum)

While he was in Christiansburg, Miller also spent a great deal of time on the grounds of Montgomery Female Academy, sketching the lawn and the young women. His relationship to these young women is not known, but he did several sketches of a "Miss Mary." His "Orbus Pictus" drawings, created around 1849, include many generalized drawings of lovely young women; sometimes a first name appears in the idealized, sentimental, or occasionally self-mocking verses accompanying the sketches. But many more are dedicated to nameless female friends referenced only by pronouns or first names, such as "Grace, Marcia, Jane, Caroline.."*(31)*

Another drawing, "Mary's Homecoming" circa 1856, comes closer to giving away the secrets of an older Lewis Miller's heart. The man depicted, looking much like Lewis Miller himself, appears near tears at the sight of the young woman returning on her horse, and has written on the lower margin: "of all the rest, I love thee best." The identity of this "Miss Mary:" has not been pinned down, but she may have been Mary M. Ingles of Montgomery County, Virginia. On the reverse side of the drawing are her name and a Miss Fanny Ingles.*(32)* This drawing descended through the family of great-niece Jane Edie Wade to Jane and Donald Brown of Christiansburg.

More often though, Miller referred to his beloved or beloveds as simply "a female friend," usually in such adoring and lofty terms that one is surprised by his lifelong bachelorhood, unless his expectations were overly idealistic. In a page of sketches of trees, flowers and women, Miller writes longingly:

"I love to see a female friend
who looks as if she thought
who on her household will
Attend, and do what e'er She
Ought,
O Could I Such a female
Find: Such beautiful one
For a wife I spend my days in peace."*(33)*

In the 1870s, Lewis Miller moved to Christiansburg to live at Hans Meadows, the Craig family farm, with his widowed niece Emmeline, whose son John Craig Jr. had been killed in the Civil War Battle of Chancellorsville in 1863. By 1880 at least, Miller was boarding with Mongtomery County farmer Chester Charlton and his wife, Kate (perhaps relatives of his deceased sister-in-law), according to the 1880 census.*(34)*

It is not clear how Miller supported himself at this time and whether the Charltons expected remuneration. Miller may have been indigent, but according to receipts from the York Savings Institution and York County Bank, Miller did own bank stocks earlier in his retirement. In a letter from Miller's friend, Samuel Small of York, dated March 24, 1881, Small writes: "The German books came to my hand. I sent them to the College. Professor reports that they cannot be any use to them in the school. Should you like to have Some of your friends here have any of them as a remembrance. I will give to them! Sending you a Check for fifteen dollars."*(35)* Miller apparently was interested in getting a college to use one of his sketchbooks, probably a book by his poet friend Henry Fisher, "S Alt Marik-Haus. Un Die Alte; Zeite." that Miller had filled in 1880 with color sketches of York's past.

Miller received occasional financial assistance from Small, an affluent entrepreneur and one of the founders of York Hospital and the Children's Home of York. The artist also received some funding from a York friend, John Hay, as well as his successful great-nephew George Billmeyer.*(36)* On February 27, 1882, impoverished, lonely and ill, Miller wrote to Billmeyer requesting financial assistance. In touching gratitude for the fifteen dollars Billmeyer sent, Miller created more than 200 portraits of citizens from York.*(37)* His ability to remember and depict those people whom he hadn't seen in decades with visually distinguishing characteristics was evidence of Miller's mental acuity.

Miller's physical health, though, continued to decline in his eighty-seventh year, and on August 17, 1882, he wrote: "[M]y health is failing every day, weakly and in want of strength, but the Lord has kept me So I can help myself in doing to dress and keep clean from dirt...give my Respects to all friends that know me, Please send me an Answer and soon...I am in need of help."*(38)*

"A Picture in Montgomery County, Virginia." (Montgomery Museum)

"The New Residence of Rev. Charles A. Miller, build (sic) 1856." (Montgomery Museum)

Miller died September 15, 1882, and was buried near his brother in the Craig family cemetery on a knoll near Hans Meadows in Christiansburg. The graveyard, uphill from the Christiansburg Livestock Market on Park Street, was vandalized repeatedly and weeds overtook the monuments. Gravestones were used as campfire benches, and Lewis Miller's headstone was shattered.*(39)* In the 1990s, money was raised to erect a new, permanent marker. Unfortunately, vandalism still plagued the cemetery in 2007.

Lewis Miller's Virginia Artwork

Miller grew up amid York, Pennsylvania's rounded hills and Pennsylvania-German culture, which he documented well. During his Virginia stays, he was fascinated by the landscape, architecture and culture. He and his Christiansburg relatives planned outings to scenic spots far and near, stopping to allow the artist to sketch. On one such jaunt, Miller sketched and captioned "A visit to Elliott's Creek. A wild stream foamaing and dashing against the rocks."*(40)* In another sketch, he portrayed himself walking along the roadbed of the unfinished Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, and wrote, "Branches of the high mountain stretch down to the road, and as huge blue masses of limestone rock, the summits of which are frequently divided by fearful clefts; Sometimes as undulating chains of hills whose side are overgrown with wood."*(41)*

The structures of Virginia also impressed the Pennsylvania carpenter, whether small, orderly farmhouses or pillared manors. Shortly after 1856, Miller sketched the commanding new home of his nephew Rev. Charles Miller and penned:

> "The stately homes of Virginia,
> how beautiful they stand.
> o'er all the pleasant land.
> The deer across their green swards bound,
> through shad and sunny gleam.
> And the birds glide past them
> with the sound of some rejoicing stream.
> The Building stands on high ground,
> A beautiful and extensive view of town
> and surrounding heights."*(42)*

The folk artist couldn't seem to stay reverent for long without a wild streak of humor bursting into the work. One sketch extols Virginia in rather lofty terms over many lines, but at the bottom of the page, Miller dropped in a bit of early American humor: "Why is a tobacco chewer like a goose in a Dutch oven?" "Because he's always on the spit." A

sketch on that page shows maple sugar making in Virginia, with sap being boiled in a kettle over a wood fire.*(43)*

Some of Miller's most popular drawings show public buildings as they stood in the nineteenth century and depict the life of the community going on around them. The 1831 sketch Lewis Miller made of the Montgomery County Courthouse reveals a lively public square on which vendors market their wares, boys bounce balls, wagons mire in the muddy street, and a man is led to court by another with a rifle. To the north, the sketch shows a pump for the public well William Pepper and Ansiel Snow had dug a few years previously. A sketch of Christiansburg's Temperance Hall shows two couples in front of the hall, juxtaposed by a rowdy pair who seemed to be losing both their balance and their bottle. "The kindest and the happiest pair will find occasion to forbear, and something every day; they live to pity and perhaps forgive," he writes in one section, with a commentary on the effects of whiskey in another. Also, in downtown Christiansburg in 1856, Miller sketches the hotel with a stagecoach out front, and writes:

Watercolor sketch of Christiansburg's Courthouse Square drawn in 1831. (Montgomery Museum)

> "Lift your dress as you cross the
> Street.
> And show your dainty little feet;
> your steps are light,
> your eye is gay.
> No fairer lady greets the day."*(44)*

No lady lifting her skirt is pictured; instead, the sole woman in the drawing, an African-American, has her hands too full of work for any dress-lifting, and with large buckets on her arms, her step is not likely light. One wonders if Miller is purposely being ironic.

In several of his Virginia drawings, Miller focuses on the lives of slaves, although not always with the eyes of an abolitionist. On the title page of his "Sketchbook of Landscapes in the State of Virginia" he shows slaves hoeing in fields, wide distances separating them from the well-dressed Caucasians on the other side of the page, although the huge fish in one slave's hand suggests that the living is good for all. In his drawing of a race horse being attended by African-American slaves, Miller comments:

> "Change but the hateful term — slave — and they were a contended and a happy race, happier far than the laboring chaps of poor in this country. A comfortable hut, which might, without exaggeration, be termed a cottage; a piece of ground to each, poultry; fed, clothed, and medical attendance gratis, and moreover, a whole holiday on Saturday to be permitted to sell their produce on the markets. Compare this with the free states of the labourer, [sic] and tell me which is the happier man of the two — the slave as he was, or the pauper as he is."*(45)*

Miller's feelings of ambivalence about slavery become apparent in examining other sketchbook drawings, particularly two. In an 1853 drawing, "Slave Trader, Sold to Tennessee," white drivers herd a slave coffle southward out of Staunton, Virginia, to Tennessee. In another, "Miss Fillis and Child, and Bill, sold at Publick sale," Miller gives names and deeply revealing facial expressions to these human beings sold for $800 in downtown Christiansburg. The details in both sketches show a subtle understanding of the trauma slaves experienced.

About the Civil War, Miller said less, probably because he had family and friends on both sides of the battle lines. His sketch of Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin visiting York's Camp Scott on May 11, 1861, has this patriotic note scrawled on the margin: "Not another week should pass over our heads without the capture of Gen. [Joseph] Johnson and his men in the rebel State of Virginia."*(46)* Perhaps it was war's destruction that he feared most, dreading the inevitable loss of life, including that of his great-nephew, John Craig Jr., for whom he created a memorial drawing. "In services which he rendered to his State, in the very crisis of the war Like a Swift reeling meteor, a fast-flying cloud,." Miller wrote.*(47)*

Watercolor sketch of the New River in Montgomery County entitled "Scene in Virginia, July 6th, 1856." (Montgomery Museum)

Although Miller used a wide variety of materials and an assortment of recycled papers (freight bills, advertising, railroad timetables, etc.) over some 70 years, he maintained a surprising consistency and homogeneity as well. He started out with a more controlled, stylized technique and gradually adopted a broader style involving more brush and less pen work.*(48)* Always frugal of paper, he often created multiple drawings on one sheet, and while some paintings show extreme attention to detail, others appear to be unpolished, waiting for the artist to fill in elements and color. His watercolor palette consisted of about eight colors, from the dark brown and black used in his notes through sepia to brilliant vermillion, greens, rich blue, and canary yellow. At the bottom of one page, he wrote a little advertisement for his own methods: "Are you going to paint? Then use Lew Miller's Black Dush (tusche) is like Indian ink — a chemical paint."*(49)*

In addition to his adopted hometown of Christiansburg, Miller created drawings of many other communities around Virginia, including Blacksburg, Mount Vernon, Lexington, Richmond, Salem, Wytheville, Lynchburg, Fredericksburg, Pulaski (which he called "Poleske") County, and Upshur County in what is now West Virginia.

"[C]ould write more about Scenes in the Country, and always find something new to communicate," he wrote above a sketch of the construction of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad through Montgomery County, Virginia.*(50)* The Blue Ridge Region he once described thusly: "The country is the scene which supplies us with the loveliest images, this state was where God placed Adam when in Paradise."*(51)*

The Virginia Historical Society has possession of Miller's "Virginia Sketchbook," an album of 114 watercolor drawings depicting scenes from his 1856-57 journeys in Prince Edward , Pulaski, Montgomery, Giles, Roanoke,

Wythe and Upshur counties. Occasional pages are dated as late as 1869 and 1871. Twelve of these scenes were earlier reproduced and sold as reproductions by the F.A.R. Gallery, New York, in 1951.*(52)* These Virginia sketchbook-diaries contain romantic scenes of rural life. They also reveal Miller's study of botanical and zoological subjects , which took up almost one-third of his "Sketchbook of Landscapes in the State of Virgina." Miller continued this interest during the Civil War years and documented the flora and fauna of New York City in his 1864 guide to Central Park.

Two more of Miller's Virginia sketchbooks are held in the collection of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fold Art Center in Williamsburg, Virginia. These include "Landscapes in the State of Virginia, 1853-1872," a volume of forty-nine sheets of drawings that was given to the Abby Alrdrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center in the late 1970s.*(53)* Others of the sixteen Lewis Miller sketchbooks that have so far been found are at the Henry Ford Museum and in collections of the York and Virginia historical societies.

A number of the drawings were sold or donated by Christiansburg residents who felt an obligation to make Miller's work available to the public as part of a secure, well-maintained collection. Jane Crush Brown had inherited a Miller drawing, as well as a fancy handmade card "Uncle Lewis" had created for her great-grandmother, Jane Harriet Edie (1826-1912) of Christiansburg. Edie became Lewis Miller's step-great-niece after her father, Dr. Joseph Edie, married Miller's niece, Amanda Miller. Brown's Miller drawing, "Mary's Homecoming," depicted a man closely resembling Lewis Miller with a young woman presumed to be Mary M. Ingles (a descendant of the Mary Draper Ingles who was held captive by Shawnees in 1755) of Radford, Virginia. Brown sold both of these items to Colonial Williamsburg's Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center in 1981.*(54)*

"Fishing at New River," by Lewis Miller, undated. (Montgomery Museum)

In the 1957 history book he compiled, Brown's father, Judge Charles Wade Crush (1893-1970; grandson of Jane Edie Wade), stated that he had once owned a Lewis Miller sketchbook but "this book was filched from the author, but was found and purchased from an art dealer in NY by the Virginia Historical Society."*(55)* In an earlier book, "Montgomery County, Virginia; The First Hundred Years," Crush mentioned that a Miller sketchbook was then owned by a Christiansburg resident, Eva Sue Rosseau.*(56)* She was the daughter of Mary Matilda Edie Figgett (1836-1923), and a second cousin of Judge Crush, as well as a granddaughter of Lewis Miller's niece, Amanda Edie.*(57)*

Rosseau apparently later moved to Williamsburg, Virginia, where she had the works photographed by a Williamsburg photographer Thomas L. Williams in 1949 or 1950, before she sold the sketchbook to Harry Shaw Newman at the Old Print Shop gallery in New York in 1951.*(58)* Rosseau gave permission to Williams to make additional print copies from his negatives. Williams sold prints to Miller collector George Hay Kain of York, Pennsylvania, in June 1953.*(59)* Thomas Williams' daughter, Karen Laufeer, and her husband, George, sold an

1857 Lewis Miller valentine to the Montgomery Museum. She later donated her father's negatives of Rosseau's Miller sketchbook to the museum.*(60)* Twelve of the original drawings were restored, reproduced and sold as facsimiles by F. A. R. Gallery in New York in 1951.*(61)* In 1953, the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond purchased the sketchbook from F.A.R. Gallery.*(62)*

Betty Stuart Goldsmith Halberstadt and her husband, Jon Halberstadt of Christiansburg, were motivated to ensure that their Miller prints were available to the public. Betty "Stuart" Halberstadt's mother, Betty Beale Stuart had been a close friend of Mary "Sherwood" Flagg (1884-1973), a great-great-niece of Lewis Miller. Flagg was also the granddaughter of Miller's niece, Emmeline Miller Craig, at whose home Miller may have died. Flagg, who never married, had inherited the Hans Meadow home and a collection of Miller's sketches from her aunt, Mary Taylor (1841-1929).*(63)*

"As Sherwood got older, she was concerned about what would become of the Lewis Miller art. Miller had become quite well-known posthumously, and she suspected individuals would be seeking the drawings for their collections," Jon Halberstadt said. "She didn't want them to be split up and sold piecemeal to private collectors. She wanted to make sure the public would be able to see these works."

Before her death in 1973, Flagg told Stuart Halberstadt's mother to take the box of Lewis Miller drawings and "do the right thing." When Stuart Halberstadt's mother died four years later, the Halberstadts inherited the drawings and the responsibility that went with them.*(64)* In 1991, they contacted curator Barbara Luck of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center and contributed thirty-one Lewis Miller sketches and related objects, such as photographs.*(65)* In 2003, they donated six more items. "We know we did the right thing," Halberstadt said. "Money isn't everything."*(66)*

Colonial Williamsburg began acquiring Miller works as early as 1978, mostly from the Kain family, descendants of Miller's York friend and occasional benefactor, John Hay. The Hay-Kahn family received much of Miller's work and has been instrumental in the preservation of Miller's work through both the Rockefeller Folk Art Center and the Virginia Historical Society. In 1978, Mr. and Mrs. Richard H. Kain donated sixty-three sheets comprising Miller's "Sketchbook of Landscapes in the State of Virginia," and Mr. and Mrs. William H. Kain donated sixty-three sheets comprising most of Miller's "Orbis Pictus." In 1980, the William Kains contributed one of Miller's bound travel journals.

Lewis Miller did not come into fame until at least seventy years after his death. In the late 1930s, when the public kindled an interest in Pennsylvania German art and crafts, historians recognized Miller's work and in the 1950s, art historians recognized it. He was included in the Dictionary of American Artists in 1957. and his work appeared in full-color reproductions in American Heritage and Life Magazine in 1955. The carpenter who died in poverty now holds a prime place in the story of American folk art.

Montgomery Museum & Lewis Miller Regional Art Center

Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center is housed in the former manse of the Christiansburg Presbyterian Church at 300 S. Pepper Street, Christiansburg. Lewis Miller likely visited this home after it was built in 1852.

The museum acquired the property in 1983 and opened satellite branches in Riner and Shawsville in 2007. The Riner facility is located in a log cabin to the left of the high school, and the Shawsville branch is located in the Meadowbrook Center adjacent to the library. Montgomery Museum also handles the care and maintenance of Craig Cemetery, where Lewis Miler is buried, behind the Christiansburg Livestock Market off Park Street.

Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center holds two original Miller sketches: a religious drawing done in 1880 and a sketch of Martin Luther's monument in Witttenburg, Germany, made during his European travels in 1841. The museum's permanent collection also contains an original valentine dated 1857 and a daguerreotype of the artist in his middle years. The museum also has possession of numerous reproductions, articles and artifacts from the life of Lewis Miller.

In addition to its permanent exhibits on Lewis Miller, Elliston-born Walter Biggs, and Montgomery County history, the museum hosts a series of changing exhibits featuring artifacts from the region. Art shows spotlighting local artists are housed in the second floor art gallery and change every two months. The museum also houses a library of historical and genealogical texts for use by researchers. The Museum Store sells Lewis Miller prints and gifts, as well as historical and regional books.

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39. Nicolay, p. 10.
40. Lewis Miller, aketch, "Visit to Elliott Creek," Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, Williamsburg, Va.

41. Lewis Miller, sketch, "Virginia & Tennessee Railroad through Montgomery County, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, Williamsburg, Va.
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47. Lewis Miller sketch, "In Memory of John Craig, John Craig Jr. Killed at Chancellorsville," VHS.
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50. McCabe, p., 67.
51. Kanode, Hans Meadow, p.16/
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Roanoke's Social Life in 1912 ~

The diary of Nina Quinn

Edited by Dorathy Piedmont

In the summer of 1912, a young lady began a diary that was to carry her through her senior year at Roanoke High School and into her life after graduation. Her name was Nina Quinn, oldest of the Quinns who lived on Allison Avenue. Following are excerpts from her observations and adventures. She begins:

Sun. July 16
While we were at dinner, Mrs. Frank Brown phoned asking Mamma and Clem to go for an automobile ride!! [in their EMF Franklin…a kind invitation since Nina's brother had a crippling spinal condition] ... Leo Henebry wants me to go to the park [Highland] with him tomorrow night, but I can't so I'm going to go to the Jefferson tomorrow aft. with him.

Mon. July 17
Helped today and read a little. Leo came for me about 4 o'clock. We took a box and I felt horribly conspicuous. I asked him to dinner.of course he accepted.

Tues. July 18
Read a good book today. Went downtown this afternoon.

Wed. July 19
Mamma and Papa are going up north for a week. Aunt Rose is going to stay with us at night and I'm to keep house.

Fri. July 21
I've been sewing today a good deal. I read a little too. Made a dandy fruit salad this afternoon and some mayonnaise dressing. Went to moving pictures with 'S.' Herbert and Earle were here nearly all evening when we got back… Genevieve's coming home tomorrow night.

Dorathy Brown Piedmont, a native of Roanoke and a graduate of Hollins College, has written about her childhood and her father in previous issues of the Journal. Nina Quinn was a relative.

Sat. July 22
Mamma and I were very busy getting things straightened up preparatory to Genevieve's coming home. Tonight, Herbert and S. and Clem and I went down to meet her. The train is due at 12:18 and it didn't come to 12:35. She looks fine and had a splendid time while away. [Genevieve, Nina's next-oldest sister, had been sent to Convent school in Pennsylvania because of her many talents. Ultimately she put those talents into practice with Miss Gen's Kindergarten.]

Sun. July 23
Genevieve and I went to late Mass and were late getting there. Tonight, Mamma and Dad took the kids and went out. Herbert and S. came up. Also Edith brought Mr. Britt over.

Mon. July 24
Genevieve and Herbert Nave have had a scrap…He came over and told me all about it… S. and I went for a walk and then to Dalby's. [Dalby's was the ice cream parlor downtown.]

Tues. July 26
We've all worked like (crazy) today getting Mamma ready to go tomorrow night. She had her lavender dress to finish and a great many little things to do. Tonight Genevieve and I stayed home and helped her.

Wed. July 26
There was some rushing done today, believe me. There was just an endless number of little things that had to be done…and then there was the darned old ironing to do because Essie chose to be sick and there was no one to be found. The train Mamma and Papa took left at 5:25. Aunt Rose doesn't come until late in the evening and I have complete charge of the kids and house.

Thurs July 27
It's been cold and rainy all day. The kids were good and played indoors.

Fri.. July 28
I wanted to finish a dress I was making so that I could wear it downtown this afternoon. I worked until I was nearly daft…the kids demand so much waiting on… I'm never going to get married.

Sun. July 30
I had a perfectly scrumptious dinner today. I made, with Clem's kind assistance, the best chocolate ice cream this a.m. Aunt Rose came over to dinner. The kids behave a little better when she's at the table.

Mon. July 31
Genevieve and Edith and I took the kids up in the park this a.m. S. came over and we read a story in the Ladies Home Journal. He swung the kids too, ...then he had the audacity to invite himself to dinner. The only thing we had for dinner was some Campbell's vegetable soup. Tonight is the last night I'll have to put the kids to bed. Mamma and Dad are coming home tomorrow. I got a postcard from them from Atlantic City this a.m.

Tues. Aug. 1
The morning's mail brought me a postal from Aunt Cleo [Aunt Cleo Shoffner was her maternal aunt who was close to her age and a frequent companion], saying that if possible I was to come to Ocean View Thurs. I was in a blue frenzy for fear Mamma and Papa wouldn't come home and make it that I couldn't get away. They were due on the Memphis Special if they came and Clem went to meet them… Mamma looks fine and so does Dad. They report having had a splendid time. They say I may go on Thursday if I can get ready by that time. Daddy ordered my Pullman passes and other passes at once. [Dad worked for the railroad.]

Wed. Aug. 2
I worked my head nearly off today. Mamma made me a love of a lingerie hat.

Thurs. Aug. 3
This has been the busiest of birthdays ever. I'm nineteen today but I haven't had time to realize. I got a dear pair of white canvas shoes… Daddy helped me pack after supper. S. and Mamma and Daddy went to the train with me. We walked up and down the platform until the train was ready to start. It left at 12:18. I did hate to say goodbye ever so badly but I'm crazy to see the ocean.

Fri. Aug. 4
Arrived in Norfolk at 8:00 a.m. promptly. Aunt Cleo met me at the train. We went to Linn's for breakfast and then did some shopping before we went out to the View. It's about a half-hour car ride from Norfolk to Ocean View and it's simply delightful. At first glimpse of the ocean I couldn't distinguish it from the horizon. It's grand. It's wonderful… There is a perfectly lovely crowd at the cottage. The name of the cottage is Diggs and it's the most popular cottage along the line. It began raining soon after we got there... I was immediately introduced to everyone. On account of the weather we all had to stay indoors… Nearly everyone plays or sings and consequently it's very pleasant for all. Tonight after dinner we went up to the View. It's just about a block from the cottage and the car runs right past the door. Professor Harned, our music teacher, is here. He's simply splendid. I danced a good deal tonight. Professor Harned is a splendid dancer.

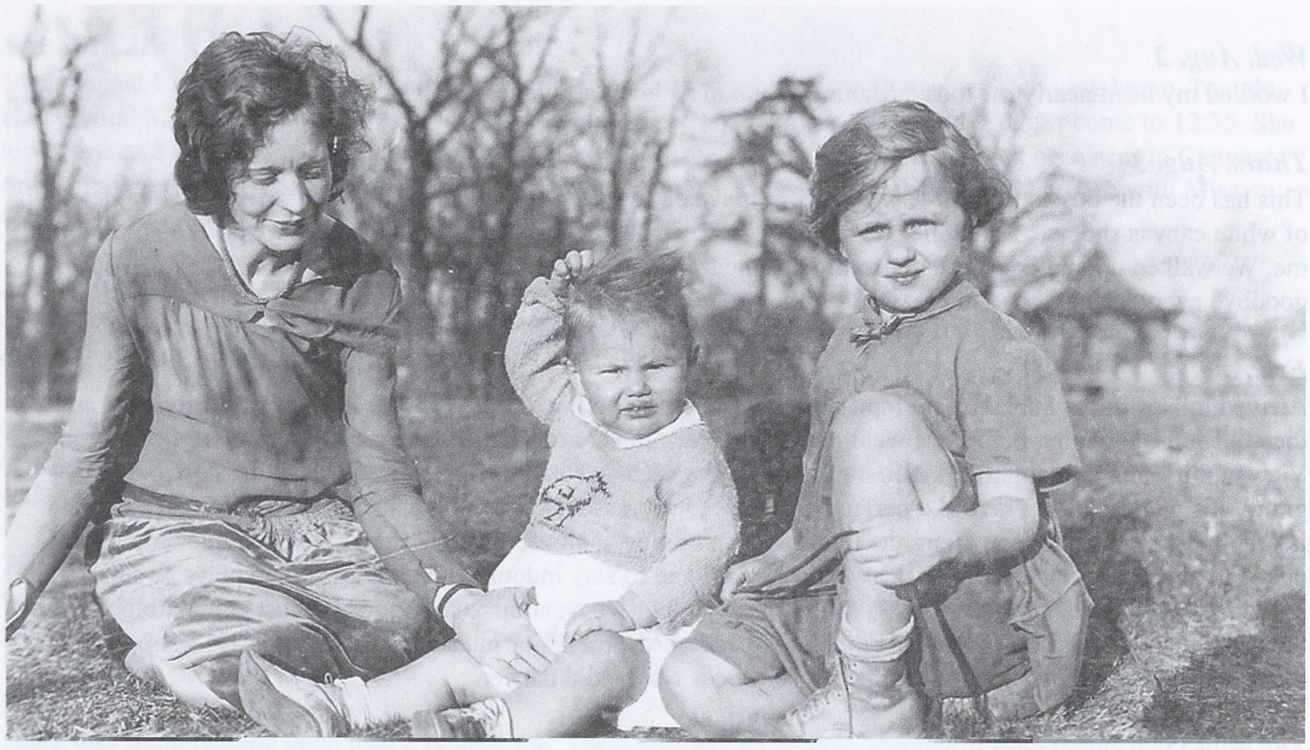
Sat. Aug. 5
After breakfast, Aunt Cleo and I went up to the View to meet cousin Maude. She had just come. We started back to the cottage about 11 o'clock so we could go in bathing. The crowd always goes in at 11:00 a.m.and four in the afternoon. We had no end of fun getting into our bathing suits and sizing ourselves up. My suit is peacock blue mohair trimmed with soutache braid. I had a blue rubber cap, too. Maude's was blue and Aunt Cleo's also with a red rubber cap. It was my first bath in the ocean and it was simply gorgeous. [She then relates her adventures with the waves and learning to float. She also talks about a growing vacation flirtation.]... My hair was soaking wet and I sat out on the roof with Miss Tinsley and Miss Wooten and dried it. After dinner, we all got ready and went up to the View. [She and her gentleman decided to have a good time by themselves.] First we went on the circle swings and then we got claret limeades and then we went down and did the Leap the Dips. It was lovely moonlight and the air was delightful. We sat on the cottage porch and talked until 11:30.

Sun. Aug. 6
[Descriptions of a new arrival] After lunch we all went into the parlour and everybody sang. [She says a reluctant farewell to her vacation flirtation.]

Mon. Aug. 7
It's been beautiful today.:

Tues. Aug. 8
[A new arrival is paying attention to her.] He's a traveling man. I mean to say he travels for the Crawford Shoe Co., Lynchburg. He bores me dreadfully with his talk. He persists in telling me what exquisite hair I have and how pretty I am. He really is old enough to know better. I think I'll freeze him tomorrow.

Wed. Aug. 9
Today's been awfully hot. I have about a million and three more freckles on my face than I had when I came down here… Tonight we had to content ourselves with staying at the cottage and playing cards, singing and talking for it rained very hard.



Nina Quinn McGinnis and her daughters, Jane and Bootie.

Thurs. Aug. 10

My last day. Goodness how I wish I could have stayed. [She stays overnight in the Edgewater section of Norfolk at the home of Maude's Aunt and Uncle, the Duffys, and is safely got to the train for an uneventful trip home.]

Fri. Sept. 1

[Back home] The boys wanted to take us for a boat ride but were afraid to ask Mamma. She had a grouch on. We mustered up the nerve and asked her. As Aunt Annie was there she said yes,... So we girls skidooed upstairs and changed our dresses which were lawns for ginghams and went… We promised faithfully to be back by 5:30. It didn't take long for the boys to get the boat out of the boat house and we were soon sailing happily on the river. S. and I rowing and Herbert and Genevieve watching out for obstacles. Well, we butted into about nineteen tree stumps and every time Herbert and Genevieve would yell so hard I nearly dropped the oar. Then Herbert fussed every time I happened to accidentally splash him. Finally, he decided to take off his shoes and stockings. He had on a beautiful pair of dark blue hose and I accidentally dropped some more water into his shoes and wet his socks which were in his shoes. He was awfully agreeable about it so to pacify him we had to let him smoke a cigarette, though S. said it wasn't good for him. Before we knew it we had drifted under Walnut Street Bridge and it's next to impossible to get back after you get on that part of the river… for it's very swift and an awful lot of rocks and rapids. We didn't know all this until afterwards, however, and thought we were having an awfully swift joy ride when – bump – we banged into a monstrous rock. If the boat hadn't been made of steel it would have smashed to pieces. Herb got excited and jumped out on the rock and as soon as the boat got dislodged we went shooting down some vicious looking rapids. I knew what was coming and shut my eyes. We shot down a big rapid and the boat lodged against a big rock and a lot of water came in on us. We looked up the river at Herb who was calmly sitting on a rock in the middle of the river, smoking a cigarette. Wet and scared as I was, I nearly died laughing at him. S. bawled at him to come… help us out of the river. Herb rolled up his pants and waded down to where we were… Then we girls had to be got out of the boat somehow… S. rolled up his trousers and

left on his shoes and socks. He looked like a lank Highland Laddie. He took me in his arms there in full view of Walnut Street Bridge and carried me to the bank... Herb insisted on carrying Genevieve… of course as soon as the weight was out of the boat it took it upon itself to go dashing down the river. S. set me down on the bank and went after it. Fortunately it was caught in some debris and held… Then the boys had to drag the boat quite a distance through barbwire fences… to get it back to the boat house. Thanks to the wind and sun our clothes were almost dry by the time we got home and Mamma wasn't one bit wiser.

The boys are coming up tonight but Papa announced that he and Mamma and Aunt Annie were going up the Incline and that we girls were going to have the exalted pleasure of taking the babies to the moving picture show.

Sun. Sept. 3
My time is pretty much up for fun. School opens Tues. and I could yell with rage.

Tues. Sept. 5
I got up earlier this a.m. than I have in a long time on account of school. The new French teacher is a bird…He's from Harvard and has a classy close-cropped mustache. He wears a perfectly violent Persian tie with pink roses and a green background. His suit's a greenish gray and he wears bright yellow shoes…[She speaks of her fierce English tech, Miss Critz, and of taking Math, History, French and Latin, and laments her lack of time to attend to "Dear Little Diary."]

At Christmas 'she' got a lovely evening coat…champagne, trimmed in black braid and black velvet buttons and lined in pale blue satin. I got a sweet little blue messaline evening dress, too (and gifts from various gentlemen friends)

During March, we had a play for the benefit of the piano fund. Mrs. Frank Brown turned up [to coach them] and we had only two weeks to get ready. In one act I was a Suffragette and in another a Greek Goddess. It was heaps of fun.

[She then describes graduation and a final dance on the mountain at which Class Beauty, Miss Emma Hester, did the "Turkey Trot" with the Zoology Professor.and then the band struck up "Everybody's Doin' It."]

[Life after Roanoke High School found Nina excited to be in Normal School preparing to be a teacher.] They gave it in charge of Mr. Fitzpatrick out at Park Street School and there are seventeen girls — all old school chums of mine. We have two textbooks — Psychology and History of Education.

[Entries in "Dear Little Diary" soon came to a close and so too does our glimpse into the world of 1912. but we leave enduringly grateful for the descriptive powers of young Nina Quinn.]

EPILOGUE
Despite the depth of her friendship with S., Nina became Mrs. Thomas (Mac) McGinnis. Genevieve, as previously noted, ran Miss Gen's Kindergarten. Brother Clem became a CPA and the "Kids" grew up to be: Joe, with the telephone company in New Jersey; Gertrude (Bun) taught for a time at Crystal Spring School and became Mrs. Henry Thomas; and Donald, who entered the military. 'S.' was Dr. Norborn (Snooks) Muir, an orthodontist. He never married but "Dear Little Diary" was found among his possessions.

Blue Ridge Parkway ~
A Graceful Mountain Drive

by Peter Givens

In tourism circles these days, a lot of folks are talking about the idea of "heritage corridors," a term that by its very nature suggests "connectedness," the linking of towns and communities, along with the stories and environments connecting those places. Heritage corridors are defined as settled landscapes and places where the land has shaped traditions and the cultural values of the people who live there. This is the basic definition of such places.

For those of us who live here in the Blue Ridge or Appalachian region, it is almost impossible to read those words without thinking of the Blue Ridge Parkway. A settled landscape… a place that has shaped the lives of residents… a land reflecting the culture of the people… protecting a wide variety of resources and traditions. These are phrases that fit the Parkway like a glove.

This is the text of a talk given by Peter Givens as part of the 75th anniversary observance of the Parkway at a meeting of the Historical Society of Western Virginia in April 2010. Givens, an interpretive ranger, has worked on the Blue Ridge Parkway for 20 years. A North Carolina native, he is a graduate of Lenoir-Rhyne College.

Former planners and superintendents spoke of "integrating the Parkway into the local scene of the highlands" and indicated that the relationship of this park to the region was the "most critical factor" for the future planning and management. The Parkway's "one reason for existence," according to its original landscape architect Stanley W. Abbott, was to reveal "the native American countryside." What better way to reveal the countryside of the Appalachians… or the variety… or the "connectedness"… or the heritage of the people… than with a graceful mountain parkway?

It began as an idea… a concept in the minds of Depression-era politicians. This type of project, they reasoned, could provide public-service jobs for many of the nation's unemployed. At the same time, it would be a link between the two eastern national parks, Virginia's Shenandoah and the Great Smokies of North Carolina and Tennessee.

The route was decided and the process began – to carve out of this rugged part of the Southern Appalachians a road – a parkway – down the Blue Ridge. The survey crews blazed a trail that sometimes led to cabins in remote coves – rocky hillsides where families eked out an existence from the land. In other areas, they found nicer homes, productive farms, even hotels and resorts. Patience, an infinite amount of patience, was necessary in order to deal with many landowners who were reluctant to sell. For most, however, the source of income from their land was welcomed. Jobs were scarce and jobs were hard to come by – much of this rocky land was too poor for much good anyway. One particular man, born and bred in the mountains, commented that he had wondered all of his life what this land was good for. "And now I've found out," he said. "Its good fer a road."

September 1935 came and the first rocks were blasted from the mountainside near the North Carolina-Virginia state line. Survey parties led the way far into the mountains and soon began to realize the size of the task at hand. For many of these areas, there were not even current maps available. Interviews with locals often were the determining factor in where the center line would be laid. Foremost in the minds of construction crews was creating as little "scar" as possible. The Parkway was to "lay easy on the land" and, in order for that to be accomplished, great care was taken to blend the new roadway into its natural surroundings.

Progress was steady until the early 1940s when work was diverted by the coming of World War II. After the war, work resumed through the late 1950s and early '60s. Finally, the only "missing link" was a section around Grandfather Mountain, North Carolina. In order to preserve the fragile environment on the steep slopes of Grandfather, a unique and award-winning design – the Linn Cove Viaduct – fulfilled the purpose.

Part of the impact of the Blue Ridge Parkway on our region is the magnificent way this strip of land protects our natural and cultural regional heritage.

When the Parkway was just an idea – before a shovel full of dirt had been turned or one rock carefully placed at a bridge or culvert – an important factor was already established: It would naturally run along the mountains, aligned north to south. This alignment in many ways determines the diversity of the park and the multitude of heritage stories that are interpreted here today.

So much of America's cultural and natural history follows an east-west path. Settlement patterns, the lay of the mountains, river drainage patterns, and our tendency as a country in our formative years to "look west," all contribute to this Parkway slicing through and across a multitude of stories associated with the natural and cultural heritage of our region and our nation. Simply because of this north-south orientation, the Blue Ridge Parkway becomes a corridor of protection that captures vignettes of a wide variety of America's great stories. A few examples will illustrate this.

Think of Daniel Boone and Thomas Jefferson, living in the Piedmont of Virginia and North Carolina, but spending much of their lives looking and dreaming westward. Boone's many ventures west took him across this corridor that we know as the Parkway. Jefferson spent time at a Rockfish Gap tavern with a group of selected friends discussing his plan for a university. In his only published book, "Notes on the State of Virginia," he detailed much of his natural and cultural observations and curiosities on the Blue Ridge, directly referencing the Peaks of Otter.

During the American Revolution and the War Between the States, the east-west migration of troops through mountain passes played a significant role. The Overmountain Men from Upper East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia crossed the Blue Ridge headed for a significant battle at Kings Mountain late in the American Revolution. General George Stoneman's raid through Western North Carolina left earthworks that can still be

seen at Deep Gap, and troops crossed the Blue Ridge near the Peaks of Otter, maneuvering around Lynchburg, considered a major strategic location.

Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Hypothesis," though dated, influences our understanding and interpretation of early Blue Ridge settlement. When Turner speaks of "innovation, adaptation, and invention" characterizing each new frontier settlement, along with the continuous pattern of venturing west to "begin over again," there is at least some relevance to the stories we tell and preserve about early Blue Ridge settlement patterns.

The stories of natural history in the Blue Ridge are just as important, and sometimes even follow the same east-west pattern. Mountain passes provide a convenient crossing for a variety of wildlife. "Water gaps" where the James, Roanoke, Linville, Swannanoa, and French Broad cross the park provide a wealth of cultural and natural history stories and resources protected for the visiting public along the Blue Ridge Parkway.

In the area of natural history, the Parkway is widely known, having 1,600 types of identified vascular plants, fifty rare or endangered plants, and a number of rare or endangered animals. Twelve types of mature deciduous forests exist in the park, along with Canadian vegetation types at higher elevations. One-hundred-ten miles of streams and thirteen lakes also dot the landscape. Heath balds and mountain bogs offer unique areas of resource management and interpretive opportunities. This variety of natural features is tied most closely to elevation with ranges from about 600-6,000 feet, but the north-south orientation spanning 500 miles is also a significant factor in creating one of the most diverse units of the National Park System.

We could just as easily discuss the linking of areas where music and crafts dominate the story. The history of the early European settlers in the Blue Ridge is perhaps best told by their performing arts rather than by their material arts. Along the Parkway corridor, we also find the tremendous heritage of traditional string band music. The thread that ties all of these together into a "singularly neat package" is the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The early designers and planners had at least some sense of this as they patiently and consistently went about the business of designing variety into the park design. Follow a mountain stream, climb up on the slope of a hillside pasture, dip into the open bottomlands, highlight a historic building or landscape, or historic canal lock, and back into the woodlands. Linking these experiences was foremost in their minds.

What this variety and "connectedness" means to us today, I think, is reminding us of the necessity of thinking regionally and broadly in the management of this place. We find ourselves on the Parkway working with a multitude of groups, agencies, and organizations, each with an interest in their story that surfaces on the Parkway.

Our "partners" are as varied as our resources and the stories that go along with them. From the Eastern Band of the Cherokee to the Appalachian Trail Conference, from the tourism folks in Floyd and Patrick County to the restaurant owners in Laurel Fork, North Carolina, multiple resources bring to the forefront multiple partners with the park. These partners represent communities, and when you link hundreds of communities in 29 counties by way of a long, linear park, you have created a heritage corridor that impacts an entire region.

As this National Park Service site fulfills its mandate to "preserve and protect for the enjoyment of future generations," it is both natural and necessary for park managers now and in the future to think in terms of heritage corridors. Working with a variety of communities, professional disciplines, universities, or protection-oriented organizations, there is no better place than the Blue Ridge Parkway to care for and interpret these widely diverse stories that are ours to cherish.

America's landscape, however, is forever changing and a cross-country drive or a quick look around your hometown will confirm that. In "Our Vanishing Landscape," Eric Sloane describes an America that used to be: "The pattern of our early landscape… had the mellowness and dignity of well seasoned wood. Close at hand there were lanes with vaulting canopies of trees and among them were houses with personalities like human beings. At a distance, it was all like a patchwork quilt of farm plots sewn together with a rough back stitching of stone fences."

Traveling down the Appalachians on the Blue Ridge Parkway… out beyond "the edge"… visitors see a landscape that has changed considerably since the first shovel of dirt was turned creating this national park. This is, of course, especially true in highly populated areas like Roanoke and Asheville. All of these changes affect the park experience of 20 million visitors each year. "The growing changes rung on the landscape of today," Eric Sloane continues, "are the Americana of tomorrow."

What happens to this place makes a difference. Those of us who live "on the edge" – in those 29 counties and

hundreds of communities and thousands of neighborhoods – find that there is a pride, an enjoyment, and a responsibility that comes with that.

I make no apologies when I say I am proud of the Blue Ridge Parkway. I didn't grow up in this area, but as I have told people in the past, I got here just as soon as I could. This pride that most people have is important. It helps, first of all, in protecting the Parkway. It is one of those important collective feelings that we share with each other that, I believe, add to our sense of community.

The Peaks of Otter's Abbott Lake displays the austere beauty of the Parkway in winter. (Christina Koomen photo)

There is, secondly, an enjoyment to living "on the edge" of the Parkway. And no wonder! We have 87,000 acres of protected land, 110 miles of streams, 13 lakes, 100 historic structures. And this doesn't even take into account the intangible things like cool air, vistas, and just the serenity of the place. Everyone, it seems, loves the Parkway. Personally, I enjoy the trout streams where those little native brook trout are still alive and well. I enjoy the grassy hills down around Rocky Knob on crisp October days. It's a wonderful place to get away from whatever you need to get away from – for enjoyment.

But in addition to pride and enjoyment, there comes a certain degree of responsibility associated with "living on the edge" of the most visited NPS area.

As I mentioned earlier, there are over 5,000 adjacent landowners, 29 counties, six congressional districts. One of the themes that you will often hear from us as we speak to communities and organizations is "you're important to the Parkway and the Parkway is important to you." This place cannot stay the way we know it for another 75 years without community and regional help, and the communities and region will not continue to be what they are without a well maintained, cared for, protected Parkway corridor. There is a mutual responsibility involved.

I once heard someone say that "too many places we see in America today look like too many places we see in America today." I didn't understand it at first, but I began to think about inner cities, interstates, subdivisions… all of which very often look the same no matter where you are in America. But national parks aren't like that – they are places where people can have "unique experiences, remarkable experiences, experiences unattainable elsewhere."

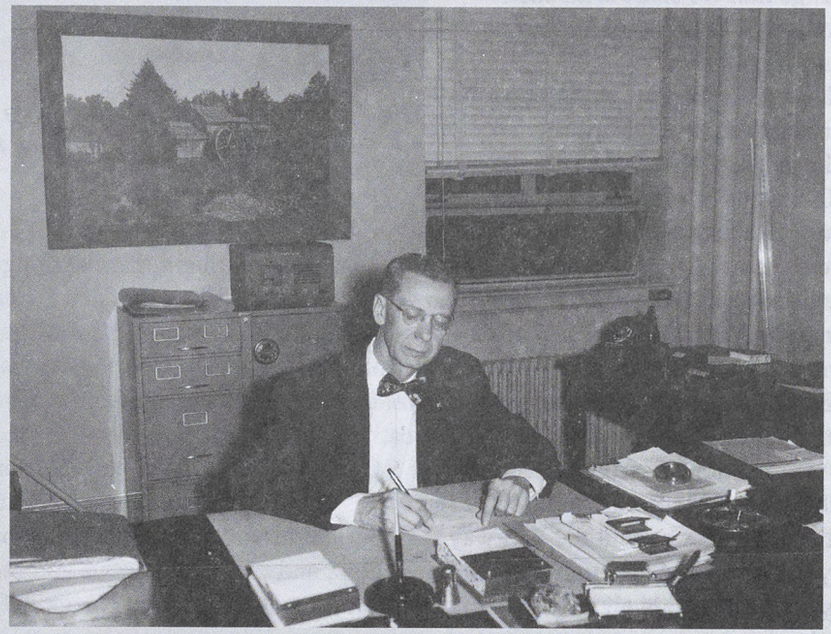
Aldo Leopold in the 1930s and'40s said: "We abuse the land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see the land as a community to which we belong we may begin to use it with love and respect."

Keeping parks like that involves community support, especially in a place with so many communities and so many neighbors. Living on "the edge" of the Parkway does generate pride… it is an enjoyable experience… but most of all, to keep it like we want it, we must recognize the responsibility we have in our communities to do all we can to ensure that our children and our children's children have a Blue Ridge Parkway to enjoy like we do.

A Parkway Picnic Saves a Waterfall

In the formative days of Blue Ridge Parkway planning, decisions were made on a regular basis having to do with alignment of the road or the purchase of property. These decisions were often politically charged and very public in nature. One of the most fascinating and important, however, took place in the early 1950s over a picnic lunch under the shade of hemlock trees on the banks of the Linville River in western North Carolina.

Longtime Parkway Superintendent Sam Weems of Roanoke received a call from former National Park Service Director Horace Albright, advising him that John D. Rockefeller and his son David wanted to visit the Parkway. "Would you set up the trip and see to it that he's taken care of?" Albright asked.



Sam Weems, Parkway superintendent in Roanoke from 1944 to 1966.

Immediately, Linville Falls came to mind. Timber companies were already beginning to work in this privately owned area and the National Park Service wanted to keep the upper falls as part of the Parkway. The price tag was too high, however, unless someone with the finances came to the rescue. Mr. Rockefeller's interest in the Parkway and his upcoming visit "nudged my thinking a little bit" Weems recalled in an interview decades later.

With orders to keep the visit as secret as possible, Mr. Weems made reservations at the Hotel Roanoke under an assumed name. The superintendent and the Parkway's Chief Ranger Mac Dale headed south with their important guests the following day.

At Doughton Park, Weems had arranged to pick up a huge picnic lunch provided by the concessionaire "complete with linens and the whole works" Weems recalled.

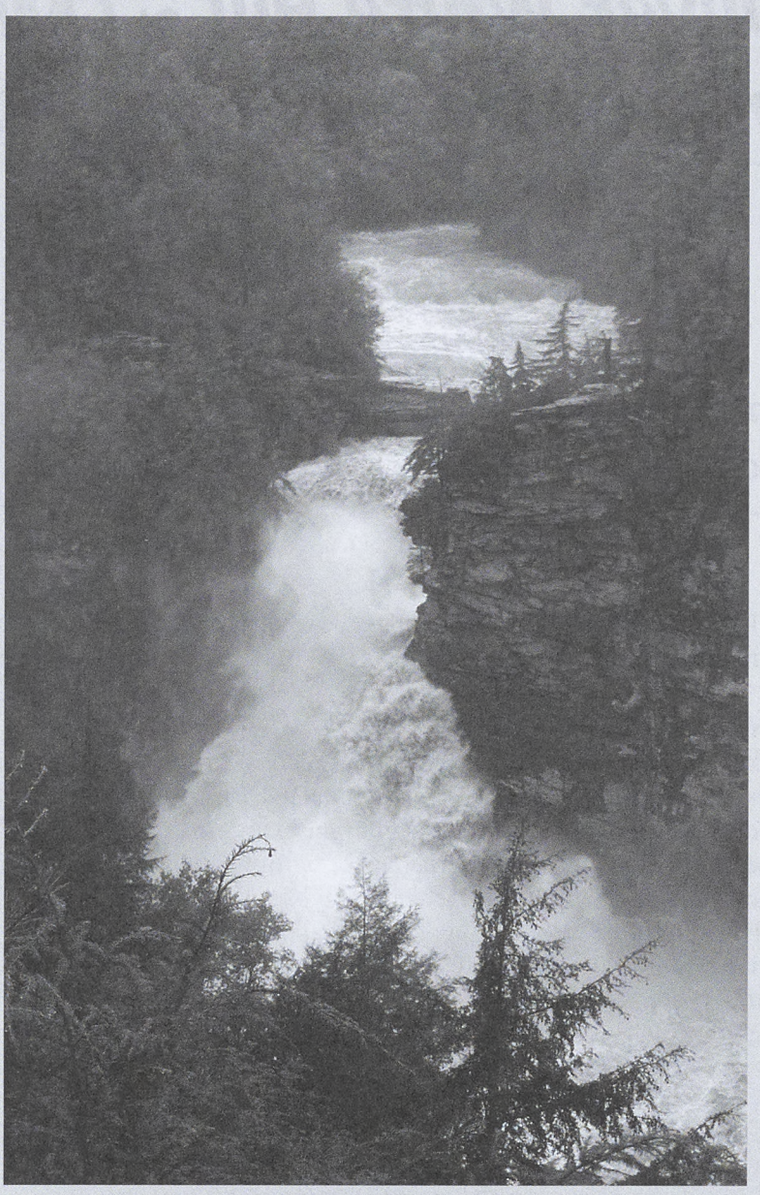
Arriving at Linville Falls, the superintendent casually mentioned a "real nice place down here where we can have lunch."

Under a huge hemlock tree on the river bank, Weems began his pitch and encouraged Rockefeller to walk down to the falls. Unfortunately Mr. Rockefeller told him that, under doctors' orders, he could not walk that far. Not to be defeated, Weems took David Rockefeller further down the way and the young boy came back excited, telling his father about the beautiful falls and the wonderful wildflowers he had seen.

The picnic spot had been pre-arranged within earshot of the sawmills and Weems and Dale made sure that Mr. Rockefeller could hear them and understand the impact that timbering this

Philanthropist
John D. Rockefeller Jr.

area could have. Mr. Rockefeller expressed an interest, inquired about the price, and the superintendent whipped out all of the maps and documentation he had been able to gather prior to the trip. "Put it in my briefcase, David," Mr. Rockefeller told his son, and that ended the conversation.



Picturesque lower Linville Falls

A month later, Sam Weems recalled, he got another call saying that Mr. Rockefeller had promised to "pick up the tab" on the Linville Falls property if the price could be negotiated down to an agreed amount. A trip to visit the owner was next on Weems' agenda and after a number of meetings and discussions, the deal was made. Weems could proudly announce that he had Linville Falls and could give Mr. Rockefeller $5,000 back in change!

Not all of the decisions about the Parkway's route and land base are as interesting and colorful, but this was, without question, one of the most important from those days.

~ Peter Givens

Oliver White Hill ~ Civil Rights Attorney in Roanoke and Throughout Virginia

by John Kern

"In my legal, humanitarian, and political activities I have been part of a large team of lawyers and activists dedicated to creating a more just and humane society."

~ Oliver Hill, Autobiography, 2000*(1)*

This paper focuses on Oliver Hill's education and career in Roanoke, with additional discussion of his Howard University Law School training and his civil rights legal practice in Virginia from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s.

PROLOGUE

My research suggests that civil rights advocates who opposed Jim Crow racial discrimination achieved progressive reforms when they received collective support from black communities with positive racial identity and black institutions that supported civil rights activism.*(2)* Oliver Hill, Virginia's foremost civil rights attorney, received community support and mentoring from 1913 to 1923 while raised as a school child in the historically black neighborhood of Gainsboro in Roanoke.

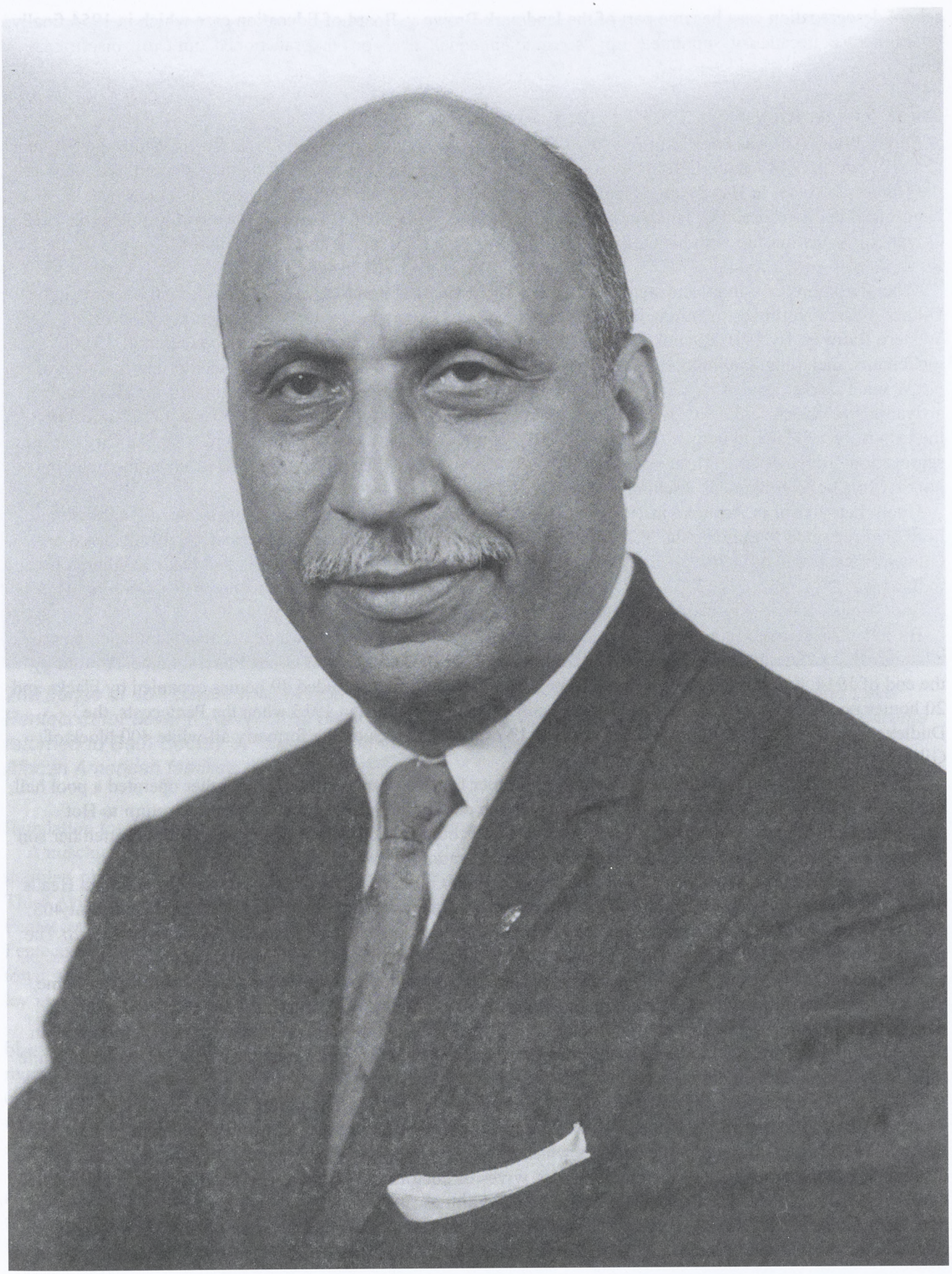
Hill received black peer support and gained awareness of Jim Crow inequities while he attended Howard University from 1927 to 1930. When Hill attended Howard Law School from 1930 to 1933 he gained exposure to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP),*(3)* and received progressive legal training which focused on judicial redress for the Jim Crow Supreme Court decisions, especially Plessy v. Ferguson (1896),that sanctioned racial discrimination against blacks. When Hill returned to Roanoke to practice law from 1934 into 1936, he again received black community support, helped organize the Virginia State Conference of NAACP chapters, and began documenting the unequal facilities of black schools around Roanoke.

Near the end of the Depression, Hill resumed his law practice in Richmond in 1939. There he acted as attorney for the Joint Committee of the NAACP and the black Virginia Teachers Association, and argued the Alston case with appeals to federal courts to obtain equal salaries for black public school teachers. After World War II, Hill returned to his Richmond law practice and by 1950, in concert with NAACP legal staff, turned from suits for equalization of black teacher salaries and black school facilities to litigation directed to the abolition of public school segregation.*(4)*

Accordingly, in April 1951 Hill met in Farmville with black students, parents, and community leaders, obtained their approval, and began the case of Davis v. School Board of Prince Edward County. This Virginia

Opposite: Early photo of Oliver Hill, the lawyer.

John Kern recently retired as a historian and director of the Western Regional Office of the Department of Historic Resources in Roanoke. He holds degrees from Swarthmore College and a doctorate from the University of Wisconsin.



school desegregation case became part of the landmark Brown v. Board of Education case which in 1954 finally overturned six decades of Supreme Court "separate but equal" decisions that sanctioned Jim Crow discrimination.

Early Years: Richmond, 1907 – 1913; Roanoke, 1913 – 1923

Oliver White Hill was born May 1, 1907, in Richmond, to eighteen-year-old Olivia Lewis White and William Henry White, Jr. Hill's father left his wife and son shortly after Oliver's birth. Olivia then worked as a maid at the Homestead hotel in Hot Springs, while her grandmother raised Oliver in Richmond. Olivia married Homestead bellhop Joseph C. Hill shortly before the newlyweds visited Richmond for a family funeral in 1913. Oliver Hill's relationship with his mother and stepfather "jelled instantly," and the family of three moved to Roanoke.*(5)*

When Hill, mother Olivia, and stepfather Joseph Hill arrived in Roanoke in 1913, they found housing at 39 Gilmer Avenue Northwest in a new industrial city founded 31 years before as headquarters for the Norfolk & Western Railway. By 1910 Roanoke ranked as the third largest city in Virginia with a population of 35,000 inhabitants, including 8,000 blacks who lived in a largely segregated neighborhood located primarily north of the N&W main tracks. Roanoke's segregated black neighborhood expanded rapidly at the time of the Hill family's arrival in 1913 because the city's black population increased almost 40 % between 1900 and 1910. In reaction to the expansion of black settlement and in step with Jim Crow era statutory discrimination, Roanoke City passed a segregation ordinance in 1911, and Gilmer Avenue became what Oliver Hill later called a "changing neighborhood" while he lived there as a school child.*(6)*

Upon their arrival in Roanoke in 1913, the Hill family resided in a home headed by Bradford Pentecost, a head chef recruited to upgrade the N&W dining car service, and his wife Lelia Pentecost. No blacks lived on Gilmer Avenue west of Henry or First Street before 1910, but by 1912 the Pentecosts had black neighbors living in houses at 21, 29, 30, 31, 33, 43, and 35 Gilmer, including five N&W employees, one or two laborers, an insurance salesman, a shoe salesman, and dentists Edward Dudley and J.B. Claytor.

By 1913 blacks lived in nine of the 10 homes on the 100 block of Gilmer, where occupants included laborers, a laundress, a janitor, a driver, and C.C. Williams, the owner of Williams and Evans Funeral home. All told by the end of 1914, the four Gilmer Avenue blocks west of Henry Street included 49 homes occupied by blacks and 20 homes occupied by whites. The biggest residential change occurred in 1915 when the Pentecosts, the Dudleys, and 15 other black households occupied 17 of the 22 homes on the formerly all-white 400 block of Gilmer Avenue.*(7)*

The Hill family lived with the Pentecosts at 39 Gilmer for two years and Hill's stepfather operated a pool hall, but by the time the Pentecosts moved to their new home on Gilmer, Hill's parents decided to return to Hot Springs in Bath County. Since Bath County had only one-room schools for blacks, Olivia Hill permitted her son to remain in Roanoke where he could receive a better education.

For the next eight years Hill lived with the Pentecosts on Gilmer. The Pentecosts became his mentors. Heads of households and their families in this block became his immediate neighbors: Dentist Edward Dudley at 405; Dr. J.H. Roberts at 411; N&W brakeman and Railway Trainmen union organizer Rufus Edwards at 415.*(8)* The Gainsboro neighborhood became Hill's extended black community of social and cultural support.

Hill admired Mrs. Pentecost as a "marvelous person," a proud woman who never worked outside her home. She refused to permit white salesmen to enter the house unless they asked for "Mrs. Pentecost" and removed their hats before they stepped inside the front door. Because these white salesmen "treated Mrs. Pentecost with the respect they accorded white female customers," Hill said he "developed personal esteem and expected white folks to treat me like they did one another."

Hill remembered close family relationships at his home as an "only child" during the years from 1915 to 1923. He played cards with the Pentecosts, and became a good player with a feel for different card games. Sometimes Hill filled in for Mrs. Pentecost's whist club for women, and noted that the women made no class distinctions, though members of the club included wives of doctors and railroad workers, teachers, a nurse and a domestic. He knew that Mrs. Pentecost always expected him to finish college. They remained close friends until Mrs. Pentecost's death in 1943. Hill said he was glad that she lived until she knew that he and NAACP associates won the Alston case, the suit that gained equal salaries for black teachers in Virginia and helped lay the legal

The house at 401 Gilmer Ave. in Roanoke is where young Oliver Hill lived with Bradford and Lelia Pentecost for several years in the early 1900s in order to attend Roanoke's schools, after his parents returned to Bath County. At the time, the 400 block of Gilmer was home to a number of prominent African American families.

foundation for dismantling state and national segregation policies.*(9)*

A mischievous student, "always into devilment," Hill respected and learned from strong teachers. He shot marbles, played basketball and football in school, played sandlot baseball, and played tennis at a vacant lot on Third Avenue. He played as a walk-on in an Oscar Micheaux race film, "House Behind the Cedars"; the Pentecosts invested in the film, and Micheaux shot a scene with Hill walking through a lawn party staged in the Pentecosts' front yard. Hill worked in an ice cream parlor, carried lunch to a black barber who worked downtown, sold newspapers, shined shoes, delivered blocks of ice, and helped Mrs. Pentecost grow and harvest parsley in her back yard for the N&W dining car service.*(10)*

Hill said that white boys chased him when he sold newspapers in white neighborhoods, and he remembered black retaliation if white boys came into his neighborhood. The best place for Hill to sell newspapers on Sunday mornings was in white neighborhoods. Hill said that if white boys came along, "They would cuff me, and if we caught them in our neighborhood we would cuff them, too…. They let us know they didn't care anything about us and we let them know we didn't care anything about them. This was one of the unfortunate results of racial segregation."*(11)*

Hill remembered Pentecost as the quiet head of household at 401 Gilmer when he was at home from his job as an N&W dining car chef, a man who read several national newspapers and enjoyed listening to records of the famous black comedian Bert Williams. Once, when Hill bragged that he won a fight against other black boys, a fight staged by white men, Pentecost told him, "You just played the fool to the white man." Another time when

Pentecost returned home from a railroad run and learned that white men at a distillery had threatened Oliver with castration, Pentecost was "mad as hell," and took Oliver back to the distillery the next day. No whites were there, so no confrontation occurred, but Oliver must have felt protected. Hill wrote that he never forgot the incident, and he finished the first "Early Years" chapter of his autobiography with this narration of threatened abuse and offered protection.*(12)*

Education in Washington, D.C: 1923 – 1933

In 1923, Hill rejoined his mother and stepfather who had moved from Hot Springs to Washington, D.C. During summers between high school years at Dunbar, he worked at summer resorts in central Pennsylvania and in the Massachusetts Berkshires. There Hill learned how to gamble at cards and how to protect himself from card sharks.*(13)*

Hill always knew he would attend college. When he began his undergraduate study at Howard University in Washington, D.C., in 1927, Hill did not consider himself an outstanding student, and never became close to his professors until the end of his third year of college when his decision to go to law school made him buckle down to his studies.

When he was in his second year at Howard, Hill's stepfather's brother died in Washington, D.C. Sam Hill had a "sundown practice" in law where he helped black clients with wills and property transactions. Natalie, Sam Hill's widow, was friends with Oliver Hill and gave him some of her husband's law books and a 1924 United States Code Annotated. When Hill began to read the annotated Constitution, he learned that "originally the Constitution didn't include Negroes, whether free or slave in any positive fashion." He learned that blacks were only regarded as three-fifths of a person for determining representation in the House of Representatives and that slaveholders received constitutionally guaranteed federal support for capture and return of escaped slaves. Hill's study of his step-uncle's law books made him determined to go to law school, because he realized that the Constitution and Supreme Court rulings made it impossible to protect black rights threatened by lynchings and by Plessy v. Ferguson rulings that sanctioned Jim Crow segregation. Hill studied Latin to meet Howard requirements for graduation, and entered Howard Law School in September 1930.*(14)*

Tall, broad shouldered, forceful, and convivial with allies, Hill entered Howard Law School determined to fight segregation. Others at Howard shared his concerns for progressive education and use of the law to improve black civil rights. Howard's first black president, Mordecai Johnson, appointed in 1926, focused his administration on making Howard an institution "dedicated to the betterment of the Negro."

In the late 1920s, when Mordecai Johnson recognized the need to improve the Howard Law School so its graduates could protect black civil rights and overthrow Jim Crow Supreme Court decisions, he sought the advice of Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis. Brandeis told Johnson that black attorneys seldom presented meritorious arguments to the high court and that the Howard Law School needed a complete overhaul: "You've got to get yourself a real faculty out there or you're always going to have a fifth-rate law school. And it's got to be full-time and a day school." Johnson acted on the advice of Brandeis and appointed Charles Houston as dean of the Howard Law School in July 1929. Houston, a 34-year-old black attorney in Washington, D.C., and a graduate with honors from Harvard Law School, accepted the appointment and took action to convert the Howard Law School to a full-time day program staffed with top-caliber black law professors.*(15)*

When Oliver Hill and Thurgood Marshall entered Howard Law School in 1930 they were members of the school's first full-time, day-school, three-year law program. Hill said he and Marshall called Houston "iron pants," taught as a "tough disciplinarian….He kept hammering at us all those years that, as lawyers, we had to be social engineers or else we were parasites." Thurgood Marshall said Houston was "hard crust….He used to tell us doctors could bury their mistakes but lawyers couldn't. And he'd drive home to us that we would be competing not only with white lawyers but really well-trained white lawyers, so there just wasn't any point in crying in our beer about being Negroes."

Marshall and Hill accepted Houston's challenge. They went to law classes in the morning, ate soul food for a quarter at one of Father Devine's restaurants, and then worked together researching cases until about 4:30 p.m. Hill said he knew Marshall studied more than he did, but "this disciplined school schedule and sense of shared purpose kept us very close." In 1933 Marshall graduated first in the class and Hill graduated second. Kluger, a great scholar of Brown v. Board of Education, wrote that by the time Marshall and Hill graduated, they and fel-

low law students knew their rights under the Constitution, and knew they had to prepare technically competent cases to get the courts to change. By then "Howard Law School became a living laboratory where civil rights law was invented by team work."*(16)*

Roanoke Law Practice: 1934 – 1936

Hill learned that he passed the Virginia bar exam in February 1934. While in law school, Hill met Beresenia "Bernie" Walker and they married in September 1934. Bernie remained in Washington, D.C., to teach in the D.C. public schools, and Hill returned to Roanoke in 1934 to open a law practice. He lived again with the Pentecosts at 401 Gilmer, and his wife came down from D.C. to visit on weekends.*(17)*

Hill opened his law practice in the two-story brick Brooks Building at 40 Centre Avenue on the southeast corner of Centre and Henry Street in the heart of Roanoke's black commercial district. A.F. Brooks ranked as the principal black commercial property owner in Gainsboro during the 1910s and 1920s. The Brooks Building adjoined the Hampton Theatre, built by Brooks at the end of World War I, and was a block south of the Strand Theatre on Henry Street. The Strand, built by Brooks in 1923, served as headquarters for the Oscar Micheaux Film Corporation from 1923 through 1925.*(18)*

The Brooks Building housed professional offices above a first-floor drugstore. Dentist E.D. Downing and physician L.C. Downing occupied second-floor offices in the front of the Brooks building that faced Centre Avenue. Physician W.R. Brown, dentist Gardiner Downing, and attorney J. Henry Claytor occupied second-floor offices in the rear of the building. Hill had a chair and a desk in the reception area of the rear offices, and Hill used attorney Claytor's cluttered office on the rare occasions when he had a client.*(19)*

Begun in the middle of the Depression, Hill's law practice in Roanoke provided him with experience, but little income. Because his criminal practice consisted mostly of *pro bono* representation of criminal defendants, Hill looked for creative ways to earn money. He filed wage assignments with the N&W personnel office to forestall garnishment. He collected a few unpaid debts for black professionals, without much success. He visited jails and prisoners or their families paid him small fees to petition judges for early release. Hill even made some money by typing chain letters.*(20)*

In 1935, Hill borrowed the Pentecosts' car to drive to Wytheville to investigate an incident that threatened to end with a lynching because a black man was charged with shooting a white local deputy sheriff. Hill learned of the incident from a concerned black man in Wytheville who called the NAACP in New York and was referred to Hill in Roanoke.

After meeting in Wytheville with the black informant and a white family who offered anonymous assistance by discussing public officials and prominent whites in the community, Hill agreed to represent the defendant. Though courtroom evidence indicated that the deputy sheriff instigated the conflict that ended in the shooting, the jury convicted the defendant who was sentenced to four years in the penitentiary. In discussing the case at the end of his life, Hill said that he often received valuable information from whites "who wanted to do right, but did not feel they could afford to go public." After the trial and sentencing, the presiding judge helped Hill obtain an early release for the defendant.*(21)*

While in Roanoke, Hill worked with Charles Houston, who had left Howard Law School by 1935 and became special counsel to the NAACP charged with directing new activities to obtain equal educational opportunities for blacks in the South. Houston hired Thurgood Marshall as his assistant for the NAACP educational program. By the mid-1930s, Hill's law practice made him Virginia's principal player on the NAACP team organized to combat racism, and Hill worked with NAACP leadership to organize the Virginia State Conference of NAACP branches in Virginia in 1935. To obtain evidence in support of NAACP litigation for equal education while he worked in Roanoke, Hill traveled around Roanoke County and photographed the exteriors and interiors of black one-room schools to document their inferiority to Roanoke County schools for white children.*(22)*

Richmond Law Practice and Civil Rights: 1939 – 1954

In June 1936, Oliver Hill left Roanoke and returned to Washington, D.C. where he could be with his wife Bernie as she continued her work as a school teacher. Hill and high school and college friend William Whitehead decided to organize an un-segregated labor union of waiters and cooks working in Washington hotels, clubs, and restaurants, but their efforts failed without support from the C.I.O. Hill took jobs as a waiter on Seaboard and

Costal railroads. The railroads offered full-time employment but Hill said he refused the offers because as he said, he was a lawyer "in between engagements."*(23)*

In May 1939 Hill resumed his law practice in Virginia by opening a Richmond law office on the second floor of a house at 117 East Hill Street. Hill soon became legal counsel for a Joint Committee of representatives of the black Virginia Teachers Association and the Virginia NAACP State Conference that he helped organize in 1935. Upon his arrival in Richmond, Hill worked as the only Virginia attorney who addressed black public school teachers' salaries. On Sundays, Hill and Dr. Jesse Tinsley, president of the Virginia NAACP Conference, visited black churches in outlying counties. They gained support for salary equalization, but Hill had no success when he negotiated with county school officials to obtain equal salaries for black teachers.

Hill traveled around the state on his own during the week to drum up black community support for salary equalization, and told his audiences that after the NAACP introduced the salary issue, they would launch a broad-based challenge against unequal and segregated public schools. Hill's fight for black teacher salary equalization in Virginia culminated with the Alston case.*(24)*

Alston v. School Board of Norfolk: 1939 – 1943

The Alston ruling followed Thurgood Marshall's appointment to head the New York NAACP office in 1938, and his subsequent decision to institute a federal District Court appeal of a Maryland county school board suit that failed to win equal pay for black teachers. In November 1939, the Federal District Court Gaines opinion ruled that unequal salaries for black teachers in Maryland "violated the supreme law of the land." Now the NAACP had legal precedent for salary equalization in Virginia.*(25)*

In the fall of 1939, the black Norfolk Teachers Association sought equal pay for Melvin Alston, a teacher at Norfolk's Booker T. Washington High School who received an annual salary of $921, compared to $1,200 for white teachers in Norfolk with comparable experience and duties. Marshall and Hill agreed to file a class action suit in Federal District Court. The case received a hearing in February 1940 when District Court Judge Luther Way ruled against Alston and the NAACP.

Marshall, Hill and the rest of the NAACP legal team decided to appeal the case to the Federal Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. Hill offered to ask for a special session so the Appeals Court could review the case before the end of the school year and almost certain termination of Alston's teaching contract. After the Court ruled in favor of Alston in June 1940, the Norfolk School board appealed the case to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court refused to take the case in November 1940, and Alston became the federal ruling that provided precedent for salary equalization.*(26)*

After the Appeals Court reversed Alston, Federal District Court Judge Luther Way told the disputants, the Norfolk School Board and Hill representing the NAACP, "You all go out and settle this thing." A subsequent consent decree called for the School Board to equalize teacher pay within three years. Thereafter, Hill successfully argued for equal pay with school boards in Newport News, Norfolk and Sussex counties, Chesterfield and Richmond.*(27)*

After serving overseas as an enlisted man in an Army regiment during the last two years of World War II, Hill returned to his law practice in Richmond where Spottswood Robinson had joined the firm. During the late 1940s Hill and Robinson filed scores of suits against Virginia school boards to secure equal transportation (adequate school buses), and equal school facilities for black students. Hill and Robinson won some advances for equal transportation, but they had no success when they argued for equal school facilities.*(28)*

In 1950, however, civil rights tactics changed, when Oliver Hill and the Virginia civil rights team accepted Thurgood Marshall's new NAACP national policy that called for a move away from equalization and instead advocated suits that argued directly for an end to school segregation. Hill recounted a positive response when he explained the new policy to hundreds assembled at a black church in Dinwiddie County. "There was this old man in the back wearing overalls and he gets up after hearing us out – he looked like he didn't know beans from Adam – and he says, 'Mr. Hill I've heard you, and all I want to say is that we've known all along that you can't do it this way, a piece at a time, and we've just been waiting for leaders to tell us we had to go all the way.'" Now civil rights activists found black community support for suits in Virginia, Washington, D.C., Delaware, South Carolina and Kansas that led to Brown v. Board of Education, the decision on May 17, 1954, that ended the Supreme Court doctrine of separate but equal.*(29)*

Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, Virginia: 1951 – 1952

Davis, the Virginia lawsuit that became one of the five cases combined in Brown v. Board of Education, began with a phone call to Hill's law office at about 5:00 p.m. Monday April 23, 1951, from Barbara Johns, a 16-year-old junior at the black Robert Moton High School in Prince Edward County. Johns' phone call to Hill marked the end of a day of protest that she directed, events that initiated Virginia's most important civil rights case of the 20th century. The Moton school student strike began just before 11 a.m. on April 23 after Moton principal Boyd Jones received a prearranged phone call that lured him out of school. Johns then sent notes to all class rooms that announced an assembly at the school auditorium.

After 450 students and teachers reached the auditorium, Johns asked the teachers to leave, and then called for a school strike until black students were treated equally and had a decent high school instead of their present inadequate facility. Johns and a student strike committee asked the students to remain at school that day while the strike committee met with the white Prince Edward County superintendent of schools. Moton principal Boyd Jones returned to school, but did not intervene to halt the strike. After Prince Edward County School Superintendent T.J. McIlwain declined to meet with Johns and her strike committee, the committee met that afternoon with the Rev. Francis Griffin, pastor of the black First Baptist Church in Farmville, a church within walking distance of Moton School. Griffin, who had organized the Prince Edward County NAACP chapter, gave the strike committee contact information for Oliver Hill as the NAACP special counsel for the Southeastern region of the United States. Late that afternoon, Barbara Johns called Hill at his law office in Richmond.*(30)*

A portrait of Barbara Johns, a principal in the Prince Edward County school segregation case, hangs in the State Capitol in Richmond today.

During the phone call, Johns told Hill about the deplorable conditions at Moton School, and made her case so strongly that Hill chose not to terminate the discussion on the telephone. On Wednesday morning, April 25, Hill, Robinson and another NAACP associate met the striking students in Farmville at Rev. Griffin's church. Though Hill planned to tell the students to go back to school, Hill said he and his partners "found these students had such fine morale and were so well disciplined that we didn't have the heart to break their spirit."

Hill told the students that the NAACP now sought to challenge segregation directly. He asked the students to talk to their parents and if their parents agreed to support them in a suit to declare racial public school segregation unconstitutional, he and his colleagues would take the case. The Moton students and parents met with Hill and associates at Rev. Griffin's church that Wednesday evening. The parents agreed to stand behind the students in the new course of action against segregation.

Two weeks later, Hill and Robinson held a county-wide meeting for black students and parents at Rev. Griffin's church, where the overwhelming majority of those in attendance voted to seek an end to segregation. By May 23, 1951, Robinson filed a suit in the Federal Courthouse in Richmond on behalf of 117 Moton students who petitioned that the state law in Virginia requiring school segregation be declared unconstitutional. The case, Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, took its name from 14-year-old Barbara Davis, the daughter of a Prince Edward County farmer, and the first name on the list of plaintiff petitioners. Thus Davis became one of the five cases heard in Brown v. Board of Education. As Hill said, the NAACP did not pick the case; Prince Edward County students and parents picked the NAACP to take the case.*(31)*

A special three-judge Federal District Court convened in Richmond in February 1952 to hear Davis v. Prince Edward County School Board. State attorneys for the defendants headed by Justin Moore argued that school segregation was not discriminatory and therefore not illegal. Hill, as lead NAACP attorney for the plaintiffs, put former Moton principal Boyd Jones on the stand to describe the overcrowding at Moton where three tar-paper shacks housed the overflow of students who made up half of the Moton student body. Jones discussed his inability to obtain better facilities and better equipment from the Prince Edward County School Board during his four years as principal. NAACP expert witnesses testified that segregated schools for blacks led to restricted curriculum, humiliation and lack of self-respect for the students, charges denied by Justin Moore.

When Moore maintained that one of the primary purposes of the NAACP "has been to foment and stir up and foment critical situations that will call critical attention to this racial problem," Hill replied, "I challenge Mr. Moore to state any place where the NAACP has been reported…to foment anything. We unquestionably are trying to break up segregation." Moore countered, "You yourself were reported in the Richmond press…as urging the people in Richmond to create these situations that focus on differences in race treatment, and you know you were." Hill replied, "I did say – and I say it now – that I urged people to exert themselves to carry on their rights – whatever their rights were, under the law, they should press for them."*(32)*

The five-day trial closed with a summation for the defendants by Lindsay Almond, former Virginia attorney general and subsequent governor of Virginia. Almond said Virginia might resort to massive violation of the law if the Court were to void school segregation; that the Prince Edward conflict was fomented by agitation and propaganda from the NAACP; and that it was up to the legislature and not the courts to determine discriminatory practice. Hill countered the argument that segregation is a legislative matter, "People...know as well as I do that the Congress cannot express its will on questions involving civil rights because the Senators of this State and other Southern states will refuse to permit Congress to express its sentiments."

As for segregation itself, speaking for the NAACP Hill said, "We want an opportunity to develop in the business and commerce of this nation. In other words, we want an opportunity to develop our talents, whatever they may be, in whatever fields of endeavor there are existing in this country….I submit that in this segregated schools system, you do not have that opportunity."*(33)*

So Davis closed for the defendants with charges of NAACP propaganda and threats of massive violation of the law in response to court-ordered desegregation, countered by Hill's assertion that segregation had to be challenged by the courts, and that segregation violated the plaintiffs' opportunity to gain equal civil rights under the law. The Federal District Court was not persuaded by the arguments of the plaintiffs. The court's decision found in school segregation "No harm or hurt to either race." Hill and the NAACP did not agree. The next year, Davis would go on to the Supreme Court as part of Brown v. Board of Education.*(34)*

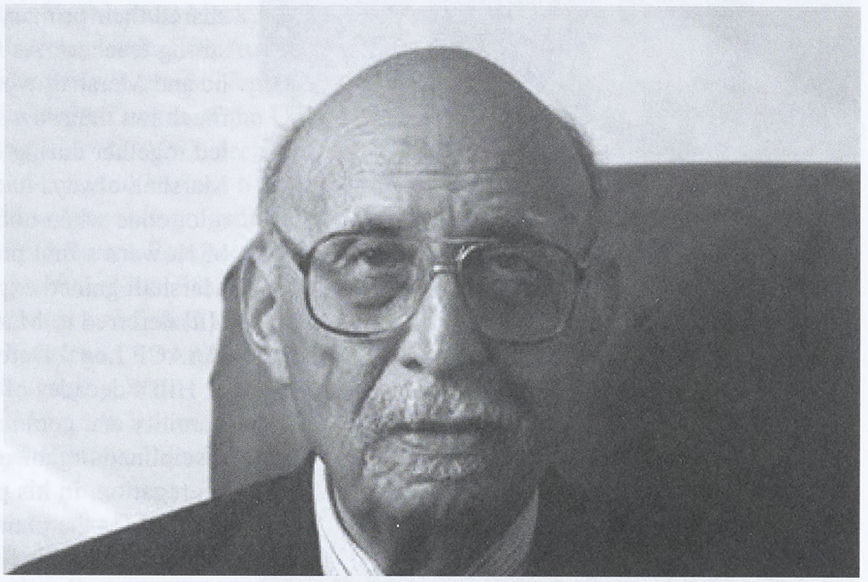
Brown v. Board of Education: 1953 – 1954

Near the end of his life, Hill discussed NAACP anti-segregation strategy. "We knew we had to educate the people and the courts including the Supreme Court. We didn't expect any positive action until we got to the Supreme Court. We planned to get to the Supreme Court by choosing good cases. We didn't want another Plessy v. Ferguson decision." Hill's work with NAACP lawyers and strategists, and his civil rights advocacy in Davis contributed to a landmark judicial reversal of Plessy v. Ferguson with the Supreme Court's ruling in Brown v. Board of Education.*(35)*

After the initial hearing of Brown concluded in the spring of 1953, the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Fred Vinson requested a re-argument of the case. Vinson died in September 1953 and re-argument began December 7, 1953, under newly appointed Chief Justice Earl Warren. At the re-argument, attorneys for the

defense John Davis and Justin Moore maintained that segregation provided for equal education, and had nothing to do with the practice of segregation. Thurgood Marshall argued as chief counsel for the NAACP that whites had imposed segregation on blacks since Emancipation. Marshall concluded that the only way for the Court to uphold segregation was "to find that for some reason Negroes are inferior to all other human beings…. Now is the time we submit, that the Court should make it clear that that is not what our Constitution stands for." The Court adjourned the re-argument on December 9, 1953.*(36)*

Warren addressed the other justices of the Court at their Saturday morning conference on December 12, 1953, three days after the Court adjourned the Brown re-argument. Though he made no reference to Marshall's closing argument, Warren told the other justices that the doctrine of "separate but equal" rested on the concept of the inferiority of the Negro race. Therefore, Warren told the justices that the segregation of Negro children had to be ended. Warren said he wanted to unite the Court on Brown with a single unanimous decision. Warren drafted a short readable opinion and circulated it among the justices with subsequent revisions until it received final approval at a conference of the justices five months later on May 15, 1954. On May 17, 1954, Warren read the opinion which closed, "We conclude unanimously that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."*(37)*



Oliver Hill, as he neared his centennial birthday.

Hill, who had not participated in the Brown re-argument, learned of the Court's decision in the early afternoon on May 17, 1954, while driving in Richmond. A bulletin came over his car radio saying the Supreme Court was announcing its decision on school segregation. "Chief Justice Warren started talking. I turned the car around and hightailed it back to the office. I ran upstairs yelling 'Turn on the radio, turn on the radio.' Soon there was much hurrahing in our office as we were celebrating. We did no more work that day." Brown v. Board of Education vindicated Hill's twenty years of work with the NAACP as a civil rights attorney in Roanoke and throughout Virginia. Plessy v. Ferguson was no longer the segregationist law of the land.*(38)*

Epilogue

Of course, school segregation did not end with Warren's announcement of the Brown v. Board of Education decision on May 17, 1954. Though he applauded the Brown decision that overruled Plessy v. Ferguson, Hill decried the Supreme Court Brown II decision, delivered in May 1955, the decision that instructed Federal District Courts to implement school desegregation with "all deliberate speed." Believing that justice delayed is justice denied, Hill addressed the Virginia General Assembly in November 1955 to oppose, without success, pending state legislation intended to obstruct school desegregation. Hill appealed to the Federal Fourth District Court when Prince Edward County kept its schools open, but segregated. Hill obtained Federal District Court orders to desegregate Charlottesville and Warren County schools. When Governor Lindsay Almond closed those schools, Hill successfully supported suits that challenged this action as unconstitutional. Hill worked with the NAACP to challenge the constitutionality of Massive Resistance statutes enacted by the Virginia General Assembly, laws that outlawed NAACP activities taken to oppose desegregation. Eventually, by around 1970, Virginia public schools were desegregated. Near the end of his long life, Hill maintained that "Over forty years

after Brown and over thirty years after enactment of the Civil Rights Acts, we still do not have a level playing field regarding employment, education, business, social or political opportunities."*(39)*

Yet despite his recognition of the survival of racial inequities at the end of his life, Hill never expressed bitterness in his pursuit of a more just and humane society. The personal self-esteem and expectation of equal treatment that Hill gained while living with the Pentecosts in Roanoke remained with him the rest of his life. Widowed and blind when he spoke in Roanoke in his nineties, with serene and total recall, Hill recounted his childhood memories of the supportive community life of Gainsboro, and the positive expectations of Gainsboro residents.*(40)*

Oliver Hill (on walker) and Clarence Dunnaville, a friend, in front of 401 Gilmer Ave., Hill's boyhood home.

At Howard University Law School Hill and Marshall shared their primary school devilment and respect for strong teachers. As members of rival fraternities, Hill said he and Marshall worked things out together and pretty much ran their law school class. Hill and Marshall studied together during their law school years. Hill said Marshall always had some lie to tell, but managed to get a lot done when nobody was watching.*(41)* As members of Howard's first professional law school class, Hill and Marshall gained exposure to the NAACP legal team and Hill deferred to Marshall's subsequent leadership of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund.

Hill's decades of work with the NAACP gave him humility and commitment as a participating member of a disciplined organization charged with the overthrow of segregation. In his practical and direct approach as lead counsel for the plaintiffs in Davis v. Prince Edward County, Hill called for blacks to press for their rights under the law to attain equal opportunities in all fields. Hill did not voice Marshall's argument in Brown v. Board of Education, repeated in Chief Justice Warren's opinion, that whites imposed segregation on blacks because of white belief in the racial inferiority of blacks.

Throughout his life Hill contemplated the injustices of segregation. As a student he resented the inequity of school facilities. Elected in 1948 as the first black to serve on the Richmond City Council since enactment of the Virginia Constitution of 1902, Hill recognized that his segregated education did not provide him with training in technical fields such as business, finance, and public administration, knowledge familiar to white council members. At the end of his life, Hill observed that he had never attended school with a white child.*(42)*

In the conclusion of his Autobiography published in 2000 when he was ninety three, Hill reflected on his lifetime dedication to make society more just and humane. He remembered, "I [saw] the way things were when I was a kid. Later I thought that I could do something about segregation, and many of us joined together and made a difference."*(43)*

End Notes

1. Oliver W. Hill, The Autobiography of Oliver W. Hill, Sr., edited by Jonathon K. Stubbs, FOUR-G Publishers, Winter Park, FL, 2000, vii, hereafter cited as Hill, Autobiography.

2. John Kern, "Jim Crow in Henry County, Virginia," paper presented at the Virginia Forum, April 16, 2010; archived in the Virginia Room of the Main Roanoke City Library, Roanoke, Virginia. C. Vann Woodward, The

Strange Career of Jim Crow, Oxford University Press, 1955, revised 1957, 1966, 1974, provides the classic discussion of segregation statutes that lent the sanction of law to racial ostracism of blacks in America from the 1870s down to 1954.

3. Formed in 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, NAACP, sought to protect civil rights and racial justice, and reached its peak membership at the end of World War II.

4. Doxey A. Wilkerson, "The Negro School Movement in Virginia: From Equalization to Integration," Journal of Negro Education, XXIX, 1960, 17-29.

5. Oliver Hill said his mother, the daughter of a white student at the Medical

College of Virginia, "looked as white as a white person." Hill's paternal grandfather William Henry White, Sr., founded the black Mount Carmel Baptist Church in Richmond, and his paternal grandmother Kate Garnet White was a friend of Maggie Walker, Richmond's foremost black supporter of women's suffrage, women's fraternal orders, and head of St. Luke's Penny Savings Bank. Hill, Autobiography, 11, 5.

6. U. S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Census: Negro Population 1790-1915 Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1918, 774. Sixteenth Census of the United States. Population 1942, Virginia, Table 2, 1100. Erin Baratta, "Gainsboro Historic Context," 1992; archived in the Virginia Room of the Main Roanoke City Library, Roanoke, Virginia; also published in History Museum & Historical Society of Western Virginia Journal, 1999, 40-50. Naomi Mattos, "Residential Segregation in the City of Roanoke, 2005," archived in the Virginia Room of the Main Roanoke City Library, Roanoke, Virginia; also published in History Museum & Historical Society of Western Virginia Journal, 2008, 32-38. Hill mentioned the U.S. Supreme Court decision Buchanan v. Worley, 1917, that ruled against residential segregation, but he decried the decision because it did not challenge the "separate but equal" Supreme Court ruling of Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) that sanctioned Jim Crow racial discrimination. Hill, Autobiography, xix.

7. Mattos, "Residential Segregation," Virginia Room, 11-13. Alice Roberts and Margaret Roberts, "Gilmer Avenue, Northwest," History Museum & Historical Society of Western Virginia Journal, 1999, 51-52. Hill, Autobiography, 12.

8. Hill, Autobiography, 14-15. All four houses, 401, 405, 411, and 415 are still standing on Gilmer Ave., NW. See Mattos, "Residential Segregation," and Alice and Margaret Roberts, "Gilmer Avenue, Northwest," for additional historical information on the families living at 405, 411, and 415 Gilmer Ave, NW.

9. Hill, Autobiography, 12-17, 34-35.

10. Hill, Autobiography, 17-28. Oscar Micheaux, the principal producer of black "race films" in America between World War I and World War II, directed several films in Roanoke from 1922 to 1925, John Kern "Oscar Micheaux, 'Race Films,' and the Strand Theatre," Notes on Virginia, 2006, 59-62.

11. Hill, Autobiography, 21-22.

12. Hill, Autobiography, 33-35. The story of Hill as the last boy left standing in the fight, commanded by white men, against other black boys, and the narration of Mr. Pentecost's critical response does not appear in his Autobiography, but was narrated by Hill in one of two memorable talks I heard him deliver in Roanoke around 1990. Though in his nineties and blind, Hill spoke with complete and animated command of his memories of blacks living with positive self esteem in the Gainsboro neighborhood of Roanoke around World War I.

13. Hill, Autobiography, 36-53.

14. Hill, Autobiography, 71-72.

15. Richard Kluger, Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality, Vintage Books, New York, 1975, 125-127. Hill, Autobiography, 76-78.

16. Kluger, Simple Justice, 127-128. Hill, Autobiography, 78-80. Engaged in friendly and studious rivalry while in law school, Hill and Marshall remained fast friends for the remainder of their lives.

17. Though Oliver Hill took the bar exam in Richmond in December 1933, he did not learn that he passed until February 1934 because the State Bar examiners mailed the notice to Hill's given residence at 401 Gilmer in Roanoke, and Mrs. Pentecost had to find a lawyer to provide receipts as evidence of Hill's payment of the state poll tax (instituted by the Virginia Constitution of 1902) for the past three years. Hill, Autobiography, 88-90. Hill did not mention in his Autobiography that Mr. Pentecost must have died while Hill lived at 401 Gilmer in the mid-1930s: the 1935 Hill's Roanoke City Directory listed both Mr. and Mrs. Pentecost in residence at 401 Gilmer; however, the 1936 Directory only listed Mrs. Pentecost.

18. Hill, Autobiography, 90. Hill's Roanoke City Directory, 1935, Hill Directory Company, Richmond, Virginia, Vol. 23, 522. "Insurance Map of Roanoke, Virginia," Sanborn Map Company, New York, 1919, revised 1933, 46. Kern, "Oscar Micheaux" 60-61.

19. Hills Roanoke City Directory, 1935, 522. Hill, Autobiography, 90.

20. Hill, Autobiography, 93, 99.

21. Hill, Autobiography, 95-97.

22. Hill, Autobiography, 97-98, 99.

23. Hill, Autobiography, 99-100.

24. Hill, Autobiography, 101-104.

25. Kluger, Simple Justice, 214-215.

26. Kluger, Simple Justice, 215-216; Hill, Autobiography, 122-130; Wilkerson, "The Negro School Movement in Virginia," 261.

27. Hill, Autobiography, 132-133.

28. In Henry County, Virginia between 1940 and 1950, following Alston, black teachers' salaries attained parity with white teachers' salaries. But throughout the decade the total value of black school facilities remained unchanged at 25% of the total value of white school facilities. Kern, "Jim Crow in Henry County;" Kern, "Henry County-Martinsville Historic Context," paper archived in the Virginia Room of the Main Roanoke City Library, Roanoke, Virginia, and in the Bassett Historical Center, Bassett, Virginia, 2010.

29. Kluger, Simple Justice, 471-475.

30. Hill Autobiography, 148-149. Kluger, 461-470.

31. In June 1951, Moton principal Boyd Jones was fired by the Prince Edward County School Board for his failure to stop the student strike. The parents of strike team leaders who were not self-employed were fired from their jobs. For her safety, Barbara Johns was sent to Montgomery, Alabama, where her uncle and noted civil rights advocate Vernon Johns was pastor of Dexter Baptist Church, a pastorate that Martin Luther King, Jr. accepted in 1954. Hill, Autobiography, 150-151, 160. Prince Edward County closed all public schools in 1959 rather than desegregate them; the reopening of Prince Edward schools under Federal District Court order in 1964 marked the end of Massive Resistance in Virginia. Kluger, 474-479. George Gilliam, producer of Massive Resistance, a Public Television Documentary, 2000; personal communication June 8, 2010.

32. Kluger, 485-497.

33. Kluger, 505-506.

34. Kluger, 506-507.

35. Hill Autobiography, 153-159.

36. Kluger, 613-616; 667-678.

37. Kluger, 700-708.

38. Hill, Autobiography, 167.

39. Hill, Autobiography, 170-182.

40. I heard Oliver Hill speak with good nature and clear memory about his childhood years in Gainsboro: in the late 1990s at Roanoke's Virginia Museum of Transportation; and shortly after 2000 in the fellowship hall of Roanoke's High Street Baptist Church.

41. Kluger, 180.

42. Hill, Autobiography, 187-188.

43. Hill, Autobiography, 330.

Traugott Bromme's 1848 Virginia Travel Guide

Introduction and Translation by Richard L. Bland

In the early 1800s economic and political problems brought many Europeans to the United States. A large number came from Germany. Among them was Traugott Bromme, who in fact was more of a traveler than an immigrant. Bromme quickly saw a chance for making a profit from this movement of peoples by writing guide books for Germans entering the United States. Between 1840 and 1866, he wrote and published several editions. His guides included information on many regions of the Western Hemisphere, covering all the states east of the Mississippi.

Simon Traugott Bromme was born on December 3, 1802, in Anger, near Leipzig, in what would later become Germany.*(1)* His father was apparently a well-to-do estate owner and Gerichtsschöffe, a legal assistant to the court. Traugott, who had at least four siblings, was orphaned at the age of five. He grew up witnessing, among other pivotal events of the era, Napoleon's troops marching to Russia in 1812.

In 1817, he attended a class at a Leipzig bookshop that would eventually lead him into the book business. He did not immediately become a writer or publisher; instead, he spent three years studying and traveling, even finding adventure. In April 1821, Bromme emigrated to the United States and studied medicine. After this he is supposed to have served as a doctor in the "Columbian service" and also spent time in a Haitian jail.*(2)*

Bromme's writing career began in 1824. In June of that year, he returned to Saxony, settling in Dresden where he became a partner in the Walther'schen Hoffbuchhandlung, which his brother-in-law, the book dealer Johann Gottlieb Wagner, had purchased in the same year. In 1833, Bromme again traveled to the United States, this time to Baltimore (where he possibly had relatives), and took up a partnership in the publishing house of Scheld and Company.*(3)* While in Baltimore he published travel guides, producing eight titles between 1834 and 1837. He appears to have returned to Germany by about 1840, settling in Stuttgart.

One thing that Bromme learned in his travels between Germany and America was that many immigrants to America arrived with no job prospects and were unable to speak English, the dominant language. He also would have seen that many of the people who were looking for a new start in life were Germans. These émigrés needed information that would let them know what to expect.

In response, Bromme wrote a travel guide for German emigrants that became relatively popular. It was entitled "Traugott Bromme's Hand- und Reisebuch für Auswanderer nach den Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika, Texas, Ober- und Unter-Canada, Neu-Braunschweig, Neu-Schottland, Santo Thomas in Guatemala und den Mosquitoküsten" [Traugott Bromme's Hand- and Travel-Book for Emigrants to the United States of North America, Texas, Upper and Lower Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saint Thomas in Guatemala and the Mosquito Coast].*(4)* Bromme's travel guide indicates that he did substantial research on the various states using the maps of Henry Schenck Tanner and others.*(5)*

It contains over 550 pages divided into two main parts. In the first, Bromme gives a general overview of the United States, including thumbnail sketches of most of the states, territories, or countries that an emigrant was likely to enter in North America. He devotes more attention to those places he considers most likely to benefit an

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immigrant—for example, the state of Virginia, which is described in about four pages. Bromme devoted much less space to locales he considered inhospitable to immigrants. For example, "The Territory of Missouri and the Oregon Territory" received less than half a page, and Bromme told his readers that for "settlement, this recommendation still comes too early . . . in the two here-named Indian territories with the wild inhabitants of the same."*(6)*

In the second part of his book, Bromme deals with the problem of who should and should not emigrate; he discusses the various trades and professions most in demand in the region, about one hundred in all. Bromme touts his book "as the most crucial and accurate purveyor of information on the conditions of the Western World, insofar as emigrants might be interested."*(7)*

Bromme obviously traveled some in the United States and perhaps in other countries of the Western Hemisphere, but it is equally obvious that it was not possible for him to have visited all the places he described in his "Hand- und Reisebuch." His travel guide is rather formulaic with regard to the information provided for each state. He gives the general geography, economy, industry, some vital statistics, and so on, generally devoting two to four pages to each state. His information appears to have been gleaned from other sources. Historian Klaus Dieter Hein-Mooren, in his study of German travel guides, says of Bromme: "His writings were not scientific works but rather generally intelligible, popular representations. He also sweepingly declined to name his sources and to state whether his workmanship was only translations of foreign-language works."*(8)*

According to Joseph Sabin, who in 1869 published a massive catalog of books related to America, Bromme produced at least twenty-three titles, all of them concerned with geography. Some were multiple volumes, and some were supplements to the works of others, such as those of Alexander von Humboldt, a famous naturalist and explorer.*(9)* Just as Bromme's use of sources is uncertain, it is also questionable whether Bromme was actually associated in any way with von Humboldt. Hein-Mooren believes it is more likely that he, or his publisher, was simply using von Humboldt's name to increase sales.*(10)*

Bromme did not intend that all his books be used solely as guides. For example, in 1842 he published the second volume of his two-volume set "Gemälde von Nord-Amerika" (Portrait of North America).*(11)* As is apparent in the full title, these volumes were intended not only as travel guides but as entertaining instruction as well.

In 1866, Bromme's 8th and final edition of the "Hand- und Reisebuch" was published posthumously. With regard to the number of books he produced describing this country, Bromme might be one of America's most forgotten authors.*(12)*

The State of Virginia

Virginia, the first land in North America entered by the British, and visited in the year 1584 by Walter Raleigh, spreads between 36° 30' and 40° 43' north latitude and between 1° 40' east and 6° 20 ' west longitude.*(13)* It is bordered on the north by Ohio, Pennsylvania and Maryland, on the east by Maryland and the Atlantic Ocean, on the south by North Carolina and Tenessee, and on the west by Kentucky and Ohio. It extends from north to south 220 miles and from east to west 370 miles, embracing an area of 67,300 ? miles or 43,072,000 acres.*(14)* The form of the land is extremely varied; the entire eastern part, up to 100 or 130 miles inland, is sandy and swampy. In the middle it is mountainous, with many fertile valleys, and in the west hilly. The valleys in the old mountain ranges are narrow and fertile; in the upland, toward the South Mountains, the soil is thin and light; however, where the secondary formations prevail it is very good. In the ore-bearing mountains there are beautiful fertile valleys; the remaining part of this area is rocky and broken. They stretch up to the sulphur springs on the ridge of the Alleghanys, where they come together with the great sedimentary deposits in the west, whose ground as far as the Ohio is similar to that of Pennsylvania, and for the most part is now devoted to meadows. The hill ranges that cut through the land from the northeast to the southwest are known by the names South Mountains, Blue Ridge, North Mountains, Jackson's Mountains, Alleghany Ridge, and Laurel Hills. Virginia offers various natural wonders in caves, among which the "Blowing Cave" is most notable—having hot springs, bogs containing hydrogen gas, and the natural stone bridge—in Rockbridge County.

The shore along the Atlantic Ocean and Chesapeake Bay is extremely broken by wide river mouths that open into them. The Chesapeake Bay breaks through the northeastern part of the state, between the sandy promonto-

ries of Charles and Henry, where it is 12 miles wide. Virginia is not particularly rich in natural bays. Currituck Bay opens up in the southeast on the border of North Carolina but is insignificant and not over 8 feet deep. Hampton Road is a bay formed by the James and, since it can hold the largest warships, the most significant in the state. The lack of natural harbors and bays is compensated for by the many rivers that flow through the state, and their broad mouths; the most important of these are the Potowmac, the Shenandoah, the Rappahannock, Mattapony, Pamunky, York, James, Rivannah, Appomatox, Elizabeth, Nottoway, Meherrin, Staunton, Ohio, Sandy, Great and Little Kenhawa, Monongahela, and Cheat. Floods have covered everywhere in this state with the water-laid deposits, and breaks on the primordial rocks, which in all the streams flowing toward the east or southeast form waterfalls, a hindrance to navigation.

The climate is, as cannot be otherwise in such a large land, very diverse. In the lower regions summer is hot and unhealthy, and winter mild. In the uplands and between the mountain ranges the air is clean and the weather pleasant. In the west the climate is moderate. Winter begins in December and ends in February; snow rarely remains on the ground several days. Rain showers are frequent but never last long.

Agriculture has made no special progress in Virginia, although the state was one of the first into which European culture was brought. The greatest hindrance indeed lay in the earlier wide-spread plantation system and slavery, both of which at present meanwhile move more into the background and give way to a more practical agriculture. The most important branch of agriculture conducted in east Virginia is tobacco cultivation, which was introduced in 1621 and until 10 to 12 years ago made up the wealth of the land. The common yield per acre, which is planted with 5,000 to 6,000 plants, amounts to about 1,000 pounds of tobacco, a worth of 100 to 250 dollars, depending on how the price stands. On a ten-year average the state exports 80,000 to 90,000 hogsheads at 1,000 pounds each. Following tobacco agriculture is corn, which is spread over all of east Virginia and produces a yield of 20 to 50 bushels per acre. In west Virginia wheat is the chief crop; 15 rye, barley, oats, buckwheat, and peas are also grown in quantity; rice is grown in the vicinity of the Dismal Swamp, where it flourishes excellently. Hemp prospers quite well, especially in the river bottoms and between the mountains; cotton in the vicinity of Roanocke; sesame or benne, and castor plants are frequently grown and the oil extracted. Potatoes grow well and deliver from 100 to 200 bushels per acre; cucurbits of various types, artichokes, watermelons, asparagus, onions, beets, and cabbage are harvested with every planting. Fruit flourishes well; apples and peaches are the most common, but pears, cherries, plums, nectarines, apricots, almonds, pomegranate, etc. also grow. Various kinds of nuts and edible acorns, sweet chestnuts, and mulberries are found in all the forests. The growth of grass in west Virginia and the mountains is luxurious. On the sand flats of the east the heat destroys the green of the meadows, and the swampy lowlands produce nothing but nettles, reeds, and rushes.

Horse breeding is given great attention; cattle raising in the east is extremely lackadaisical. In the west, however, it is all the more carefully conducted, and a quantity of fattened cattle are brought from there to the east and sheep raising has recently taken a sharp upswing; swine are grown in astonishing numbers, since their maintenance costs almost nothing, and they find the best feed in the forests and fruit gardens. The fowl are predominantly turkeys and guineas; bee keeping however is carried out only as a forest culture.

Over three-fourths of the land is still covered with forest; in the eastern lowlands are predominantly found the white spruce, cypress, evergreen, oak and the Virginia juniper tree, which in the sandy plains reaches a height of 40 to 45 feet. In the mountains and the western parts of the state are magnolia, balsam fir, ash, maple, five kinds of nut trees, twelve species of oak, birch, linden, beech, etc.

Regarding minerals, gold can be found on and in the James, Rappahannock, and Appomatox; lead at Austinville; copper on the James; iron, marble, limestone, and fluorite in almost all parts of the land. Ten miles west of Richmond is a rich coal deposit, which is 20 to 25 miles long and 10 miles wide and enclosed by old mountains.

The manufactories of the state are still insignificant, and serve primarily household needs. Among the more significant factories and manufacturing plants are 41 woolen mills, 47 fulling mills, 22 cotton mills with 42,262 spindles, 42 blast furnaces, 52 foundries, 11 gold smelters, 5 lead smelters, 12 paper mills, a large number of tobacco manufactories, 660 tanneries, 4 glass plants, 33 pottery plants, 1,454 distillers, 5 breweries, 764 flour mills and 50 book printers. The trade in natural products is considerable; the chief exports are tobacco and flour, corn, wood, animals, turpentine, salt pork, fattened cattle and coal. In 1845 the total export amounted to 4,873,211 dollars, the import to 583,277 dollars.

The chief origin of the inhabitants—of whom Virginia at present counts 1,259,647, among which are 53,695 free Coloreds and 514,502 slaves—are the descendants of the first English settlers. Little by little Scots, Irish and Germans have been added; the last two form at least a third of the entire white population.

The religious parties that have the most members are in the east the Episcopalians with 65 churches and the Baptists with 437; in the west the Presbyterians with 120 ministers and the Methodists with 170; the Germans in the mountains are all Lutherans. Churches are not found in all districts, but wandering preachers of all sects travel the land. By comparison schools have been erected in all communities, there is a university in Charlotteville and colleges at Williamsburg, Lexington, Boydton, and in Prince Edward; academies number 382 in the state, elementary schools 1,561, with 35,331 students.

Public installations completed and in use are the Dismal Swamp Canal, which connects Chesapeake Bay with Albemarle Sound and stretches 23 miles from Deep Creek to Joyce's Creek; the Alexandria Canal, which we have already mentioned with regard to the District of Columbia; the James River and Kanawha Canal, which goes from Richmond 175 miles to Buchanan; the Richmond-Frederiksburg-Potowmac Railroad, which stretches 75 miles to Aquia Creek; the Louisa branch of the same, 25 miles from Richmond, which goes 49 miles to Gordonsville; the Richmond-Petersburgh Railroad 23 miles in length; the Petersburgh-Roanoke Railroad, which runs 59 miles to Weldon; Greensville Railroad, which stretches from near Hicks 18 miles to Gaston, N.C.; the City Point Railroad, which goes from City Point on the James, 12 miles to Petersburgh; the Chesterfield Railroad, which leads 13? miles from the coal mines to Richmond; the Portsmouth-Roanoke Railroad, 8 miles in length, which ends in Weldon, N.C., and the Winchester and Potowmac Railroad, which runs 32 miles from Harper's Ferry to Winchester.

The government of the state is formed under the title of general assembly: the senate is elected every four years, and the representatives and governor are elected every year. The latter can be elected only three times in succession.

The state of Virginia falls into four districts and 120 counties, 67 in east Virginia and 53 in west Virginia. As in the more northern states, one looks in vain for large cities; Richmond and Petersburgh have come up only in recent years and have for the most part brick houses. The dwellings of the distinguished planters are for the most part constructed of stone or brick, large and well built. The smaller planters in contrast live in log houses, which have sprung up all over west Virginia.

The most important cities of the land are Richmond, capital of the state, at 37° 30' north latitude, on the James, the lower part of which has rapids, with the suburb of Rocketts, with a capital, 1 council house, 6 churches, 1 synagogue, 2 market houses, 3 banks, 1 state arsenal, 2 prisons, 1,697 houses, and 22,456 inhabitants, whose income comes from trade, industry, and agriculture. Petersburgh, on the Appomatox at 37° 15' north latitude, the principal market place for tobacco, and the three communities of Petersburgh, Blandford, and Pockahontas include 981 houses, 6 churches, 1 council house, 2 banks, several tobacco warehouses, many mills in the neighborhood, and 11,386 inhabitants. Norfolk, at 36° 53' north latitude on a peninsula at the mouth of the Elizabeth, is the most important trade city in the state; after the fire, was regularly and well rebuilt, with 1,200 houses and about 15,200 inhabitants. Frederiksburgh, on the south side of the Rappahannok, has 600 houses, among which are 1 council house, 5 churches, 2 banks, several tobacco warehouses, 1 academy, and 6,913 inhabitants; Wheeling, on the Ohio, is the most significant trade city in the west, with its 640 houses and 7,885 inhabitants.

Charlotteville, a half mile from the Rivanna, is a university city. Williamsburgh, earlier capital of the state, contains 350 houses and William and Mary College. Yorktown, with 1,800 inhabitants; Suffolk, on the Nansemond; Bermuda Hundred on both sides of the Appomatox, with City Point on the James; Linchburg, at the falls of the James; and Danville on the Dan are small communities which however carry out respectable trade.

Notes

1. At that time the region consisted of small independent states that would later unify as the country of Germany.

2. According to James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, Bromme "settled in the United States in 1820, and after-

ward traveled extensively in Texas and Mexico, became surgeon on a Columbian war-schooner cruising in the West Indies, and was detained for a year as a prisoner in Hayti" (Wilson and Fiske, eds., Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography (New York, 1888), 1:384). Historian Klaus Dieter Hein-Mooren's research indicates that Bromme came to the United States in 1821, studied medicine (although he does not say where), later became a doctor in the "Colombian service," and spent some time in Haiti, returning to Saxony in 1824 (Hein-Mooren, "'Gediegene Schriften für Auswanderer': Bromme, Buchner und die Auswandererliteratur" ["'Dependable Publications for Emigrants': Bromme, Buchner and the Emigrant Literature"] Buchhandelsgeschichte 15: B45–B46, 2001).

3. Hein-Mooren, "Gediegene," B45–B47.

4. The fifth edition of Bromme's Hand- und Reisebuch, which is used in this document, was published in Bayreuth, Germany, 1848.

5. Henry Tanner created numerous maps in the early 1800s. As a result, it is difficult to say with certainty which ones Bromme used. For those interested, Tanner's maps can be viewed online at, for example, http://www.davidrumsey.com/maps2784.html. Regarding his maps, Bromme wrote the following work: Post-, Kanal- und Eisenbahn-Karte der Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika: nach Smith, Tanner, Mitchel und den Berichten des General-Postamts, bearb. von Traugott Bromme [Postal, Canal, and Railroad Maps of the United States of North America: After Smith, Tanner, Mitchel, and Reports of the General Post Office, elaborated by Traugott Bromme] (Stuttgart, Germany, 1850).

6. Bromme, Hand- und Reisebuch, 186–89, 225–26.

7. Ibid., v.

8. Hein-Mooren, "Gediegene," B48. This and other quotations from Hein-Mooren's article are translations from the German provided by the author.

9. Joseph Sabin, Dictionary of Books Related to America (New York, 1869), 2:516–18.

10. Hein-Mooren, "Gediegene," B45. Alexander Freiherr von Humboldt (1769–1859) was a German explorer, scientist, and natural philosopher who conducted expeditions to Cuba and Central and South America. His greatest work was the five-volume Kosmos (1845–62). Bromme is credited with working on the illustrations in Kosmos by some scholars of the era (Sabin, Dictionary of Books, 2:516); this, however, is questionable.

11. Traugott Bromme, Gemälde von Nord-Amerika in allen Beziehungen von der Entdeckung an bis auf die neueste Zeit—Eine pittoreske Geographie für Alle, welche unterhaltende Belehrung suchen und ein Umfassendes Reise-Handbuch für Jene, welche in diesem Lande wander wollen [Portrait of North America in All Connections from the Discovery to the Most Recent Time—A Picturesque Geography for Everyone Who Seeks Entertaining Instruction, and a Comprehensive Traveler's Handbook for Anyone Who Wants to Travel in this Land] (Stuttgart, Germany, 1842).

12. I have left Bromme's spellings, errors, and omissions as they are in the original, trying not to intrude upon the author. However, I have at times changed his punctuation and syntax in order to bring the text somewhat more in line with modern idiomatic English. I have also broken the text into several paragraphs—only two in the original. I would like to thank the Staatsbibliotek in Berlin for helpfully providing materials and Nan Coppock for editorial assistance.

13. Bromme separates east and west longitude, that is, forms a prime meridian, at the present longitude of 77° west. Simply stated, this is because 77° west longitude runs through the nation's capital, Washington, D.C.

14. The small square following the number of miles is Bromme's way of indicating square miles.

15. West Virginia did not become a state until 15 years after this publication.

Tobacco in Old Virginia Letters

by Stan Lanford

The Historical Society of Western Virginia has a large collection of personal letters in its archives. Within the past two years, the Society's volunteers have been reading these letters and entering the names of persons, subject matter and place names into an online index. Many of the letters contain information about the writer's family and friends. Frequently, there is other information that is of interest to researchers on such topics as politics, education, business, transportation, crops, weather conditions and slavery.

Among the Breckinridge family letters located in the Society's archives (Accession No.1967.51), several letters have information about tobacco, including: preparing the beds, as well as planting, harvesting and selling the crop that sustained so much of Virginia's economy during the Colonial period, continuing through the Civil War, and to a declining extent during the past 50 years. Because these letters in the Breckinridge collection are primary sources for most of the information in this article, it may be worthwhile to give some background information on the people who wrote frequently about tobacco.

William Wirt Gilmer was the son of Peachy R. Gilmer and Mary House Gilmer who lived in Henry, Bedford and Albemarle counties for most of their lives. William had a sister, Emma Walker Gilmer, who married Cary Breckinridge in 1827, and they lived near Fincastle, Botetourt County, in a home they called "Catawba." This marriage is the reason a portion of the Gilmer family letters is included in the Breckinridge collection. The University of Virginia Library holds additional Gilmer family papers.

William Gilmer was born September 26, 1804, in the home of his grandfather, George Gilmer, that was called "Pen Park," in Albemarle County. William was the bachelor son in charge of the family farms and was sometimes called "the Wit of Albemarle." He managed the family's property at "Bremo" in Fluvanna County (often referred to in the letters as "Flu"), and at "Leigh" in Albemarle County (located near present-day Ivy, a few miles west of Charlottesville). His mother, Mary Gilmer, also wrote about some aspects of raising and marketing tobacco.

In a letter dated June 27, 1831, from Ivy Creek, William Gilmer wrote to his sister, Emma, about the tobacco crop from the previous year, which was sold in Lynchburg. "The price was rather better then last year, but still low" as it averaged slightly over $5.00 per hundredweight or 5 cents per pound. He also reported that the house that his parents were building (to be called Leigh), was near completion.

In an early letter in the collection, dated September 5, 1777 (Accession No.1969.51.14), a tobacco trader wrote to inform Col. William Preston in Botetourt County that he had found the price of tobacco to be less than he had offered Preston, and he named a price of 16 pounds/8 shillings per hundredweight as the actual market price in Page County.

The broker claimed that he would lose over 37 English pounds on the tobacco that he bought from Preston, but said he would accept the loss if Preston desired. This is indicative of the problems that farmers and brokers in interior Virginia experienced in determining the best price for their crop. In many cases tobacco was the only cash crop for a Virginia farmer.

Most farmers in the 1800's grew a large portion of the food and materials they required for their own sustenance. Certain items had to be purchased, such as sugar, salt, coffee, spices, pottery, dishes and farm implements which required cash. The main cash crop in Virginia was tobacco. Although grain crops, and the flour and meal derived from that grain were also grown for sale at local markets, by far the largest producer of cash for the colo-

Stan Lanford, a volunteer in the virtual collections of the Historical Society of Western Virginia virtual library, is a former vice president and board member. He retired as president of Lanford Brothers, a Roanoke construction company.

nial farmer was tobacco, which had to be sent to market at a port from which the tobacco was shipped to England.

After the American Revolution, tobacco could be shipped to other countries. This was known as the "cash crop". The cash was received once a year, after the crop had been harvested and cured by the farmer, put into hogsheads (sometimes abbreviated as hds.), graded by state inspectors and delivered to a marketplace. If it was sold through a broker, the farmer might get some of his cash at the time of sale, but the cost of freight, inspection fees, tolls and the broker's commission were deducted from the gross sale price.

In a letter from Mary Gilmer to Emma Breckinridge, dated April 12, 1841, William Gilmer added a postscript to Mr. B[reckinridge] about the tobacco crop they expected to plant that year. He wrote, "We shall have 101,000 hills of tobacco & go for 30 to 35,000 cut here, from in Flu, half new land, go for 20,000 cut." These remarks show that the farmer expected to harvest 30 to 35 stalks for each 100 tobacco plants planted. The following paragraphs indicate the results for the 1841 crop.

In a letter dated October 3, 1841, William wrote about his tobacco "Thank God we have saved all our tobacco & it is a long way the finest crop I ever saw. Oliver [Gilmer, one of the slaves at "Leigh"] has cured it all by my order, most of it while I was flat on my back. Poor fellow, he has been 19 days and nights in the tobacco houses without quitting. He gets a night's rest tonight & at it again tomorrow. We have 34,000 [mature harvestable plants] at home and 20,000 I think in Flu. I have not been able to go there since they cut any. It was the finest crop ever grown when I went down 3 weeks since.

"We cut tobacco from 8 o'clock to two & had my coat off. It began raining at two. I got wet as did all the hands & Overseer. We were out until 10 o'clock in a smart rain. Hands, I and Overseer were 18 [total number working]. Nine were taken down, Overseer and Dilly died. Polly is getting better as are all the others. Old Grace is dead. The stage is coming." [It's time to mail this letter.]

William added a note to his mother's letter of December 24, 1841, on page three: "Our tobacco house turned out 12,500 [plants or pounds? Or plats?] I calculated it at 13[000]. The crop will average 31,000 smartly. [Probably the number of plants that survived to harvest.] Tell Mr. B. it is the most beautiful crop I ever saw and weighs like lead. We have burnt over 1000 yards of Plant Land and will go at [it] as soon as the ground gets dry again." It was customary to plant the tobacco seed beds in ground that had been burnt over, to kill any insects or diseases that would attack the tobacco plants. The farmer saved seed each year for the next year's crop, and planted the seed in beds early in the spring, to be transplanted later into hills in the tobacco field.

In a letter dated February 9, 1842, Mary Gilmer wrote to Emma Breckinridge about the last year's tobacco crop: "We have sent off 12 hds. [hogsheads] tobacco from Leigh, have 4 more turned out, & have not done stripping by near 2 more, 4 hds. No. 1 [graded] in boxes shall make here 22 hds. and 12 at Flu. We go for 40 this crop." Mary hoped they could increase their harvest from 34 to 40 hogsheads in 1842.

These remarks indicate how important it was to the farmer that his crop be harvested and handled properly in order to get a good quality tobacco. Few harvests would have caused the death and illness of so many workers, and it was a terrible price to pay. According to the same letter, William himself had been near death for several weeks, but was recovering.

From the publication, Statistics of manufacturing of tobacco and of its Commercial Distribution, US Census Office, 1880, published by Business and Economics, 1884, we find the following data. In 1840 the United States exported 119,481 hogsheads of tobacco with a value of $9,883,957 for an average price of $82.72 per hogshead. The weight of tobacco exported was not recorded until after 1865. The size of the hogshead varied over the years, and the weight of a hogshead of tobacco varied from 600 to over 1,000 pounds. The time period was from 1777, when the colonies acquired the freedom to ship to countries other then England, through 1880. Before the American Revolution, the British colonies were required to sell all of their agricultural products to the mother country.

After exports ceased being reported in pounds (British currency), tobacco sold in a price range from 15.4 cents in 1866 to 8.5 cents by 1882. The price could vary each year depending on the size of the crop that could be harvested, cured and sold. During all this time, the United States was the leading exporter of tobacco in the world. Most was exported to England, France, Belgium and Holland. While we do not have a source for the price per pound of tobacco in Virginia during the 1840s, we can estimate the price by assuming the hogshead in 1840 weighed about 750 pounds. Converting the average hogshead price of $82.72, and dividing by 750 pounds, gives

a value of about 11 cents per pound.

From a business letter dated May 7, 1842, concerning 27 barrels of flour shipped from Fincastle to Richmond, we found that the freight cost was 15.6% of the value, while cooperage, storage and inspection fees were 2.4%, and the commission for the agent handling the transaction was 2.5%, for a total of 20.4%. Assuming that tobacco had about the same costs, the sale price of tobacco was diminished by about 20% by the aforesaid fees.

To apply this to the Gilmer's crop raised in 1841 and sold in 1842, we estimate the 34 hogsheads of tobacco raised and sold at their two plantations, after paying the 20% cost, could have netted about $3,060. Tobacco today sells for about 85 cents per pound, and the 1841 crop would have brought about $22,000 at today's price.

The 1840 census for Albemarle County counts Mary Gilmer and her family (a total of six persons, plus 44 slaves). Their living came from the cash delivered by the tobacco crop, and from food and material raised on their land. Two children, John and Mary Peachy, were in boarding schools with fairly high expenses. Letters in the winter of 1841 suggested that Mary Gilmer probably could not afford to send them both to school the next year.

The James River Canal was completed to Lynchburg by 1840, and a portion of the canal was located on land purchased from the Gilmer plantation in Fluvanna. This greatly facilitated the movement of tobacco and other goods to Richmond, where ocean-going vessels could come up James River and goods could be transferred to ships bound for England.

In a letter dated February 26, 1842, Mary Gilmer wrote to her daughter Emma about the hard work that William was doing on the plantation in Fluvanna County. In preparation for the new season, the overseer "manured" the tobacco fields along the banks between the James and Hardware Rivers. Each day the hands applied the manure at the rate of 200 single-horse cart loads per acre. They used two one-horse carts to take the manure from the stable to the tobacco beds. On these beds the overseer expected to plant 125,000 individual tobacco plants. She commented that this overseer did not need a whip to discipline the slaves.

Several of these letters mention the adding of livestock manure to the tobacco beds as fertilizer to improve the soil that grew the tobacco. Growing tobacco used the nutrients in the soil at a fast pace. Tobacco farmers were adding new fields every few years until they learned the value of adding manure and/or fertilizer to help replace the nutrients that the growing tobacco took from the soil.

For the tobacco-growing farmers in Virginia this cycle of preparing the land, planting the seed beds, transplanting the young plants to crop land, and carefully tending the growing plants, continued year after year. They needed to remove the weeds, kill the insects eating the leaves and remove any diseased stalks to prevent contamination of the rest of the crop. These farmers had no chemical sprays to kill insects and disease. As with all crops, a late frost, too much or too little rain, or a wet harvest time could greatly affect the crop. If the crop was poor, most of these farmers had little cash reserves to carry them another year until the next crop could be sold.

We hope this article will give an idea about some of the information that can be found in the old letters in our Digital Library. Many letters are now online, and eventually we shall have the entire Breckinridge collection, with letters from about 1759 to the early 20th century, online for easy access by everyone. Our Digital Library is another way to bring history alive for more people.

Sources

"The Domestic Encyclopaedia Vol 1," by A. F. M. Willich. Amazon: The Domestic Encyclopaedia.

In addition to the cited letters and booklets in this article, I interviewed Doug Cundiff, a Franklin County native who was reared on a farm where tobacco was grown each year, to get a better understanding of the various operations the farmer had to complete for a successful harvest.

The Great Bedford Fire of 1884

by Travis Witt

The dry breeze blew steadily as the regular evening visits of the horse-drawn cart traversed the bridge spanning the Norfolk and Western Railway. Both were directed towards Main Street; unusual for one, with timely regularity for the other. The Indian summer lasted well into October and sparse rain showers accompanied the breezier conditions. As the last worker provided the citizens of Liberty with a reminder that extra sleep the evening before a Sabbath would be welcome.

But it was not to be a night of extra sleep for the residents of Liberty; nor a peaceful Sabbath for Bedford's county seat in 1884. At approximately 2 a.m. on Sunday, October 12, 1884, the great fire that destroyed much of the village of Liberty began. Although there remains some uncertainty as to the cause of the conflagration, there was no ambiguity as to the location of the initial spark – a business on the east side of North Bridge Street adjacent to the bridge.

The wood-framed storefronts and second-story living quarters were soon engulfed by the wind-encouraged blaze. The flames jumped Depot Street before crossing Bridge Street and consumed businesses and living quarters on both sides of the thoroughfare. Cries of "Fire" pierced the early morning silence before the sounds of the inferno diminished the pleas for help. Fortunately, those initial cries awakened all in the path of the blaze and no one perished.

Within minutes, a bucket brigade was formed, bringing water from the cistern behind the courthouse. All in the line were strongly aware that their efforts were too little. The breeze blew the smoking embers, leaving no buildings untouched as the blaze intensified, quickly approaching the intersection of Bridge and Main. The smoke was thick as the fire made the night sky explode with light seen for miles. A telegram was sent to Lynchburg but their services would not arrive until late that tragic Sunday morning. A sense of hopelessness engulfed the citizens as the flames devoured the structures in its path.

Many must have believed the entire town would succumb. Yet the width of Main Street hindered the flames from crossing the thoroughfare and destroying the southern portion of Liberty. Prayers and a decision for the widest street to be Main at Liberty's formation more than 100 years earlier protected other businesses. Traveling west on Main Street, there were no buildings on the right side except for a structure that cornered the street. The corner building was destroyed and the flame ceased any westerly movement.

While the flames were hindered in their south and west direction, buildings still providing fuel remained on the northern face of East Main. The opera house and the courthouse were soon to be within reach. Quick thinking by several saved both buildings. The bucket brigade was redirected to cover the western side of the opera house with water.

An abandoned building stood between the fire and now soaked theater. A keg of powder was brought to the building and charges were placed within the unsightly structure. Once an all-clear was sounded, the building was destroyed by an explosion. Its timber, now lying on the ground and beginning to burn, was not high enough for the flames to extend eastward to two of the prominent buildings still standing on the morning of October 12, 1884.

As the sun rose that fateful morning, smoke still billowed from the smoldering buildings. No lives were lost, yet little tangible property was saved. Some merchandise from the stores was piled haphazardly in the street, where saving the items had been the goal before the smoke and heat were too overwhelming to return again to storefront retrieving. Even the rescued items were damaged beyond use from the secondary effects of the inferno.

This article first appeared in Museum News, a publication of the Bedford Museum and Genealogical Library.

Some cried, their tears leaving streaks on soot-covered faces. Some hugged while others were dazed and speechless, dutifully walking through the streets now pilfered with charred planks and damaged goods. The horse-drawn cart and driver had to alter their traversing through the streets, yet stopped regularly to accomplish his responsibilities and comfort his friends. His concern for his community was felt as blisters pained the hands that had worked diligently to pull water from the well behind the court of law.

The search for loved ones continued through the morning as regular church-goers, some aware only as their mode of transportation brought them close enough to the overpowering release from the smoldering buildings, fully experienced by God's provision of fire. None of the churches in Liberty were destroyed; yet their lives were readjusted that morning. Serving congregants and friends proved to be of more value than a sermon about the triumph out of tragedy. The time for that message would be at the evening meeting after the fire was extinguished and the magnitude was fully known.

The churches were full that evening, many counting their blessings, thanking God for his protective hand on life and limb; and searching for a pastoral proclamation that this catastrophe was not God's wrath being expressed to the guilty but a strong reminder of God's faithfulness to protect and shelter his flock as a mother hen covers her chicks. Only in future personal moments would any understanding of how God used this difficulty to bring a greater desire to know Him and serve others be conveyed.

On Tuesday, October 14, 1884, the Lynchburg paper reported that some believed the fire was purposely started; an over-abundant aroma of kerosene was noticed the evening before the fire. The lamp lighter was asked if he had spilled any of the lamp oil while lighting the street lights that evening. He was unaware of any significant spill. Others noticed the smell but not the lamp lighter, for those accustomed to certain smells tend to be oblivious of degrees of intensity. Although no one was ever charged with arson, the activities and inclinations of some who had "internally justifiable" reasons to torch an individual business or the community of Liberty remain a question only of reflective speculation.

Buildings were reconstructed; brick would provide greater structure and more flame-retardant material. Even with the new buildings, community leaders were convinced that preventative measures were needed forthwith. Ten months later, in August 1885, a mountain reservoir was completed, pipe was laid from the lake and fire hydrants were conveniently situated along the streets. In addition, fire equipment was purchased that could send a spout of water forty feet upward, adequately reaching the tallest buildings standing in Liberty.

Tragedy can bring demise or restoration. In the minds of some, it brought both. Progress created the need for a volunteer fire department. Drastic change afforded different buildings, increased responsibilities and modified lifestyles. Reliving the fire brought daytime worries and sleepless nights. The progress of the town after the fire may have been so transformational that six years later, leaving both tragedy in the ashes and America's triumph in the Revolution behind, Bedford became the replacement name for Liberty, Virginia.

Burruss Hall is a classic example of the merging of Hokie Stone with neo-Gothic architecture at Virginia Tech. It is the most recognizable building on the Virginia Tech campus. (Photo © by William E. Cox)

Hokie Stone: Virginia Tech's Spirited Old Rock

by Clara B. Cox

Can a rock have spirit? Some would argue that Hokie Stone contributes to — perhaps even serves as a foundation of — Hokie Spirit.

The native limestone, mined at Virginia Tech's own quarry, has defined the campus scene for more than a hundred years. The rocks have become so integral to the aura of Virginia Tech that the university's board of visitors has passed a resolution requiring that all new buildings and expansion projects within the academic core and life science precincts of the campus use Hokie Stone as the predominant material on building facades.

Clara Cox retired in July as director of publications at Virginia Tech after 35 years in editing, writing, management and public relations responsibilities. A graduate of Radford University, she holds a master's degree from Virginia Tech. She has written or edited five books and was named the university's Outstanding Leader in 2003. (Reprinted with permission from Virginia Tech Magazine. The author has made some modifications to the article, which originally appeared in the Spring 2010 issue of the magazine.)

Torgersen Hall (left) is joined with Newman Library by the Torgersen Bridge. The hall is clad with 2,700 tons of Hokie Stone. (Photo © by William E. Cox)

History of its use

Campus use of these limestone slabs dates back to the late 1800s. It was then that alumni donated money to construct a building on campus for the YMCA, which advised and counseled students and provided them with social activities. The cornerstone was laid on June 20, 1899, and the $20,729 building served as Y headquarters until 1937.

Richmond architect W.F. West designed the facility, known today as the Performing Arts Building. West produced a Romanesque-inspired design clad in rough limestone, which proved to be popular with President John McBryde (1891-1907) and his faculty, who called the material "our native limestone."

In 1905, the first building was erected that reflected the university's prevailing neo-Gothic architectural style. Plans for the Chapel, which later became the college library, called for a brick exterior, but difficulty in securing the bricks led builders to use easily accessible limestone instead. By then, Tech had located limestone deposits on campus — in the area of today's Derring and Cowgill Halls — where it quarried dark gray stone, called "black limestone." Another native-limestone-clad building, Price Hall, was completed in 1907.

Still, most buildings were brick and reflected styles of the Victorian era. McBryde's successor, Joseph D. Eggleston (1913-1919), compared them to "poverty stricken textile mills" and convinced the board of visitors to hire the architectural firm Carneal and Johnston to develop a plan for campus structures based on the Gothic style of architecture prevalent at European universities.

The first resulting building, the McBryde Building of Mechanic Arts, completed in 1917 and razed in 1966, was constructed of native limestone and became the prototype for numerous buildings that followed, including Burruss Hall. Today, the Inn at Virginia Tech and the Holtzman Alumni Center are among the newer Hokie Stone buildings on campus that provide modern interpretations of the classic architectural style.

Hokie Stone was used on the façade of the Virginia Tech-Carilion School of Medicine in Roanoke. (Photo by Christina Koomen)

Formation and transformation

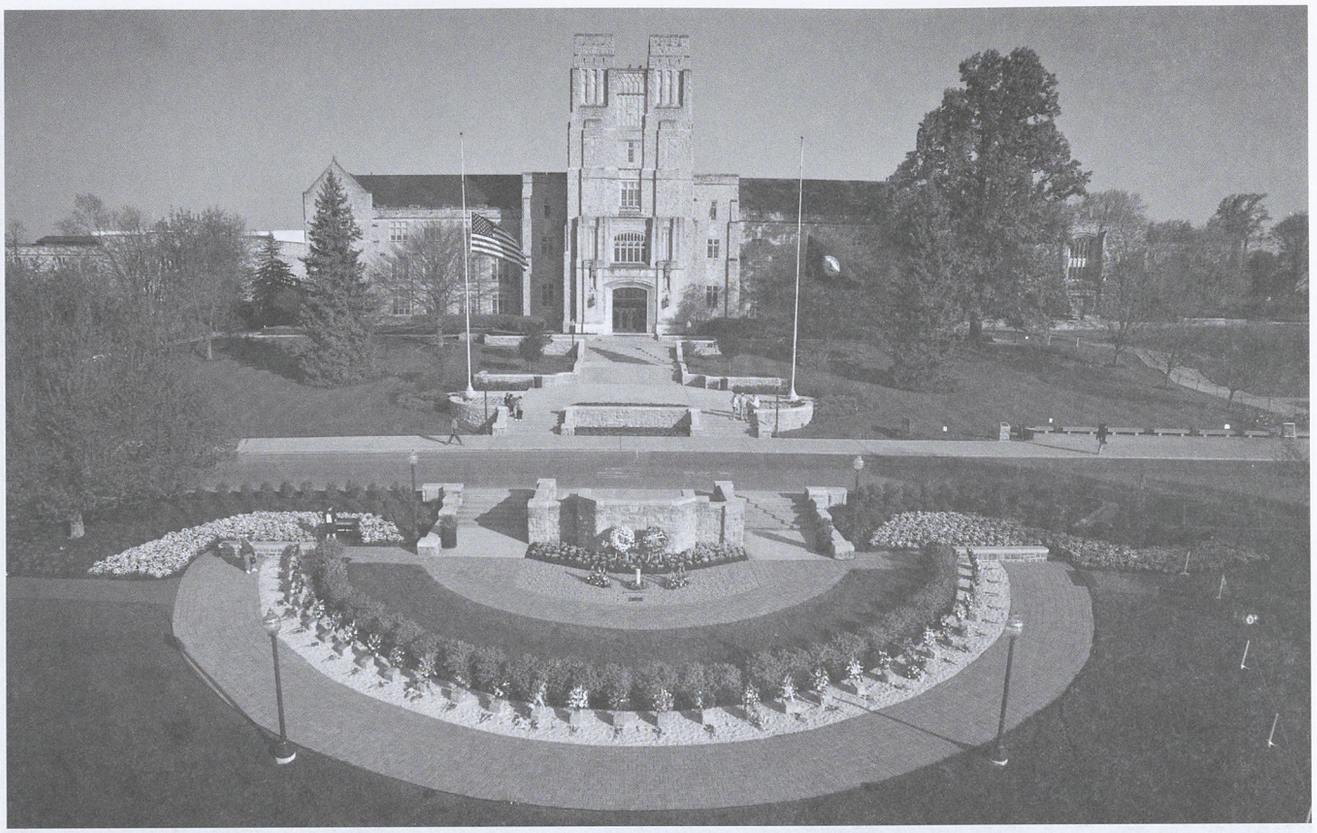
Some 300 million years old, Hokie Stone is unique to the Appalachian region of Virginia, Tennessee, and Alabama. Technically a Chepultepec and Kingsport Formation dolomite, which is rich in calcium and magnesium, this sedimentary rock began to emerge at the end of the Paleozoic Age, when continental drift forced the coastal plains of Africa and North America to collide, creating wrinkled layers of faults and folds. As natural forces pushed these layers near the earth's surface, they formed the stone so popular in the Hokie Nation.

The rock's varied colors — yellows, grays, browns, blacks, and maroons, among others — were created by different conditions present when the stone was formed. Pinkish tones found in older dolomites resulted from arid, desert-like climates, while darker gray and black stones reflect their creation in swampy and wetter conditions.

Several sites for the limestone exist in the Blacksburg region. In 1975, the Virginia Tech Foundation purchased a 38-acre quarry that had been in operation since 1958; adding 10 more acres in 2007. Located within the Blacksburg town limits, the quarry provides 80 percent of the Hokie Stones used on new campus buildings. To get variations in color, the university purchases the remaining 20 percent from a farm in Montgomery County.

Workers at the quarry use a relatively quiet explosive to fracture the shelf-like formation. They employ other processes that eventually break the stones into the approximately 2-foot-by-1-foot size most commonly used for cutting and for carving the outer face to the desired level of surface relief. Each stonemason uses hammers and chisels to accomplish the last steps by hand, shaping, smoothing, and dressing about a ton of stones per day to final dimensions.

The university recently purchased equipment to slice the stone into brick-like depths, reducing the bulk — and the cost — of cladding a building. The new Visitor and Admissions Center, now under construction near the Inn



Virginia Tech's April 16 Memorial, located across Drillfield Drive from Burruss Hall, honors the 32 lives lost in two campus shootings on April 16, 2007. Each victim is represented by one Hokie Stone, which is engraved with the victim's name. (Photo by John McCormick)

at Virginia Tech off Prices Fork Road, will be the first campus building to incorporate this technique.

The quarry produces about 55 tons of Hokie Stone per week, about 2,600 tons per year. Each ton will cover approximately 35 square feet on a building. Typical campus buildings use about 1,500 tons of stone, or more than 82,000 individual stones.

An emblem of spirit

In late afternoon or early morning on bright, cloudless days, sunlight striking campus buildings appears to give the Hokie Stones an inner glow. The soft, muted colors stand in stark contrast to the mental image of a hard, grey stone building, visually bringing the buildings to life. That visual image remains in the memory, long after one leaves campus and the stones often become synonymous with thoughts of Virginia Tech.

For the university's football team, Hokie Stone has become a lucky talisman and a symbol of achievement. The last thing each football player does before entering Worsham Field is stroke a Hokie Stone embedded over the Lane Stadium doorway. Beside the stone are the words: "For those who have passed, for those to come, reach for excellence."

The limestone's prevalence in the mindset of the Hokie Nation was reiterated in 2007 when Hokies United placed a block of Hokie Stone in a memorial for each student and faculty member killed on April 16. That memorial inspired the permanent memorial, which includes 32 Hokie Stones, each engraved with the name of one who died that day. "With our native limestone as the base, we have etched their names into the foundation of this great university," said the late Zenobia Hikes, vice president of Student Affairs, at the dedication ceremony.

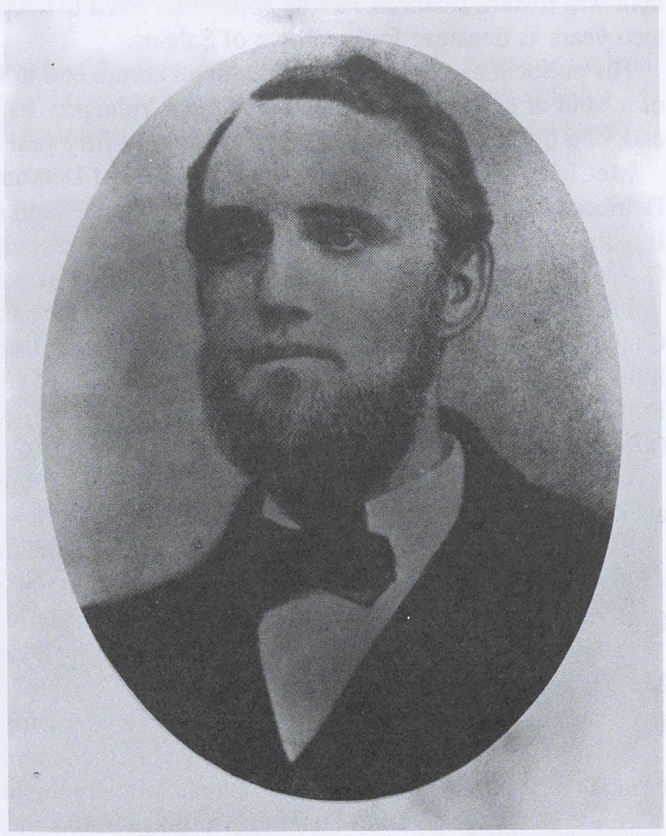
Hokie Stone, the heart of campus construction, has become the manifestation of Virginia Tech's resilience and spirit.

Robert McClelland: Mayor of Two Cities

by John Long

The Roanoke Valley is home to two independent cities — Roanoke and Salem. Both have been governed for many years by a town or city council presided over by a mayor or equivalent officer. Many men (no women yet) have served in that capacity for the two communities through the years.

This may give rise to a question: has anyone served as chief executive of both Salem and Roanoke? It sounds improbable to the modern resident of the Valley, but in fact, the fascinating Robert McClelland (1834-1896) is the one man who can claim the distinction of leading both civic governments, and his impact on both communities is undeniable.



Robert McClelland

Born in either Belfast or Ballyclaire, Ireland, about 1834, McClelland came to the United States at the age of 18, perhaps in response to the great Irish Potato Famine of 1845-52. Initially he settled in Ohio and was employed as a teacher, but a few years later moved to Charleston, Va. (later W.Va.) and then to Salem, where he worked as a clerk.

But his business career was interrupted by the War Between the States. It is clear that like most men of his generation, McClelland served in the war, but exactly what he did is a little less certain. His obituary claims that he served in the 13th Virginia Regiment under Colonel George Patton (who was the grandfather of the celebrated WWII general of the same name). However, Patton commanded the 22nd Virginia, not the 13th, and indeed a Robert McClelland served in that unit.

Further, the obituary also claims that McClelland at the end of the war served in the Commissary Department in Richmond, where he was responsible for evacuating the last wagonloads of supplies from the Confederate capital, a bold stroke that kept Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in the fight, for a few more days at least.

However, if he was the Robert McClelland in the 22nd, his service record indicates he was in a POW camp in West Virginia in April 1865, not in Richmond in charge of a supply depot. There does not seem to be an easy way to harmonize the various discrepancies in his service record. Confederate records being notoriously incom-

John Long, executive director of Salem Historical Society, also teaches history at Roanoke College and writes a column for The Roanoke Times.

plete and imprecise at the end of the War, perhaps it is best to defer to the obituary written at the end of his colorful life.

His post-war biography becomes clearer. After the war he relocated to Chattanooga, but seemed to have been drawn back to our valley by an affair of the heart. In 1868 he returned to marry his beloved, Mary Coles of Bent Mountain. They would be blessed with one daughter.

Gifted with a financial mind, McClelland became a prosperous businessman, running a livery stable, a mercantile, and working with a tobacco firm. He also got into real estate along the way – McClelland Street in Salem bears silent testimony to his role in developing the town during its fabled Great Land Boom of the 1880s.

McClelland was also involved in local politics. He was elected to Salem Town Council in 1872, and served for about eight months as the president of the Council – the equivalent of the modern office of mayor. But his bent was toward finances, and he apparently liked to keep books; so after acting as mayor he spent the next fourteen years as treasurer for the Town of Salem.

His political career in Salem came to an abrupt end in 1886 when he was suddenly voted out of office in favor of a band of newcomers headed by William Younger. His political defeat was the result, according to local legend, of a bit of political subterfuge, a story told fifty years later by the Salem Times-Register.

McClelland was a member of a local faction of Democrats led by then-mayor Robert Logan. Salem being a Democratic town, they apparently looked on the election of 1886 with little concern. But in fact, a cadre of Republicans headed by pharmacist and councilman Younger, tobacconist J. Albert Finke, undertaker John M. Oakey, and newspaperman Charles M. Webber, had secretly plotted a coup.

In those days, there were no filing requirements for candidates and no standardized ballot in local elections. Candidates typically had their own ballot printed and distributed it to supporters; on election day the voter turned it in at the poll. Thus it would be possible for a slate of candidates to run a stealth campaign. Younger's Republican faction did just that, utilizing especially the support for the GOP amongst African American voters (the suppression of black votes so well known in the 20th Century was not yet the rule).

It was all perfectly legal, though there were hazards to the tactic. The story is told of one illiterate voter who accidentally voted a sales order for nails at the ballot box, and turned in his ballot at the hardware store.

Election day finally arrived, and in the evening officials gathered to tally the ballots. One of the first unfolded was an unexpected Younger ballot. "Here's something new to me!" exclaimed the judge. "I guess you'll find a good many more like it before you are through," wryly responded a Younger supporter.

In the end, Younger carried the day over Logan by a vote of 241 to 81 and was elected mayor of Salem. McClelland was also defeated, a blow which he accepted with customary grace. Years later Younger would be a pallbearer at his funeral, so apparently there were no hard feelings.

But with no further ties to Salem, and seeing the growing city of Roanoke as a lucrative market for his real estate business, McClelland moved there. And there he thrived.

A few years later, he was appointed to finish out an unexpired term on Roanoke's City Council. He stood for election in 1892 and was given a full term in his own right. Given his fiduciary talents, it's no surprise he soon took over the duties of head of the municipal finance committee. He served so capably that only four years later he was elected mayor of the City of Roanoke.

Unfortunately, his term was not to be long and was to end in tragedy. On November 3, 1896, McClelland was strolling through downtown Roanoke on his way to the bank to deposit his church's offering from the previous Sunday. (A dedicated Christian, he served as treasurer of First Presbyterian Church in Roanoke. He had acted in a similar capacity at Salem Presbyterian before his move to Roanoke) Seemingly deep in thought over something, he suddenly and inexplicably turned and stepped in front of a passing streetcar. Horrified witnesses rushed to his aid, and the injured mayor was taken to the nearby offices of Drs. Lewis and Gale. But nothing could be done. He died later in the day, and both communities that he had called home mourned his loss.

Robert McClelland was buried in East Hill Cemetery in Salem, where his wife Mary would join him in 1917. Today, many people pass his grave in the Center Circle, not far from that of General Andrew Lewis. But too few know the story of this man who helped build two cities into the great communities they became.

Riding a Bull Across the Roanoke River

by Ruth Dickerson

My name is Ruth Dickerson and I am a resident of Bedford County, Virginia. I was born April 8, 1922, in Bedford County at a place near McKee's Ford, which is upstream from Rutrough Road and across the Roanoke River from the location where the Explore Park bateaux are usually tied up. My dad was part Cherokee and his dad was what we called "thoroughbred" Cherokee, or 100% full blooded. My granddad died at McKee's Ford. He was crossing the river in January and the boat turned over. He was able to get to the shore, but he died on the bank due to the cold.

When I was only 11 months old, my mother moved us across the river and downstream to the house at the end of Rutrough Road (formerly called Trading Post Road) which became known as the Dickerson House. I had a sister, Gracie, and a brother, Samuel Winford. My brother later died in a fire at Roanoke Iron & Bridge where he worked.

Ruth Dickerson

My mother raised us pretty much on her own, which was really tough in those times. We raised most of our own food with a large garden. We kept chickens, pigs and cows, along with a bull and some horses. As a child I worked the cows and often had to round them up and herd them home, sometimes in my bare feet and sometimes after dark. I recall sometimes waiting for a bolt of lightning to see which way to go home with the cows. I raised a bull myself and used to ride the bull like a horse to round up the cattle. One time I even rode the bull across the Roanoke River, but my mother got quite upset about that, so I quit.

I walked to school over at Coopers Cove using a trail over the mountain. I had to cross a log bridge across Back Creek every day to get to school. One winter day I fell off the log and got soaking wet. I had to walk all the way to school wet and cold. I only went to school until the third grade. In that year I caught the whooping cough and my teacher sent me home. When I got home, my mom marched me right back to school and told the teacher I should stay in school and that if the teacher sent me home, I would not be back. The teacher sent me home and my mother never sent me back to school again. In those days you could get away with that.

My mother had help from her family and from neighbors, especially if we had problems. It was a very tight-knit community and people looked out for each other then. I was baptized in Back Creek as a child. I used to swim in the river all the time. In later years, I saw tubers floating down the river. Now there are kayakers and canoeists quite often.

This account and the photo were arranged by Bill Tanger, president of Friends of the Roanoke River, for a river project. Ms. Dickerson lives on Shady Run Road with her grandson Steve Meeks.

My first car was a 1937 Ford. I worked all my life, starting at the Vincent Wheeler Laundromat for 10 years, then Armour Company as an egg inspector for five years, then Singer Furniture as a woodworking machine operator for 24 years and finally at Elizabeth Arden for 14 years. So I worked full-time for over 53 years as well as working part time during some other years.

Rutrough Road was always a gathering place, even in the 1930s. On the weekends, many people came down to the river to drink and party. There would be lots of cars lining the roadside. Sometimes there were so many cars parked there we could not get the horse and buggy out to the road. The road had a good deal of traffic in the 1930s and 1940s. There were many horses and wagons and also trucks. Many carried wheat, some hay and corn. Just across the road, about 100 feet from our house on Back Creek, there was a mill and store. The mill ground corn for meal. Some of the millwheels are likely in the bottom of Back Creek from when the mill burned down.

Rutrough Road went down and forded the river and up the other side into Bedford County. Mostly horses and buggies crossed the river, but also trucks. The river used to be much less wide and much shallower. Also the banks were not as steep. You could walk across the river by stepping on stones and never get wet. Over time the river got deeper and wider, even before the lake backed up the water.

Flood waters reached up to the house twice. During one flood my brother took people across the river in the high water. We had use of a homemade wooden boat and paddles. It was a very dangerous thing to do with big logs floating down the river during the flood. My mother was 90 years old when the 1985 flood hit us. The water came right up to the porch and my mother was so scared she lost her mind. She was never herself again.

I had two daughters and married my childhood sweetheart, Henry Myers, in 1995. Unfortunately he died two years later of a burst heart.

The Flying Squadron

Capable of doing 90 miles an hour on any motorcycle, but don't let them catch you trying to imitate them. One of the features of the department which has demonstrated its immense value since its installation six years ago.

Officers George G. Hurd, George P. Kefauver and Charles I. Schwinger form the squad. The men serve all summonses, answer all emergency calls and assist in the investigation of all classes of criminal work. One or more of the men are on duty at all hours. The men each work a 12-hour shift each day and when necessary are often called on from two to eight hours extra service.

A call is heard through the signal system and immediately an officer of this squad is off on the trail. They are the chief protection of the residential section of the city, owing to the fact that at the present time the department does not consist of sufficient members to keep roundsmen on short enough beats for the adequate patrolling of all beats.

The service is most efficient and is the pride of Major Moore (Edward R. Moore, chief of police). It frequently happens that a call is sent in from the outskirts of the city and before the astonished citizen can further investigate the case he looks out and sees a brown clothed figure grabbing the culprit. "How did you get here so soon?" is the usual question asked on the arrival of the "Flyer." "It's our business to Hurry" is the reply.

~ History of the Roanoke Police Department, 1916

Wythe County's Social Disasters... Divorces

by Mary B. Kegley

Most Southern men and women regarded divorce as a "personal, familial, and social disaster." Many were left "with deep psychic scars," as a result of using the law to end a difficult or even a disastrous marriage. It was the only way to cope with an often impossible and embarrassing situation. It was a necessary evil.*(1)* But how to do it?

When the new country became independent, the government adopted the Common Law of England, but did not adopt their church laws. As a result there was confusion on how to handle divorces. Virginia's culture opposed it. There was no code section that told the lawyers, legislators or individuals how it was to be done.*(2)* It was a harsh legal system.

The General Assembly began considering cases in 1786 and between that time and 1827, a total of 41 years, 268 petitions were sent to the General Assembly asking for a divorce. Some had been re-filed three or four times. The assembly approved only 42 divorce bills; only 23 women and 19 men received a divorce in all of Virginia.*(3)* Twenty-five of these were *a vinculo matrimonii* or final divorces. Others were from bed and board or *a mensa et thoro*, that is a legal separation. What was the alternative? Western migration!*(4)* Or as we sometimes call them: "Irish divorces." The Irish moved to England and began a new family because they did not believe in divorce.

In the Wythe County Legislative Petitions filed in the Library of Virginia (and now on microfilm), there were five women and one man who filed petitions. Three of the petitioners were successful. Nevertheless, from these documents we learn a lot about family life in the early days. Often relatives do not want to talk about it, even today.

In order to file a petition, notice was given to the other spouse that a petition would be sent to the legislature; it often appeared in the local newspapers. Three readings in the house of the General Assembly began the process. The petitions were then sent to a committee and in the nineteenth century to the Committee on Courts of Justice. If three readings were successful in the House, the petition was sent to the Senate and then if the legislature agreed, the petition for divorce was granted and a bill was drawn up to that effect.*(5)*

The legislature often questioned whether they had authority to grant a divorce, but in the 1840s changes began and there were too many cases taking up their time. By 1851, at the time the new State Constitution passed, the Assembly was sure they did not want to have anything more to do with such petitions. In fact, in 1851 they were forbidden to grant divorces!*(6)* Now what to do?

The next step was to file in the Circuit Court in the county where the couple last resided together. The case was classified as a chancery case and papers were filed in a special place with other chancery cases. Divorce was only one of many kinds of such cases. The important papers are the actual suit papers, but occasionally these are missing or have been destroyed. Some information however, will appear in the Chancery Order Books giving the basic information. When the notation in the order book stated that the case had been "stricken from the docket" it usually gave the result and the case was ended.

Legislative Petitions of Wythe County *(7)*

These are the brave souls who filed petitions in the General Assembly:

Sally Carter v. Thompson Carter

Elizabeth Kimberlin v. Martin Kimberlin

Elizabeth Stuart v. Charles Stuart

Mary B. Kegley is a Wytheville historian, author of more than 50 books, a genealogist and a lawyer.

Elizabeth Grainger v. William Grainger
Elizabeth Lynch v. James Lynch
Leonard G. Bailey v. Hannah Bailey

Thompson Carter obtained the marriage bond on October 19, 1809, and he and Sarah or Sally, the daughter of Nathanial Frisbie, were married on October 26.*(8)* They lived together three years and they had two children, not named. She requested that the legislature restore to her "the rights and priviledge of a single woman" and that she be allowed to acquire property.

Among those who gave depositions were Nathaniel Frisbie, Alexander Porter, George Oury, John Evans, Catherine Thornburg, William New and John Ginkins [Jenkins]. Her husband was described as "improvident, given to intoxication and idleness," and in 1813 he abandoned her and took her back to her father's. He was described as an "idle drinking man" or a "lazy, lying drinking man." There was no mention of adultery or any other legal reason to obtain a divorce. Her petition was rejected.*(9)*

The good news is that many years later divorce papers were filed in Hawkins County, Tennessee, and Sally Carter obtained a divorce. Copies of these papers were filed in a Wythe County Chancery suit when Sally inherited property from her father.*(10)* She was unable to control the property as a married women and her husband threatened to interfere. She requested that she be returned to the status of a *feme sole*, a single woman. Testimony showed her husband was a "worthless dissipated man, who spent his time about still houses, grog shops and houses of ill fame." On the fourth Monday in December 1826, the Hawkins County Court granted the divorce.

The first of the women named Elizabeth who applied for a divorce from Wythe County was Elizabeth Kimberlin [Kimberling], the only child of Daniel Sponsler. She complained that her husband Martin Kimberlin [Jr.] attempted to assassinate her father by shooting him. He was tried and acquitted, because "there was a want of clear proof, having done it in the night." Her husband moved to Kentucky and there was convicted of being a horse thief, and was confined to the penitentiary for two years. Also, Martin had married another woman. Her divorce was granted on December 13, 1808.*(11)*

Elizabeth Stuart (also Steward), the second woman named Elizabeth to file a petition, was married by the Reverend John Stanger under the name of Bezy Ingledove on November 26, 1801, although she claimed it was in the fall of 1802.*(12)* They had four children and three of them were living with her at the time she filed her petition in the Assembly. None of the children were named.

In June 1810, her husband "coolly and deliberately" left her in an advanced stage of pregnancy and went to Kentucky. Witnesses testified that she had been beaten often by her husband. The letters sent back home by Charles suggested that if she traveled 200 miles west with the children he would take her back. But she also received news that he was intending to marry another woman.

Elizabeth noted that by law she was only allowed to contract for necessaries of life but wanted to acquire property and not be subject to pay her husband's debts. The petition was rejected on December 11, 1812, and she did not obtain a divorce.

Elizabeth Grainger, the third woman named Elizabeth, filed her petition against her husband William. They were married September 12, 1816, where she used the name Betsey Stoneman. They had one female child, not named, and at the time of the petition they were living with her parents, the John Stonemans.*(13)*

She described her husband as a "stage coach driver," who "captivated her young heart." She was in her 16th year. He drank excessively, beat her, and left the state. She heard later that he was married to a woman in Maryland who was still living. She wished to be removed from "her present disagreeable and distressing situation" and was "bold enough to appeal to this honourable body for relief." Her petition was rejected on December 19, 1820.*(14)*

Elizabeth Lynch also filed a petition with the General Assembly against her husband, James Lynch, stating she had married him on June 1, 1816.*(15)*

She claimed that he left her in August the following year and had married Phebe Duncan of Russell County in 1817. They left for Kentucky or North Carolina and she had not heard from him in two years. She had inherited property from her father Daniel Sponsler and wanted full control of it. The petition was filed on December 15, 1829, and was held to be reasonable on December 22. The bill was drawn and she obtained her divorce.*(16)* It appears that Elizabeth Sponsler had been married and divorced twice. Her first husband was Martin Kimberling

mentioned above.

Leonard Bailey filed his petition in 1845 against Hannah S. Bailey, his wife, claiming that they had been married on October 1, 1840. She was the daughter of Elmer and Elinor Gilbert and the Reverend David Fleming of the Methodist E. Church performed the ceremony.*(17)* She had left for parts unknown to live her life in "notorious prostitution." More than seventy citizens of the county signed a document claiming Leonard was a good and worthy citizen and his case "requires justice." Written community support was often done so that the petitioner would have a better chance with the legislature where they hoped the distinguished members of the House and Senate would sympathize with the man. In addition, in this case, seven local ministers, C.D. Smith, Wm. Hicks, J.C. Walker, C.N. Charlton, David Fleming, Absalom Fisher and Casper Yost, signed their own document stating Bailey had been a respectable member of the church for several years. On January 10, 1846, an Act of the General Assembly was passed which dissolved the marriage and "all right, interest of Hannah Bailey, his wife, in his real or personal property was to cease.*(18)* On October 29, 1851, Leonard G. Bailey was married by R.C. Graham to Johanna Cassell.*(19)*

At this time period when women got married all of their property became the property of the husband and the two became one…the man! A married woman could not legally own any property in her own name. If she was single, a widow or divorcee she could. Some of these women inherited property from their fathers and if not divorced, it became the property of the husband.

None of these cases named their children; none of these petitioners told exactly where the other party moved to; a few mentioned their maiden name; a few mentioned the date of the marriage; only three of the six got a divorce; later Sally Carter got her divorce in Tennessee after she moved and established residency there.

From these few petitions a picture of abandonment, cruelty, drunkenness, criminal acts, and adultery emerge. Why some cases failed in their request is not known but merely hearing about the marriage of their mate to someone else probably was not strong enough evidence to grant the divorce; and cruelty alone was not usually enough for the marriage to be terminated.

Divorce Cases in Chancery

In order to obtain a divorce in the local court certain chancery procedures were required. To begin the suit a bill of complaint was filed and an answer was sometimes made by the defendant, who with the witnesses was summoned to appear. Sometimes exhibits, such as a marriage license might be included in the case papers. If the defendant lived out of state, a notice was placed in the local paper and a copy was usually in the file. When the judge signed the final decree or order, the case was "stricken from the docket," and this order entered into the Chancery Order Books.

There were two kinds of divorce: from "bed and board" (*a mensa et thoro*), where the parties were legally separated but could not remarry. The second kind was to be free from the chains of matrimony (*a vinculo matrimonii*) when the parties usually could remarry. Some of the Wythe County judges decided that they could not, especially if one of the parties was at fault. Occasionally, a maiden name was returned to the woman; rarely children's names were given; sometimes the word *enceinte* was used when the woman was pregnant; and the legal term *ex parte* was used when a decision was made without the other party being present. When women received their divorce the case often used the term *feme sole*, in other words a single woman, who could now make contracts for herself, who could handle her own affairs, something she could not do when married; there were a few exceptions.

In Wythe County there were more than 120 individuals who filed for divorces between 1851 and 1886. Sixty percent of the cases were brought by men, the remainder by the women.

In the Wythe County chancery cases the reasons for filing for a divorce were varied. They included adultery, abandonment and desertion. Often cruelty, drunkenness and violent passions were mentioned. Some women were charged with being "fussy and quarrelsome and disagreeable" causing the home to be more of a "torment than a comfort."*(20)* One man described his wife as being "of a boisterous and termagant character" and a witness claimed that her temper was "pretty rappid." Another claimed his wife as "turbulent, refractory and perverse." One man claimed that he "lived a life of pain and misery."*(21)*

If adultery was involved, some women were described as "being too thick with other men," or "a common strumpet," "playing the harlot," or being a "perfect or common prostitute."*(22)* One woman claimed she would

"not be bound to any man, and that she intended to lie down a mistress and get up a mistress."*(23)*

Two cases specifically mentioned the "the disreputable place of whoredom called Frog Level" believed to be on Spring Street in Wytheville, where houses of ill-fame were located.*(24)* Because adultery was recognized as a valid reason to request a divorce, many of the cases involved such behavior. For example, one man was accused of eloping with a woman of "bad fame," and one wife formed an "undue attachment" for the U.S. deputy marshal, and eloped with him to Bristol.*(25)*

Violence was often mentioned in divorce cases. One man explained why he left his wife. She had "unmercifully" beaten him "over the head with a chair and a rolling pin."*(26)* One struck her husband "on the head with a bucket and cut him with a knife."*(27)* The women sometimes complained of the violence of their husbands. One woman stated her husband, in a "fit of unprovoked rage," had tried to kill her, and that her life was "pandemonium," and that he was full of "wicked passion."*(28)* Another had her life threatened and had been kicked and knocked down with his fists, so that "her body was as blue as if dyed with indigo."*(29)* Probably among the most painful physical attacks was the case in Rocky Mount, Virginia, when the bride on her wedding night poured a "quantity of molten lead" into her husband's ear. Within the week, her husband began the divorce proceedings.*(30)*

On a few occasions, divorces were filed because the husband was guilty of a felony or was in the penitentiary. All of these divorces were granted.*(31)*

In one particular divorce case, the local newspaper had the headlines on March 31, 1875: "A Citizen Elopes with a Neighbor's Wife – They go West." The woman was 24 with black hair and eyes and "is said to be very pretty." The man left a wife and seven children behind, was about 45 years old with "dark hair (slightly grey) and whiskers (dyed)." The husband reported that he was unaware of the problem and believed, because he had provided her with necessaries and some luxuries of life, he was "gliding down the stream of time without apparently a ripple on the surface of his domestic felicity."*(32)*

Flowery language in at least two of the divorce cases may be attributed to the attorneys drafting the papers, with the possibility of some additions from the person filing the complaint. One husband noted that he and his wife were "gliding over the sea of matrimonial life with nothing to disturb their peace and tranquility" when the Methodist Circuit Rider preacher appeared on the scene. The husband came upon him kissing his wife, but could not decide if it was a "kiss of inspiration or a holy kiss." He believed that the kiss "seemed to arouse the latent passion within the breast" of his wife, who had a "partiality for the society of other men." She frequently left his house and was absent for hours and sometimes even days. He concluded that his wife was "leading an adulterous life with various and sundry men." The climax was reached by her eloping with another man and spending time in Scott County, near Moccasin Gap. The court granted the divorce to the husband, giving him custody of the two children and decreed that the ex-wife "shall not marry again."*(33)*

The second case was presented by a young and inexperienced man who was divorcing his "first love." He was unfamiliar with the world and its "tortuous paths" and was "illy prepared to buffet its adverse waves." After removing his wife and their place of residence to a new location in order to preserve the marriage, he found that "his troubles still beset him and followed in his retreat and here again, the fell destroyer of happiness invades the sanctity of his home and those rose-colored days of bliss which were wont, in early marriage to linger so gently and tenderly about orator's then peaceful abode, were done and darkness fell from the wings of night upon him." He concluded that the sun had "set upon his happiness at a time when it should have been shining in the noonday splendor of the glory of their married life." His wife left their home and eventually settled in West Virginia with another man. He was granted a divorce and was given permission to remarry, "he being without fault."*(34)* On January 1, 1878, at age 23, he married a fifteen-year old girl.*(35)*

This small sample of divorces in Wythe County was similar to the complaints filed in the state generally, either by legislative petition or in the Chancery Courts. The circumstances of the marital shipwreck calling for a divorce caused one man to report "great mortification and shame," another "shame and mortification," another "mortification and surprise," and still another "great mortification."*(36)* In Southwest Virginia, as elsewhere, divorce was a social disaster.

Notes

1. Thomas E. Buckley, S.J., The Great Catastrophe of My Life (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2002), 7, 8.
2. Ibid., 267.
3. Ibid., 14, 16, 17, 23.
4. Ibid., 33.
5. Ibid., 23-24.
6. Ibid., 42, 44-45.
7. Microfilm: Virginia General Assembly Legislative Petitions, Record Group 78, Reels 205 (1792-1839) and 206 (1840-1863).
8. Beverly Repass Hoch and Mary B. Kegley, Wythe County Virginia, Marriages 1790-1853 (Wytheville, VA: The Wythe County Genealogical and Historical Association, 2002), 22, 102.
9. The petition was rejected on November 18, 1816; Mary B. Kegley, Divorces of Wythe County, Virginia, 1816-1886 (Wytheville, VA: Kegley Books, 2004), 3-5.
10. Wythe County Chancery 1832-37, David Pierce v. Wm. Thornburg.
11. Kegley, Divorces, 5-6; the petition was found to be reasonable on December 13, 1808; see also divorce of Elizabeth Lynch where she states her father is Daniel Sponsler.
12. Hoch and Kegley, Marriages, 11; Kegley, Divorces, 6-7.
13. Hoch and Kegley, Marriages, 27; Kegley, Divorces, 7-8.
14. Kegley, Divorces, 8.
15. Hoch and Kegley, Marriages, 27. Daniel Lockett filed his list of marriages on December 28, 1816, but he gave no individual dates of marriages. Elizabeth was identified as Betsy Sponsler. It appears this was the same Betsy who divorced Martin Kimberling. See above.
16. Kegley, Divorces, 8.
17. Hoch and Kegley, Marriages, 69, 119.
18. Kegley, Divorces , 8-9.
19. Hoch and Kegley, Marriages, 89, 141.
20. Kegley, Divorces, 71
21. Ibid. 49, 62-63.
22. Kegley, Divorces, 33, 40, 64, 81, 88, 93.
23. Ibid., 38.
24. Ibid., 61, 72, 73.
25. Ibid., 59, 67.
26. Ibid., 65.
27. Ibid., 64.
28. Ibid, 41.
29. Ibid., 78.
30. Buckley, The Great Catastrophe, 209.
31. Kegley, Divorces, 83, 87, 96.
32. Ibid, 56.
33. Ibid., 54.
34. Ibid., 67.
35. Janie Dillon and Mary B. Kegley, Wythe County, Virginia, Marriages 1867-1880 (Wytheville, VA: The Wythe County Genealogical and Historical Association, 2007), 103.
36. Ibid., 66, 71,72, 88.

A Tribute to Our Editor

This Journal has been published since 1964. Ben Bane Dulaney edited the Journal from its first issue until his death November 2, 1967. George Kegley (president of the Society 1963-66) was appointed to succeed him, and George has continued to serve as its indefatigable editor ever since. He has authored at least a dozen bylined articles in the Journal and numerous notes, and probably has authored most of the many non-bylined articles which have appeared in the Journal over the years. (See the Society's website for an index of all articles published in the Journal.)

George is currently an emeritus member of the Society's Board, and continues to organize and schedule the Society's monthly lecture series, and its twice-annual bus tours of historic areas, both of which he has been doing since the 1960s. George was instrumental in creating and funding the Society's Kegley Fund (which helps finance the Society's publications), and has been very active in recruiting authors and developing works to be published by the Society.

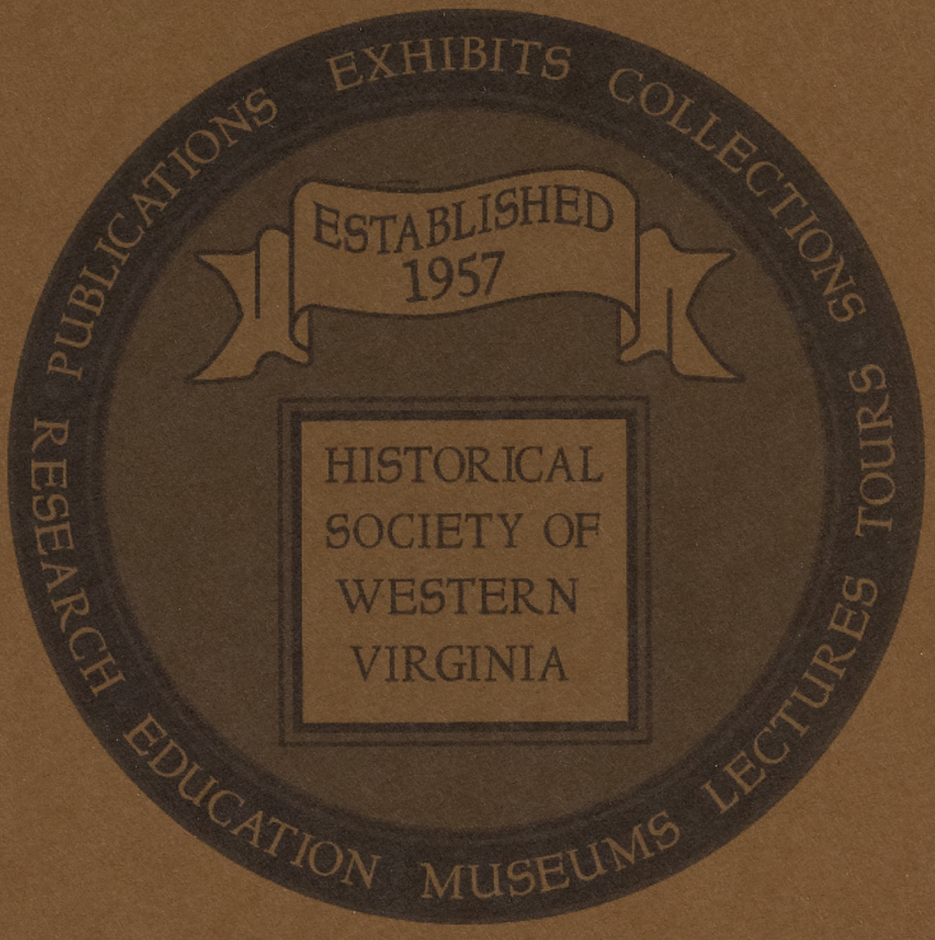
A complete outline of George's volunteer activities and contributions to our community, in additoin to his work with the Society, would take pages. Roanoke City Council honored him as Citizen of the Year in 2002, and his alma mater, Roanoke College (he was Class of 1949), awarded him the College Medal in 1985 and an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters in 2001 (so, it's *Doctor* Kegley!). He was cited for his civic contributions at Emory & Henry College's Charter Day convocation in 2002.

George's volunteer service has included stints as president of the Roanoke College Alumni Association, vice-chair of the State Library Board, president of the Rescue Mission, and service on the boards of such organizations as the Pastoral Counseling Center of Roanoke Valley, Western Virginia Land Trust (he writes for their newsletter, too), the Brandon Oaks Advisory Board, Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation (he chairs the Endangered Sites committee), Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, the community board of Roanoke Refugee and Immigration Services, the advisory board of the Transitional Living Center, and service on the Roanoke Valley Community Relations Committee, the City Manager's Community Relations Task Force, and with the Preservation Alliance of Virginia, Literacy Volunteers of Roanoke Valley, and the Roanoke Arts Commission. He volunteers for Meals on Wheels and began donating blood to the Red Cross in 1950. He helped plan the 125th anniversary celebration for the City. He has authored numerous book reviews for the Roanoke Times. George has undertaken many different roles with his church, St. Mark's Lutheran Church (including a long stint as adult Sunday School teacher and work with its food pantry) and other Lutheran organizations, and he edited the Virginia Lutheran Synod Quarterly, a news magazine distributed to every Lutheran church in Virginia. His former colleague at the Roanoke Times (where George worked his entire career until "retiring" in 1993), Ben Beagle, said of George, "One thing you have to say about George, he's a real Christian gentleman."

The Society is much indebted to George for his long-term editorship of this Journal and for his many other contributions to the Society, and takes this opportunity to thank him for his many years of service.

—Publications Committee

The Journal was originally called the Journal of the Roanoke Historical Society. On February 15, 1972, the Society changed its name to the Roanoke Valley Historical Society, and the Journal accordingly changed its name thereafter to the Journal of the Roanoke Valley Historical Society. In 1997, the Society again changed its name, to the History Museum and Historical Society of Western Virginia, and the Journal became the Journal of the History Museum and Historical Society of Western Virginia with publication of the 1999 Journal. With publication of the 2006-2007 issue, the Journal became the Journal of the Historical Society of Western Virginia, reflecting another change in the name of the Society.



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