

The



Muse

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VOLUME 47, NUMBER 2

Preserving Amherst County History

Spring/Summer/Fall 2022

The year 2022 is just about over! Can you believe it? We've kept busy with researchers, exhibit visitors, interns, lightning strikes (which put us out of commission for almost a week), membership renewals, Sunday programs, floor preservation (which halted the flow of researchers and visitors for almost 2 weeks), the August Colonial Day, and the October Ghost Walk Tours. Not to mention planning programs and events for 2023.

Our interns were great. The first 3 were from Liberty University. Angus Hobson worked with our volunteer Registrar, Nancy McDearmon, in the Collection for 40 hours in the spring. His interest was military, and many weekends found him re-enacting at an event. He was excited about our military items, and we learned much from him in this area. He created a notebook on military aspects that applied to our collection, and we are most appreciative. No task was too big or too little for him. He was somewhat a clown and most entertaining. Believing in hands-on learning experiences, when he asked me what the rectangular wooden item was in the collection, I replied a head hold for a cow being milked. How could that possibly be? he asked. Shall I demonstrate? I replied, and turned Angus into a Holstein.

His project also included inventorying, assigning location by categories, and storing the items in acid-free paper and boxes.

Both Elizabeth Campbell and Samantha Foster, after spending time with volunteer Genealogist and Board member, Midge Elliott, conducted research, and each created an exhibit based on their findings.



Elizabeth Campbell's exhibit

Elizabeth's exhibit focused on Nathaniel Hale Pryor of the Lewis and Clark

Expedition. Pryor was born in Amherst County to Captain John Alexander Armstrong Pryor and Nancy Floyd in 1775.

They moved to Kentucky in 1783. In addition to the bobcat, a baby bear skin was a part of the exhibit.

Samantha's research and exhibit focused on Amherst County-born William H. Crawford (1772), who moved with his family to Georgia. Crawford was involved in two duels, killing one man. He served as the U.S. Minister to France (1813), U. S. Secretary of War (1815) and U. S. Secretary of the Treasury (1816). The students' exhibits will be up through the Spring 2023.



Angus Hobson



Samantha Foster

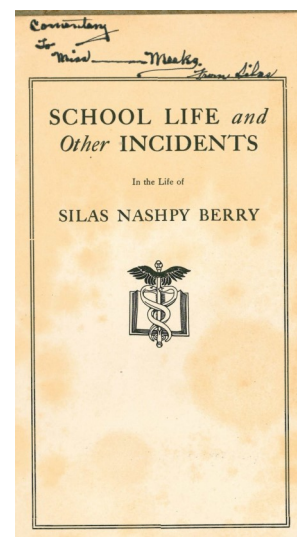
Silas N. Berry: AMHERST COUNTY EDUCATOR – 1880s to 1912

By
Leah Settle Gibbs

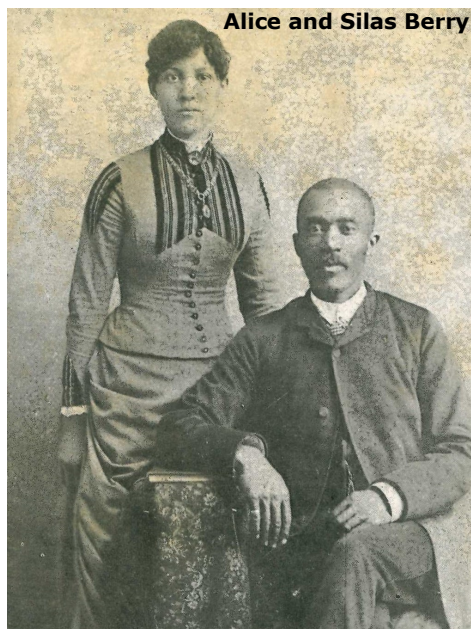
Among my long-procrastinated projects, stimulated by the pandemic, was the cleaning out of various reservoirs of family memorabilia, from Sunday School certificates to records from Girl Scout cookie sales to yellowed newspaper clippings of articles, weddings, and obituaries dating back many decades. Most items triggered familiar memories, with the glaring exception of a 27-page monograph, written in 1919, *SCHOOL LIFE AND OTHER INCIDENTS in the Life of SILAS NASHPY BERRY*, designed and printed by J.P. Bell, Lynchburg, 1919, price of \$1.00.

The discovery, unfortunately, elicited more questions than answers, the initial ones being "What?" and "Why?" What is this? Why is it in my possession? The flyleaf contained my mother's name, in her adult handwriting, "Dabney Meeks". Inside was a note from the author, "Courtesy to Miss _____ Meeks, from Silas."

I have made assumptions drawn from the author's written memories, and then have tried to piece together some conclusions regarding the Amherst County people, places, and events. It was from that perspective that I have summarized this memoir. My hope now is that there are people out there who will recognize some of these names and locations, and who will then be able to amplify the body of information for future generations.



The impetus for writing this book seemed to have been a reunion of students, in 1915: "Old School Reunion", held at the First Baptist Church on July 14, 1915. The day commenced at 10:00 a.m., and featured several speakers. Apparently this event was to honor the author and his career as a teacher, with one agendum being "Biography of Ex. Teacher (Silas N. Berry), delivered by Mrs. Nellie Hutcherson." That was followed by a response by Prof. George E. Clarke, who is later cited as one of Silas' early teachers.



The afternoon program included hymns, roll call of 400 names, reading of deceased schoolmates, with accompanying eulogies, and a "dress parade". Concluding the day was a sermon at 8:00 p.m.

Berry was precise in the writing of this memoir, noting its beginning as January 5, 1919, at 9:55 p.m. He completed it on August 27, 1919, at 11:26 p.m.

Silas Nashpy Berry, born in Rappahannock County, Virginia, in 1864, hardly knew his mother. He came to the Lynchburg area with his father at a very young age. His father apparently valued education, which became a significant part of Silas' early life.

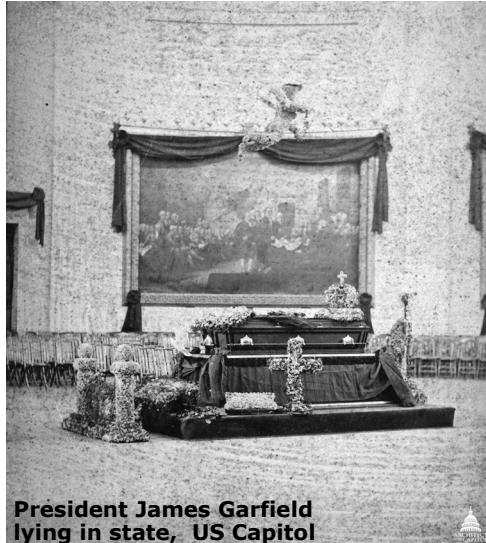
(continued on page 3)

Silas N. Berry

(continued from page 2)

Between then and 1883, Silas Berry had periods of schooling and work. His first reported in-home instruction, presumably in Lynchburg, was led by several named individuals. Perhaps in his mid-teen years, he went to Washington DC, and found his way. He located an uncle, Lewis Mason, who worked for a Dr. Thompson; he identified his uncle's work as "office help and carriage driver." Berry was both working and getting further education at this point.

He mentioned going to Capon Springs (presumably West Virginia) where he "found some of the smartest colored men and women, continued studies and gave lessons to my employer's daughter."



President James Garfield
lying in state, US Capitol

A note of historical significance was made for September, 1881, when his return to Washington coincided with the arrival of the body of the assassinated president, James Garfield. He described in considerable detail the city's response, with the tolling of the death knell from numerous churches, a procession featuring bands and singing, and the flowing of tears. Berry elaborated on his efforts to attend both the viewing of the remains, lying in state at the US Capitol (which he did twice by encircling the throng), and later the funeral, held from the Capitol steps, although he was unable to hear anything that was said.

He came back to Lynchburg, and worked on the Shenandoah Railroad for a few months, then accompanied about 40 Lynchburgers who went to Portland, Pennsylvania, to do bridge work.

By 1883, he returned to the home of his father, who wanted his son to follow in his footsteps as a carpenter. This type of work did not seem to interest Berry, who was then encouraged by a friend to be a teacher. At this time, approaching 20 years of age, he was launched into his life's calling. He walked 4 miles to see the Superintendent of Schools (I am assuming Lynchburg), seemingly unannounced, who put him through a series of tests, and then granted him a "Number 4 Certificate." The superintendent suggested that he go to Amherst where they were in need of a teacher. He noted that on that same day, he registered to vote.

Pleasant Grove School



Berry then was contracted to teach at Pleasant Grove School by a "very large white gentleman, very kindly disposed and very pleasant in manner." He mentions N. N. Mantiply, Clerk of the Board, Temperance School District. He wrote nothing about his transportation, living arrangements, or specifics of day-to-day existence or his reaction to any detail or event. The following Monday, he met 25 students, assessed their abilities, and hence, began his teaching career. Among the 25 school children was his future wife.

(continued on page 4)

Silas Berry

(continued from page 3)

He continued for two years, at which time he was summoned home on account of his father's death. After a few days, he resumed teaching at "Rose Mills". He wrote of making a verbal agreement regarding his employment, "which was good in those good old honest days." He also referenced his compensation at various points.

Berry does not define a "term", stating that he next taught for 7 consecutive terms, plus a private term, at First Baptist School, then, after 3 or 4 years, returned to "Rose Mills".

He and Alice married in 1887. Following chronologically, he then cited having taught for a couple of terms in Nelson County, followed by "Lewis Watts' school" in Amherst (County, or town, not identified) and then concluded his "public school" work at "Edward Ware's School".

In 1905, Lelia Alice Berry died after a brief illness, leaving her husband with 8 children – 6 girls, 2 boys – ranging in age from 5 months to 14 years: Warner Clinton Berry, Delia Esther Berry, Virginia Rovilla Berry, Willie Ann Berry, Flora Callie Berry, Margarette Elizabeth Berry, John William Berry, Alice Mabel Berry. Alice Berry's funeral service was conducted by the Revs. Merchant and Hutcherson, with her burial in "the family burying ground".

He mentioned that, in 1890, he joined the True Reformers, a post-Civil War fraternal organization founded to promote black businesses, cultivate high standards among the middle class, and offer services such as retirement and death benefits, a retirement home, a bank, and youth services to teach discipline, thrift, and business skills. The organization suffered a scandalous demise around 1910, but its legacy lay in the leadership that had been developed as the segregation era evolved.

Silas Berry retired from teaching around 1912 and applied for a state pension, which was granted. He later became a notary public. He was determined to keep the family together and see them through their formative years; a neighboring couple had helped with the care of the youngest girl for a little more than a year following Alice's death.

He makes note of his children's situations in 1919: Warner was a cook in Washington DC; Delia married Warner Slaughter and lived in the Salt Creek area of Amherst County; Virginia taught in Amherst County; Willie worked in the home of an unnamed Amherst lawyer; John, Alice, Flora, and Virginia were still "living under my roof." Margarette had died in 1917.

He again cited his work as a notary, and his appointment as Bureau of Mines Superintendent in Washington DC as a mines explosives agent.

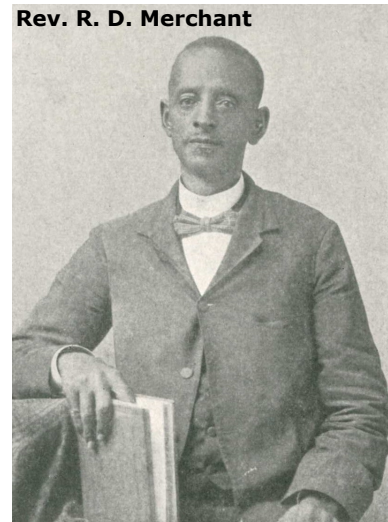
Unfortunately, the author did not elaborate on his experiences – the subjects he taught, the ages of his students, the locations of the schools, the conditions of his teaching experiences, his housing, transportation, supplies, student performance, successes or frustrations, or any notable achievements during the school terms, or further responsibilities with his family. My references to the city of Lynchburg are generally speculative, but not necessarily stated.

(continued on page 5)

Silas Berry

(continued from page 4)

Berry later compiled another monograph (*Memories of Rev. R. D. Merchant, Pastor for 60 Years, of the First Baptist Church of Amherst County*), started in 1935, to highlight the events in the life of the revered minister. That book identified the First Baptist Church as being in Coolwell. In the Preface, he wrote that he wanted "to put on record men and women who have served well." Rev. Merchant died, apparently unexpectedly, early in the compiling of this information, and the book then became a record of reminiscences and correspondences regarding his service and his death.



My thinking on why this first book had been lying untouched in a long-neglected file drawer is that Silas Berry perhaps had contact with my grandfather, Edward Meeks, who began his law practice in Amherst around 1909.

My feeling toward the contents of this book is that it is merely the framework for a bounty of information that is unstated, but perhaps in the memories of some of the next generations who can fill in some details.

Both monographs are in the possession of the Amherst County Museum and Historical Society. The first one contains a listing of more than 400 of Silas Berry's students, with another 125 not listed because of his loss of records. *

Leah Settle Gibbs is a lifelong resident of Amherst County and co-author with William C. Wimer of the book *Amherst From Taverns to Town*. She is taught 8th and 9th grades between 1970 and 1988, mostly at Amherst Jr. High, and coached several sports.

*Anyone interested in a copy of the list of Silas Berry's students can request such by emailing the Director at staff@amherstcountymuseum.org

What's Happening in Collections?

Every day is an adventure in Collections. During the past year, we have built shelves in two storage areas and have worked to house objects with similar items. We've separated military uniforms from children's clothing; medical memorabilia from ladies' hats, etc. Making the physical changes requires updating the Museum's database which helps us know what we have and where to find it.



Last fall, a kind person happened upon an old photo album in Northern Virginia that contained Civilian Conservation Corps photographs identified as P-81 Amherst County, VA, Company 2356 (1935). We know there was also P-81 Amherst County, Company 2399 (1938, African American men located on the same site as Company 2366), Company 354 (1933) in Snowden, and NP-16 Company 2360 at Oronoco. The CCC was active from 1933 -1942 and built much in Amherst County that we use daily, including the Blue Ridge Parkway, Rt. 60, and bridges, and dams. If your family had a connection to the CCC, we would love to hear your stories. Please call to schedule a time to visit.

Director's Notes

(continued from page 1)

Our Fall interns from Sweet Briar College are also diligent workers. Their stories will appear in the next newsletter.

The March 13 program, *Dr. Karenne Wood, Virginia Poet, Mother, Monacan, Scholar and Historian*, was presented in collaboration with the Monacan Nation and Amherst Glebe Arts Response (AGAR) and was a truly heartfelt and emotional tribute to Dr. Wood. The program has been uploaded onto AGAR's YouTube.

AGAR YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2QjW7z-FwmfxdgILPZKGhQ>

Then select video: Karenne Wood Panel

The Mysterious Mt. Edlo program was held on Sunday, May 29. Presenters were Roderick Bryant and Douglas MacLeod. The old maps were the hit of the presentation. Editing is just about finished on the filming and should be on the Museum's YouTube by the time you receive this newsletter. You will really enjoy the maps. Prior to the program we celebrated the life of Professor Apple, Thomas "Tom" Nelson Burford with the Hill City Master Gardeners dedicating an apple tree in his memory. See page 8 for more information provided by Hill City Master Gardeners and Museum member Karen Sacasky.

The Colony & Evolution of Society by Rob Merryman was presented on June 26. That taping will also be on YouTube by the end of December. Mr. Merryman was on staff at the Central Virginia Training Center for 30 years and provided us with some interesting points to consider. The exhibit on the early years of the Colony will run through the summer of 2023.

It was so wonderful to bring back Amherst Colonial Day on August 13. We were delighted to add a cooper to our interpretation group. Who is and what does a cooper do? you may ask. A picture will answer that question for you.



On Sunday, September 11, 2022, the community joined together for the program *Remembrances of Ted Hughes*. Ted was known far and wide for his restoration/conservation projects. Most people probably remember his work on the Virginia Blue Ridge Caboose #2, but his scope of work went far beyond the caboose. His workshop *Chalklevel Carriage and Buggy Works* was a delight to see, especially when he was busy working on a piece like a horse-drawn carriage or hearse. Ted restored Proffitt's Mill, a gristmill that his wife Jane's grandfather, Eglon M. Proffitt, had operated. Special to us at the Museum is the restoration work Ted accomplished on the Thornhill Wagon, a gift donated by Doris C.



Ted Hughes

Johnson and son, Mark, in 1996.



Thornhill Wagon

(continued on page 7)

Director's Notes

(continued from page 6)

In September Mr. Steve Coffey, assisted by son and grandson began to lay protective plywood sheets over the original floor on the Museum's lower level. It was determined that the floor could not be sanded due to its thinness. To preserve the floor, it was deemed necessary to cover it with a wood-like surface. It happened so fast that we were unable to find a funding source for the materials and labor. We have set up a **Preserve the Floor Fund** and hope that, with your generous help, we will be able to pay off the debt soon. Be sure to mark your check with **Floor Fund** if you can contribute. We appreciate all you do for the Museum and Historical Society.



While the floor preservation was happening, the Museum uploaded on YouTube two new programs in partnership with Amherst County Public Schools and the Amherst Lancers Tech Club with support from Amherst County, the Town of Amherst, and The Greater Lynchburg Community Foundation. We hope you visit our channel and enjoy the presentations by going to:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6u0jNXgTGSEdmU1azRa4AQ/>

And what would October be without our annual GhostWalk? There were 8 tours with 102 participants. The ghosts and guides and all other volunteers were invaluable and, on behalf of the Museum's Board, I extend a magnificent "thank you" to them for being with us on a beautiful afternoon and evening on October 22. Volunteer Sandi Esposito once again did a wonderful job.

THANK YOU, EVERYONE!



(continued to page 8)

Director's Notes

(continued from page 7)

Although we have had many researchers in the library this year, I do want to share one story with you. Stephanie Binns was looking for a relative, S.T. Moore, who had lived in Monroe for only three months in the 1930s. She knew he had been associated with the railroad. I put her to work looking through the Southern Railroad Timesheet books. She found him in January 1932 and learned that he was a boiler-maker. Is she a happy researcher or what?

I hope this year is ending well for you and I wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I will look forward to sharing more information in 2023.



Octavia

Remembering Thomas "Tom" Nelson Burford



I always thought I was weird because I did not like picture-perfect Red Delicious apples. That is, until I met Tom Burford known as Professor Apple or the Apple Prince. Here was an apple expert confirming that the Red Delicious was a terrible apple, mealy and bland. I was vindicated! We lost the Apple Prince on March 29, 2020. With his death, we lost a charming, southern gentleman. One who was a wonderful storyteller and a veritable treasure chest of knowledge. Always ready to share his knowledge and answer questions, he was a favorite among Hill City Master Gardeners. He provided our Master Gardeners with wonderful programs, the most recent being the headline speaker at several MG training graduations. I believe it was at the graduation in April of 2011 that Tom was a guest speaker and we found out that he had heart surgery only a week or two before; and he was already planning another international trip to lecture and promote heirloom apples. At that time, Tom was in his mid-seventies and still not slowing down.

Thomas Nelson Burford was born at Long Hill on Tobacco Row Mountain in Amherst County, Virginia, in 1935. He was the son of Thomas Russell and Frances Antoinette Whitehead Burford. Tom said his mother went into labor as she was picking apples. Tom traced his roots to seven generations of apple growers in Amherst and Nelson counties. He, along with his brother, established Burford Brothers, a consortium that included a farm, orchard, fruit tree nursery, sawmill, building construction and antique furniture reproduction. It closed in 1995, a year after his brother's death. Although Tom Burford never married, he is survived by a multitude of loyal fans and friends including many Master Gardeners, past and present. Yes, we really lost an icon in the world of horticulture.

Karen Sacasky, Hill City Master Gardener and Museum Member

CONTRIBUTIONS IN REMEMBRANCE

(February 2022– October 2022)

***In Loving Memory of
Ann Whitley***

Elizabeth Whitley

***In Loving Memory of
Donna Meeks***

Judy Faris

Karol Lawson

Nancy McDearmon

Octavia Starbuck

***In Loving Memory of
Jack Faris***

Judy Faris

***In Loving Memory of
Anne Grimm***

Dr. Kenneth Grimm

***In Loving Memory of
Ted Hughes***

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***In Loving Memory of
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***In Loving Memory of
Charles & Mary Tompkins
Tucker***

Donna Courtney

(continued on page 10)

CONTRIBUTIONS IN REMEMBRANCE

(February 2022 – October 2022)

In Loving Memory of Elizabeth "Dolly" Payne

Susan and John Payne, Jr.

In Loving Memory of John Mason

Octavia Starbuck

In Loving Memory of Ruth McBride

K. H. Woodford

In Loving Memory of Dottie Diuguid

Judy and Linnie Dudley

In Loving Memory of R. Wayne Ogden

Dreama Ogden

In Loving Memory of William Layne

Bruce Bowman

In Loving Memory of Their Parents Alice & Howard Holzheuer Doris & Hugh Garbee

Linda and Richard Garbee

In Loving Memory of Patriot William Hartless

Donna St.Clair

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(continued on page 12)

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Laura Wigington
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Virginia Campbell
Octavia and Greg Starbuck
Kathleen Whitehead

In Honor of
Kathy Pierson

Octavia Starbuck

In Honor of
Sandi Esposito

Barbara Pryor

In Honor of
Bettie Worley

Charlotte Myers Bearden

In Honor of
Jerry Elliott's Birthday

Elizabeth and Jim Hixon

In Honor of
Octavia Nicely Starbuck

Marilyn and Ralph Shore

2023 ACMHS PROGRAMS: "Illuminating the Past"

Schedule subject to change due to COVID.

Sunday, January 8 at 2:30 p.m. — Thomas Jefferson and Dr. Bill Trout discuss batteaux and canals both having slipped through the time portal to answer questions posed by Moderator Jeff Taylor and the audience. \$10.00 per ticket on-line at <https://tinyurl.com/24ycju7s> or \$10.00 prepaid at the Museum. Light refreshments.

Sunday, February 12 at 2:30 p.m. — Life in Burley Hollow presented Glenwood Burley. Mr. Burley will also be available to sign his book *Death by Silence*. Light refreshments.

Sunday, March 26 at 2:30 p.m. — The Reverend Robert Rose. More information to follow. Light refreshments.

Saturday, April 22— Field Trip. TBA. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Sunday, May 28 at 2:30 p.m. — Vanishing Villages:
Dearborn by Nancy McDearmon
Pedlar Mills by Lee Wood



New Museum YouTube Programs at

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6u0jNXgTGSEdmU1azRa4AQ/>

Thomas Jefferson was not unknown to Amherst. His father Peter owned land in the County which Jefferson inherited on his father's death. One of Jefferson's best friends was Hugh Rose who lived in the county and to whose home, "Geddes," Jefferson, Martha and their two children sought refuge from Lt. Colonel Banastre Tarleton in 1776. Jefferson with host Jeff Taylor reminisce about his various trips to Amherst in ***Thomas Jefferson Returns to Amherst County***. Jefferson is portrayed by Bill Barker, Courtesy of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Monticello.

Museum volunteer and architectural historian Sandi Esposito presents the program ***The Layout of Cemeteries and Gravestone Symbols***. She discusses the meaning of symbols seen on gravestones. All the cemeteries shown are in Amherst County. It is not unusual to see Sandi, accompanied by Museum Board Member Ellen Craig, in a field examining and recording information on a cemetery they have located or been directed to. All cemetery information recovered becomes a part of the Gravestone Inscriptions in Amherst County Virginia series.

These programs are brought to you by the Amherst County Museum & Historical Society in partnership with Amherst County Public Schools and the Amherst Lancers Tech Club with support from Amherst County, the Town of Amherst, and the Greater Lynchburg Community Foundation.

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www.amherstcountymuseum.org



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Give guidance for researching genealogy
Create New Exhibits
Preserve our Collection of Amherst County History
Add resource books to our Genealogy Library
Provide information and family histories
Design and implement programs and activities for school students
Digitize old scrapbooks, year books and archival materials

**ILLUMINATING
THE PAST**

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Spring/Summer/Fall 2022

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