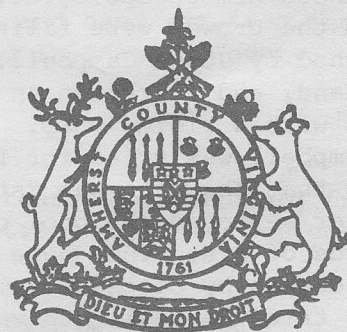


# THE



# MUSE

February, 1990

NO # 82.



## Amherst County Historical Museum

### THE TRIAL

As we enter the last decade of this century, it is interesting to look back at the beginning of the century and gain a better understanding of the issues of the day and how people dealt with them. One true story which took place in Amherst illustrates some of these issues. Though a small town, Amherst Courthouse could be very lively when politically energized.

This is the story of a circuit judge named Clarence J. Campbell, formerly of Edge Hill Farm in Amherst. Campbell's enduring fame, however, comes from his experience on the other side of the bench, charged with felonious assault, and his later impeachment by the Virginia Assembly.

The story begins in 1897 at the fall Democratic caucus. Delegate C.J. Campbell was instrumental in placing his cousin Bentley Campbell on the bench in Amherst over a popular 18-year incumbent, Judge Dillon. Oddly, after only one year as judge, Bentley resigned his position and influenced the governor to place Clarence Campbell in his place in 1899. During this period the Temperance movement was gaining considerable clout, so much so that several districts within the county had taken the "local option" to become "dry" communities, among them the Courthouse district. But Judge Clarence Campbell was rumored to be involved in the purchase and protection of illegal intoxicants. Richmond minister Dr. C. H. Crawford responded to a case Campbell tried with the following editorial in the Christian Federation:

At Amherst recently a whiskey-selling druggist was presented to the grand jury. It was proved that he had sold about twenty-five barrels of intoxicants during the past year and a number of witnesses testified that they had bought from him. But the jury was instructed by the judge that the druggist had the right to sell medicated whiskey, so they brought in a verdict "No Indictment". Such rulings set the people wondering which has been

doctored the most, the whiskey or the judge."

Campbell summoned Crawford to appear in Amherst for contempt of court for making this comment. Unable to find him guilty, Campbell freed Crawford, but several times commanded him to apologize. Crawford refused.

As the crowds were filing out of the courthouse, Crawford approached or was approached by Judge Campbell. According to eyewitness accounts, Rev. Crawford extended his hand, and in return an outraged Judge Campbell smacked him in the head five or six times with a riding whip. This assault would cause Amherst to be noticed statewide.

Campbell was tried for felonious assault in his own courtroom. From the records it seems that the case was "stacked" from the very beginning. C.J. Campbell had as judge earlier selected the pool of jurors, and a large number were personal or political friends of his. The judge sitting in the case, the Hon. Eugene N. Wood of Fluvanna, was also chosen by Campbell. Otto L. Evans, the prosecuting attorney, was threatened that if he tried Campbell and won, Campbell's supporters would "pull down the jail, burn it and set [Evans] on top."

Amherst was severely split between pro- and anti- Campbell factions. There seemed to be no middle ground. Arguments in and out of court were this: either Campbell struck Crawford out of self-defense for sneering, or Campbell assaulted Crawford out of revenge for what he said. The assault could not be denied but the defense argued and won on a basis that gave Campbell the right to beat a "Yankee parson" for insulting a Virginian.

The local paper, Amherst New Era (owned by C.J. Campbell) praised Campbell and condemned any opponents. Other papers around the state were not as gentle in their responses to Campbell's acquittal. Extensive rioting and mayhem after the trial, along with reports that friends, jurors and Judge Wood joined Campbell at his home for a party till the early morning, brought sharp editorials from around the state. Opposing residents and officials from Amherst County petitioned the Assembly to investigate this case and other charges of abuse of power. The Assembly was not at all sympathetic and Clarence J. Campbell became one of very few circuit court judges to be impeached.

#### REFERENCES

In the County Court for the County of Amherst, VA, July term, 1902. Commonwealth of Virginia vs. C.J. Campbell, Felonious assault.

Amherst New Era, various issues, 1902.

Richmond News, various issues, 1902.

Lynchburg News, various issues, 1902.

Investigation by the Committee for Courts of Justice of the House of Delegates of Charges Proffered Against C.J. Campbell, January, 1903.

#### EARLY AUTO EXHIBIT

A look at the earliest days of the auto in Amherst County and at its rapid effects on the life of the community. The auto is the most famous example of how technology changes our lives. The ACHM is looking for pre-1920 license plates, tools used for auto repair, auto clothing (goggles or hats), and photographs from before 1920 illustrating Amherst autos, filling stations, and related structures. This exhibit is scheduled to open at the Madison Heights Branch Library this spring.



WORKING IN WOOD EXHIBIT

On-site exhibition of woodworking tools from the late 19th to early 20th Century. Items still not in the collection include a broad ax, hatchet and hand adz (for logs) from the 19th Century. Items must have been purchased or used in Amherst County. Please help us locate these items.

COURTHOUSE MUSEUM, LYNCHBURG

A new exhibit titled "Wish You Were Here", displaying postcards of Lynchburg from the 1890's through the 1940's. This exhibit will continue until the end of September.

MAIER MUSEUM OF ART

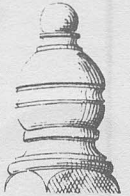
"Realism in a Post-Modern World": selections from the Sydney and Frances Lewis Collection. This exhibit will continue until March 25.

PANNELL CENTER GALLERY, SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE

Exhibition, "Prints by Marie Laurencin" organized by the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Open February 16 to April 15. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 12 - 5 p.m.

**PRESERVATION...PLAN ON IT**

National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Dept. PA, 1785 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036



LOOKING FOR PLACES TO VISIT IN THE OLD DOMINION?

The Virginia Association of Museums directory for state and local museums and related institutions in Virginia is now for sale in the ACHM Gift Shop for \$4.00.

THANKS AGAIN AND AGAIN!!

Since the last MUSE (#81) several new contributors and past contributors have given their support to the Wood House Restoration Project. These funds came in around the holiday season and have helped with expenses during January and February. It is very encouraging to see this support, thanks again!



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Hilda Griffin  
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\*Leslie Bryant

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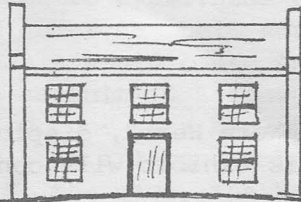
\*William Mays  
\*Amherst County Ext. Homemakers Council

BENEFACTORS: \*Virginia Fibre Corp., \*Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Zinsser, \*Amherst Womans Club.

\* Special thanks to those who have given several times to support the museum's efforts to restore its new home. Thanks again.

# A.C.H.M.

*Annual*



*Program*

For the Old House Owner  
A Slide/Tape Presentation from the  
American Association for State and Local History  
READING A BUILDING: COLONIAL.

Literature and other help will be available for the  
at home preservationist

*Friday!*

TIME: MARCH 9 AT 7:30 PM.

*Friday!*

PLACE: AT THE MADISON HEIGHTS BRANCH LIBRARY.

This is a special for the members of the Heritage Guild  
which includes all regular members and donors to the Wood House.

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