

The Muse

Amherst County Museum & Historical Society

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Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

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February 2012

The Mary Snow House to be on Tour in April

April is a lovely time to go touring, and this year the Museum has a special place lined up for touring! The Mary Snow House is a couple miles west of the Town of Amherst and has been beautifully restored. Now the home is elegantly graced with lovely antiques. It has never been open to the public before so this is truly a rare opportunity! The tour is set for Sunday, April 22, from 2 to 4 p.m. More details will be in the April newsletter.

New in the Gift Shop!

Carolyn Tyree Feagans' most recent book, *Through My Window*, is a departure from her previous books. This nonfiction work is a collage of thoughtful devotions inspired by a Lenten tradition, combined with accompanying photographs that are breathtaking. Many of the photographs are of local scenes—Amherst and Bedford counties, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and some from further afield—North Carolina, even Oregon and Arizona appear on these pages. All copies purchased from the Museum's Gift Shop are signed by the author. Price \$22.

An Opportunity to Buy a Rare Book!

The noted Amherst County researcher, Rosemary Dunne, has donated a number of her research books to the Museum's library (see page 5 for some of these). She has graciously given us permission to auction one of these books, *More Passages: A New History of Amherst County, Virginia*, by Sherrie S. McLeRoy and William R. McLeRoy. Although published in 1995, the book has long been out of print, yet it is the most comprehensive professionally published history of Amherst County. It turns up occasionally on the rare book market, but there are few to be had due to its popularity. If you would like to buy this book, please send in your sealed bid to: Amherst County Museum, P.O. Box 741, Amherst, VA, 24521. Bids must be received by March 30, 2012, at 5 p.m. (Do not include postage in your bid; the Museum will pay postage if needed.) This offer is open to **Members Only**. So, if you've been wanting your own copy, this is a good time to get one, and benefit the Museum as well! Minimum bid is \$40.

2012 Events

Sunday, March 18, at 2 p.m. - Samuel Garland & pre-Civil War Amherst County

Sunday, April 22, 2 - 4 p.m. - Home Tour on 60 West

Thank You!

Benefactors

Mrs. Harold Singleton (Marguerite)

Patrons

Tom & Janie Hall, VA

Friends

*Virginia Campbell, FL
Kathleen Whitehead, FL*

Thanks to St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church for the donation of sixty chairs for the new Hamble Center.

Thanks to Northminster Presbyterian Church for the donation of a computer for the Museum's research library.

Welcome to our New Members!

Joseph & Barbara Ramsey, VA

And a special Thank You to our Volunteers!

In December:

*Frances Butler
Midge Elliott
Bill Hathaway
Elizabeth Overbey
Tom Wallace*

In January

*Ellen Craig
Tom Wallace
Mary Wilhelm*



Do You Know ...

... who these people are? The owner of the original photograph reproduced above believes that they are Cashwells, or connected to the Cashwell family of Amherst County.

*The Muse, February 2012
Page 2*

Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! Calling All Virginians!

Family homes are prized possessions, and it can be challenging to pass them from one generation to the next. However, when we are able to do so, we gain a much fuller understanding of our ancestors' lives, surrounded by the furnishings and art that reflect their history.

For four years, Governor McDonnell and I have the honor of living in one of Virginia's oldest "family" homes ~ the Executive Mansion. Celebrating its 200th anniversary in 2013, the Executive Mansion is the oldest continually occupied governor's residence in all the fifty states. As you can imagine, this translates to a home full of history and stories of everyday family life. With the 200th birthday of the mansion approaching, we are looking to gain a more intimate understanding of this historic home, one that has not yet been told in the history books.

This fall, the official book of the Executive Mansion's 200th Anniversary will be released. Our commemorative coffee table book will chronicle the experiences of the fifty-four governors' families who have occupied the mansion. It is being written by Virginia historian Mary Miley Theobald, with an introduction by Virginia author David Baldacci and designed by Carol Roper Hoffer. We are also planning a yearlong celebration with special events, exhibits, and programs to commemorate this bicentennial.

I believe that the key to unlocking the untold stories of the mansion lies with the people of Virginia, and I'd like to involve you in this endeavor. If you are a descendant of a former "First Family" or of someone who worked in the mansion, we'd love to hear your stories about your ancestors and the mansion. We are looking for old photographs of governors' families taken in the mansion and any letters and objects with a history of having been in the mansion that we might exhibit. You may have to dig them out of your great-great Aunt Matilda's trunk that's been sitting in Grandma's attic, but they will help shed light on this wonderful home's proud past.

If you have stories or images of Virginia's Executive Mansion, please join us in this opportunity to recapture them as we celebrate the bicentennial. Please contact us by mail at Commonwealth of Virginia, Executive Mansion, P.O. Box 1475, Richmond, Virginia 23218; or by email at ExecutiveMansion@governor.virginia.gov, and help us bring the history of Virginia's Executive Mansion to life!

With warmest regards,

Maureen McDonnell
First Lady of Virginia

Death Records – A Glimpse at the Past

By Midge Elliott

Death records can provide a wealth of information when researching one's family history. They can contain information not only on the when, where and how, but also information on parentage and birth location. Genealogy aside, death records can also give an interesting glimpse into the past.

Nineteenth century death records for Amherst County were kept from 1853 to 1896, for which several years were unaccounted. The causes of deaths in that period ranged from common ailments such as consumption, dysentery, pneumonia or pleurisy, to the unusual such as a ten year old boy whose cause of death was listed as "kick by boy." Many ailments that we currently don't consider fatal were common causes of death at that time. These included such ailments as, flu, child bearing, colds, or teething. Strange names were sometimes used for diseases or conditions, gravel was a term used for kidney stones, flux also meant dysentery and scrofula was tuberculosis of the neck. In the early 1880s, measles began to show up as a cause of death and in the 1890's La Grippe started being used for types of flu.

Tracking certain outbreaks or epidemics is near impossible due to incomplete information and poor record keeping. Many deaths were listed as unknown or simply left blank. In one district the recordkeeper liked to use ditto marks and entire pages show everyone dying of the same fever or flux. On one page in 1894 in this district, about halfway down the page, a man died of old age at the age of 78 and everyone below him is dittoed to have died of old age for ages that ranged from 5 days to 30 years.

Of the over 3000 deaths that were reported between 1853 and 1896, only two were Civil War related. They were Shelton Hudson who at the age of 41 years died in 1864 from "wounds in battle" and Robert Ware who at age 28 also died in 1864 with the cause listed as "wounded at Gettysburg." This was partially due to the fact

that 1861 through 1863 are missing from the records and that battlefield deaths were not recorded as local deaths.

Several suicides were recorded, as well as murders, gunshot wounds, burns and people killed by being run over by railroad cars. There were also several cases of poisoning, although the records generally did not state whether they were accidental or intentional. In 1880, three female Dawson family members were recorded as all having been poisoned at the same time. And in 1883, two young siblings, ages 3 years and 6 months were shown as being "poisoned by bluestone." Research shows that bluestone is copper sulfate that was once used to induce vomiting, but is now considered toxic.

Some of the more unusual deaths included Sheddie and Elizabeth Grant who died in 1876 on the same day after being struck by lightning. In 1875, M. Allen's cause of death was "hurt by ox" and in 1882, little 10 year old L. Jackson died of a snake bite. 1886 records list W. Mahone, age 22, was "killed in mine" and in 1889, Isaac Hill was killed by an "explosion of powder" and B. W. Hawkins cause was "accidental by powder."

The Amherst County Museum and Historical Society has an index and photo copies of these death records. These are available to in-house researchers or by submitting a research request.

Midge Elliott is a volunteer researcher at the Amherst County Museum and her work is well-known to many. She indexed Amherst County's Birth Register and Death Register. Both registers were mandated by the Commonwealth of Virginia from 1843 until 1896. her article on naming patterns, "The Name Game: 1800s Amherst Style," describes occurrences of popular names in Amherst County found in the Birth Register and was published in The Muse in December, 2008.

Amherst County now has two more Virginia Landmarks listings!

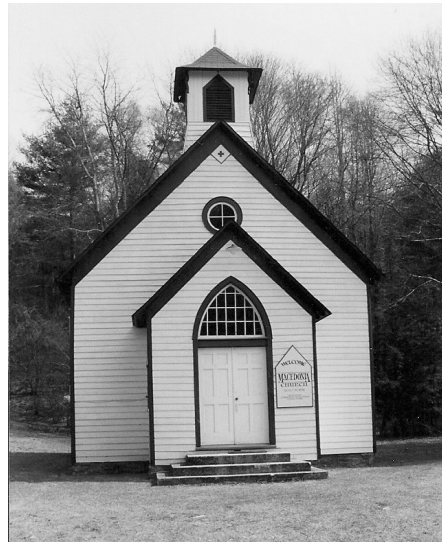
The *Clifford-New Glasgow Historic District* centers on the oldest existing settlement in Amherst County. With buildings dating from circa 1772, the district is important for its early role as a regional commercial center. It developed at the crossroads of the stage road between Charlottesville and Lynchburg and an east-west road running between the James River and crossing over the Blue Ridge Mountains to Lexington. The village had several taverns, retail stores, and the services of a saddler, a blacksmith, and a tobacco weigh station. It also prospered during the first half of the 20th century as a motorists' stop along U.S. Route 29 (the old stage road) with several gas stations, convenience stores, and an auto repair garage. In the mid-20th century after the Route 29 bypass was constructed, many of the village's businesses moved or closed. The district's period of significance extends from circa 1772 to 1961, during the time when Clifford served as a commercial center for stage coaches, then automobiles. Its buildings reflect much of that heritage.

*At right,
Clifford
Tavern,
Ca. 1914*



*At left,
Clifford
Saddlery,
as it appears
today*

Built in 1896, *Macedonia Methodist Church* is an excellent example of a vernacular country church with a bell tower, arched windows and entries, and the use of unpainted chestnut beadboard paneling in the interior. Macedonia was one of nine churches constructed between 1850 and 1910 in Amherst County in a mostly traditional form, although the decorative elements of each building varied. Only six of the churches remain and Macedonia is the best-preserved frame-built example of the Gothic Revival church style. Centrally located within a secluded community called Coffeytown, the church was built on a low, cleared lot along Coffeytown Road across from a creek and has a triple rail fence bounding all but the front of the property. The church replaced an earlier 1875 log church on the property.

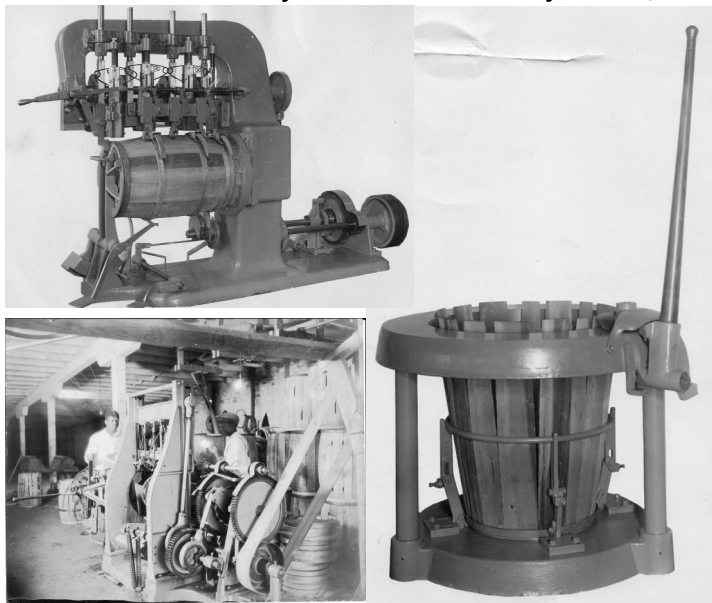


Charles E. and Sarah Jane Coffey donated the property to the church on August 14, 1882. The church was closed on December 31, 1981, and in 1989, the Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Charge Conference made arrangements to transfer the property to the Macedonia Community Association. Today it serves as a community center and is used for family reunions, weddings, funerals, and other community events.



The apple barrel at left was donated by Bill McClenny in 1995, and now that the barrel will be moving to exhibit in the Hamble Center, he has donated photographs of the machine that R.J. McClenny used to make the barrel. These photographs will be used to provide more information

about the barrel's story in the exhibit. Many thanks, Bill!



New in the Library

Many of you may know of Rosemary Dunne, who has done so much research for the Museum for so many years. She recently began thinning out her personal research collection and has brought many of her books to our research library! There's not enough room to list all of them, but here is a sampling:

- *The Monacan Reclaiming a Heritage*
- *Researching Your Historic Virginia Property*
- *Civil War Virginia: Battleground for a Nation*, by James I. Robertson, Jr.
- *Immigrant Ancestors: A List of 2,500 Immigrants to America before 1750*, edited by Frederick Adams Virkus
- *A Guidebook to Virginia's Historical Markers*
- *Albemarle County in Virginia*, by Rev. Edgar Woods
- *Marriage Bonds of Franklin County, Virginia, 1786-1858*
- *Marriages and Deaths from Richmond, Virginia Newspapers: 1780-1820.*
- *Alexandria City Directory, 1791*
- *Frederick County, Virginia: Wills & Administrations, 1795-1816*
- *Abstracts of Northern Neck Grants: Books "F" and "G" 1747-1751*
- *Loudoun County, Virginia, Minute Book: 1780-1783*
- *1810 Census of Loudoun County, Virginia*
- and a number of books about Hampshire County [West] Virginia and Monongalia County [West] Virginia



When you start your new year,
be sure to check out
what's new in the Museum's Gift Shop!



The Mission of the Amherst County Museum & Historical Society is to discover, collect and preserve objects related to the history and genealogy of Amherst County. The Museum & Historical Society shall exhibit, interpret and offer those collections to provide educational experiences for people of all ages.

Memberships are annual from September to September; for details, see www.amherstcountymuseum.org/membership.html

Special Contributions

| | |
|------------|----------------|
| Friend | \$25 to \$49 |
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| Benefactor | \$1000 and up |

If you would like your donation to go to a certain purpose, please check one of the funds below.

Categories for Donations

Operating Fund _____
 Endowment Fund _____
 Annex Fund _____

Museum Calendar

- **Friday & Saturday, March 16 & 17** - The Civil War 150 Legacy Project will visit the Museum. See column at right for more details.
- **Sunday, March 18**, at 2 p.m. VCU student Faith Hofma will present her research about Samuel Meredith Garland and antebellum politics in Amherst County.
- **Sunday, April 22**, from 2 to 4 p.m. Spring tour of the Mary Snow House. More details will be in the April newsletter.



About twenty participants at the Museum's Valentine Party made over seventy Valentines!

The Civil War 150 Legacy Project

The Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission and the Library of Virginia are partnering to identify and locate original, family-owned manuscript materials concerning the Civil War. These materials will be scanned on-site at the Amherst County Museum and made accessible through the Commission and the Library of Virginia web sites for research purposes. Please call ahead to schedule an appointment for document scanning. The Legacy Project will be at the Amherst County Museum on **March 16 and 17**. Materials of interest include:

- Daybooks / ledgers
- Diaries
- Letters
- Hand-drawn maps
- Military passes
- Claims for damages by the Confederate Army or Federal Army
- Other documentary materials not listed
- Original pension materials
- Photographs
- Reminiscences
- Hand-drawn sketches
- Discharge papers

This event is jointly sponsored by the Amherst County Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee and the Amherst County Museum and Historical Society. For further information or to schedule an appointment for document scanning, call: (434) 946-9068 or visit www.amherstcountymuseum.org.

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