

The



Muse

Amherst County Museum & Historical Society

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(434) 946-9068

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

VOLUME 38, NUMBER 1

February 2013

The Museum is all abuzz this spring!

We started 2013 with a program about Brightwell's Mill that was practically bursting at the seams! With all seats taken and then standing room only, Ricky Brightwell spoke about the history of Brightwell's Mill and its current restoration project. With a wealth of pictures to illustrate much of the history and renovation, all enjoyed an afternoon full of information and interest. Many thanks, Ricky!

But there's more to come!

March is shaping up to be a busy month. On Sunday, March 17, the Museum is sponsoring a book talk. Authors Margaret Myers and Ann Rucker will tell us the story behind the book, *Sunday Drives: Cruising the back roads of Amherst and Nelson County*. This is the ever popular book that sold out in one month of its first printing!. It is now back in print and available again in the Museum's Gift Shop. The book is \$20, with \$1 in tax, and you can buy it and have it signed at the book talk. If you are ordering by mail, there is no tax for non-Virginia addresses, but you will need to add \$4 for postage and handling. With a copy of this in hand, you'll be ready for a beautiful spring and the flowers in new bloom. The program is free and open to the public, but the book is extra...

The Museum can now accept
donations online

Just click on the *Donate* button on our homepage

www.amherstcountymuseum.org

Last year's *Card Party* was a great success and we are doing it again! On Tuesday, March 19, the Museum's Hamble Center will be set up for cards and refreshments so we can do this again. Cards will be dealt beginning at 10 a.m., and the cost is \$10 per person. Gather your friends and sign up for a table!

The Museum's Annual Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, April 27, at 4 p.m. at the Museum's Hamble Center. The change from previous years' fall meeting heralds a new format for the Annual Meeting. Former Museum Director Tom Mackie will speak about bateaux, and afterwards we will enjoy barbecue and band music. For tickets and reservations, call the Museum at (434) 946-9068.

Holiday Vacation & Museum Closings

In July, the Museum will close for the week of July 4.

Sunday, March 17, 2013, at 2 p.m. — Program and Book Signing for *Sunday Drives* at the Museum (Free)

Tuesday, March 19, 2013, at 10 a.m. — Bridge Party in the Hamble Center (\$10 per person)

Saturday, April 27, at 4 p.m. — Annual Meeting: Bateaux, barbecue and bands (call for reservations and prices)

The Brightwell's Mill Renovation Project

If you didn't make it to the program, here's what you missed!



Ricky Brightwell gave a media presentation on its history.



Pat Woody, from Woody Wood Chinking, tells about the renovations.



Quite a few artifacts, articles, and artwork pieces were exhibited.



Our Wish List update!

For the Hamble Center: We'll need a 10' x 12' storage building for storage of tables and chairs. The Building Committee is seeking volunteers to assist with maintenance.

For the research library: We need a September 20, 2012, issue of the *Amherst New Era-Progress*, also issues for November 12, 19, and 26 of 2009, December 24 and 31 of 2009, as well as issues between 1972 and 1982.

Welcome to our New Members!

Mary Clark, VA

Aubrey Lee, VA

Henry Q. Thompson, FL

Thank you!

Sponsors

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and Other Gifts

Hill Hardware

Memorials

In memoriam: Niles Gooding

Mary Landon Brugh, VA



At right, a coverlet that highlights a number of the mills of Amherst County.

Accidents & Arson in Amherst

The anecdotes that follow are mostly collected from newspaper accounts — the earlier notes can be found online in the American Memory database which can be found on the Library of Congress website. Later accounts were found in the Amherst New-Era Progress which is on microfilm in the Museum's research library. (This list is not comprehensive!)

February 23, 1883: I learn this morning [February 23, 1884] that an appeal has been granted in the case of J. W. O., who was tried in the county Court of Bedford at the last term upon the charge of instigating two small boys to set fire to the freight and passenger depot of the Richmond and Alleghany Railroad Company at Pedlar Mills, and, on conviction was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in the penitentiary. Counsel for the prisoner have had a detective employed on the case since J.W.O.'s conviction, and it is claimed that sufficient new evidence has been adduced to prove that J.W.O. had no part in the act of incendiarism. The appeal will be heard before Judge Wingfield March 1st. See *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, February 24, 1883.

November 2, 1883: The *Lynchburg Virginian* says: About 2 o'clock yesterday morning a frame outhouse, in Amherst, two miles from this city, was destroyed by fire. It was owned by Mr. Samuel Patterson, of this city, and is insured for a small amount. Reported in the *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, November 3, 1883.

March 31, 1885: The *Lynchburg Virginian* of yesterday says: The house of Mr. Stephens, an Englishman, about two miles from this city [Lynchburg], in Amherst county, was destroyed by fire Tuesday [March 31, 1885] about 1 o'clock with nearly all its contents; in insurance. The agent was on his way to effect an insurance, and when in sight of the house saw it in flames. His wife is afflicted with a cancer, and his son, who is ill with pneumonia, is not expected to live. *Richmond Dispatch*, April 2, 1885

May 28, 1885 *Richmond Dispatch*, W.H. Turner, about four miles south of Amherst courthouse lost his tobacco house and horse and cow in a fire some days ago. His tobacco had been sold but all else was lost.

December 24, 1886: (from [Richmond] *Daily Times*) Tuesday night [December 21] John L. Lee, a young lawyer at Amherst Courthouse, was startled by loud shrieks, apparently from the courthouse lawn. Supposing them to come from some drunken parties, he did not go immediately to look after the matter. The cries continuing and increasing, he rushed out in his shirt sleeves and pro-

ceeded to the jail, where the noise came from, and found one of the cells on fire and three prisoners well nigh suffocated. Lee entered the cell with buckets of water, and with the assistance of E.S. Morrill, who had by this time arrived, extinguished the flames. It seems there was a lunatic confined in the cell, who was so dangerous that he was chained to the floor, and two boys had been confined in the same cell with him. After the boys had extinguished the lamp for the night, the insane prisoner managed to break a good-sized iron chain with which he was fastened, and turned over the stove with its red hot contents on the floor, set fire to the straw mattresses, and got the whole cell in flames. He then, with the stovepipe and such other weapons as were at hand, made an attack on the boys, whom he injured considerably. The boys defended themselves as best they could, and finally one of them got a stick of firewood and with a well-directed blow knocked the lunatic down. Mr. Lee arrived in time to save all three from being burned to death.

October 9, 1891, report from Amherst as published in the *Richmond Times* on October 10, 1891: Mr. E.D. Major, a merchant on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad in this county, had his storehouse and contents burned Saturday [October 5] night. The origin of the fire is unknown. The stock was estimated at \$1,500, with \$1,000 insurance.

January 18, 1900: The plant of the Amherst New Era and building, at Amherst Courthouse, were destroyed by fire yesterday. The owner, Judge C.J. Campbell, places his loss at \$3,000. There was no insurance. Reported by the *Alexandria Gazette*, *January 19, 1900*. Also see *Fredericksburg Free Lance*, *January 20, 1900 issue*.

January 27, 1900: From a Lynchburg, January 29 report published in the *Richmond Times* on January 30, 1900: Information comes from Lowesville, Amherst county, of the destruction by fire on Saturday night of a valuable barn on the farm of Gordon B. Woodson, resulting in the horrible death of a man, whose remains were discovered in the ruins. The man was under the influence of liquor, and several of his friends had placed him in the barn on a bed of shucks to sober off. Being a constant smoker, it is supposed that he awoke in the night, and, striking a match to light

his pipe, set fire to the chucks.

April 3, 1903: [The fire was April 3, in the early morning hours—see second article.] An Incendiary Fire. Fire at Amherst Court House today destroyed the drug store of S.A. Day, who has figured so prominently in the courts of the State for alleged sale of liquor in violation of the law. The storage warehouse of A.C. Harrison was also destroyed. The fire was of incendiary origin. Reported by the *Alexandria Gazette*, April 3, 1903. See also more details in the *Lexington Gazette*, April 8, 1903. On Friday morning at 2:30 o'clock, the drug store of S.A. Day and the lumber house of Mr. A.D. Harrison, at Amherst, together with their contents, were destroyed by fire. Mr. Day's drug store, furniture and fixtures were all entirely destroyed, and in Mr. Harrison's lumber house at the time of the fire were two McCormick binders, several buggies, as well as many other articles, which were all destroyed. Nothing was gotten out of either building. Both of these buildings were frame, and the flames raged furiously for a while, threatening the destruction of a large portion of the town. But for the calmness of the night and splendid work done by the bucket brigade, a considerable number of the best buildings in the town would now be lying in ruin. Nearly everybody in the village turned out both white and colored, and worked with all the energies of their being to prevent the spread of the angry flames. Mr. Day was insured in the Firemen's Insurance Company of Baltimore for \$1,750, \$500 of which was on the building and \$1,250 on stock. The owner says that he will lose \$1,000 over and above the amount of his insurance. There was no insurance on Mr. Harrison's building or its contents. There was a meeting of the citizens of Amherst in the courthouse Friday night, looking to and discussing the expediency of having the town of Amherst incorporated, and it was only a few hours after the crowd had retired to their homes when the alarm of fire was given.

October 4, 1904 Dispatch Colonel C. Burks Christian employed to defend N. Moore, charged with arson of home of Mr. J. J. W. Pinnell, 83 years old and deaf. He had been a veteran of the Mexican War. He was badly burned and almost died in the fire.

1907 December 5: Times Dispatch, Samuel, the four-year-old child of Mr. and Mrs. P.W. Mason, who live near Baldock's Mill, Amherst county, died this morning at 3 o'clock from burns received yesterday afternoon. The child and an elder sister were playing in the yard of the Mason home, and went into a summer kitchen, where a fire had been kindled in an old-fashioned fire-

place. In a few minutes the little boy ran screaming from the old house, and when his mother, who was sewing in the residence, looked up it was to see the little boy's clothing burning. She ran to his assistance, but before she could beat the burning clothing sufficiently to extinguish the fire the little fellow had been so badly burned that no hope was held out for his recovery. Mrs. Mason was badly burned on both of her hands in her efforts to rescue the child. It was said this afternoon by a gentleman living in that section of Amherst county that four years ago yesterday two children were burned in the same neighborhood by playing with fire. One of these was a child, who inhaled the flames and died within two days, but the other, a baby which was burned much worse on the body, recovered, and is living to-day.

March 22, 1942: The Amherst Fire Department was called out six times—one in the basement of Mrs. L.V. Parr where the telephone company was located and several grass and hay fires near the F.C. Steen farm near Sweet Briar College.

November 14, 1949: The Camden and Younger Store in Elon was destroyed by fire.

November 25, 1951: The Wade H. Wood Building, including the Western Auto, Wood's Grocery and a second floor dance hall, burned in one of the largest fires in downtown Amherst. (*Amherst New Era-Progress*).

March 17, 1961: Duckbill was struck by a disastrous fire that gutted the frame portion of the house and damaged the brick portion as well. (See the Madison Heights scrapbook.)

Thursday, March 8, 1962, Amherst New Era-Progress: Mountain View Damaged By Fire—Fire did extensive damage to the kitchen of Mountain View, historical home of Mrs. Sallie C. Whitehead and Mr. and Mrs. F.E. Hamilton, here Sunday night about 9 o'clock. Members of the Amherst Fire Department extinguished the flames after receiving a call from Mr. Hamilton who was in another part of the large house when the fire broke....

October 24, 1962: The Board of Supervisors voted to give the 75 foot lot from the old Allen property for a proposed two story building for fire fighting equipment.

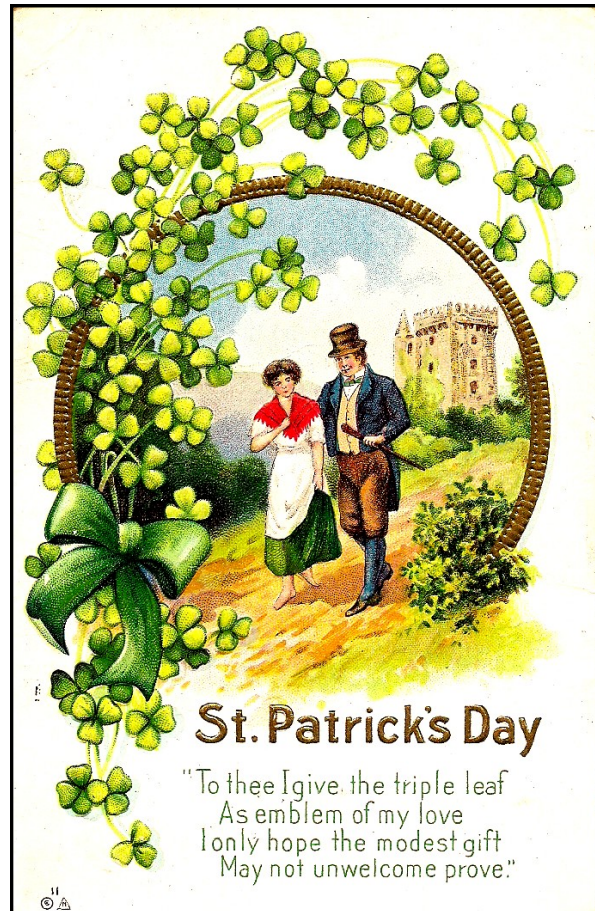
February 15, 1963: Haywood Plantation, historic home in Pedlar Mills, burns down; Mr. and Mrs. Pleasants (Bud and Mary) die in the fire.

Goings-On in the Research Room

There is always something happening on the research front, and our volunteers are making even more and more happen!

In December, Shaneika Goins worked on the newspaper index for the Amherst New-Era Progress. We now have it web-ready through December of 1944. Initially, this project started out to gather obituary information, but it was quickly realized that so much more information could be gained by widening it to other local topics. Check it out on our website! Click on the "Library" and find "Newspapers." This document is eighty-four pages, and will grow even more as work continues.

Mary Clark is a retired programmer and has taken to cataloging like a duck to water! While the updated inventory page of the research library's books is an ongoing progress, you may find it fun to search for our books, and browse through the catalog at Library-Thing which can also be reached from our website. Be careful when searching as there are two search features—one says "Search this site" and the other says "Search your library." Using the second one allows you to search the Amherst County Museum's research library. This can be more fun and allows you to see the covers of the books we have.



Above, a St. Patrick's Day Greeting postmarked 1912, to Mrs. Frank (Betty) Fletcher, of Madison Heights.



New in the Museum's Gift Shop!

SUNDAY DRIVES

\$20 plus \$4 p&h (Va residents add \$1 tax)



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
Donor	\$50 to \$99
Patron	\$100 to \$499
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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 _____
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Coming Events

We will be having both a house tour and a driving tour (tour #3 from the book, *Sunday Drives*) later on this year—be sure to watch your newsletter and the website for more information as these events are planned. You won't want to miss them!

As we get more finishing touches added to the Hamble Center, we'll be able to do even more programs on site. More tables, chairs and serving ware in the kitchen have already made a big difference. As we expand our parking space we will be able to accommodate even more events. We have great plans for this place and you can help us make a difference!

We have a great need for volunteers to assist with planning and coordinating children's events. Bringing up a new generation of Museum supporters is critical to the Museum's future. If you know of some people who would like to help with this, please let us know!

March 26, 1884: [Lynchburg] The river at this point is higher than it has been at any time during the present season, being nearly thirteen feet above low-water mark.... The Richmond and Alleghany railroad track from Tenth street to the aqueduct is submerged, rendering the passage of trains impossible... Strange's mill-dam, in Amherst county, has been carried away, See Richmond *Daily Dispatch*, March 27, 1884.



The Museum can benefit from your online shopping without costing you anything! Start your shopping at www.shopformuseums.com and select *Amherst County Museum & Historical Society* to benefit. **Registration is free.** (Please note that there is a listing for "Amherst Museum" in New York; This is not the same organization as the Amherst County Museum.)

Donate



For those who are accustomed to managing finances online, the Museum now offers the opportunity to make donations online. Just click on the button on the Museum's homepage!

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