

# The Muse

## Amherst County Museum & Historical Society

staff@amherstcountymuseum.org

www.amherstcountymuseum.org

(434) 946-9068

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

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### *ANNUAL YARD SALE*

Saturday, June 5

7:00 til noon at Museum Annex behind the Museum

We need **your** help to make our Yard Sale the best ever!! Bring household items, decorative pieces, artwork, plants, yard equipment, toys, linens, books, etc.; no clothes, please. The Museum is open Tuesday through Saturday 10:00 to noon, and 1:00 to 5:00, and you may bring your items any day before the sale.

If you can't participate or do not live in the area, we welcome **cash** donations. Our Museum has felt the effects of the recession as has everyone, and we must maintain our buildings and grounds and buy material and equipment to operate.

You can help so much by supporting this Fundraising Campaign. For further information, call Kathryn Pixley 929-1232. Helpers are welcome!

### *REMEMBERING AMHERST STORIES ON THE PORCH*

Saturday, May 22 at 10:00 a.m.

Bring a chair and enjoy tales about Amherst by long-time residents and local historians. You can join in and tell your story too. Very informal and fun!

We had a wonderful program in February when snow was on the ground, and everyone thought another session would be great to keep celebrating Amherst's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

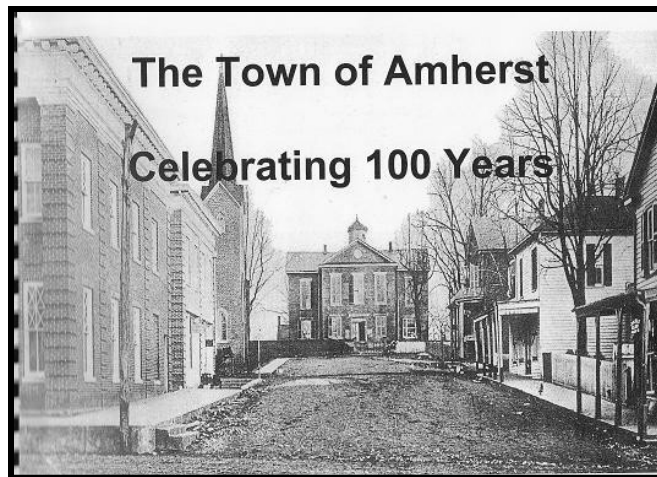
We also have new outdoor signs which will be unveiled that day.

In case of bad weather, come to the Annex in back.

Some of the featured storytellers will include Leah Settle Gibbs, Helen Massie, Will Mays, Jimmy Settle, Ben Smith and Paul Wailes.

### *Everyone Is Talking About Our Newest Publication!*

This book has many pictures and history at the affordable price of \$18 and was released in April for the town's centennial. If you haven't gotten your copy yet be sure to do so soon. The limited



*The Museum's NEW BOOK about the first  
hundred years of the town of Amherst!*

first printing is quickly selling out. Call the Museum at 946-9068, or mail your order to the Museum's giftshop (the order form can be found at: [www.amherstcountymuseum.org/giftshop.html](http://www.amherstcountymuseum.org/giftshop.html)).

These are also available at The Hair Gallery, Central Virginia Printing and Hill House.

## ***New in the Library***

- *The Town of Amherst: Celebrating 100 Years*, compiled by Lee Wilkins and Mary Frances Olinger, published by Amherst County Museum & Historical Society, 2010.

- *A is for the Town of Amherst*, with verse by Susanne Bunch and illustrated by the students of Central Elementary School, Amherst, Virginia, 2010.

## ***In the Galleries***

The Massie Gallery exhibit is the best way to get a quick overview of the history of Amherst County from its earliest settlement into the twentieth century. If you haven't seen Edwin's wooden leg then you must come by and check it out!

The Whitehead Gallery is the ever-popular interactive room that provides opportunities for voting practice, a push-button map, adventures in dressing in nineteenth century styles and railroad engineering.

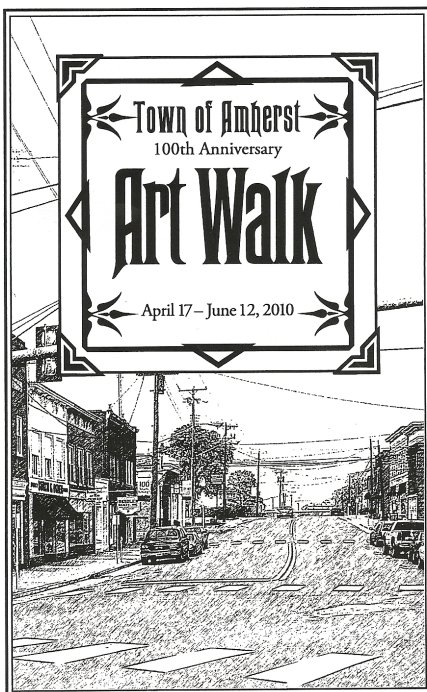
The Singleton-Zinsser Gallery is currently exhibiting artifacts and memorabilia of the Town of Amherst from firefighting gear to town police badges.

## ***Thank You!***

Many, many thanks to all of you who helped us with our annual spring tour! This year the town of Amherst was featured in the *Town and House Tour 2010*, including eight sites—private homes, a business and four churches. Thank you to these home and business owners—Dr. and Mrs. Duncan Augustine, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Hobbs, Mr. Marvin Cash and Mr. William Baker, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Wydner, and the congregations of Amherst Presbyterian, Ascension, Morning Star and Mount Olive churches. Special thanks go to Frances Butler, without whom this tour could not have happened. House captains played an important part in helping to bring this all together, and of course, the many docents at each site who made each visitor feel welcome. Thank you one and all!

## ***SCAVENGER HUNT***

Plans are underway for a *Scavenger Hunt* for children during the summer. This can be a fun way to learn more of Amherst's history.



## ***The Town of Amherst 100th Anniversary Art Walk April 17 — June 12, 2010 Nancy McDearmon, Curator***

The Amherst County Museum is pleased to partner with the local artists to bring to you a delightful opportunity of art gazing. Businesses and organizations all along South Main Street are exhibiting painting and photographic work of people and places in and around the Town of Amherst.

Pieces exhibited at the Museum are Anne Hanger's *Amherst School Days* and *Meeks Family I*, Bill England's *Flat Woods*, Nancy McDearmon's *Ice House: Amherst Mill*, Rosalie Day White's *Amherst Cemetery* and *Smokey Hollow Road*, Charlene Ryan's *Amherst Museum Garden* and Angela Bennett's *Screaming Statue* (SBC) and *Rod and Tackle, Izaak Walton Park*. The guide for this art tour is available at all participating businesses and also on the Museum's website.

## *The Museum Celebrated the Town's 75th Anniversary in 1985*

*The following article is a reprint of the same article written by Mr. Thomas Mackie in the Muse in 1985 on the occasion of the Town of Amherst's 75th anniversary. Former Museum Director Thomas Mackie had just arrived in Amherst to become the new director for the Museum. Today Mr. Mackie is Director of the Museum at Lincoln Memorial University, Tennessee, and he still enjoys the history of this lovely place.*

The small village of Amherst Court House became an incorporated town on April 15, 1910. Since the county first moved the courthouse to its present location in 1808, what was this settlement like during the 102-year span that lay between?

Although the idea of an unincorporated county seat may seem strange to us today, this was apparently not the case in the early days of Amherst County. The earlier courthouse at Cabellsville, in what is now Nelson County, was for years surrounded by orchards. It only very slowly came to be supported by taverns, stores and churches. The small roadside oasis known as Five Oaks was large by comparison when it was chosen as the site for the new county seat. By 1807, Five Oaks had two taverns with stables and other outbuildings. There were also several large homes nearby, including the Edgewood estate which is still occupied today.

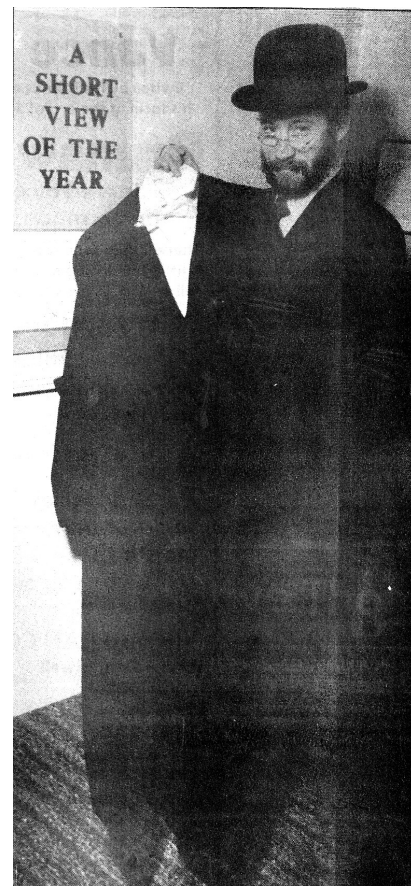
Five Oaks was chosen to be the county seat because of its central location along the important Lynchburg-Charlottesville Road. As with numerous other Virginia county seats, the justices (counterparts of our present Board of Supervisors) were required to make the courthouse accessible to even the most remote citizens of the county. The most important characteristic of a county seat was a central location.

After selecting Five Oaks for the new county seat, the justices purchased land from the Colemans, one of the three major land-holding families in the settlement. The cost for the original two acres on the "east side of the Lynchburg-Charlottesville Road" was ten shillings. Soon after the purchase, the Five Oaks community came to be known as "Amherst Court House."

The original courthouse structure was a two-story timber frame building located at the eastern end of the present green and facing the present day Second Street. In keeping with tradition, the other offices were housed in separate buildings around the green. While the courthouse complex was developing, the community of Amherst was growing with other businesses to support the needs of the county seat.

A peaceful picture? The life in the village was not always as quiet as may be assumed. It was during these years that the county endured occupation by federal troops after the Civil War. The county seat would certainly have been the center of operation for them. In fact, some oral records tell of the court-house green being used as a campground for Union soldiers.

Other records recall later 19<sup>th</sup> century life in Amherst. Numerous older residents remember hearing about such things as County Fairs and horse trading behind the present day jail house. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of color and growth for a crossroads hamlet turning into a proud, incorporated town.



Former Amherst County Historical Museum Director Tom Mackie donned a bowler and displayed a man's suit from the museum exhibit, *The Town of Amherst in 1910*.

***ACHS-CVCC Students' Projects Find Their Way to the Museum!***

The Amherst County High School Early College American History students at CVCC have contributed to the Museum in a variety of ways this year. Some of the students decided to opt out of the traditional research paper in favor of something a little bit different. Here's just a few samples:

Coffey	Reuben	O
Coffey	James	O
Coffey	Schyler	R
Coffey	Peter	O
Coleman	William	R
Coleman	Rufus	O
Coleman	Mahala	R
Coleman	Lindsey	O
Cooper	Alfred	O
Crawford	William	O
Crawford	Gabriel	R
Cunningham	John R	O
Cunningham	Joseph	O
Curry	Daniel	O
Davis	Benjamin	R
Davis	Edward P	R
Decker	William	O
Dodd	George W	O
Eubank	James	O
Eubank	Richard	O

The 1880 Agricultural Census is a project that is a combination of traditional and student volunteer work. The above table shows a part of the index, indicating whether a farmer owns, rents or sharecrops. The microfilm can then be used to provide many details about the farm: acreage, how much is improved or unimproved, the value of the farm machinery, how much cattle and other livestock, how many were born or died, how much grain is grown, dairy production and how much land is invested in orchards and vineyards. Thanks to Brittany Coleman for assistance on this project.

Two of the students have created posters—Carter Davis chose the World War II figure of *Rosie the Riveter* for her poster, and Shelby Bowling has made one featuring highlights of the history of Amherst County. Both posters are in the interactive gallery.

**Amherst Circuit Court**, 1/14/1960, recorded 253,000 dollars of realty transfers

**Amherst County School Board**, 1/7/1960, new Pedlar district representative, Presley Thornton attends his first school board meeting

**Amherst County School Board**, 1/7/1960, School board favors sales taxes with proceeds going to education

**Amherst Publishing Company Inc.**, 1/14/1960, moved to Main Street in Amherst

**Amherst Rotary Club**, 1/14/1960, voted in favor of increasing salaries of public school teachers in Amherst County

**Bryant**, Reuben W., 1/7/1960, serving aboard the aircraft carrier USS Essex

**Campbell**, Rev. Eugene C., 1/14/1960, assumed duties as pastor of Elon Baptist Church on Jan. 1st

**Cash**, Lorrie Ellen, 1/7/1960, born on New Year's Day by parents: Mr. and Mrs. Robert Lee Cash

**Jobe**, Kenneth Wayne, 1/14/1960, seventh grader at Amherst Elementary was appointed page in the senate of the General Assembly

**Junior Women's Club**, 1/7/1960, decided to support proposed salary increase for teachers

**Madison Heights Post Office**, 1/21/1960, asking for bids to build new building for post office

**Sweet Briar College**, 1/14/1960, was granted more than 100,000 dollars in funding

**Teenage Theft Ring in Amherst**, 1/21/1960, charged for breaking and entering in Amherst and surrounding counties

**Wood**, Wade H., 1/21/1960, started local grocery business on only 50 cents

Above you can see selected entries from the index to the *Amherst New Era-Progress*, Taylor Johnson and Michelle Carwile reviewed microfilm from 1960 and put the information into a spreadsheet. The newspaper indexing project is a continuing project and volunteers who can read microfilm and/or enter data are always welcome on this project.

**Coming Event:  
Centennial Parade and Street Fair  
Downtown Amherst**

Saturday, June 12 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Featuring display tables and booths, food, live music, clowns and free balloons

Sale of Town Centennial shirts and caps

Sale of the County Museum's new book:  
***The Town of Amherst: Celebrating 100 Years***

2010 ArtMeters Unveiling 11 a.m.  
at the Town MiniPark

Centennial Parade at 2 p.m.  
Featuring the ACHS band, vintage vehicles and floats, and marching units.

Bring a lawn chair and help us celebrate!

For more information see  
[www.amherstva.gov](http://www.amherstva.gov) or call Town Hall at 946-7885

***The Museum Gardens are Beautiful***

Visitors to the Museum are always asking about our lovely gardens. Thanks to the Village Garden Club, the Museum has one of the most beautiful flower gardens in town. This is what makes it such a pleasure to make our facilities available to the Village Garden Club for their annual GardenFest. We understand that everyone enjoyed this year's event.

The Federation of Genealogical Societies launches a national fundraiser, **Preserve the Pensions!** to digitize the War of 1812 Pension Files.

With the approaching bicentennial of the War of 1812, the Federation of Genealogical Societies, a non-profit genealogical organization headquartered in Austin, Texas, is pleased to announce a national fundraising initiative to raise \$3.7 million to digitize of the War of 1812 pension files. The digitization process will enable online access by historians and family researchers to the memories and biographies of those who fought to protect our nation's independence.  
[www.fgs.org/1812](http://www.fgs.org/1812)



The Perfect Gift!  
**The Town of Amherst: Celebrating 100 Years**  
Published by the Amherst County Museum and Historical Society  
Available now in our 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.

Membership Category	
Regular (Individual)	\$15.00 _____
Regular (Household)	\$20.00 _____
Senior 55+ (Individual)	\$10.00 _____
Senior (Household)	\$15.00 _____
Student	\$5.00 _____
Business	\$100.00 _____

**Special Contributions** Friend \$25 to \$50

- Donor \$50 to \$100
- Patron \$100 to \$500
- Sponsor \$500 to 1000
- Benefactor \$1000 and up

**Categories for Donations**

- Operating Fund \_\_\_\_\_
- Endowment Fund \_\_\_\_\_
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- Library & Genealogy Resources \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

## *In Amherst County*

**Saturday, May 22**, at 10 a.m. Amherst Stories from the Front Porch.

**Saturday, June 5**, from 7 a.m. to noon. Amherst County Museum's Annual Yard Sale.

**Saturday, June 12**, starting at 10 a.m. Centennial Street Fair. Come by for lemonade and cookies and watch the Town Centennial Parade from our front lawn.

**Through Saturday, June 12.** *The Town of Amherst 100th Anniversary Art Walk*, Nancy McDearmon, Curator. See this exhibit at the Museum and various business locations on Main Street in the Town of Amherst.

**Friday, May 21**—Sunday, May 23. Highlights from the Permanent Collection: Alumnae Reunion Art Exhibition 2010. This exhibit features works selected from Sweet Briar Museum's permanent collection. Open noon to 5 p.m. on Friday and Saturday; and from 9 a.m. to noon on Sunday. Pannell Gallery at Sweet Briar College; see calendar at [www.sbc.edu](http://www.sbc.edu).

## *Events Elsewhere*

**Friday, May 21**—**Saturday, May 22**, at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources in Richmond. Workshop on historic cemeteries, discussing topics of funerary symbolism and appropriate care and maintenance of grave markers, monuments and graveyards. Limited number of spaces available. For more information see [www.dhr.virginia.gov](http://www.dhr.virginia.gov) under *Recent News* or contact Dee DeRoche at DHR, (804) 367-2323 ext. 134.

**Wednesday, May 19**, at 5 p.m. *The History of Hospitals in Lynchburg, Virginia* a lecture by George Dawson and Dr. Peter Houck. Jones Memorial Library. For information call 846-0501.

**Sunday, June 13**, from noon until 5 p.m. Blue Ridge Parkway 75th Anniversary event at Skylark, MP 25, 24981 Blue Ridge Parkway, Nelson County. For details see [www.rockfishvalley.org/blog/](http://www.rockfishvalley.org/blog/)

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**Amherst County Museum & Historical Society**

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