

# The Muse

## Amherst County Museum & Historical Society

achmuseum@aol.com

www.amherstcountymuseum.org

(434) 946-9068

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



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It's autumn in Amherst, and the museum has a full slate of programs and fundraisers! Be sure to read through this whole newsletter so you don't miss the upcoming van tour in Coffeytown, the Election Day Cake Event, and our Celebration of the Apple of Amherst's Eye. On Saturday, November 21, Tom Burford will tell us about Amherst County's apple history (for a preview see his article inside this issue) and you'll have the opportunity to sample different apples.

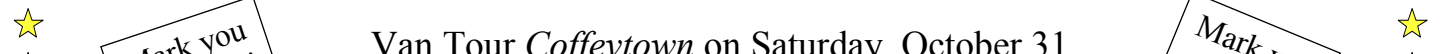







Jessica Boone spent much of her summer here processing the Cash collection of glass plate negatives from 1905-1915 and this fall we have a Sweet Briar student, Jordan McIntire, who has started organizing the museum's collection of slides. The assistance of these students has made it possible to provide more assistance to those seeking images of Amherst County's history. If you know of a student trying to find an outlet for his or her talents, the museum has a number of such projects from which to choose.

Finally, as we approach the holiday season, remember the many ways you can support it while doing your usual holiday shopping, whether buying groceries for the holiday meals, books for grandchildren, buying Christmas presents online, giving a **gift membership** to a friend or buying something from our gift shop! Page 5 has details. Enjoy the season!  
—Holly Mills, Director

  
**VAN TOUR**  
Your County Van Tour on October 31 will visit sites out Rt. 60 west. We plan to visit the remnants of a CCC Camp at Oronoco, Macedonia Church in Coffeytown, and Mt. Hebron Church. Bring your lunch to enjoy at Emmanuel Baptist Church. We will view Sandidge's Mill, Thrasher's Lake, and Mill Creek Lake as time permits. The leaves should be beautiful, and Halloween ghosts may be out!  
Call the Museum (946-9068) to reserve your space on the van. Meet at the County Administration Building at 9:00 a.m. We welcome donations to defray costs.  


**APPLE TREE PLANTING**  
Tom Burford, Amherst County's own apple expert and historian, has donated and will plant a historic apple tree at the Museum on Saturday, November 21. He will speak about apples at 1:30 p.m.; he will also have books for sale and take orders for apple trees. We will have apple pies for sale. Let's make it a great celebration! Mark your calendars now: November 21, 1:30 p.m.

  
**YOUR CHANCE TO SWEETEN THE POT**  
 On Election Day, November 3, a representative of your Museum will be present at your polling place asking for a donation of \$1.00 or more. At the end of the day some lucky person will receive a wonderful cake.  
 Please be generous and remember that every dollar you donate will be a vote for your Museum - a vital part of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.  


  
    
    
  
Van Tour *Coffeytown* on Saturday, October 31  
Election Day Cake Event on Tuesday, November 3  
A Celebration of Apples on Saturday, November 21

## Annual Meeting 2009

The distinguished guest for our annual meeting was Abigail Adams, portrayed by Abigail Schumann. Ms. Schumann is not only a noted historical interpreter but also a producer of many history programs in public broadcasting. At right, Ms. Schumann poses with host



Dr. Ed Hopkins and the American flag. At left, museum board member John Swift with his wife, Frances.



At right, board president Lee Wilkins, vice president Mary Frances Olinger and treasurer Martha Cox enjoy the buffet at Winton



At left, Will Mays demonstrates his renowned charm and Ms. Schumann responds with delight. Below, visitors examine the preview pictures from the Museum's

forthcoming book about the first hundred years of the town of Amherst.



## New in the Library

- *Monacan Indian Nation of Virginia: the drums of life*, by Rosemary Clark Whitlock, 2008, University of Alabama Press.
- *Bedford County (Images of America)*, by Ben Martin, 2008, Arcadia Publishing.
- *The Canal on the James*, by T. Gibson Hobbs, Jr., 2008, Blackwell Press. **Also available in our giftshop.**
- *A History of Clifford Baptist Church, 1909-2009*, by Sandi Esposito and the Church History Committee.

### *The Williams' of Locust Grove*

The June *Muse* article about the Pixleys brought memories to me of that house called Locust Grove, the home of my grandparents. I remember visiting there, playing croquet, making playhouses with tobacco sticks, and savoring good pies.

The house was presumably built about 1850 by James Beverly Lewis Williams, a Methodist minister, for his son, James Fennel Williams (1848-1915); James F. and his wife Josephine raised twelve children there. James Fennel served in the Civil War and was postmaster of Amherst for 35-40 years. The farm produced tobacco, wheat, and corn.

James B.L. Williams was the son of John Morgan Williams, a large landowner in the "Merry Acres" Madison Heights area around 1780.

—Marguerite Singleton

### *Kids' Corner*

Saturday, October 10 at 2 p.m. the museum will sponsor a program for children about historical methods of spinning and weaving cloth. If you've wondered about how to manage a distaff and spindle, this is the time to find out how it's done!

The November program will feature the nineteenth century story of several boys from Amherst County who decide to produce their own newspaper. Children will have an opportunity to try their own hand at several types of printing.

And don't forget Cookies and Cocoa in December!

## Amherst County's Heritage Apple

by Tom Burford



A full description of the apple from Burford's book *Apples: A Catalog of International Varieties, 1991* follows:

**RALLS** is frequently called Ralls Genet, Ralls Janet and Neverfail and is also known by dozens of other names as Rockremain, Rock Rimmon, and Winter Genneting. In Japan it is called Kokko and it migrated from Korea to China, where it is called Glory of the Fatherland. Efforts have been made to determine the relationship and interrelationship of the nurseryman M. Caleb Ralls, Thomas Jefferson and Edmond Genet, known as Citizen Genet and the French minister to the United States when Jefferson was secretary of state. Court documents do show that M. Caleb Ralls owned and lived on 624 acres on Tobacco Row Mountain in Amherst County, Virginia, in 1785. This property is only a few miles from Burford Brothers nursery and orchard and in the 18th century was the site of extensive apple and peach orchards. Jefferson's summer home, Poplar Forest, is just across the James River from the Ralls property and it is likely that the two would have been acquainted. Genet's role is unclear. Beach in *Apples of New York, 1905* wrote: "First known about this variety is that trees were growing on the farm of M. Caleb Ralls in Amherst County, Virginia, something over a hundred years ago (Before 1850)." In the 1920's Stark Brothers in Missouri sold the Ralls with the name Jeniton, as well as a Giant Jeniton. Until documentation can clarify the name, it is referred to as Ralls in all Burford Brothers literature. Medium in size and roundish oblate in shape, the greenish yellow skin is flushed, mottled and streaked various shades of pink, red and crimson over

Caleb Ralls was born in 1750 near Stafford, Virginia and moved to Amherst County as a young man and established a fruit tree nursery on Tobacco Row Mountain. His father, Edward Ralls, was also born near Stafford in 1720. Court records indicate that Caleb Ralls owned and lived on 624 acres on Tobacco Row Mountain in Amherst County, Virginia in 1785. He had a wife named Polly whom he married about 1773. The spelling of the name is sometimes Rawls.

Fruit tree nurseries were established in America for not only cider making and fresh fruit but to provide colonists with trees to establish claim to property through the homestead movement. There were two locally significant ones. The Lynchburg Nursery with a Quaker origin operated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but an Amherst County one pre-dates it. The Caleb Ralls Nursery that was in operation around 1778 near Horsley's Creek on the western slope of Tobacco Row propagated named varieties, and, from a seedling in that nursery, an apple variety appeared that has become internationally known in the apple world.

The Ralls apple was widely distributed in the early 1800's and was planted at Monticello by Jefferson and at Bremo by Cocke and even though there are no records, very likely at both Montpelier and Poplar Forest.

But its most famous role comes out of Japan. In the early 1960s the Japanese developed an apple breeding program and crossed the Ralls, which had been widely planted in both Japan and China, with the Red Delicious to produce the Fuji, now one of the major commercial apple varieties in the world. Every Fuji apple has genetic material from an apple that came from Amherst County, Virginia.



one half or more of the surface. Yellow or russet and white dots are conspicuous and scarfskin may be present on some fruit. Sometimes, the stalk is partly covered by a fleshy protuberance in the cavity, as it does in the Keswick Codling. Inside the basin around the stem is usually russeted. The yellowish flesh with a greenish tinge is dense, crisp and tender with a tart-sweet balance of flavor. When cut, the flesh exudes a sweet aroma. The moderately vigorous trees have an open framework with considerably twiggy growth that can be described as brushy which makes it difficult to prune and the oval medium green leaves are folded and reflexed and slightly waved with sharp, regular and prominent serrations. Seeds are brown, large and ovate and the stem is thick and can vary in length. Ralls will produce good fruit under a low spray program even with its slight susceptibility to scab and bitter rot. Blossom fireblight is its major disease problem, but even though it may be severe, the set and production is not affected. In thinning, consideration must be made that the "June drop" does not affect this variety. The tree seems to have high resistance to collar rot. Records of blooming dates kept from 1983 to 1994 by Burford Brothers show full bloom from May 4 to May 6. This very late flowering assures a crop set and accounts for its popular Central Virginia name of Neverfail. Ralls was one of a number of American seedling varieties imported by the Japanese to establish an apple-breeding program. From the cross of Ralls and Red Delicious has come Fuji, which is now a major commercial variety. Ralls is also widely grown in China, particularly in the northern provinces. It stores particularly well and ripens in Virginia the first week of October.



*About the author:*

**Tom Burford** is an orchard and nursery consultant, author and apple historian. He specializes in the restoration, re-creation and design at historic sites and private estates and consults with landscape architects and designers, commercial and backyard orchardists, as well as academic institutions.

Since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Burford family has been involved in Virginia agriculture, particularly the fruit industry. He is a native of Amherst County, Virginia and works out of Lynchburg and Charlottesville, Virginia.

His firm, Burford Brothers, produced and nationally marketed hundreds of heirloom and modern varieties of fruit trees for forty years. In 1997 the nursery operation was closed to devote full time to writing, consulting in the fruit industry and presenting lectures, workshops and seminars. The company was also involved with passive solar building construction, the design, manufacture and marketing of a solar domestic hot water system called Sunwater and the design and marketing of agriculture alternative energy products. A longtime advocate of sustainable agriculture and local and regional food production he supports the Slow Food and RAFT (Renewing America's Food Traditions) programs.

Burford is the author of *Apples: A Catalog of International Varieties*, an encyclopedic work on commercial and heirloom apple varieties that he grew and documented. He has written manuals on fruit tree propagation, orchard management, integrated pest management, orchard design and fruit tree renovation. As contributing editor, he wrote on fruits in *The Northeastern Garden Book* published by Sunset in February 2001 and in October 2001, his work, *Fruit Grafters Handbook*, a how-to work on grafting fruit trees, was published. Burford authored the apple entries for the Oxford University Press two volumes *Encyclopedia of American Food and Drink* released in September 2004 and wrote major entries and co-authored the 2005 Brooklyn Botanic Garden book *The Best Apples to Buy & Grow*.

Articles on his work have appeared in many national publications, including *US News & World Report*, *The American Gardener*, *House Beautiful*, *Town and Country*, *Southern Living*, *Garden Design Magazine*, *Kitchen Garden*, *Vegetarian Times* and *Gourmet* as well as newspapers worldwide, including a feature article on the Pippin apple in the *New York Times* in October 2004. Burford appeared twice on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* and Frank Browning in his book *Apples* described his life as a fruit explorer.

Burford conducts apple tastings, workshops and lectures at national historic sites and for private and public organizations. His 2008 apple tasting at Jefferson's Monticello was the eighteenth, the oldest formal apple tasting in America.

**Barnes & Noble  
BOOKFAIR**  
Supporting  
**Amherst County  
Museum**

**Saturday, December 12**

**Barnes & Noble**

**4024C Wards Rd, Lynchburg**

**Bookfair # 10046365**

Please present this voucher prior to making your purchase. A percentage of the net sale will be donated to your school/organization.\*

\*The purchase of gift cards, Barnes & Noble memberships, text books and magazine subscriptions are not included in bookfair totals. Our discount purchasing program may not be applied to bookfair purchases.



***Cookies and Cocoa Before the Parade!***

Get your hot cocoa and cookies here! The Town of Amherst will be having its annual Christmas Parade on Saturday, December 5, starting at 6:30 PM. The museum will be serving delicious hot cocoa and yummy cookies on the lawn outside the museum before and during the parade. The refreshments are free, but as always, donations are welcome. Children's activities and crafts will also be available inside the building before the parade. We hope to see you there!

***If you'd like to help out the Museum...***

And you can always "donate" to the Museum without spending an extra cent more than you usually would by shopping at **Food Lion** for your holiday treats (you can register your MVP card at [www.foodlion.com/Community-Connections/Lion-Shop-And-Share](http://www.foodlion.com/Community-Connections/Lion-Shop-And-Share)) and by starting your online shopping at Shop for Museums. (You can register at [www.shopformuseums.com](http://www.shopformuseums.com) and pick the Amherst County Museum & Historical Society as your selected museum. Please be aware that the Amherst Museum is in New York. We are the Amherst COUNTY Museum!) And don't forget the Book Fair on December 12! (at left)

Wanted: DVD player (preferably one that does not record)

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 \_\_\_\_\_
- Conservation Fund \_\_\_\_\_
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- Library & Genealogy Resources \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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**A membership is the perfect gift**



## *Happenings at the Museum*

**Saturday, October 10** at 2 p.m. Second Saturdays Children's program. History, crafts, activities and refreshments.

**Saturday, October 31** at 9 a.m. at County Administration building. *Fall Van Tour*.

**Tuesday, November 3** at the polls. *Election Day Cake Event*.

**Saturday, November 14** at 2 p.m. Second Saturdays Children's program. History, crafts, activities and refreshments.

**Saturday, November 21 at 1: 30** *A Celebration of the Amherst County Ralls Genet Apple*.

Plan ahead to shop at Barnes and Noble on **Saturday, December 12**. Watch for more details on how this can benefit the Amherst County Museum!

## *Happenings Elsewhere*

**Saturday, October 10, 2009** Virginia Genealogical Society Fall Conference. *Oh Shenandoah! Migration and Settlements Across the Valley*. Winchester Medical Center, Conference Center, 1840 Amherst Street, Winchester, Virginia.

**Wednesday, October 21,** at 5:30 p.m. Jones Memorial Library *Jefferson Davis and the end of the Civil War, lecture* by Dean Knight, Supervisor of White House Operations, Museum of the Confederacy

**Wednesday, November 18,** at 5:30 p.m. Jones Memorial Library *A Creative Dynasty of Virginia Women*, lecture by Andrew Gladwell, Exhibition Designer, Virginia Historical Society

**Saturday, November 21** *Inaugural Thomas Jefferson Wine Festival* Tickets: \$15.00 in advance, \$20.00 at the door. Visitors can purchase tickets at [www.poplarforest.org](http://www.poplarforest.org) or call the Poplar Forest Museum Shop at (434) 534-8120

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**Amherst County Museum & Historical Society**

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