

King William County Historical Society Newsletter

March 2013

From Our President

The Jail project is now complete and we have for our use an office, library/artifact room and a meeting room, as well as three bathrooms. The total cost was about \$52,000.00. The meeting room and bathrooms are available for general use. The key can be obtained from the County Administrator's office or the Society.

We had about \$4,000.00 in donations/grants left, which will be used to repair and paint the outside of the Historic Court House. It is our plan to start this work this spring. Once this work is done we will finally have a Court House complex we all can be proud of.

Your donations have made this possible. I hope you will be able to join us for our April meeting.

Carl Fischer



Carl Fischer greeting visitors in the newly renovated Jail.

KWHS Membership Meeting January 20, 2013

The King William County Historical Society met on January 20, 2013 at the County Administration Building in the Supervisors Room at 3:00 p.m. following an Open House of the newly restored "Old Jail." Visitors were amazed at the renovation and transformation of the Court House complex.

The light refreshments were delicious and much appreciated.

Following a brief business meeting led by Carl Fischer, President of the KWCHS, Mr. Mike Whitt spoke. He is employed by the Virginia Baptist Historical Society and has been studying old church records and histories of the Baptist churches in the state including the records of Beulah Baptist Church and Colosse Baptist Church here in King William County.

He was able to share some interesting and humorous facts that he has gleaned from those records. Those facts, when read along with the history of the area at that same time, fill in some holes and add personal insight, making history come alive. Members thoroughly enjoyed the program and at the conclusion of the program Mr. Whitt invited members to peruse the documents, records and local histories he had brought with him.

Adele Smith

Old St. John's Celebration

The Saint John's Church Restoration Association will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the completion of restoration of the 1734 St. John's Church on Saturday, April 27, 2013. The event will be held from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and will include a tour and history of the church followed by a lecture by Carl Lounsbury, Senior Architectural Historian, Colonial Williamsburg as well as an organ concert. There will also be a program on flower arranging and an actor portraying 18th Century Dr. John Clayton.

The Association hopes you can attend. No reservations are necessary. The church is 9 miles West of West Point on Route 30. For additional information contact the Association's President, Carl R. Fischer, telephone 804- 843-9194.

Annual Membership Dues

We are approaching the end of our fiscal year (June 30) and we still have a significant number of members who have not paid their 2012 dues. As we have stated before, we are critically dependent on our members support for our ongoing expenses and projects in order to carry out our mission. Our organization by-laws state that "All memberships, except life memberships, shall EXPIRE ONE YEAR after the payment of annual dues."

Of course, we do not want to lose any of our members, so if you have not done so, please send in your dues payments as soon as possible.

Regards,
Ron Parker, Treasurer

The dues for annual memberships are:

Individual..... \$20 Family \$30

Student \$10

Lifetime memberships are:

Single Lifetime... .. \$250

Lifetime Couple.... \$300

Mail to: King William Historical Society

PO Box 233

King William, Va. 23086

Museum News

Exciting things are happening at the museum!

Wanted!

Live Volunteers!

To do any of the following: Tour Guide and Hosting, Data Research and Entry, and Exhibit Planning and Care, call 804-769-9619 to volunteer.

Museum Opening with new exhibits

The museum is now open Saturdays and Sundays from 1:00 - 5:00 p.m., and by appointment, by calling 804-769-9619. (We check messages a couple of times during the week, as we are usually at the courthouse doing research and working on projects throughout the week.)

"The Year of the Woman" Celebration

This year the Museum will be celebrating "The Year of the Woman." The project came about as a result of a gift that was given to the museum by Miss Mary Neale Garrett of Arlington, Virginia. She sent a dress box marked "Slaughter Bride 1824." Within the box was a full length white dress of the Empire style typical of dresses worn by Napoleon's Empress Josephine of France. The dress is completely hand sewn, made of a gauze-like fabric often referred to as "lawn". It has puffed satin roping looped around the hem. Organdy ribbon edged in satin is fashioned into puffed bows and leaves to trim the capped sleeves. This past winter the dress and slippers, as well as an 1807 sampler, were taken to Winterthur Museum to be evaluated. They were found to be true to the time in every way.

In researching the owner of the dress it was obvious that very little information is available about women of that era. Any information that was found was almost always given in the context of a male relation. Because of this, the museum council decided that the exhibit for March would be entitled "IN THE SHADOWS: WHO IS THAT LADY?" Everyone is invited to explore the lady who owned the dress, (without revealing her identity) and what was going on in her world during her lifetime.

In APRIL the museum exhibit will add a second dimension, "IN THE SHADOWS: SHE SMOKES A CORNCOB PIPE?!" At this point the museum will be displaying information and artifacts (in a timeline format) that addresses local women and the social mores that have evolved over time. The corncob

pipe title was chosen because of one contribution that was received a couple of years ago. The only data submitted with a picture of an African American was her name, dates of birth and death, that she was born into slavery and who she worked for and the statement "**she smoked a corncob pipe.**" Her life had to have amounted to more than those few words.

In May, "IN THE SHADOWS: SHE PLAYS WITH AIRPLANES" will be the display. We are fortunate to have on loan a collection of "playthings" from a WWII WASP. This display takes us into the modern era.

On JUNE 1, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. we will have a luncheon and fashion show: "OUT OF THE SHADOWS, INTO THE LIGHT!" The fashion show is courtesy of Tiffany's Bridal and the Groom's Corner of Richmond. It will be on the courthouse green (unless the weather chases inside). Tickets are available by calling 804-769-9619, from a King William County Historical Society member, or a King William Historical Museum Council Member.

A special treat will be a display of dresses worn by King William's women throughout the ages. At the end of the fashion show, we will unveil the MYSTERIOUS LADY who inspired our year. Your \$25.00 ticket will provide you with a catered lunch, a fashion show, and a sneak peak of six historic dresses within the Museum, as well as a tour of the entire facility. Please place your ticket order prior to May 24th. Requests after that date will be \$30.00.

The WASP collection (which was opened in May) will be showcased until after our final show of the season. A two-day exhibit will be presented by a group of Modern Warfare aficionados that calls itself "Tools of Freedom." The group will show artifacts from WWI through the Vietnam Conflict. The exhibit will be open for visitors on the courthouse grounds on Saturday, November 9, 10:00a.m. until 7:00 p.m. and on Sunday, November 10, from 12:00 noon until 5:00p.m.

Rebecca Townsend

King & Queen County Historical Society

Michael Hild will be the guest speaker for the April 28, 2012 second quarter Historical Society Meeting. This event will be at Shackelford's Chapel United Methodist Church at Plainview in King and Queen County, Buena Vista Road below Route 33, at 3:00 p.m. Michael Hild is the chief executive at Live Well Financial. Live Well Financial is "what Michael does for money" and "what he does for his soul is Anderson's Neck Oyster Company". Michael will share his intriguing story at the meeting.

Arrangements are being made for a oyster shucking event after Michael finishes his presentation. This is in addition to the normal treats offered after every quarterly meeting.

Old Jail Ready to Debut New Look

The following article was written for the Tidewater Review by Frances Hubbard. Ms. Hubbard and the Tidewater Review have graciously allowed us to reprint the article that appeared in the January 16 2013 edition of their paper. We thank them for their support, and generosity of sharing this article with our newsletter. Photographs have been provided by Gene Campbell

Over the years the King William Historical Society has proven that the historic courthouse complex is a useful commodity to the county one historic property at a time.

Projects have included restoring the historic courthouse wall, establishing the King William County museum, and ensuring that the historic courthouse holds its title as the oldest courthouse in continuous use in the nation.

Now, in an effort to bring the entire courthouse complex back into use, renovations are complete on King William's historic jail and the building is ready to make its debut.

On Sunday, January 20th, 2013, the historical society offered tours of the newly renovated building prior to and following its quarterly meeting.



The old jail has been steadily deteriorating since it was abandoned for use by the county government in 1947. The historical society fought for years to repair the old jail's roof, and its repair became even more of a priority after the new courts facility was dedicated in 2004.

In order for King William to keep its designation as the oldest courthouse in continuous use in the country, Judge Thomas Hoover has to hold court in the historic building a few times a year. Damage to the old jail building made it dangerous to use during these cases, and threatened the continued use of the historic courthouse because of the safety issues.

It became clear that renovations to the building would be the best way to solve those issues. The judges would have a new jury room and the historical society would be able to use the building. In July of 2011, the Board of Supervisors approved repairs to the roof, which were completed in October of that year. In May of 2012, the board passed a resolution approving the lease of the old jail to the King William Historical Society (KWHS).

The lease was an extension of the KWHS's lease of the old clerk's office, which houses King William's museum, and

allowed the KWHS to renovate the building, creating an office, library, meeting room, bathrooms, and storage space. According to historical society president Carl Fischer, who became somewhat of a contractor on the renovations, the project cost about \$52,000 to complete.

"Carl deserves a lot of credit for taking charge and seeing this project through," said Gene Campbell, KWHS member. "The King William Historical Society and community as well are fortunate to have someone like Carl with his skills and leadership abilities."

The jail building, as it stands today, was built in 1885 after fire destroyed 95 percent of the county's court records and left the King William clerk's office in shambles early in the year. With an insurance policy of \$1,200 the county was able to build a new clerk's office and a new jail.

According to the KWHS, the new clerk's office was built over the county's "old" jail, which had become insecure, and the "new" jail was built where the clerk's office once stood. Today, both buildings still stand surrounded by the historic courthouse wall constructed in 1840 joined by King William's original courthouse building.

The jail building was abandoned for use by the county government in 1947.

Tours of the newly renovated jail building and the county museum will be available on weekends from March through October.