

King William County Historical Society Newsletter

April 2014

From Our President

Please note that our spring meeting will be two weeks later than usual because of Easter. We will meet on Sunday, May 4 at the Christadelphian Church in King William. (A meeting notice will be sent to you.) The reason we are meeting there is because the KWCHS has been asked if it would be willing to accept title to the property. Details regarding this matter will be discussed at our meeting and we plan to vote at that time.



When the KWCHS bylaws were rewritten about five years ago, a provision was added that stated the officers (with the exception of the Treasurer) could only serve two consecutive two year terms. Thus this summer we will be electing new officers and a member-at-large. Members of the Nominating Committee are Herb White (Chair), Mollie Gregory and Emilie Townsend. If you would like to serve or recommend someone to serve, please contact one of them.

Carl R. Fischer
President

KWHS Membership Meeting January 19, 2014

The King William County Historical Society met at the Administrative Building at 2:30 on Jan. 19, 2014. Carl Fischer, President, conducted a brief business meeting and turned the floor over to Adele

Smith, Vice President, to introduce the guest speaker, Rev. Bill Palmer. Rev. Palmer, who was raised in New York City, has always had a keen interest in the history of the Civil War. Moving to West Point and learning of a Civil War battle near Eltham from a former parishioner only whetted his desire to research the May 7, 1862 battle and record his findings. He wrote *The Battle of Eltham's Landing*, which was published in 2012.

Rev. Powell gave a listing of his findings to a very enthusiastic gathering. Using a power point presentation, he showed where each army marched and camped, where gunshots were fired, and how the rivers played such an important part in the action. He ended his program by telling of the seventy dead Union and Confederate soldiers, where they were buried then and where some are buried today. After a question and answer period, the meeting was adjourned to refreshments in the lobby of the building.

Historic Garden Week Comes to King William County

On Friday, May 2, 2014 the Garden Club of the Middle Peninsula will open four houses in King William County this year for Historic Garden Week sponsored by the Garden Club of Virginia. The theme of the Middle Peninsula's tour is "Fox Trails of King William County." The Fox family was a prominent early settler of King William County whose influence later stretched from one tip of the county to the other. Henry Fox married Anne West, daughter of Colonel John West, who was the son of Gov. John West. They lived in Delaware Town which was later renamed West Point. Later Henry Fox's residence, *Huntington* (also called *Fox's*), was the original seat of the Fox family in King William county and was built on the road from *Chelsea* to *Fox's Ferry* on the Mattaponi River near Custis Mill Pond. The Hon. Henry Fox donated a house and land to be used as the original King William County courthouse. The present building built on that site is now the oldest courthouse in the United States still in continuous use. In 1780 Captain John Fox moved

from *Fox's Ferry* to *Retreat* in the upper part of the county and lived there until he built *Roseville* in 1807. He sold *Retreat* to his nephew, James Fox, who built the present house in 1808.

Four houses on the western end of the county will be open for touring – two historic homes, the early 1800s homes built by the Fox family, and two newer homes. Visitors will have access to outbuildings set up to represent their original functions at Roseville. Throughout the tour elegant rooms filled with fine antiques, art and decorative pieces will delight all who visit the homes. Gillette inspired gardens, stately old trees and boxwoods, and ponds punctuate the lawns of these homes. Highlights include collections of farming toys, woodcarvings and needlework.

On the day of the tour all tickets will be purchased at Hebron Baptist Church. Visitors will be able to inspect the bullet holes in the woodwork fired by stragglers from Grant's army on their way to Cold Harbor and an inscription left by one of these soldiers in the church Bible. There will also be period costumes, Civil War artifacts, and art from local artists for sale.

For further information and advanced tickets please contact Kelly Gwathmey, 6357 W. River Road, Aylett, VA, 23009, (804) 769- 2601

King William High School Ring Class Of 1942

Recently, the KWCHS was contacted by someone who had found a 1942 class ring. Although the initials were a little worn, members began trying to solve the mystery of who was the owner. Because there were no high yearbooks printed during the "war years," it seemed as though the answer would never come.

However, after contacting Mrs. Terry Bailey at the King William School Board office, the mystery was solved. Mrs. Bailey helped locate the handwritten records for the entire decade. There was, in fact, only one person graduating in the class of 1942 with those initials. Hopefully, the ring will soon be reunited with family members of the owner.

Audrey Mitchell

King William County Historical Society Regular Membership Meeting Minutes January 19, 2014

The regular membership meeting of the King William County Historical Society was called to order

by President Carl Fischer at 2:30 pm on January 19, 2014 at the King William Administration Offices, in King William County, Virginia.

Minutes of October 20, 2013: The minutes of the October 20, 2013 regular membership meeting were placed at the back of the room by Marie Jennings. It was agreed that instead of reading the minutes at every meeting that we would place at the back of the room during the meetings and also it would be published in the newsletter previous to the upcoming meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Ron Parker gave out the treasurer's report. He reported that the current balance as of January 19th was \$145,417.85. The account totals were as follows: Checking \$23,500.32, Museum Savings \$23,719.96, and the Wells Fargo Investment account was at \$98,197.57. It was noted that the Jail Restoration account was closed.

Courthouse Repairs – Have been completed.

Cost Share Program – Carl Fischer updated everyone on the progress of the cost share grant. One-third of the homes have been finished. The Society was working along with them on some properties that they were not able to identify. Some discussion on the research this firm is doing.

Museum Report – Rebecca Townsend reported on the upcoming Museum exhibit. The exhibit would be on Native Americans and Herb R. Collins, from Northern Virginia Community College would help in identifying the artifacts. Rebecca asked if anyone had suggestion for a name for the theme. The exhibit will open March 1st. Rebecca Townsend also asked for volunteers which are always in short supply. If you are interested she asked that they see her after the meeting.

Carl Fischer asked if anyone had anything more to add and with that the program was handed over to Adele Smith to introduce our special guest speaker, a local historian Bill Palmer, who presented an illustrated lecture on the Civil War battle of Eltham's Landing, also known as the Battle of West Point.

After hearing Mr. Palmer talk we were adjourned to the lobby where refreshments and copies of the book were available for purchase and signing.

Respectfully submitted
Marie W. Jennings, Recording Secretary