

King William County Historical Society Newsletter

April 2015

From Our President

Spring is here! The welcome break from cold winds and frequent rains allows me a brief moment to reflect on the successes of this past winter and herald the fantastic plans we have for 2015. Our recent meeting was one of the most well attended in the history of the King William County Historical Society. Nearly 100 individuals from across the region enjoyed a fascinating presentation by Bibb Edwards, summarizing what is certainly one of the most significant contributions ever made to our county's history.

Bibb and his team undertook the daunting task of making accessible to all of us the once-thought-lost "burned records" of King William County. Their diligent work to locate, research, photograph, and organize the collection will help all of us better understand our shared past, find ancestors, and celebrate the history of the county. Copies of over 8000 pages of detailed records are, for the first time since the late 19th century, available for the public to review and, if they desire, purchase.

With the support of Court Clerk Patricia Norman and the county, Bibb has made available thumb drives with this information. You can purchase these and the proceeds go to support our museum. In the near future, you will be able to review these records in the clerk's office, as well as the new visitor's research computer in the recently restored Old Jail at the King William County Courthouse.

While this was one of our most exciting projects in recent memory, there are even more reasons to visit the museum, attend our upcoming meetings, and join our society. The museum has the recently installed exhibit on the Virginia Indian artifact collection donated by Mr. Herbert Ridgeway Collins and

is working towards celebrating the significant contributions of women in King William County throughout Virginia's history (and prehistory). And at our upcoming meetings we hope to visit wonderful historic sites in the county, including the Pamunkey Museum on the Pamunkey Reservation, and learn from great speakers, and hopefully at a joint meeting with our friends in the the King and Queen County Historical Society.

As always, we need your help. As you look at your calendar for the year to come, consider attending our meetings, visiting the museum with friends in tow, and get involved with one of our many exciting projects. You won't be disappointed!

Dr. David A. Brown,

President

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Museum News

Copies of KW Burned records now available

Thanks to the efforts of Bibb Edwards, and the support and encouragement of many, including Clerk of the Court, Patricia Norman, Lloyd Huckstep, and other family and friends, the Museum now has a limited supply of the thumb drives of the Burned Records of King William County, @ \$35.00 each. They are available during the week (8:30 a.m. until 4:30p.m, 804-769-4936) at the Clerk's office and on Saturdays and Sundays (1-5 p.m. 804-769-9619) in the Museum's Gift Shop.

The King William Historical Museum Council will hold its quarterly meeting on Sunday, April 12, at 2:30 PM in the meeting room at the courthouse.

The Council invites the public to join them in helping showcase a National Treasure that boasts the oldest courthouse in continuous use in the United States of America. Volunteers are always welcome to help continue in that mission

The "bones" of the Museum are being shaken up in preparation for a new exhibit featuring local women who have contributed to the formation of our country as we now know it. Many of the original artifacts, have been rearranged to welcome a new exhibit, and at the same time to give a fresh new message about our county's history.

The catalyst for this change was a long-time resident and friend, Ruth Eppler Armatage, A founding member of the Museum Council, she continually advocated for recognition of women in the Museum. After her death in November, her sister made an initial contribution to a fund to help realize her wishes. To accomplish her goal, we are asking for nominations of local women who have made significant contributions to our society throughout our county's history. Please provide documentation such as a written description of the person's contribution. Entrants may include any relevant artifacts, as well as pictures, books, letters, newspaper, or magazine articles.

As always, volunteers are welcome to serve in various capacities: data entry, exhibit/collection and development, fund-raising, publicity, gardening, hosting in the museum, as well as housekeeping.

For more information, please call the museum at 804-769-9619 or Rebecca Townsend, Council Chair at 804-338-5738.

Welcome New Members

Welcome and thank you, to our newest members:

Byron Heath - Mechanicsville, VA
Anna and Benjamin Curran - Aylett, VA
Lindsay Robbins - Little Plymouth, VA
Pat Baber - Bumpass, VA
F. Claiborne and Carolyn Johnston - Richmond, VA

Jenny Littlepage and John Wilkinson - Columbia, MD (Jenny is a direct descendent of Caroline Ellett Littlepage whose Civil War Journal has been published online by Bibb Edwards)

Minutes of the King William Historical Society Membership Meeting,

Sunday January 18, 2015

The Membership Meeting of the King William Historical Society was called to order at 2:40 pm on January 18, 2015 at the County Administration Building. There were 94 members and guests present.

Minutes of the November 2, 2014 meeting were approved. The Treasurer's report was made available showing the following balances: Checking \$19,503, Museum Savings \$23,654 and Investment Account \$105,507. The Museum Report was given stating that there were 240 visits during 2014, and included the following special events: 2 weddings, visits from the Garden Club, Scouts, a family reunion, and other private groups.

A call went out inviting all to join the Society (instructions are given on the Society's website), and to volunteer to help with the museum. The President announced the recent passing of the following members who were honored for their service and contributions to the Society: Ruth Armitage, Harry Coon, and Ellet McGeorge. The transfer of the Christadelphian Church Property from Mr. Walker to the KWHS was postponed in 2014, and is expected to occur in 2015.

The Society was pleased to have Bibb Edwards give a presentation entitled *From the Ashes: King William County Burned Records*, in which he described the process of discovery of 19 volumes of county records, previously thought to be destroyed in the fires of the County Clerk's office in 1787, 1864 and 1884. (King William is one of the 39 counties in Virginia with burned records.) When Mr. Edwards was looking for records of ancestors in King William prior to these dates, he found reference to some

records that had been saved from the fires and included in a manuscript by Elizabeth Hawes Ryland prior to 1948. The surviving burned records had been photographed earlier but the copies on microfilm at the Library of Virginia were of very poor quality.

The next question was where were the originals of the old burned records? They were not at the Library of Virginia or the Virginia Historical Society. It came out in an interview with Patricia Norman, the current Clerk of the King William County Records, that some boxes of old unidentified records had been moved to the new Clerk's Office when the new Court House was built in 2004. When Mr. Edwards took a look at the records in the boxes at the Clerk's office, he discovered these are the originals of the burned records starting with documents from 1702, and they are in excellent condition. There are 19 volumes of previously thought missing burned records.

Mrs. Norman agreed that Mr. Edwards could make new photographs of the burned records, and that they could be made available for distribution through the King William County Historical Society. So in mid-July, 2012, Mr. Edwards began the consuming process of photographing and editing the over 8,000 documents with the assistance of Angie Huckstep, Lloyd Huckstep, Anne Jackson and Jack Neal. These records are now available on flash drive file format. Mr. Edwards closed with thanks to the Clerk, Patricia Norman, and the photography team, the Society as well as the Tidewater Review for their assistance with the Burned Records Project. Those in attendance gave a resounding round of applause for this very interesting presentation.

The presentation was followed by refreshments in the foyer.