

KING WILLIAM COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Quarterly Newsletter
October 2019

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UPCOMING MEMBERSHIP MEETING

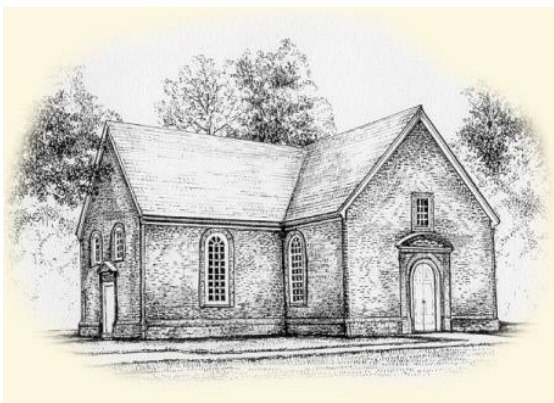
October 20, 2019, 2:30 PM

Old St. John's Church
103 St. John's Church Lane
West Point, Virginia 23181

The next meeting of the King William Historical Society will be held on Sunday, October 20th at 2:30 at Old St. John's Church near West Point.

Please join us for the first of two lectures presented jointly by the St. John's Church Restoration Association and the King William County Historical Society.

The speaker on October 20th will be John Ericson presenting on "Religion and the American Revolution". Read more about the presentation as well as the second lecture in the series in the Lecture Flyer attached to the email.



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello Fellow History Buffs,

I hope you are enjoying this beautiful fall weather. As I'm writing this I'm reflecting on the wonderful time we had at our summer meeting at the home of Carl and Lynn Fischer. Although the day was a scorcher, the Fischers graciously invited us to have our meal and fellowship in the tavern where George Washington and many other notable historic characters spent time. Carl gave a fascinating history of Windsor Shades and the ferry that operated on the banks of the tavern. The meeting was followed up with a tour of the house and grounds. It was a lovely day and I can't thank Carl and Lynn enough for hosting.

Please save the dates for the upcoming lecture series at Old St. John's Church. The West Point Historical Society as well as members of the King and Queen Historical Society will be joining with us for that series. Please spread the word to your friends and neighbors. We would like this event to be the beginning of a partnership with our neighboring historic societies. Our rich histories are so intertwined.

We are certainly fortunate to have our own David Brown with DATA Investigations LLC performing an archaeological dig at the Historic King William County Courthouse. This dig is designed to give the public and county government a deeper understanding of the resources that it owns and protects. The dig days are October 18th, 19th and November 15th, 16th. David has led important archaeological projects at the Fairfield Foundation. The public is welcome and encouraged to come and observe and participate.

See you there and thank you for all that you do to keep King William County's history alive.

Best Regards,

Sally W. Pearson

King William Historical Society President



MEMBER NEWS

A SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY TO WATCH KING WILLIAM COUNTY HISTORY UNFOLD BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES

WHO: Sponsored by the King William County Historical Society and open to the general public and school groups

WHAT: Archeological Survey and Public Dig Days

WHEN: October 18-19 & November 15-16, 2019

WHERE: Within the two brick-wall-enclosed “greens”, the picnic area to the immediate east, and the open lawn to the south of the gravel parking area (confined by Rt. 30, Horse Landing Road, and Courthouse Road)

WHY: Provide an opportunity for the public to watch an actual archeological survey at historic King William County Courthouse that will identify artifact concentrations and, potentially, archaeological deposits which will provide vital insight into how this property was used throughout history and prehistory. This data can be incorporated into a revised and expanded nomination for the King William County courthouse district for the state and federal registers of historic places.

Volunteers are welcome to participate in the survey and testing, and at least two of the work days budgeted for this project will take place on Saturdays to accommodate increased public engagement.

Background Information: The King William County Courthouse is the longest, continuously active courthouse in Virginia. It is the centerpiece to King William County’s political landscape since the beginning of the 18th century. It was also the centerpiece to some of the most important moments in the county’s history. Crucial legal decisions were passed down alongside more personal moments where judges, lawyers, and business leaders negotiated deals and took on the challenges that would affect the everyday life of citizens of the county. It is certainly one of the most cherished landmarks in the county.

This project is intended to provide three distinct benefits to the historical society, King William County government, and the citizens of King William County.

1. An archaeological shovel test pit (STP) survey will help identify artifact concentrations and, potentially, archaeological deposits which will provide vital insight into how this property was used throughout history and prehistory.
2. The resulting map and detailed analysis of this data can be incorporated into a revised and expanded nomination for the King William County courthouse district which was last updated in 1969.
3. Involving the public and county government will lead to a deeper understanding of these cultural resources. Knowing where the resources are on a property can help future infrastructure investments avoid impacting cultural resources. Having the public involved

in the archaeological survey will bring greater attention to the historic resources while also promoting research and preservation in King William County.

Come out and join us for one or all of the Dig Days and help support this project.

Minutes of the King William County Historical Society Membership Meeting Sunday, July 21, 2019

The Membership Meeting of the King William County Historical Society was held at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, July 21, 2019 at Windsor Shades. There were approximately 22 members and guests present. President Sally Pearson called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Lynn Fischer, owner, with her husband Carl Fischer, of Windsor Shades, welcomed members and guests. The Minutes of the April 28, 2019 Membership Meeting were published in the KWHS Newsletter and approved as submitted.

Treasurer Ron Parker's report shows the following balances as of July 21, 2019.

Checking	\$ 22,614.12 *
Museum Savings CD	\$ 20,876.85
Church Maintenance	\$ 506.93
Wells Fargo Museum Investment	\$142,133.36
Total	\$186,131.26

*Checking account includes \$17,049.32 in Coon Grant Funds.

Open Issues:

Sally Pearson reported that Book 1 of the Transcription Project, the Coon Fund project that will digitize and index all of the King William County Burned Records, is complete. The Coon Fund project of installation of fiber optic for fast internet access to the Museum and King William County Historical Society offices at the Old Courthouse is complete. The Museum is scheduled to be open Sunday afternoons through August, and longer if more volunteer.

New Business:

Sally Pearson announced the following opportunities of historical interest: A program of Middlesex Historic Society about Tuckahoe Plantation in August 2019 in Deltaville. The King William County Fest on Sunday, August 17 from 10am to 2pm at which the Society will sponsor a booth to distribute information about the Society and our programs. The Society's October 20 Membership meeting at Historic St. John's Church in cooperation with Historic St. John's at which the speaker will be John Erickson.

The Coon Fund Project of an Archaeological Survey of the Old King William Courthouse property is scheduled for this Fall. The King William Board of Supervisors at a recent meeting expressed their support for the project and suggested that students from King William schools be involved. Carl Fischer explained the dig process of creating a grid on the property and digging test holes and recording the findings for future exploration. The project will include public dig days when students and other members of the public can work along with archaeologists at the site. Carla Carter suggested that the site may contain remains of the Freedman Bureau and Burial Ground. Others suggested researching early property owners and using ground penetrating radar on the site.

The meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m. at which time Vice President Rhonda Sonnenburg introduced the program: Carl Fischer, owner with his wife Lynne, of Windsor Shades.

Carl presented a fascinating history of the Windsor Shades property and house. The property, now 14 acres on the Pamunkey River, has been inhabited since paleolithic times as is revealed by Clovis Point spear points and other archaeological finds on the site. When the English came in the early 1600s the site was a major Native American village. In 1745 - 1750 a house was built on the site and a tavern and ferry across the Pamunkey were established. During Colonial times, the Revolutionary War, and the early decades of the United States, Windsor Shades was a busy place, the spot for transporting and provisioning troops and welcoming many historically important visitors and guests. During the Civil War it was quiet at Windsor Shades but the ferry operated from 1754 to 1927. More recently; in 1978 the property was placed on the National Registry of Historic Places. In 1998 the Fischers bought the property and in 1999 added two historically appropriate wings to the original house. In 2008 an easement from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources was obtained to protect the original house. After his presentation, Carl and Lynn led tours of the house and the group enjoyed a pot luck lunch.

Respectfully Submitted:
Fran Freimarck
Secretary



King William County Courthouse

ELSING GREEN

A Brief History of Elsing Green Plantation

By Gus Kaspar

Elsing Green is one of those few plantations left in the south which is not only completely intact, but also fully functioning and mostly self-sufficient. The manor is situated on a rise above the Pamunkey River and has a beautiful view of the water. The house and surrounding buildings, as well as the 2,254 acres that make up the estate, are protected from development through the applications of easements.

The history of Elsing Green began in the seventeenth century when Colonel West, relative of Lord de la Warr, was granted the land by the King of England. The first structure he built was Jacobean in style, and was constructed approximately two years before his death in 1692. Upon his death his son, Captain Nathaniel West, inherited his property. Captain West had only one child, Unity West, who upon her marriage to the esteemed Captain William Dandridge he gave the dowry of Elsing Green with 1,247 acres. Captain Dandridge served in the British navy and was a very successful commander in battles like Cartagena and St. Augustine.



After Unity and William Dandridge received the dowry of Elsing Green, they continued to live with Unity's father, Captain West in the Jacobean lodge. When West passed Unity inherited his vast fortunes. With this new wealth, the couple began the construction of what we would now call the main house of Elsing Green. Construction began around 1715-1720, and also included a flanking kitchen building, mirroring the size of the adjacent Jacobean dependency. The kitchen and lodge both flank the house, the lodge being on the East of the house, the kitchen on the west. In 1753 Unity died. Already having been a widow for ten years, she gave her property and fortune to her children. Because her children were already grown and established in their own homes, Elsing Green was offered for sale. The manor was consequently sold to Carter Braxton, signer of the Declaration of Independence. After Braxton's wife passed, upon bearing him their second child, he moved to Chericoke, causing him to sell Elsing Green.

The home then passed into the hands of William Burnet Browne, who hailed from Massachusetts. In an attempt to continue his family name, William Browne offered his estate to his grandson under the condition that he change his name from William Burnet Claiborne to William Burnet Browne. This was accomplished by an act of the General Assembly. In 1820 the home was sold once again, this time to a man named William Gregory. For over a century the home stayed in the Gregory family. It was not until 1935 that the home was sold again, this time to Mr. and Mrs. Beverley Causey. The Causeys meticulously restored the plantation, returning it to its former glory after years of neglect. Mrs. Causey was not entirely satisfied with living in such a remote location, so upon completion of the renovations Elsing Green was sold one more time, this time to Mr. and Mrs. Edgar R. Lafferty Jr.

The Lafferty family had previously established a home at the nearby location of Williams Ferry, and thus brought additional acreage to Elsing Green. When they acquired the manor, they

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planted dozens of trees and planted formal and informal English gardens to replicate how the house would have looked in the seventeenth century.

The manor itself is Queen Anne in style and has a unique half H-shaped floor plan. The brick work is that of the Flemish brick bond with glazed headers. The furniture inside of the house is mostly of the period, and even includes the "Surrender Table" upon which the British commander Cornwallis surrendered to the British and French forces at Yorktown. Today the house is lived in by Mr. Lafferty III. The house is open on Sundays from 1-5 during the summer and hosts weddings.

Mr. Lafferty Jr. started the Lafferty Foundation which upon his death assumed ownership of Elsing Green. The foundation ensures that the plantation remains operational. It protects the property from development as well as maintains it as a wildlife refuge. As stated in the pamphlet given to guests upon touring the plantation "Elsing Green is not for crowds of people, but rather 'a quiet and beautiful place, a wonderful gift from our forefathers to be enjoyed by quiet and thoughtful people seeking a change from life as it is today.' To people in pursuit of such a place Elsing Green is always open."

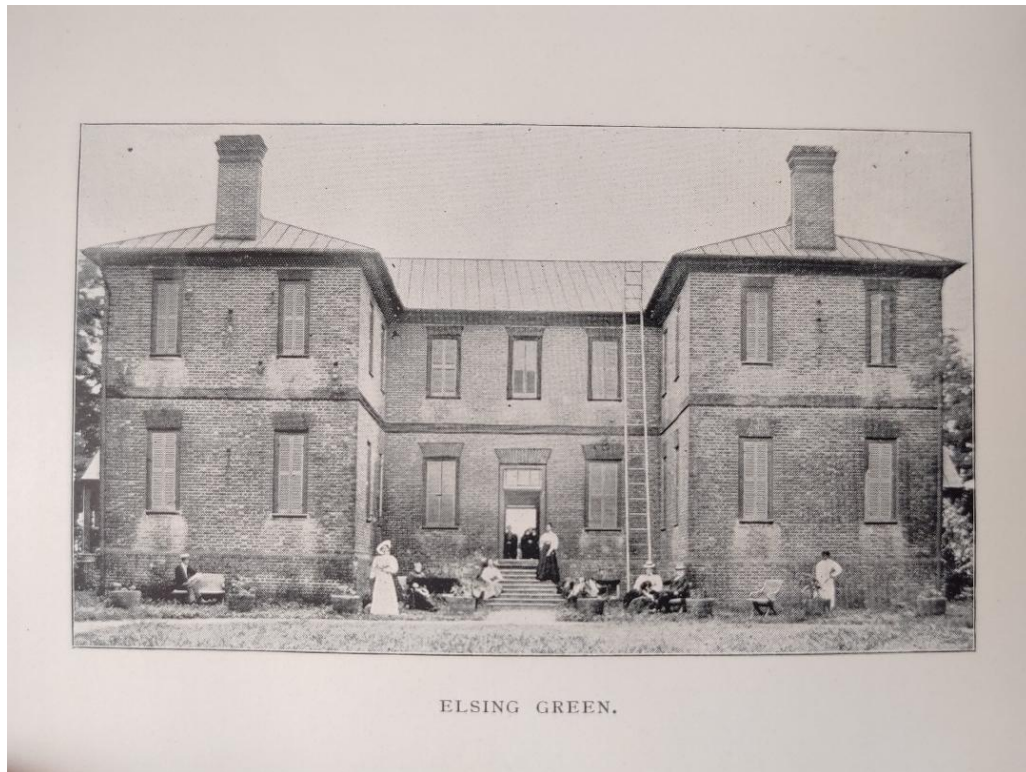
Harris, M. H. (1973). *Old New Kent County: some account of the planters, plantations, and places* volumes I and II.

Clarke, Peyton Neal (1897). *Homes and Families of Old King William County*. Published in Louisville KY, John P. Morton and Co.

Photo of "Elsing Green" Clarke, Peyton Neal (1897). *Homes and Families of Old King William County*. Published in Louisville KY, John P. Morton and Co.

Much of the information included in this article was discovered though an interview with the present owner Mr. Lafferty III. It is with much gratitude towards Mr. Lafferty that I thank him for the interview and subsequent tour.

Gus Kasper is a King William resident majoring in History at the University of Mary Washington.



LECTURE SERIES AT OLD ST. JOHN'S CHURCH: SAVE THE DATES

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Annual Membership expires twelve (12) months after your last dues payment.

Family \$30

Student \$10

Individual \$20

Lifetime \$250

Artifact Level \$150+

Pamunkey/Mattaponi Level \$300+

Thomas T. H. Hill Benefactor Level
\$500+

Corporate Sponsorship \$500+

Mail to:

King William Historical Society
P.O. Box 233
King William, VA 23086

Sunday, October 20, 2019, 2:30 p.m.

John Ericson will be presenting on "Religion and the American Revolution". This under-explored topic is a vital one in understanding the reasons for separation from Great Britain. Religion was not only one of the causes of separation, but, also the grammar of the Revolution. John will explore the role of religious language and practices as part of the Patriot cause as well as the role clergy and chaplains played during the Revolution.

Sunday, December 8, 2019, 2:30 p.m.

Carl Lounsbury will speak on "Metropolitan Prototypes and Provincial Filters: Public Building in Eighteenth-Century America". English public houses provided many of the symbols and design precedents for America's town halls, courthouses, and statehouses that emerged in the eighteenth century. Two distinctive types of English public buildings – the market house and the county hall – shaped the design of American statehouses and courthouses. Yet, there was a strong colonial filter that altered and sometimes rejected elements of that inheritance as local conditions reshaped English building types and construction practices that led to the emergence of new hybrid forms. American architecture was more complex than the mere replication of English models. This lecture explores the evolution of public architecture in British America.

*The King William Museum is open Sundays from
1:00 - 5:00 PM and by prearranged appointment
(closed on major holidays).
Located at 227 Horse Landing Road,
King William, Virginia*



To make no mistakes is not in the power of man; but from their errors and mistakes the wise and good learn wisdom for the future.

Plutarch

