

KING WILLIAM COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Quarterly Newsletter
April 2020

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The membership meeting planned for Sunday, April 19th, 2020, has been cancelled due to Covid-19. The Museum is closed at this time. We will let you know when it reopens.

We all look forward to our upcoming meetings for 2020:

Sunday, July 19, 2:30 p.m.

Sunday, October 18, 2:30 p.m.

The upside of the social distancing we are experiencing is being able to enjoy the natural beauty around us, or perhaps having time to read a book, or research your ancestry.



Old and new bridges in Walkerton, with the town in the background

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

It is hard to believe how our lives have changed over the past few weeks. We are living in historic times indeed. Imagine how it was in King William County in 1918 when the Spanish Flu epidemic struck. The population of Virginia at that time was 2.2 million and the flu sickened 326,000 and killed 16,000. The next time you are able to visit your local cemetery, you may take note of the graves from 1918. [This article](#) details the timeline for the Spanish Flu in our area. Many of the same precautions were taken in 1918 as we are taking in 2020 to control spread of the virus. There were times when the authorities tried to reopen businesses and schools but the virus flared up again. The first cases of the Spanish Flu surfaced at Fort Lee in August of 1918 and the pandemic raged on until February of 1919. Fortunately, in 2020 we are able to make use technology and connect with one another by electronic means.

It is disappointing that we must postpone our joint meeting with the West Point Historical Society that was scheduled for April 19th. We hope to be able to reschedule Mary Lynn Bayliss to come and speak about "Railroads, Steamships and a Big Hotel: Two Generations of Dooleys in West Point and King William County". I was very eager to learn more about the Dooleys and their influence on the early days of the Town of West Point and the surrounding area through their connections to the transportation industry and The Terminal Hotel.

The Board of the King William County Historical Society recently met via teleconference. A major focus of that meeting was to establish an operating budget for the upcoming year. The Board also approved some capital improvements to be completed from the current year budget. There will be cabinetry and shelving installed for the research room in the Museum office space. Also, there will be masonry and stucco repairs on the historic courthouse and colonnade.

For the upcoming year, the Board approved an architectural survey of King William County and Museum needs. The Board will continue the King William County Burned records Project and Courthouse Public Archaeology survey and public dig project. The Board also approved major capital expenditures for artifacts and electronic upgrades for the King William County Historical Society Museum. It is time to elect new officers and Board members for the King William County Historical Society. For any members who are interested in serving, please contact David Brown, Chairman of the nominating committee at dabro3@email.wm.edu.

I hope that all of you are staying well and are finding more time to research some history or ancestor that you have been unable to work on in the past. I am finding that I have the gift of time in my life and trying to be grateful and thankful. I wish you and your families good health and peace.

Best Regards,

Sally W. Pearson
President of the King William County Historical Society

MEMBER NEWS

To the general membership and friends in eastern Virginia:

There is a new grant program available for communities affected by Hurricane's Michael and Florence from several years ago. There are monies available to help the owners of historic properties in specific localities across eastern Virginia, including the citizens of King William County, specifically for:

- 1) direct recovery assistance to property owners, and
- 2) planning/preservation initiatives.

This quick article is to help spread the word about the former, and to build support for our county to pursue the latter...especially since this is NOT a matching grant (i.e. no county monies needed; all monies reimbursed).

Regarding #1 above: Funds are available to provide "recovery assistance" to historic properties including archaeological sites damaged by hurricanes Florence and/or Michael in September and October 2018. These properties must be listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. There must be used to reimburse for repairs to historic resources that sustained documented damage during either or both hurricanes. Private owners, not-for-profit organizations, and public administrators of historic properties are included.

Ask yourself: who in the county knows they own a site either ON or ELIGIBLE FOR the historic registers? While many of those ON the register know, those who are ELIGIBLE may not. Please reach out to us, or to past president Dr. David Brown (dabro3@email.wm.edu) to verify if your historic property might qualify. To our knowledge, the state is NOT reaching out to owners directly.

Regarding #2 above: there are many properties in King William County that might qualify for assistance, but have not been formally evaluated. That process usually takes money. While being ELIGIBLE is an honorific, this is the second federal program to use that status for hurricane-relief funding in the last decade (Hurricane Sandy was the other). We should encourage the county to apply for county-wide surveys of historic (architectural and archaeological) resources in King William County so that property owners can more easily know if they would qualify for assistance, and —

- to determine their potential for listing on the National Register of Historic Places,
- to assess storm-inflicted damage to the resources, and
- to compile disaster management plans specifically tailored to historic resources.

If people don't know their house is eligible, then they won't know they qualify. We need to support efforts to inform property owners. This fund can do that.

All projects funded by the grant program must also result in plans that improve preparedness and substantially mitigate the threat of damage from future severe storm events. (cont'd p. 4)

MEMBER NEWS

The deadline for applications by private property owners (#1 above) is 5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 22, 2020.

These are reimbursement grants: all grantees must document and provide proof of expenditures and submit the same to recover eligible expenses.

For more info: the application forms and detailed information about eligibility standards and regulations are posted on the DHR website on the [Virginia ESHPF Disaster Relief Assistance Grants webpage](#). (The grants webpage can also be accessed from the DHR homepage (www.dhr.virginia.gov) by clicking on the “Grants” tab on the left-hand navigation menu of the website. On the Grants webpage, scroll down to, and then click on the Virginia ESHPF Disaster Relief Assistance Grants heading.)



Update on Archaeological Survey at the Historic Courthouse

Shortly before we all headed inside to avoid the Coronavirus, the King William County Historical Society finished up its first round of archaeological survey at the historic courthouse. We achieved many goals with this first phase. We began a systematic archaeological survey that uncovered important evidence of changes to the courthouse landscape across the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. We also found tantalizing clues regarding where buildings were once standing, using the historical research published by the historical society coupled with additional archaeological evidence of construction materials associated with distinct, intact layers of soil helping date construction and destruction of long-lost buildings.

Our most important discovery, though, was the sheer joy of working with every 4th grade student in the county. In collaboration with the elementary school, we arranged for each of these students to tour the courthouse complex, museum, and participate in hands-on archaeology with archaeologists from The Fairfield Foundation. These kids got the chance to discover history through their own actions, on THEIR courthouse - the longest continuously active courthouse in the country. To see the pride beaming from the face of our elementary school's principal was reward in and of itself.

We are happy to report that the artifacts are being washed and cataloged, maps being prepared, and analysis is underway. We hope to present to you in the next newsletter some initial findings from the survey and two test units. And we look forward to the days ahead in 2020 when we will expand our survey, looking for buildings just beyond the courthouse walls, and welcome the next year's students to the site, keeping the tradition of engaging our fourth graders in local history. King William history IS Virginia history.

For more information about the survey, contact past president Dr. David Brown (dabro3@email.wm.edu). Volunteers are welcome as soon as the Coronavirus pandemic subsides and public gatherings are permissible once again. Last year's volunteers were fantastic and contributed many hours to our efforts. We look forward to working with you.

KWCHS MINUTES

Minutes of the King William County Historical Society Membership Meeting Sunday, January 19, 2020

The Membership Meeting of the King William County Historical Society was held at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, January 19, 2020 at the Administration Building on the King William Courthouse grounds. There were approximately 20 members and guests present.

Vice President Rhonda Sonnenberg called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m. and welcomed members and guests.

The Minutes of the October 20, 2019 Membership Meeting were approved as submitted.

Ms. Sonnenberg introduced the speaker, Robert Van Ness. Mr. Van Ness began a podcast in October, 2015, called the Virginia History Podcast. His website is vahistorypodcast.com. Mr. Van Ness spoke engagingly about Sir William Berkeley and his considerable influence on 17th century America.

Treasurer Ron Parker's report shows the following balances as of January 19, 2020:

Checking	\$ 15,973.06*
Museum Savings CD	\$ 21,002.93
Church Maintenance	\$ 645.62
Wells Fargo Museum Fund	\$152,951.50
Total	\$190,573.11

*Checking account includes \$10,583.72 in Coon funds.

We received an update from the Transcription Project Committee, shared by Ms. Sonnenberg: We have the complete revised draft of Book 1 in hand. We are still on track with Book 2 to be completed by summer.

Members, volunteers and visitors were encouraged to come to the Old Courthouse grounds on Friday, January 24th from 10-4 to view and participate in the architectural survey.

No Old or New Business was discussed.

The meeting schedule for 2020 was shared: April 19, July 19, October 18.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m. and refreshments were served. The museum was opened after the meeting.

Respectfully submitted:
Lisa Vawter, Corresponding Secretary

RUMFORD ACADEMY

Rumford Academy

by Gus Kasper

Rumford Academy was established in 1804 as a preparatory school in King William County. The Academy was situated near the intersection of Route 600 and King William Road, in close proximity to both the court house and the then-bustling town of Aylett. The school was founded by John Roane in 1804, and was officially incorporated by the legislature on January 2nd, 1806. Included in the charter, the General Assembly granted the newly appointed Academy trustees the right to raise the sum of \$4,200 by means of a lottery.¹ The money they raised helped the new school purchase the books and supplies necessary for the fledgling Academy.

Rumford was attended by the local gentry of King William and its surrounding counties who lacked such a school. An advertisement in *The Southern Planter and Farmer* described the Academy as a “classical and mathematical school.”² The advertisement also detailed the curriculum offered by the school, boasting an education complete with Latin, Greek, French, chemistry, and philosophy. The Academy functioned as both a boarding school and a day school, allowing local students to choose based on their situation. The tuition cost for boarding students was advertised as \$85 per semester in 1854 “with every necessary, except lights.”³

The school was advertised as positioned on a very healthy part of the county, claiming “It has an elevated situation, and is exempt from sickness of a local nature. The water is as pure as that of the mountains.”⁴ The school building was constructed of brick in the Flemish brick bond according to the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of 1939.⁵ The HABS survey reported that the building’s woodwork and brickwork was defaced “with boys’ initials and dates,” presumably those of the students who attended the Academy. Rumford Academy closed after, or perhaps during, the Civil War. Following the conflict, the school house was turned into a private residence by a branch of the Abrams family who eventually tore the structure down and sold the bricks.⁶ The image below shows the building as it stood in 1935.⁷

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

Notes

¹ Shepherd, Samuel. *The Statues at Large in Virginia From October Session 1792, to December Session 1806, Inclusive*. Richmond: Printed by Samuel Shepherd, 1836. 223.

² Pitts, John H. *Classical Mathematical School*. *The Southern Planter and Farmer*. May 7th 1853. 157.

³ Rumford Academy, King William County, VA. *Classical and Mathematical School 1854* [PDF Document] Available from <https://search.lib.virginia.edu/catalog/u2092323>

⁴ Rumford Academy. *Classical and Mathematical School*. 1854

⁵ Waterman, Thomas T. *Historic American Building Survey, Rumford Academy*. Washington Office of the Southeast Unit, May 1939.

⁶ Ryland, Elizabeth Hawes *King William County, Virginia from Old Newspapers and Files*. Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1955. 73.

⁷Mistie, Elsie Josephine, 1907-1960, *Rumford Academy (King William County, Va.)*, Library of Virginia, Available <https://lva.omeka.net/items/show/219>.

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:

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RUMFORD ACADEMY



1934 engraving

Erratum: In the January 2020 newsletter, the date of Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse was incorrect. The correct date is April 9, 1865.



Would you like to be on the committee to nominate candidates for officers of the Historical Society? Contact David Brown (Email: dabro3@email.wm.edu. Phone: 804-815-1066)

