

KING WILLIAM COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Quarterly Newsletter
January 2022

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UPCOMING MEMBERSHIP MEETING January 16, 2022, 2:30 PM

Administration Building, King William Courthouse
180 Horse Landing Road
King William, VA 23086

Please join us for the next meeting of the King William Historical Society which will be held on Sunday, January 16th at 2:30. This will be an in-person meeting and we encourage folks to be vaccinated, masked, and practice social distancing.

Our speaker, the Reverend William Palmer, will be speaking on "Untold Tales of Old West Point", which is also the title of his latest book. Join our speaker as he shares fascinating tidbits of the history of West Point from when the Clovis people lived there 13,000 years ago up to the West Point Police Department's only cold case, dating to 1957. You'll leave the meeting saying, "I never knew that."

Free refreshments will be available after the presentation and copies of the book will be available for purchase. The book costs \$20 and payment can be in cash or by check made out to "Town of West Point".

Rev. Palmer and his wife have lived in West Point since 2000. An ordained clergyman in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), he retired from every-Sunday preaching in 2012 but still does supply work. He also serves as chaplain of the West Point Police and Fire Departments.

His publications include The Battle of Eltham's Landing (2012), Forged in Fire: History of the West Point Volunteer Fire Department (2014) and Untold Tales of West Point (2020).

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello Everyone,

I hope you had a wonderful holiday. The KWCHS Board met on December 18, 2021 and we had a very productive meeting. Our Bylaws state that we need to elect new officers for the KWCHS Board and someone for the leadership role for the museum council. I hope you will consider serving in a position on the KWCHS Board or the Museum Council if you are able. The KWCHS Board will meet again prior to our membership meeting on January 16th. The Board will select a nominating committee and we will let the membership know who is serving on that committee. Please let me or any other member know if you would be interested in serving in some capacity.

The past couple of years have been very challenging, however, my hopes are that in 2022 we will leave the Pandemic behind and be able to reopen the Museum. I'm grateful to you for having the confidence in me to serve as your King William County Historical Society President. This organization was founded on April 6, 1974. The purpose of this society shall be the collection and preservation of everything relating to the history, antiquities, and literature of the County of King William and Virginia in general. With your help, the KWCHS can continue to keep the history of King William County preserved by sharing that history with others.

I look forward to seeing you at our next membership meeting on January 16.

Best Regards,

Sally W. Pearson

President, King William County Historical Society



Staff archaeologist Ned Rose provides visitors with a tour of our most recent discoveries

Archaeology Update: King William Courthouse and Tavern Site

The last few months have been very productive in our continued search for the King William Courthouse Tavern. While we will need to wait until 2022 before we bring students out to tour the site and museum, we've had a fairly regular stream of visitors (especially home schoolers) who patiently listened to our history of the site and shared with us archaeological sites they found in King William County. Archaeology has a way of bringing people together and we were excited to work alongside new volunteers, including Historical Society board members.

We plan to continue work at the site intermittently (weather depending) in January and February on two priorities: First, we will spend one or two more days with the archaeological survey of the triangularly-shaped "green" in between Rt. 30 and Courthouse Road. We know of at least two buildings that were on the property in the 19th century and preliminary evidence suggests they date as early as the 18th century. They were later replaced with Victory Gardens for a short time after WWII. Second, we will be finishing up the several five-foot-square test units that exposed a now more than 23'-wide foundation with hearth and a second, aligned building foundation along the tree line near the picnic area. The site is still somewhat problematic: all of the artifacts scream "This is a Tavern Site!" while the foundations are just a single-brick wide ... hardly substantial enough to underpin the more than 70'-long, two-story tavern reported in the Virginia Gazette in the 1770s. Our most recent excavations have clarified, though, that there were intense fires of some kind on the site, hot enough that they left some American Blue and Grey Stoneware fragments covered in melted glass.

We are grateful for the access and encouragement provided by the King William County Buildings and Grounds Department and especially continued funding for this project by the King William County Historical Society. The artifacts and information we are collecting through this excavation will be available to the museum's committee assembling the upcoming exhibit on taverns. We also have several artifacts that may rival the impressive near-complete 1740s plate recovered last year, so stay tuned for photographs and more information as we share that with the public. Stay tuned to our social media accounts to learn more about our next days on site and please remember that the site and all of the artifacts (that we've dug, and that remain in the ground) are the property of King William County. Through these professionally-led, and community-supported, excavations, we hope to bring new attention to the history of our county and share these discoveries with everyone.

MEMBER NEWS



A new 18th century, one-brick-wide foundation found to the south of our previous discovered foundation



The same test unit (notice the stump in the lower right) one soil layer BEFORE we discovered the new foundation

ROSENWALD SCHOOLS IN KING WILLIAM

The recent issue of the newsletter from the African American Heritage Society of New Kent brought to mind a historic building many of us frequently drive past, but may rarely think about. It is the King William Training School at 18627 King William Road. This was once a “Rosenwald School” intended for the education of African American children in the county. Preservation Virginia gives us a brief history of the Rosenwald Schools, most built during the 1920s and 1930s: “The Rosenwald rural school building program, created by Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee Institute, was an effort to improve the quality of public education for African Americans in the rural South during segregation. Washington enlisted the help of Julius Rosenwald, philanthropist and president of Sears Roebuck, to provide funding to local African American communities through the Rosenwald Fund. As part of the program, these communities were tasked with raising money to match the Rosenwald Fund’s contributions in order to have the schools built. Approximately 5,500 Rosenwald Schools were built in the United States as far north as Maryland and as far west as Oklahoma. Most schools fell out of use after the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954.” For African American students in the South, these schools may have been the only opportunity for education beyond sixth grade.

In King William alone, there were three Rosenwald schools, the previous mentioned as well as Rucker School, now demolished, which stood in the vicinity of 4610 Dorrell Road in the Mangohick area. In current use as a community center, Mt. Olive School at 2439 Mt. Olive Cohoke Road was constructed from 1926-1927. Now owned by the Pamunkey Baptist Association, the King William Training School was constructed in 1922 and 1923 and consisted of four rooms, plus multiple structures including a home economics building (built in 1933), shop building (built in 1928), a baseball field shared with a soccer field, shared tennis and volleyball courts, and an outdoor basketball court. A converted street car was used to prepare lunch, which was served in the auditorium.

Students graduated from the King William Training School each year through 1951. The first high school graduating class of 1934 had seven graduates, four of whom went on to graduate college, and several became educators. Our own Dr. Alvin Lomax graduated in 1949 in a class of 17. Dr. Lomax explained that the educational system for African Americans developed with the churches. Beginning in 1869 successive generations of members from Third Union Baptist Church have graduated high school each year. Every major African American community in our area had a church and a school, and often the buildings were used for both church and education purposes. In addition to teaching children, evening classes were held for adults, where both the basics (reading, math) and skills such as farming were taught.

Education evolved in this country first through the academy movement and later the English classical period with the spread of educational institutions throughout the United States. In King William, in the early 1900s, Dr. Samuel Brenton Holmes (for whom Hamilton-Holmes School was partially named) began an academy on his property that was also funded by the Pamunkey Baptist Association. Here children were taught through 7th grade, and many went on to get associate degrees in elementary education and teach future generations.

Born in King and Queen County, after studying at Howard University, India Hamilton came to King William in 1913 to teach at the Rucker Rosenwald School. In 1924 she was appointed supervisor of schools serving African Americans in King William. Her salary was partly paid

ROSENWALD SCHOOLS IN KING WILLIAM

by the Jeanes Fund, which was begun in 1907 by Philadelphia philanthropist Anna Jeanes to improve education for African American youth in rural schools. The Education@LVA Changemakers site tells us that Hamilton “displayed an unwavering passion for teaching and learning throughout her life.” In addition to Dr. Holmes, she was honored with the naming of Hamilton-Holmes School.

Resources were limited, but it is amazing what can be done with creativity and determination. As an example, at the Training School, transportation of students became an issue. Early on they had no buses. They improvised and used an old truck chassis with a structure built on top to transport students to school. Later they were able to purchase second hand buses which often broke down, interrupting instruction time. In the late 40s, if a student lived within two miles of school, the student could not ride the bus, rain or shine.

Education for African Americans became a premium for advancement. Education provided opportunities for rational decision making, resulting in increasing success of individuals and communities.

Today a highway marker alerts us about the history of the King William Training School. Consider the rich legacy of this historic landmark next time you drive by.

With gratitude for the assistance of Dr. Alvin Lomax - Staff



An early photo of students outside the King William Training School, from Preservation Virginia

ROSENWALD SCHOOLS IN KING WILLIAM



Mt. Olive School today, from Preservation Virginia



King William Training School today

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+

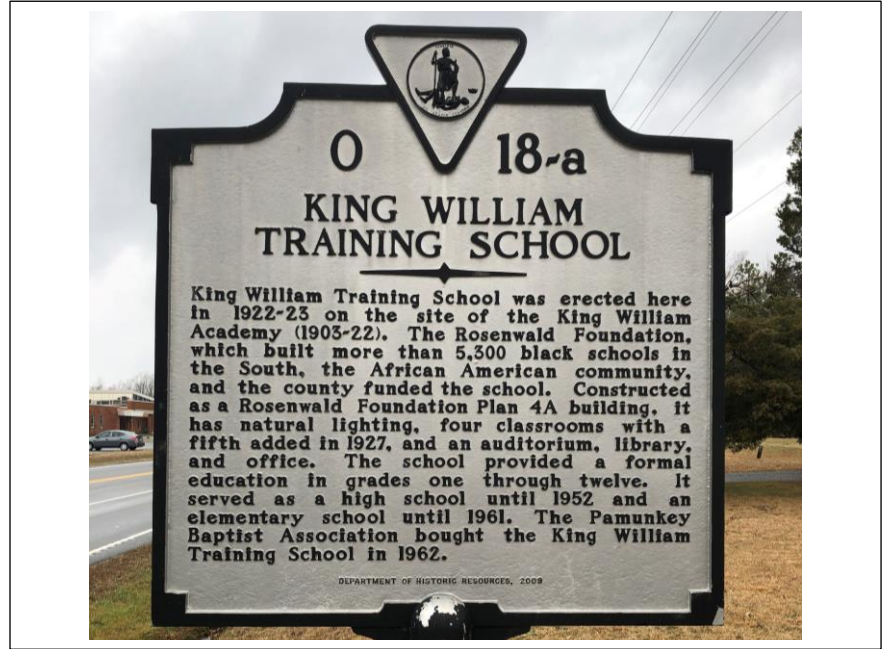
Thomas T. H. Hill Benefactor Level
\$500+

Corporate Sponsorship \$500+

Mail to:

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

KING WILLIAM TRAINING SCHOOL HIGHWAY MARKER



*The King William Museum is closed for renovations.
Located at 227 Horse Landing Road,
King William, Virginia*



When angry, count ten, before you speak; if very angry, a hundred.

Thomas Jefferson

