

# KING WILLIAM COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Quarterly Newsletter  
July 2022

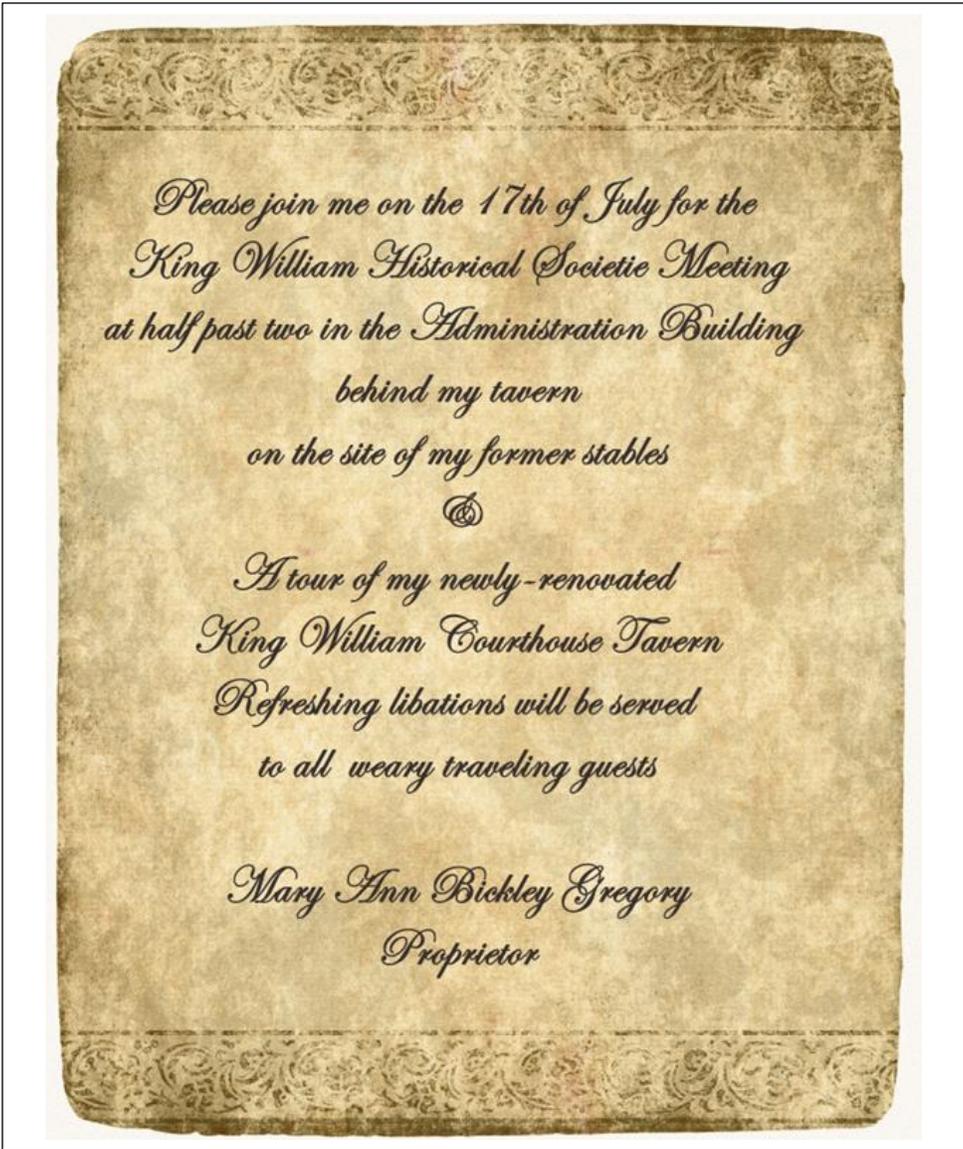
## IN THIS ISSUE

P.2: The President's  
Message

P. 3: Member News

P. 6: Greensand Marl:  
A Lesson in History  
and Geography

P. 8: Member  
Information



*Please join me on the 17th of July for the  
King William Historical Societie Meeting  
at half past two in the Administration Building  
behind my tavern  
on the site of my former stables*



*A tour of my newly-renovated  
King William Courthouse Tavern  
Refreshing libations will be served  
to all weary traveling guests*

*Mary Ann Bickley Gregory  
Proprietor*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello Friends,

The end of my term as President of the King William County Historical Society (KWCHS) has given me time for reflection. Many things have changed in our world over the last four years and certainly many more things will change as we continue to adapt in the future. As the stewards of King William County's history, we have seen how this occurs. It is our responsibility to preserve and uncover the past for those who come behind us to learn from.

As I look back on the last four years, I am very proud of what we have been able to accomplish amid a pandemic. The museum has reopened with a wonderful new tavern exhibit, and we have had interesting speakers at each meeting. As new opportunities presented, the KWCHS Board has done its best to focus its efforts and respond in kind. In the last few months this has been highlighted with the KWCHS funding for the archaeology digs at the colonial courthouse using ground penetrating radar to pinpoint the location of the original tavern on the courthouse green. The KWCHS is also preserving important landmarks such as the Lanesville Christadelphian Church and Acquinton Church in King William County.

Our board of directors has an ambitious plan with your support to maintain and preserve the aforementioned properties as well as the historic courthouse that the Society leases from King William County for the museum. As of this newsletter, the KWCHS has a lease agreement with the County for the next 10 years for the King William County Museum. The members of the Museum Council with the support of the KWCHS took advantage of the down time during COVID to rework and reimagine the museum. We have some of the most interesting historic buildings in our nation and our plan is to keep them well maintained and visited by the public.

In 2025, the County will celebrate its 300th anniversary and the KWCHS has plans to highlight King William County's remarkable history on a national level. We have invested more in our excellent museum, specifically drawing attention to the vibrant activities that took place on the courthouse green and tavern. We have tried to provide even more reason for others to visit and learn about our community's history. I also look forward to finding new members and involving more of our fellow citizens in the worthy efforts of our society. We will surely better our organization through the inclusion of others, equally dedicated to preserving our county's legacy and sharing it. I look forward to seeing each of you at our membership meeting on July 17 and working with you to make our society the best it can be.

Sincerely,

*Sally W. Pearson*

President, King William County Historical Society

***P.S. Mark your calendars for October 16<sup>th</sup> for the October Picnic Membership Meeting at Retreat in the Mangohick area of King William.***

## MEMBER NEWS

### UPCOMING MEMBERSHIP MEETING

July 17, 2022, 2:30 PM

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

Please join us at the next meeting of the King William County Historical Society which will be held on Sunday, July 17th at 2:30. This will be an in-person meeting only as the educational portion of the meeting will be a tour. We encourage attendees to be vaccinated. Masks will not be required but members are welcome to wear them.

After the business meeting, we will go to the Grand Reopening of our Museum. Here you will visit Mrs. Gregory's Tavern, the new Colonial Tavern exhibit. Enjoy period costumes and typical tavern refreshments. Come and celebrate with us the hard work of our Museum Council in making this new exhibit come to life for all to enjoy.

Taverns in Colonial Virginia served a significant role in early society. Travel during the period was accomplished by foot, horseback, or carriage; therefore, these establishments were numerous as the average length of travel was limited to how far one could go before becoming tired or hungry. The "Gregory Ordinary" or King William Courthouse Tavern was one such tavern as run by Ann Bickley--wife of Nathaniel Gregory from 1792 to the 1820's. The first known owner was John Quarles, who died in 1740 and left the tavern to his son. Holt Richardson advertised the tavern in 1768 in the Virginia Gazette. According to George Washington's diary, he visited the tavern in 1792 and described it as "72 ft by 20 ft with a portico the whole length, 4 rooms below, 4 rooms above, 4 closets on a floor." In 1792, the tavern was bought by Roger and Nathaniel Gregory. At one time there was a petition to move the courthouse about a mile west to Rumford. Proprietor Ann Bickley Gregory petitioned the General Assembly to keep the courthouse at the present location so she would be able to provide for her young children by catering to travelers at the tavern.

Records show the Ordinary was in close proximity to the King William County Courthouse. This establishment would have been important as a meeting place before and after hearings and court proceedings. Taverns were an important social hub in a community. Imagine a place where food, drink, exchange of local news and from abroad, political debates, games, and finally served as a place to sleep (hopefully without bedbugs).

After much research, collecting and remodeling, the King William Museum Council is proud to present their interpretation through a variety of exhibits. Also included in the exhibit are actual artifacts that were discovered by the Fairfield Foundation during their ongoing archeological digs in their search for the actual Gregory Ordinary location.

Special thanks to all members who with their tireless research and contributions have made this possible. And as always, a museum is a work in progress. Anyone interested in donating or volunteering please contact the museum. Phone: 804.769.9619

Email: [kwhs@kingwilliamhistory.org](mailto:kwhs@kingwilliamhistory.org)

Debi Moren

### County Historic Sites Mapping - Online

History buffs generally like maps that show the locations of old historic structures, like homes, churches, schools, mills, etc. There are several existing maps that identify historic sites in King William County. This includes the Gilmer Confederate Engineering Map developed during the Civil War, the Garber & Wendenburg map created in 1976, and the 2006 map developed by society member Bibb Edwards. These maps are great, but very “busy” ... and you need a large printer to print them, and a table to display them on!

King William County has been using GIS mapping technology for years to identify houses, building, schools, roads and property parcel boundaries. There are additional items planned for the future – like churches, utilities, parks, water bodies, etc. These different views of county assets are made available through a menu item called “Layers” on the county GIS Mapping System. This mapping is available through the King William County Website - [kingwilliamcounty.us](http://kingwilliamcounty.us).

With the help of our county administrator, we have the opportunity to establish “online” GIS mapping of historic sites and places in the county. In addition to identifying the specific location, there can be links established to provide more information about a historic resource. The county is allowing the Historical Society to include historic sites as a “Layer” on their GIS Mapping System. We have started this effort by identifying the county’s 20 historic resources that are on the National Register of Historic Places and the 7 county Historic Districts.

To access this information, access this link: <https://kingwilliamcountygis.timmons.com/#/>

1. Agree to the disclaimer (maps and data are for illustration purposes only)
2. Click the “+” (left top corner of map area) one time to zoom in
3. Select the far-right menu item “Layers”
4. Select Historic Places or Historic Districts or both
5. The historic sites will appear on the map
6. Zoom in on the satellite view to see the site (“+” icon)
7. Click on the “I” (below “+” & “-“) on the far left of screen and then click on an historic resource of interest to display summary information about a resource
8. Click “Open Link” in the summary box to access detail information about the resource

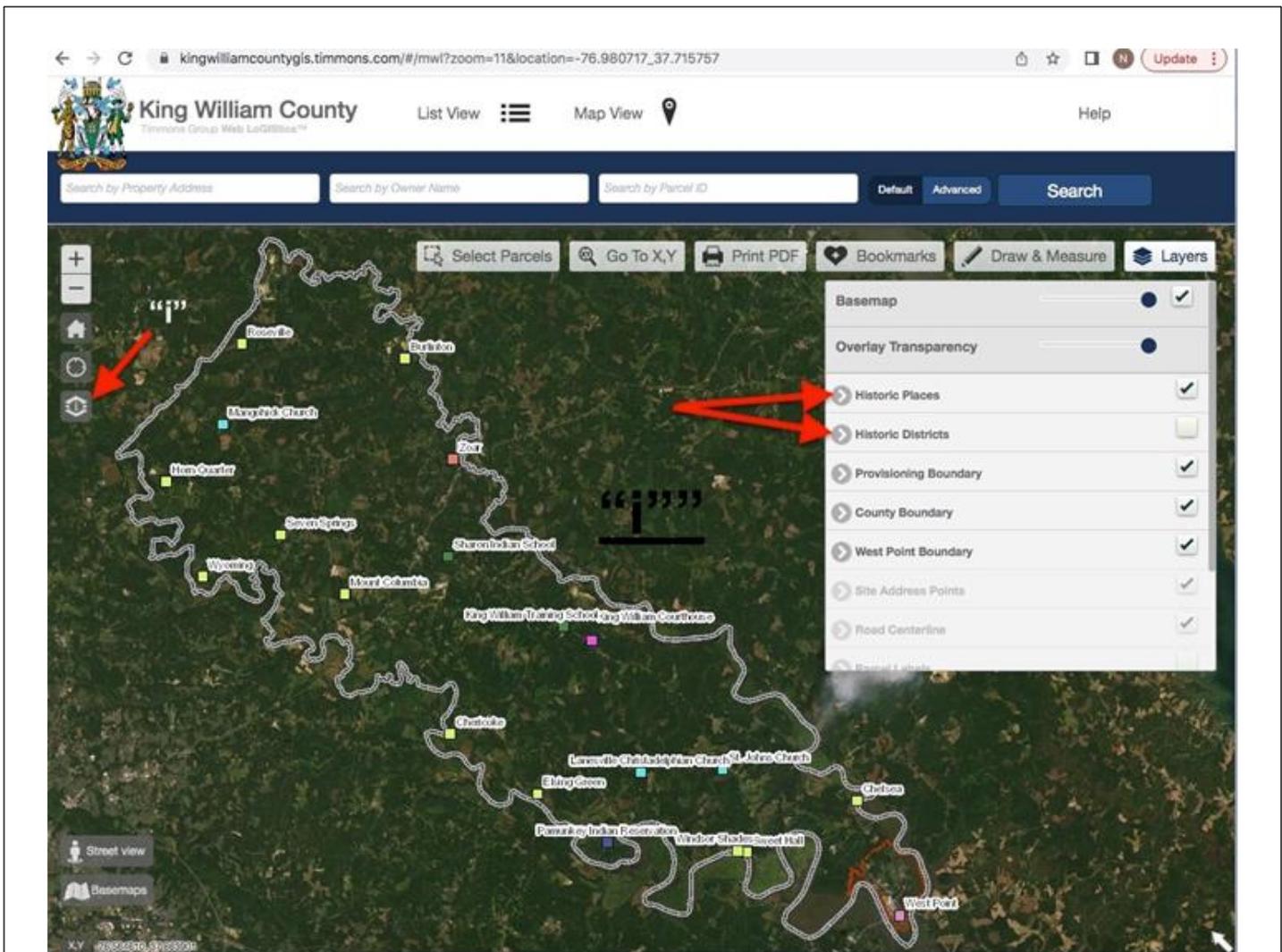
This is just the beginning of utilizing the county GIS Mapping System for identifying potentially hundreds of old homes, churches, schools, stores, etc. in our county. Our next step would be to establish a committee to work on identifying additional historic resources, categorizing them and adding them to the “layers” menu.

If you have questions about using the site, Bob Hubbard would be glad to speak with you. Please call Bob at 804-994-2637.

Bob Hubbard

*Please see a sample on the following page.*

## MEMBER NEWS



Screen shot of GIS mapping of historic sites

### New Welcome Signs to Greet Visitors Entering King William County

Motorists entering King William County on both Route 360 and Route 30 will soon be greeted with new “Welcome Signs” approved by the Board of Supervisors at their Work Session on June 13. The signs will be aluminum with aluminum posts. The KWCHS is contributing to the cost of these signs.

The two signs on Route 360 will rest in the median after leaving Hanover and King & Queen counties. The two signs leaving Caroline and the Town of West Point on Route 30 will be near the same places as the existing signs.

Depending on availability of materials, County officials are hopeful the signs will be erected by Labor Day.

## GREENSAND MARL: A LESSON IN HISTORY AND GEOLOGY

By Gus Kasper

In 1884, Dr. C. A. Greene, a medical doctor from Pennsylvania, published a pamphlet entitled *Fertilizers in General and the Greensand Marl of King William County, Virginia, in Particular*. Dr. Greene had taken a great interest in the greensand marl deposits in the Pamunkey River basin, believing that they had a great economic potential as agricultural fertilizer. He went so far as to call the King William marl “the Great Fertilizer.” Greene’s pamphlet, a sort of disorganized persuasive essay, attempted to convince people to invest their money in King William County’s marl deposits.

So, what is marl? Marl is a sort of sedimentary rock which has a consistency somewhere between chalk and clay. Formed in a marine environment, marl often contains fossilized sea shells. Greensand marl in particular has a greenish blue hue to it, and appears to be superior in agricultural value to other marls insofar as it is a better fertilizer. Marl has been used as a fertilizer for hundreds of years, with roots in agriculture dating as far back as ancient Rome. This claim is proven by the writings of Pliny the Elder (23-79AD) who commented on its use. Many Americans continued in this ancient agricultural tradition, replenishing their own soil with marl. As a fertilizer, marl is beneficial in many ways. For example, marl supplies one of the most important nutrients for plant growth, Potassium. Additionally, marl increases the pH of soil through its abundance of lime. Such an increase in pH, among other benefits, gives plants better access to nutrients.

Dr. Greene appears to have been correct in claiming that marl existed along the Pamunkey River in King William. Indeed, when looking at a geologic map of the area, one can see there are many areas along the Pamunkey which appear to match his own account of local marl along that river. Adding to the value of the Pamunkey marl itself, Dr. Greene claimed that it was in a prime location for transportation, considering that the deposits lay directly on the banks of the Pamunkey river. Such a waterway conceivably could even be dredged to make it more accessible for larger vessels. During this time before effective overland highways, such an argument must have had some investors interested.

Dr. Greene included many testimonies from local King William farmers who claimed that upon using the local marl, their lands were greatly enriched. For example, Greene reported that “Dr. William B. Croxten, of Manquin, Va., says that George M. Bassett marled his land in patches in 1863, and you can plainly see the difference now, and he has never re-marled the same land. Dr. Croxten says he is now getting 250 bushels of corn to the acre by marling, when he could not before obtain ten bushels.” Another man by the name Mr. Hogan claimed that he was able to “obtain 23 bushels of wheat from my marled land, and ten only when I have not added the greensand marl.” Dr. Greene also reported that John C. Lacey, another man from King William County, told him “he bought a farm in 1868 that was worn out and by marling he has so enriched it that he raises elegant crops, and that he does not use his stable manure. He considers the marl more valuable, and it retains [sic] its virtues for so many years, when stable manure must be replenished annually. Dr. John T. Lewis and Dr. Thos. Caster, and many other reliable farmers, made similar statements, after testing the marl for from 10 to 35 years.” Dr. Greene added other testimonies from other farmers living in the vicinity of the Pamunkey River basin as well.

If he failed to convince others of the potential for a such a mining business, he was himself no doubt convinced by the time of writing his pamphlet. Indeed, he mentions in the text that he had already signed a “ninety-nine years lease for all the available river frontage, with a few exceptions. The first marl reached in going up the Pamunkey is ours by lease, with the privilege of purchase.”

## GREENSAND MARL: A LESSON IN HISTORY AND GEOLOGY

In his pamphlet, Dr. Greene tried all he could to induce investors to come to King William, going beyond discussing just the economic potential of the local marl. Indeed, he tried to paint a picture of the place as the ideal locality in the “Sunny South,” even going as far as to say “that favored locality [King William] ... must necessarily be (in a few decade of years [sic]) the ‘Garden of Eden’ of the United States” and that if it were not for the fact that there was “no hotel or boarding-house here... hundreds and thousands of visitors would flock to this wonderful locality.”

It appears that Dr. Greene’s efforts came to naught, as no mention of later greensand marl mining in King William appears in the historical record. Perhaps the greatest problem with Dr. Greene’s plan was that he was pitching an outdated product. While such a mining operation may have been profitable only a half century before he wrote his pamphlet, by 1884 new fertilizers had already appeared on the market. Already by 1849 “the first patent for the production of chemical fertilizers or ‘artificial manurers’ was issued” and by the 1870’s the use of commercial fertilizers had become widespread amongst American farmers. The trouble with marl was that it was too inconvenient to transport, with one source from 1912 reporting that “its bulkiness will probably always prevent it being extensively used in its natural condition except locally.” Other fertilizers were also no doubt more concentrated, making them not only more effective but also cheaper than marl which required higher shipping costs. Even farmers and planters who had marl readily accessible were unable to spread enough to cover their vast acreage, it simply was not practical to do so. As a result, Dr. Greene’s solution of mining and selling raw marl was never adopted, and commercial mining of the King William marl was never undertaken.

*Gus Kasper is a KWCHS and Museum Council member. Congratulations, Gus, on your recent graduation, with a degree in History, from Mary Washington University!*

### Bibliography:

- Agriculture Victoria. “Soil Acidity.” Farm Management. Last modified December 29, 2020. <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/soil/soil-acidity#:~:text=A%20pH%20range%20between%205%20and%206%20is,to%20neutral%20E2%80%94%20Optimum%20for%20many%20acid-sensitive%20plants>.
- Clark, William Bullock and Benjamin LeRoy Miller. “The Physiography and Geology of the Coastal Plain Province of Virginia.” *Virginia Geological Survey Bulletin* no. 4 (1912).
- Greene, C.A. *Fertilizers in General and the Greensand Marl of King William County, Virginia, in Particular*. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1884.
- Mixon, R.B., C.R. Berquist, Jr., W.L. Newell, G.H. Johnson. “Geologic map and generalized cross sections of the Coastal Plain and adjacent parts of the Piedmont, Virginia.” Map. 1989. [https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/Prodesc/proddesc\\_10097.htm](https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/Prodesc/proddesc_10097.htm).
- Sheridan, Richard C. “Chemical Fertilizers in Southern Agriculture.” *Agricultural History* 53, no. 1, (1979): 308–18.
- Taylor, Rosser H. “Fertilizers and Farming in the Southeast 1840-1950, Part I: 1840-1900.” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 30, no. 3 (1953): 305–28.
- Winiwarter, Verena and Winfried Blum. “From Marl to Rock Powder. On the History of Soil Fertility Management by Rock Materials.” *Journal of Plant Nutrition and Soil Science* 171, no. 3 (2018): 316-324.

## 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

## VOTING FOR OFFICERS

At the July 17<sup>th</sup> meeting, members will vote on the following slate of officers for the next biennium:

President: David Brown  
Vice-President: Morgan Faulkner  
Treasurer: Sally Pearson  
Corresponding Secretary: Amanda Walker  
Recording Secretary: Lisa Vawter  
At Large: Benjamin Shumaker  
At Large: Carl Fischer  
At Large: Bob Hubbard  
Parliamentarian: John Breeden



*The King William Museum is open on Sundays from  
1:00 to 5:00 pm.  
Located at 227 Horse Landing Road,  
King William, Virginia*

### *King William County Historical Society*

The King William County Historical Society was formed in 1973 to preserve and promote the unique heritage and rich history of King William County, Virginia through education, research, and restoration of historically significant landmarks.

Our mission is to collect, interpret, and preserve those things relative to the history of the county while acting as caretaker of artifacts from the lives and traditions of the people who have gone before us.

To this end our efforts are wide ranging, including our publications, operating the county historical museum, and the stabilization and restoration of King William landmarks such as the Old Jail, Lanesville Christadelphian Church, and Acquinton Church.

Membership is open to all who share a passion for history, a reverence for the past, and an interest in preserving our common heritage for future generations.