



Photo by Frances Benjamin Johnston , 1935

KING WILLIAM COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Summer, 2026 - Volume 18, Number 3

SUNDAY, JULY 19TH AT 2:30 PM

Mark your calendar for our Summer Quarterly Membership Meeting. Note that we will be at the **Lanesville Christadelphian Church**, not the King William County Administration Building. And yes, we know we are competing with the World Cup finals 🤔. FIFA should have checked with us.

If it seems we have **oral history** on our minds, we do. We support interviews of family, friends, and neighbors as a low-cost - but time-sensitive - way to preserve our past. **Dr. Jessica Taylor** will help us develop our skills so we can do it right. **Join us!**

Board & Officers, 2026-2028

The KWCHS Nominating Committee will propose the following slate of Board Members and Officers for 2026-2028 for consideration by our members at the Membership Meeting on July 19th.

President: Katie [Gibson] Harlow
 Vice-President: John Breeden
 Recording Secretary: Amanda Walker
 Corresponding Secretary: Bibb Edwards
 Treasurer: Sally Pearson
 Parliamentarian: David Brown
 At-Large: Lee Ramsey
 At-Large: Reggie Neale
 At-Large: Gus Kasper

Nominations for these positions may also be made from the floor. However, the candidate's consent must be obtained prior to the nomination.

The Committee will also recommend the Board approve Debi Moren as Museum Council Chair at the next Board meeting in September.
 - Bibb Edwards, Membership Committee Chair

**King William County
Historical Society**

QUARTERLY MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Join us for a presentation by Dr. Jessica Taylor on the best practices for conducting oral history interviews. Jessica is also conducting interviews for KWCHS on African American education in King William

Date: July 19th, 2026

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Location: Lanesville Christadelphian Church
7442 Mt. Olive Cohoke Rd.
King William, Va 23086



**Oral History Interview Opportunity
African American Education
in King William County**

King William County Historical Society is conducting interviews with community members on African American education in the county. Interviews will take place July 19th - 26th

If you or someone you know would be interested in participating, please contact:

Jessica Taylor | Oral Historian
jessicataylor@vt.edu
Or
Katie Gibson Harlow | KWCHS Vice President
 (804) 854-6739 or kgibson98@gmail.com



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

For the second time, I have the honor of giving thanks to you, the membership, for choosing me to lead the King William County Historical Society as its President over the last two terms. Term limits mean we will have a new President after our Summer membership meeting. We will have new leadership and hopefully fresh perspectives with new energy. After spending the last two years with one of the best board of directors we have ever had, I am certain that the society will be in good hands. And I plan to stick with the board as Past President, helping anywhere and everywhere I can.

Change brings with it opportunity. And the last two years have shown that our society is interested in projects that are ambitious and timely. Our best example is the forthcoming book on the pre-Civil War houses of King William County. It's been more than a few generations since we've had a reliable, up-to-date publication that highlights our county's history. By focusing on architecture, not only do we get a beautiful compendium of historic buildings, but we can also celebrate the efforts of so many property owners who have preserved these landmarks for future generations. With a little luck, you'll be able to buy a copy as a Christmas present for that history lover in your family. Stay tuned for more.

But we're not only interested in big projects. We are also capable of small, remarkable initiatives that demonstrate both our capacity and creativity. One that I want to highlight is the Coon Fund-sponsored LOVE sign erected at the base of the Fire Tower at the Courthouse. Debi Moren, Museum

Chairperson, worked diligently from start to finish to shepherd the project. From concept, to design, through fabrication and ultimately installation, she overcame significant hurdles to ensure we have a symbol for our community to be proud of, while drawing more attention to our courthouse historic district. Debi's work is worthy of recognition.

And some of our projects are just starting. Our upcoming meeting will focus on oral histories with members of our African American communities in King William County. Projects like these often start small, with a handful of committee members reaching out to a handful of citizens. For many, talking about the past can be difficult, feel awkward, and it challenges us to see our own past as important. But these recorded moments are truly gifts to the next generation. Without them, we are left to conjecture. With them, we can speak our truths to the future.

And this is where my term concludes - with a look to the future. We have an excellent slate for your consideration and a combination of experienced and new board members. Our financial position is strong, our membership is generous with their time and support, and the years ahead are bright. Challenges will surely come our way, but we will persevere as we have for generations before us.

Thank you again for letting me serve you.

Sincerely,

Dr. David A. Brown, President



(Photo by Ed Moren)

L-O-V-E Sign in King William County

As many of you may remember a campaign in Virginia in the late 60's a slogan was born known as **Virginia is for Lovers**. It became known to represent a broad love for various attractions and experiences that Virginia offers. Born from this campaign, the LOVE Signs were created in 2011 by the Virginia Tourism

Commission. In 2013, the VTC commissioned artists to spell out the L-O-V-E to carry out their own theme. As early as this year there are now over 300 signs throughout the Old Dominion designed to promote tourism and to reflect the local character of the Community.

Heading down Route 30 towards West Point and the Oldest Courthouse, you will find King William's newest LOVE Sign. It stands on a knoll in front of the Fire Tower. In this design, the "L" shows the date King William was established; the "O" includes the County coat of Arms; the "V" shows the two rivers which border King William (Pamunkey and Mattaponi) as well as a photo of the "Oldest Courthouse in the United States still in continuous use"; and finally, the "E" honors the original 13 colonies with stars and stripes.

The King William Historical Society funded the project 100% using funds from the Alma and Harry Coon Fund. A special thanks to Dave Tench Signs for bringing the concept to life. - Debi Moren, Museum Chair

Racial Integrity Act Marker Unveiling

On Saturday, April 4th, Tribal leaders, citizens, and members of the public gathered at the Courthouse for the unveiling of the historical marker installed by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. It commemorates the resilience of the Tribes of King William and the Racial Integrity Act.

The ceremony consisted of a welcome from King William County Historical Society President, Dave Brown, comments from the Chiefs of each of the Tribes in King William (pictured below from left to right, Chief Mark Custalow, Mattaponi; Chief Kevin Brown, Pamunkey; Chief Frank Adams, Upper Mattaponi; and former Chief Ken Adams, Upper Mattaponi), and Ashley Spivey, a member of the Virginia Board of Historic Resources and Executive Director of Kenah Consulting. Chief Mark Custalow sang a ceremonial song.

After the ceremony, participants enjoyed food and fellowship with Indian tacos from a Mattaponi-owned food truck, Hungry Hungry Arrow. Our Museum was open and assisted with the event. - Katie [Gibson] Harlow



(Photo by Gene Campbell)



Do You Recognize These Children?

On a late summer afternoon in 1935, renowned photographer [Frances Benjamin Johnston](#) set up her camera outside the dilapidated Ferry House at Piping Tree. Eventually, five images of the building made their way into the [Carnegie Survey of the Architecture of the South at the Library of Congress](#).

Unlike the vast majority of her photos taken to document a rapidly vanishing southern built environment, this afternoon she posed three children on the building's steps, as seen in the inset above.

Barefoot, displaying ample evidence of being outside much of the day, the girls do show signs of being prepared to have their photograph made; notice their hair. And perhaps of becoming a bit restless.

So, who are they? Siblings? They surely lived nearby. Would they attend school in King William, perhaps graduating in the 1940's from KWHS? Do they still have family in King William?

Could they now be in their 90s with memories of the day the old lady in the big chauffeured car took their picture on the steps of that run-down building on the river?



King William Dig Days

Our Members and the public are encouraged to volunteer to assist Fairfield Foundation staff **doing archaeology** at the KW Courthouse.

Digs occur, weather permitting, on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month from 10 am to 4 pm. To reserve your spot (recommended), email fairfield@fairfieldfoundation.org. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

Above: Fourth Graders from Acquinton Elementary School.

Below: Drone view of the east gable of The Hill Hotel and southern corner of an 18th-century mystery foundation.

(Photos courtesy of the Fairfield Foundation.)



CORRESPONDENCE

Richmond Whig & Public Advertiser,

February 3, 1857, page one

[For the Whig

A KING WILLIAM FOX HUNT

Messrs, Editors - According to previous arrangements, a party of ladies and gentlemen numbering between 35 and 40 met on the 10th inst., near the Acquinton Church, and started out in a regular fox hunt. Although the weather was very cold, the ladies appeared to mind it very little. The gentlemen were in fine spirits, and not deficient in gallantry. Indeed, it seemed the age of chivalry had revived, when, gazing on the assemblage of fair ladies and gallant knights amid stamping steeds and sounding horns.

After the rendezvous and a short consultation, the ground to hunt was agreed upon. Off we went "with hearts so light and free," a gay cavalcade, with laughing and talking, until we reached the Pamunkey low lands. Silence was then observed, and the huntsmen saw that their dogs hunted diligently the lands of Dr. Gregory, Mr. Hogan, Mrs. Gen. Braxton, Dr. Wm. P. Braxton and Wm. A. Braxton. Then on the farm of Mr. Robert A. Munday. In his low grounds we started the fox half-past 12 o'clock.

Really, I never witnessed such a display of horsemanship by ladies. They were well equipped, and entered in the spirit of the chase with as much zest as the gentlemen. The company being eager, the run was short, a good many of the dogs were thrown out and Reynard, a wily rascal, made his escape.

We were growing cold and thirsty, but being on Virginia soil, whose proprietors are noted for their

hospitality, about half-past 2, Mr. M_____ posted a servant to the company with an invitation to come to the house and get some refreshments. - This was pleasant intelligence - the ladies cold, the gentlemen thirsty, the invitation was unanimously accepted. We proceeded immediately to the house, where we were most kindly received by Mr. and Mrs. M. The ladies refreshed and the gentleman's thirst slaked, we resumed our saddles and wended our way to Mrs. P.'s who gave us a cordial reception.

Time passed so agreeably that we took no note of it. "When hearts are glad, time flies fast."

However, about dusk we set out for our respective homes, with the understanding that it should not be a final parting, but the hope of meeting again to enjoy another day's sport gladdened our otherwise saddened hearts. *** (paragraphed for clarity)

Thanks to the Confederate "Gilmer" map, we can easily note that the party of fair ladies and gallant gentlemen traveled from Acquinton to the Pamunkey lowlands - Piping Tree > Chericoke > Liberty Hall - staying mostly southwest of Jack's Creek on lands and roads they would certainly recognize today.

And what could be a more agreeable example of "old King William" than an idyllic fox hunt on a crisp Saturday in January, 1857?

But alas, things are seldom as simple as they first appear. As the unidentified author wished, soon there would be another hunt. This one would provoke the ire of at least one King William resident. He would quickly vent his strong displeasure in the *Whig*. Can you guess why?

Stay tuned for Part Two!

\$ TREASURER'S REPORT ¢

Account	Balance (06/29/2026)
Checking	\$885.33
Museum Savings CD	\$11,734.86
Wells Fargo Brokerage Account	\$214,105.07
Wells Fargo Coon Fund Money Market	\$130,945.00
PayPal Balance	\$86.20

~ DONATIONS ~

Please consider donating to the King William County Historical Society. You can do this easily online by visiting

<https://kingwilliamhistory.org/donate>

If you have a project in mind for the Society to undertake that you would like to financially support, let's talk.

BURNED RECORDS TRANSCRIPTIONS

Books **1 through 9** are complete and available for purchase. Thanks to the help of Gus Kasper, we've formatted four more books since the Spring newsletter. The cost is still \$20.00 for each transcribed book with a media charge of \$10 for orders under \$40. Contact [John Breeden](#) for details and orders. Drives may also be purchased through the Museum.

Visit Us!

In Person: King William County Historical Museum
227 Horse Landing Road, King William, VA
Phone: (804) 769-9619

Online: <https://kingwilliamhistory.org>
<https://www.facebook.com/kingwillcoHS>

Email: kwhs@kingwilliamhistory.org

And Our Neighbors...

Pamunkey Indian Museum and Cultural Center
<https://pamunkey.org/museum-cultural-center>
Historical Society of West Point, Virginia
<https://hswpva.org>

King & Queen Historical Society / Tavern Museum
<https://www.kingandqueenmuseum.org>

New Kent Historical Society / Museum
<https://www.newkenthistoricalsoc.com>

Hanover County Historical Society
<https://hanoverhistorical.org>

Caroline County Historical Society
<https://www.facebook.com/CarolineHistoricalSociety>

MEMBERSHIP

DUES

Individual (Year).....\$20
Family Membership (Year).....\$30
Individual Lifetime.....\$250

Checks can be sent to:

King William Historical Society
PO Box 233
King William, VA 23086

We also accept dues through **PayPal**.
(A PayPal account is not necessary)

Scan our QR Code below

Membership Dues



Or visit

<https://kingwilliamhistory.org/dues>

Yearly memberships run for one year from the date
we receive your dues.

For membership questions, please contact

Sally Pearson at

treasurer@kingwilliamhistory.org

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If you are receiving this newsletter via the US Postal
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instead, please email us at

kwhs@kingwilliamhistory.org

If you are a member and are not receiving a
newsletter, let us know! If you do not wish to receive
this newsletter, let us know that too.

As our Spring Membership Meeting was set aside to encourage our members to attend the King William County VA250 Heritage Day Festival at the Courthouse on April 11th, we have no minutes to report in this newsletter.

The Coon Fund, Part One

At our last Board Meeting, we received notification from The Community Foundation in Richmond that our 2025-26 proposed budget had been approved. It has been almost a decade since we began receiving annual funding from the Alma and Harry Coon Fund. Perhaps this would be a good time to recap.

Harry H. Coon lived a remarkable life. The adopted son of financier and philanthropist Owen L. Coon, he was comfortably raised in Northside Chicago. It was the era of the Big Bands, and teenage Harry was more interested in playing the drums than the money-lending business. In his freshman year at Northwestern, he was compared to the great Gene Krupa. But it was also the early 1940s, and like for many before and since, war cut short his formal education. He joined the Navy and secured a position in the elite Navy Band. The day after marrying Alma in 1944, he left the Midwest to report for duty at Yorktown. Service in the Navy likely was his introduction to Tidewater Virginia and its history.

After the war, rather than return to Northwestern, Harry followed his father into the family finance business. But after Owen's untimely death in 1948, Harry made music his business. For CBS and then on his own, he performed, wrote, recorded, and produced a wide variety of music. He participated in the early days of TV, built a recording studio in his home, and he and Alma owned and operated a radio station during the golden age of AM.

In addition, Harry served as President of the Owen L. Coon Foundation from 1961 to 1991. During this time, as he was involved in donations of millions of dollars to institutions in his Illinois community, he and Alma developed a deep affection for the work of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (CWF). While remaining based in Illinois, they strengthened their ties to the area in 1982 by purchasing the partially restored Seven Springs property in King William.



Photo courtesy Seven Springs Manor, LLC

After completing the renovation and Alma's death in 2004, Harry donated Seven Springs to the CWF. By special arrangement with them, he maintained a residence on "DoG" Street in Williamsburg. Harry died in 2015; he was 93.

While in King William, Harry visited our courthouse, attended Society meetings, and became a member. This was a time when the Society was actively undertaking much the same work as Colonial Williamsburg: building restoration, museum development, and public education. He must have liked what he saw and who he met, for after his death, the Society received notice that it had received an unexpected - and sizable - perpetual endowment from the Alma and Harry Coon Fund.

In making his bequest, Harry partnered with Richmond's Community Foundation, Inc. to manage and disburse the funds and to ensure they are used as he directed. Thus, to receive money, the Society must submit an annual proposed budget that directs spending in accordance with Mr. Coon's wishes, and later account for how these funds were spent. In Part Two, we will share how we have been using the Coon Fund to further his - and our - goals.

Book Review

Ever since I promised a review of Barbara Vines Little's *A Researcher's Guide to Virginia's Historical Records*, I have been struggling with how to pull it off. A detailed, full review simply could not fit in this column, even if I had the skill to write one. So I have opted for metaphor: a needle in a haystack. Researchers are often looking for needles, small bits of information (hopefully) contained (hidden) within large, often fragmented collections of information, haystacks. We can become so focused on what we wish to learn (needles) that it may not occur to us that success may depend on how much we understand available historical records (haystacks).

Ms. Little's book explains Virginia's historical haystacks with researchers in mind. The Table of Contents below speaks for itself. So if you would like to **do a little history** and wish to save yourself time, money, and probably frustration, buy and consult her book. Click [HERE](#).

- Bibb Edwards

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King William County Historical Society, Inc.

a volunteer-driven,
tax-exempt 501 (c) (03) corporation

Founded in 1974, the King William County Historical Society was incorporated in 1997 to promote interest in the history of King William County, Virginia. The Society operates the King William County Museum adjacent to the Old Courthouse, 227 Horse Landing Road, King William, VA.

We also support member and public education, research projects, and the preservation of historically significant local landmarks and artifacts.

Our quarterly Membership Meetings, usually held 3rd Sundays in January, April, July and October, feature informative historically themed programs that are open to all. Board meetings are usually the previous month.

We welcome your support.

Current Board & Officers

David Brown: President
Katie [Gibson] Harlow: Vice President
Sally Pearson: Past President & Treasurer
Amanda Walker: Recording Secretary
Bibb Edwards: Corresponding Secretary
John Breeden: Parliamentarian
Debi Moren: Museum Council Chair*
Lee Ramsey: At Large

*appointed by the Board