

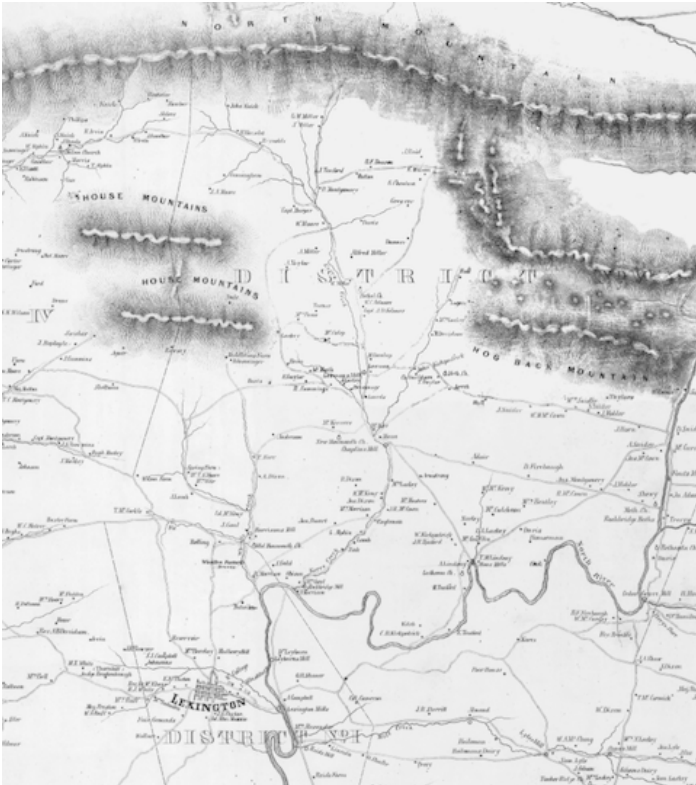
NEWS - NOTES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

November 2015

Program on Sunday, December 13

'The Haunts of House Mountain: Oral Histories, Hollows, and Homes'



The two peaks of House Mountain appear in this 1860 Gilham map together with Lexington and the North (now Maury) River. Image courtesy of W&L Special Collections.

After September's journeys to our county's southerly namesake at Natural Bridge, RHS turns this December to another local landmark in a joint presentation by Sarah Clayton and Jennifer Law Young that will center on the communities nestled around House Mountain. Though the Bridge's majestic span may be our signature for outsiders, the icon for many local residents is the familiar profile of House Mountain (indeed, its double profiles, for those here who know its twin ridges).

The December program will provide a visual and narrative tour of the histories, hollows, and homes that surround those paired mountains. The afternoon's presentations, exhibits and film will draw from an inventive, ongoing project that's being developed across a number of multimedia platforms by two Rockbridge residents. Sarah Clayton is an award-winning writer and photographer, and author of a book on this terrain; Jennifer Law Young is a veteran, Emmy-award winning filmmaker and journalist,

Program at a Glance

Theme: Haunts of House Mountain

Date: Sunday, December 13

Location: House Mountain Inn

Time: 2:00 p.m., reception to follow

See Haunts of House Mountain, Page 5

Save these dates

Holiday Open House: Come to Campbell House on Friday, December 4, from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. Stop in, warm up, and enjoy the Society's fellowship before Lexington's Main Street Parade. This will also be your final chance to view the exhibit, "Images of the Rock Bridge," before it closes.

Special tour for RHS members on the theme "President Lee and Washington College": Join us on Wednesday, December 16, from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. Start by viewing the 150th-anniversary exhibits at Lee Chapel and Special Collections in Leyburn Library, then tour Lee House and enjoy a reception afterward. Reservations are required because numbers are limited. *For details see Page 4.*

Lecture on "The Legacy of the Civil War" by Dr. Ron Heinemann, Professor Emeritus, Hampden-Sydney College, Wednesday, February 17 at 7 p.m., Lexington Presbyterian Church. Details will appear in February newsletter.

A letter from the RHS President

Dear Friends of the Rockbridge Historical Society:

My first year as President of your Society is almost over. It has been an exciting, rewarding, and fruitful experience for me. In recognizing the year's good work, let me share our important accomplishments and related goals:

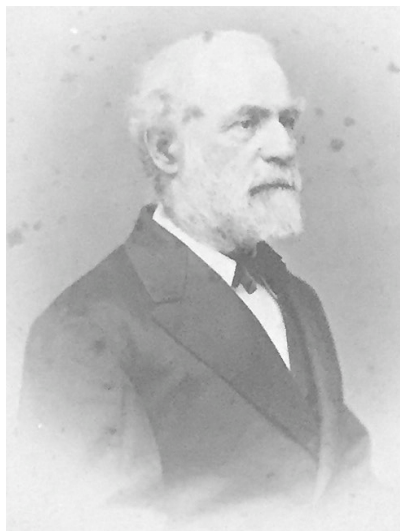
- (1) We are doing well financially, and will finish even stronger, as those with outstanding pledges to our Annual Fund fulfill them to complete our fiscal year.
- (2) Our three historic properties are in good shape, now fully rented, and needing only some minor fix-ups, as is always the case with antique buildings.
- (3) A survey mistake made years ago involving a property line at the Castle has been corrected, and a title encumbrance to the Sloan House has been eliminated.
- (4) We've both repeated and extended the journeys of our Lewis and Clark Discovery Trunk and have creatively adapted its materials and stories for the different curricular needs of elementary, middle and high school students in Buena Vista, Lexington, and Rockbridge County. However, we need more volunteers to partner us as "trunk ambassadors," willing to expand these presentations to a larger number of classes.
- (5) We are on our way to establishing the first Rockbridge "History Bee" in 2016, thanks to the active recruitment of community support by our new Educational Outreach Chair, Mary Harvey-Halseth, who has also just been elected as the new Secretary of the Society.
- (6) Through the enthusiasm and foresight of our new Programs Chair, Reed Belden, we have identified all of the quarterly public programs planned for the coming year.
- (7) Volunteers on our Publications Committee continued to edit articles for our next "Proceedings," and produced several new brochures involving Campbell House and distinctive items from its collections; one brochure can be used as a carryout map and guide to neighboring historical attractions, to be given out at Campbell House and the Visitor Center.
- (8) Another volunteer has digitized Volume XIII of the "RHS Proceedings" and is evaluating with the Society the efficacy of digitizing the entire series for broader access by researchers and curious readers.
- (9) In a related vein, we're moving to redesign our website to be more content-rich and user-friendly to the public.
- (10) Trustee Peggy Hays has been working with local theater directors and the author of "Murder in Lexington" to adapt that book into a stage play for public performance in the spring of 2016.
- (11) Our public programs this year have shown a wide and popular reach, with our recent presentation, exhibit, and reception at the Natural Bridge Hotel requiring well more seating than planned. Given that appeal and accessibility, we are evaluating having more of our programs and social events on Sunday afternoons.
- (12) We've revitalized the unique institutional resources we share with W&L Special Collections. More frequent display and promotion of our rich, varied collections there have been spurred by an energetic, forward-looking staff who actively support our programming, including Head of Special Collections Tom Camden and Seth McCormick-Goodhart, both of whom now serve on our Board.
- (13) Lastly, we continue to work closely with other history-centered organizations in the larger community, including the Historic Lexington Foundation, the Miller's House Museum Foundation, the Brownsburg Museum, Paxton House, the Mountain Valley Preservation Alliance, Natural Bridge, the Virginia Association of Museums, and our neighboring universities.

In shaping and guiding these efforts, we're fortunate to be led by an energetic Board and many volunteers dedicated to expanding our mission of preserving and disseminating the history of Rockbridge County. Eric Wilson, our creative and effective Executive Director, the day-to-day conductor of this orchestra, continues to get the best out of our assets both physical and human. But without a doubt we need more volunteers: please evaluate your time and make an effort to lend us your hands, your interests, and your experience. You will be richly rewarded, as are those of us already working on behalf of your Society.

-- *Stephen D. Beck*

Exciting new materials donated to the Society in 2015

We are here reviving an earlier feature in our newsletter (and periodically in the "Proceedings") that brings attention to some of the unique histories associated with our artifacts and archives at Campbell House and at W&L's Special Collections. In future issues, we'll detail some of the items in RHS holdings and the role they play in preserving and enlivening our appreciation for the history of Rockbridge County, which now stretches across four centuries. Through articles and images shared in these newsletters, my colleagues and fellow Board members will 'open the vault' for a peek inside. In the best traditions of local and public history, we hope these narrative miniatures will shed light on some of the material artifacts, manuscripts, and historic images that constitute the Society's holdings



Michael Miley photograph of Robert E. Lee as President of Washington College. Image courtesy of W&L Special Collections.

As one timely example, RHS member and volunteer Harry W. Hamilton, III, with his sister Mary Ann Hamilton Stripling, recently donated to the Society two oval framed photographic portraits: one of their great-grandfather, the Reverend Doctor Augustus Houston Hamilton, the other an important photograph of Robert E. Lee (shown here) during his presidency of Washington College.

As a young man, Hamilton served with the Rockbridge Artillery during the Civil War. After he was paroled at Appomattox, he returned to Washington College in Lexington, graduating in 1870, his diploma signed by President Lee, before attending Union Theological Seminary. Reverend Hamilton preached for two years before joining the Mount Carmel congregation in Augusta County, where he served from 1875 to 1913. The oval framed portrait of Lee, likely purchased by Augustus during his student days in Lexington, was apparently taken in 1869 or 1870 by Michael Miley; its format is rare and likely unpublished.

Michigan. The contents include several early twentieth-century photo scrapbooks compiled by the Timber Ridge family, as well as a variety of documents and an important photo album pertaining to Private John A. Kinnear's experiences in World War One, when he served as a member of Washington and Lee University's volunteer ambulance unit. This particular family archive could not be more timely as we approach the 100th anniversary of the Great War.

Both of these recent acquisitions may be accessed at the Washington and Lee University Special Collections Department in Leyburn Library (Level One). We hope you can come see them for yourself at the RHS Members' Tour of Lee Chapel and Special Collections on Wednesday, December 16 (numbers will be limited; see Page 4 for sign-up information).

In its long tradition of preservation, publication, and programming, RHS is fortunate to serve as a leading custodian of local, regional, and national legacies. We hope you will share your curiosities and your commitments to ensuring that these stories are meaningfully told to our current audiences and those in the future.

-- Seth McCormick-Goodhart



John Kinnear and friends in France during World War I. Kinnear is at far left. Image courtesy of W&L Special Collections.

Partner Events

Brownsburg Museum: "Civil War Brownsburg," last chance to see this exhibit. Weekends through December 13.

Marshall Museum: December 3, 5:30 p.m. "Behind the Scenes Event: The Things They Carried Home," interpreting artifacts and souvenirs brought back by troops in WW I and WW II. Part of the Marshall Foundation's Legacy Series, "Taking Care of the Troops." With reception and tastings from veteran-owned/operated breweries. Reservations required: 463-7103.

Paxton House Historical Society: January 29, 2016, 7:00 p.m. Francis Lynn will present a program on one of Buena Vista's earliest industries, the Buena Vista Fire Clay Company. Maury River Senior Center, Buena Vista. Free, reception to follow.

History Museum of Western Virginia through January 31 in Roanoke: "Distant Echoes: Black Farmers in America." Photographic and artifact-based exhibit chronicling historic and contemporary experiences of African-American Farmers in Virginia and the South. Partnered with neighboring Taubman Museum's global exhibit, "Tobacco People."

Give the gifts of local history!

"Remarkable Rockbridge," by Charles Bodie, published by RHS, is Rockbridge's signature county history, rich in photographs and genealogical ties, along with the iconic characters and distinctive social developments that shape our local legacy. Contact RHS, 464-1058 or rockhist.org/remarkable_sales2.html.

"The Architecture of Historic Rockbridge," by Dan Pezzoni, published by HLF. New illustrated survey of our local architectural traditions: from homes and churches, to barns, mills, and resorts. Companion volume to "The Architecture of Historic Lexington." Order at 463-6832 or historiclexington.org/rockbridge-book.html

"First and Last to Pay the Price: Brownsburg's Civil War Story," published by Brownsburg Museum. Illustrated exhibit catalogue and narrative by Cash Koeniger, Bob Driver, Seth Goodhart. Order at 348-5360 or brownsburgva.wordpress.com/online-store/.

Or give a framable historic map of Rockbridge, Lexington, the Borden Grant, or other prints available for purchase at Campbell House.

R.E. Lee at Washington College, a special tour for RHS members

Wednesday, December 16, from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Thanks to Lucy Wilkins, Patricia Hobbs, Tom Camden, and President and Mrs. Ruscio, RHS members are invited to tour the new exhibits at Lee Chapel and Leyburn Library's Special Collections, detailing Lee's presidency at Washington College, then enjoy a rare tour of the Lee House itself followed by a reception. Reservations are required: please call 464-1058 or email rochist@hotmail.com.

Cheers to history, cheer the parade

We invite you to the annual RHS Holiday Open House at Campbell House, one block off Main Street, before Lexington's Holiday Parade on Friday, December 4, from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m..

Join in the day's festivities with Society friends and enjoy hot cider and treats, seasonal carols and instruments, historic artifacts and your last chance to see the celebrated RHS exhibit on Natural Bridge before it closes at year's end.

Book Review

'First and Last to Pay the Price: Brownsburg's Civil War Story'

Published by the Brownsburg Museum in 2014, this book by Cash Koeniger, Seth McCormick-Goodhart, and Bob Driver, is a model enterprise in local history, translating the collaborative work of a community museum into a memorable and elegant volume.

Set against the sweep of the Civil War, the grand narratives of America's pivotal crisis are woven throughout the exhibit and book. But where this account succeeds more than most is in its carefully curated commitment to center on a small, coherent community: Brownsburg, Rockbridge County, Virginia, in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley.

At once native and national in its footprints, "First and Last" trains a meaningful, neighborly eye on the felt particulars of everyday life. And with that keen, intimate focus, the larger motivations and momentum of the Civil War take shape through the sharp lens of local experience.

-- Eric Wilson

Haunts of House Mountain

Continued from Page 1

whose documentary film on this subject, “Lost in Time,” is being prepared for public television.

As their work continues to grow and evolve, the two women draw on a remarkable series of more than 100 recorded interviews; a wide variety of original and historic photographs; the evidence of geologists, botanists and archaeologists; and the rich resources at Washington and Lee’s Special Collections, including those belonging to RHS. In addition to previews from Young’s film, the audience will be treated to a slideshow, and readings from diaries, letters and interviews, as well as the chance to browse displays of historic maps and artifacts both ancient and more modern.

We particularly invite to the event those participants and families who contributed to the project, and whose interview transcripts we plan to add to the RHS archives. And we hope that both neighbors and guests will enjoy the opportunity before and after the presentation to visit together and examine the displays in detail.

House Mountain has long been an icon here, and now there are concerns about its historic and environmental

preservation. But what distinguishes our presenters’ collaborative approach is their depth of inquiry and witness, their colorful variety of testimonies and media. Sarah and Jennifer will share intimate, distinctive stories of the House Mountain settlements and families, illuminated through their sustained, creative efforts. Together, they bring to life both personal memoirs and long local traditions, through these new modes of public history.



Sarah Clayton



Jennifer Law Young

Please invite a current – or prospective – Society member to join you for this, our final RHS program of the year. House Mountain Inn is a 25-minute drive northwest of Lexington at 455 Lonesome Dove Trail; for directions, look at housemountaininn.com or call 540-464-4004.



Habitation near House Mountain (photo by Sarah Clayton).

Rockbridge Historical Society

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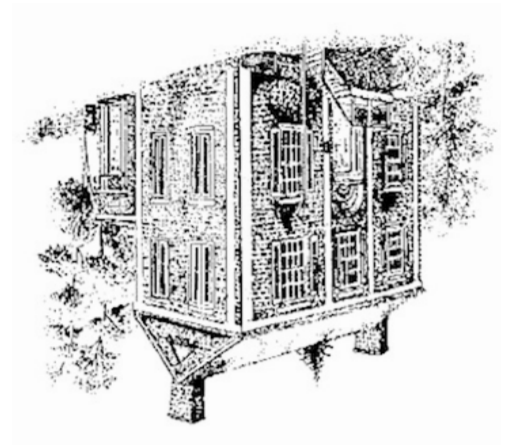
Executive Director Eric Wilson

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