

NEWS - NOTES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

April 2013

New exhibit opens with reception at Campbell House

Main Street Lexington, 1867



Main Street 1867. Image courtesy of Col. Ed Dooley

A new exhibit will open at Campbell House on Friday, May 3, with a reception from 5-7 p.m. The exhibit, "Main Street Lexington, 1867," is based on Col. Ed Dooley's November presentation for the RHS and features 25 framed prints from his reconstruction of the historic streetscape.

These detailed color graphics are based on existing buildings and historic photographs. Col. Dooley used Google SketchUp software to model the buildings in 3-D to nearly exact dimensions and design, basing his decisions on evidence that allowed him to clearly visualize aspects of a particular building. The prints will be displayed in the Remsburg Gallery together with the historic photographs that inspired them, interpretive text describing the buildings' features and history, and contemporary images that will help visitors place the views in the context of Main Street today.

The striking detail of these images will allow visitors to imagine they are strolling along Main Street in Lexington at the end of the Civil War. Visitors and guest may want to share their own stories about these buildings and their evolving roles in community history.

National Preservation Month

May 18 Lecture and tour at VMI

The RHS program set for May 18 will cap local observance of "National Preservation Month."

Col. Keith Gibson, Director of VMI Museums, will discuss Gothic Revival architecture at VMI, including the work of Alexander Jackson Davis, premier architect of that style in mid-nineteenth century America, who designed the VMI Barracks and two faculty houses along the Parade Ground. Following his lecture, Col. Gibson will conduct a tour of some of the buildings discussed in his talk.

Other organizations planning local programs on Gothic Revival architecture in the first two weeks of May include the Historic Lexington Foundation and the local branch of Preservation Virginia. See the box on Page 3 for details.

Program at a Glance

Theme: *Gothic Revival
Architecture at VMI*

Date: Saturday, May 18

Location: Pogue Auditorium,
Marshall Library, VMI

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Note: Talk will be followed by a walking tour of Gothic Revival buildings along the Parade Ground

A letter from the Executive Director

Dear Readers,

The Rockbridge Historical Society is a strong and storied institution, nearing its 75th year of sharing the narratives and treasures chronicling the history of the Rockbridge area. Mindful of that charge, our recent Board retreat challenged us to remain dynamic: Creative in developing new approaches and partnerships, conservative in preserving our best practices and core histories, and committed to sharing our perspectives and stories with generations to come.

As the Society's new Executive Director, I'm eager to center on a critical pair of words highlighted here: *Stories* and *partnerships*. 'Story' is, of course, the root word in the word 'history.' And while it's sometimes seen as an imaginative or even fanciful counterpoint to a more objective sense of history, I'd insist on the core value of stories: not simply in terms of etymology, but in our institutional mission to "preserve and promote the history of the Rockbridge area." Perhaps because my own career has trafficked for two decades between historical and literary terrains, I recognize the joint value of these approaches. Particularly so in the arenas of public humanities, and local non-profits, where our audiences generally come to us for narratives and memories rather than for data. At RHS, we provide a distinctive and valuable counterpart to the many other sources for history, including the unusually rich resources of our two university faculties and libraries, and the array of credible and creative history sites accessible online. Stories – well researched and grounded in our mission to things local – are what we do well, and will always continue to share.

Partnerships are also crucial to our continued and creative efforts. In March, I presented an invited talk at the annual conference of the Virginia Association of Museums. It was a truly impressive gathering of people from different history, art, science, children's and house museums. And it was a fine chance to promote our good work and to compare our efforts with other organizations of different scales with diverse aims. I spoke on the importance of partnerships between local and likeminded institutions, both on our immediate home turf and across the region. More specifically, I underscored the value of partnering with other civic institutions: Public schools and universities, tourist affairs, and local business communities.

Throughout Rockbridge, we will thrive by pursuing ongoing conversations and programming, not only with members involved with the Historic Lexington Foundation, the Brownsburg Museum or the Paxton Historical Society, but also by cultivating new partnerships with other organizations such as the Rockbridge Area Conservation Council and the Museum Studies program at W&L. Please let us know what other organizations you'd recommend in these efforts, and where you see overlapping interests that resonate in our communities. Your input on such collaborations can help our Board engage and build on the footholds of your own varied experience, expertise, and leadership.

In closing, an invitation, and some continued thanks. We hope you'll make plans to attend the opening on May 3 of Ed Dooley's new exhibit on "Main Street Lexington, 1867," an inviting installation based on his celebrated November program.

We also thank you for your sustained work in our development efforts. Your generous contributions have seeded an impressive opening to our inaugural Annual Fund campaign. But you've also helped us to advance the development of new ideas, memberships, and connections: the cultivation of valued stories and partnerships that will sustain our mission in the decades yet to come.

Partnered, in stories and histories,

Eric Wilson, Executive Director

RHS business notes

Volunteers Needed!

Open hours for Campbell House in 2013 are M-W 10-3, Sat. 1-3. Our ability to staff the facility depends on volunteers to welcome visitors. *No historic expertise is needed*, merely a readiness to share your passion for what makes our historic communities so special. We are hosting a luncheon at Campbell House for active and potential volunteers on May 14 at noon.. If you are interested in attending, please contact me at 463-6566 or jlbrooke@embarqmail.com.

-- Jane Brooke, Vice President & Chair of Volunteers

Annual Fund Update

The first quarter of our inaugural campaign for the Annual Fund has brought contributions from longtime friends and members, as well as a number of new donors, totaling more than \$22,000, substantially exceeding our goal of \$15,000. This is an impressive achievement by any development standard. This support has allowed us to make needed improvements to our historic properties as well as proceeding with plans to print a second, paperback edition of the Society's legacy publication, Remarkable Rockbridge. We thank you for your trust, your generosity, and your continued efforts in advancing our good work.

-- Neely Young, Development Chair

Property Update

Success in the development campaign has allowed RHS to complete major work on the Sloan House, including roof replacement, installation of heat in the restrooms and the stairwell, and reconfiguration electrical circuits in the lowest level of the building subject to flooding. This affords storage and meeting space on the lower level, while also allowing for lighting of public access ways for after-hours safety. We hope to secure \$10,000. in additional funds to install permanent air conditioning instead of window units. We've refinished the flooring of the Castle, the oldest building in Lexington, repainted the first floor and removed unused cast-iron radiators to ready The Castle for leasing on a competitive basis.

-Steve Beck, Vice President for Property

Nearby events of interest

Events sponsored by HLF for National Preservation Month

Wednesday, May 1, 5:30 p.m. A lecture on Gothic Revival Style and Structures in the Old Courthouse Meeting Room. The speaker is Dan Pezzoni of Landmark Preservation Associates.

Saturday, May 4, 2:00 p.m. Meet in the Stonewall Jackson Memorial Cemetery for a tour of "Apple Cottage" (on Jordan Street), originally the manse for the Falling Spring Presbyterian Church.

Saturday, May 11, 2:00 p.m. – Open House at Beechenbrook Chapel on Stono Lane (below VMI); Skip Ravenhorst will discuss the **restoration** plans for this **structure** which was

Stonewall Jackson House and VMI Museums:

May 1, VMI Museum: Opening of an exhibit on the 150th Anniversary of the Death of Stonewall Jackson at the VMI Museum.

May 19, **TIME**, Jackson Memorial Hall at VMI: Author Frank O'Reilly will give a presentation commemorating Jackson's wounding, death, and burial.

Paxton House

May 10-11, 10-4, Glen Maury Park, Buena Vista: Commemorating the 150th Anniversary of Elisha Paxton's leadership and death at Chancellorsville, the Paxton House will host the Virginia Historymobile, an interactive museum on wheels. See what life was like during the Civil War with living history by the Sons of the Confederate Veterans Camp #1296, enjoy displays and tours by the Virginia Canal Society, period music, and more. Saturday and Sunday.

Brownsburg Museum

April 13: The museum is re-opening its 2012 exhibit, "Sentimental Attachments," on the social, spiritual and affective ties between the African-American and White communities in Brownsburg in the 19th and 20th centuries. 2716 Brownsburg Turnpike. Until September.

History Museum of Western Virginia

May 18: Grand re-opening of this Roanoke museum after extensive renovations and improvements. Exhibits include the permanent Crossroads to History and a traveling exhibit, "An American Turning Point: The Civil War in Virginia."

Rockbridge Historical Society www.rockhists.org

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EST. 1939

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