

NEWS - NOTES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

January 2016

February Program: 'The Legacy of the Civil War'

Dr. Ronald Heinemann, Squires Professor Emeritus of History at Hampden-Sydney College, will launch the Society's 77th year with a timely, purposeful overview on "The Legacy of the Civil War." As sesquicentennial anniversaries give way to the reckonings that follow, he will begin by examining the war's costs and consequences before turning to some of the choices through which the postwar leadership of Robert E. Lee and others offered new models to rebuild our own local community and shape national legacies.

While drawing on a wide range of reference, Dr. Heinemann's remarks share a thoughtful dialogue, indeed a title, with Robert Penn Warren's classic book, "The Legacy of the Civil War," a concise, celebrated touchstone well worth a look before our program. In broadest terms, Heinemann notes that we must attend to the importance of historical memory, as well as the course of events themselves, to understand the war's stakes and its later meanings. And for all the continued impact of the Civil War on contemporary culture, he challenges us to open our minds and not overlook its worthwhile lessons that extend beyond the war itself and into the concerns of our own era.

Dr. Heinemann earned his B.A. and Ph.D. at Dartmouth and UVA, and served four years in the U.S. Navy. Joining the faculty at HSC in 1968 (where he's continued teaching a class on the Civil War since his retirement in 2004), his courses have canvassed Southern History, African-American History, and 20th-Century America, along with seminars ranging from Civil Rights to Hollywood and History.

Dr. Heinemann has published numerous books and articles on 20th-Century Virginia, including a study of the Depression and the New Deal, and a biography of Harry Byrd, Sr. In 2007, he also co-authored a popular history of Virginia, "Old

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Program at a Glance

Theme: Legacy of the Civil War

Date: Wednesday, February 17

Location: Lexington Presbyterian Church Sanctuary

Time: 7:00 p.m.

RHS Members' Tour, Saturday, January 30, 1:00-4:30 p.m., Roanoke Museums

'Leafing through History: Photographing Tobacco Culture in the Valley ... and Beyond'



Photo courtesy Sarah Hazelgrove (2012), on display at Taubman Museum of Art.

Building on the success of December's tours on the theme "Lee at Washington College," RHS Members are invited to join on a 'field trip' to see two photographic and multimedia exhibits in downtown Roanoke at the History Museum of Western Virginia and the Taubman Museum of Art. The staffs of both of these these flagship regional museums have kindly offered to welcome our group. Although we are not limited by numbers, RSVP's to rochist@hotmail.com would be welcome for planning purposes.

Interested members may want to carpool; all should meet at 1:00 p.m. in the downstairs lobby of the History Museum, which is located in Roanoke's Center in the Square. Admission (\$8.00) can be paid at the door. The museum's curator, Ashley Webb, will be on hand to interpret and discuss their exhibit, "Distant Echoes: Black Farmers of the South." The gallery's focus on African-American family farms couples a series of historic and contemporary agricultural tools and equipment with more than

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Civil War legacy

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Dominion, New Commonwealth.” His comments on the newly revised school textbooks on Virginia history, and reflections on the causes and legacy of the Civil War, have been featured in popular outlets such as C-SPAN and “The Richmond Times-Dispatch.”

In 1997, Dr. Heinemann presented an RHS program at Waddell School, published in Vol. 12 of the "RHS Proceedings" as “Two Senators from Virginia: Harry Byrd and Willis Robertson, a Political Partnership.”

We hope you’ll welcome him back to Rockbridge and encourage you to bring a friend who might enjoy the program and perhaps later join our Society.

Tobacco culture

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50 large black-and-white photographic portraits and landscapes. Later, we’ll walk a block to the Taubman Museum to see their free exhibit, “Tobacco People,” by Southside Virginia native and Hollins College alumna Sarah Hazelgrove. Its displays use film, photography, innovative printing techniques, and a huge, original 16th-Century tobacco press from Bahia, Brazil, to “document the changing faces of individuals and communities engaged in the rapidly disappearing world of tobacco cultivation.” Other elements of the exhibit are jointly presented at the Harrison Center of African-American Culture, the O. Winston Link Museum, and Center in the Square.

These exhibits provide a fine opportunity to compare these regional and international traditions in culture and agriculture with local legacies in Rockbridge. For more information on each, see <http://tinyurl.com/BlackFarmers> and <http://tinyurl.com/TobaccoPeople>

As a special treat, we’ll be joined on the day by celebrated local photographer and writer Patrick Hinely, University Photographer for Washington and Lee. Among his own interpretive comments on the images, he’ll ask us to consider how documentary and creativity play off one another in the dialogue between histories and stories, how they are formally arranged, framed, and narrated to shape and enrich our impressions of past and present alike.

Save the Date: Sunday, April 3

'Denmark, at the Foot of House Mountain: A Rockbridge Village in Time'

The RHS spring Quarterly Program will revisit the terrain near House Mountain enjoyed by our record-breaking audience in December. The afternoon presentation will cover the period from Denmark's beginning in 1800 to the closure of its last commercial business in the early 20th Century. The program is based on the Teaford Papers, a chronology of life in that period left to us by Cleopatra Hartbarger (1894-1979) and her daughter Seatta Hartbarger Teaford (1918-2012). The program will be presented by Reed Belden based on work by Barbara Bennington Nunnely and Stewart Bennington, who have studied these papers over the past decade. Location TBA.

Book Review

'Those Pesky Germans'

Over the past five years my curiosity has grown as to the Germans in our midst, since the majority of discussions of the Valley of Virginia's earliest European settlers has focused on the Ulster Scots (Scotch Irish). After some research, I happened upon the book, "The German Element of the Shenandoah Valley," written by John W. Wayland in 1907. In spite of its age, Wayland's research still affords marvelous insights into the number, distribution, industry and social activities of the Germans who came to occupy the northern half of the Valley.

The geographic core of this story starts at Harper's Ferry, runs through Augusta County and spreads from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the counties to the west, with Rockingham and Augusta their stronghold. The early Germans came primarily from southern Germany. Most were fleeing religious persecution, political repression, and seemingly incessant warfare. Wayland recounts each wave of immigrants throughout the 18th and 19th Centuries. He also details settlement patterns resulting from the many land grants in the 'lower' (northern) part of the Valley, the original naming of those communities, and he even delves into the various forms that their family names would take over time.

I recommend Wayland's book for anyone interested in how "those pesky Germans" came to be integrated throughout the northern Valley of Virginia, and how they gradually spread further south, into Rockbridge County and beyond.

-- Stephen D. Beck, President

Collections Spotlight

The Mexican Fan of Jane Cornelia Nicoll Blair

On display at Campbell House is a lady's fan representing the "*fetes champêtre*" or "garden party" style. Although its subject matter is 18th Century European, the fan comes from Mexico. How, you might wonder, did it get to Rockbridge?

The Rockbridge Historical Society welcomes gifts of objects with a Rockbridge County connection. The fan, received by Judith Cornelia Nicoll Blair as a gift from her husband in 1847, remained in her family until it was donated to RHS in 1985. Her husband, Col. William Barrett Blair, a Richmond native and graduate of West Point, served in the U. S. Army in the war with Mexico, 1846-1848. According to the donor of the fan, a great-great-granddaughter of Judith, Col. Blair acquired it in Mexico City as a gift for his wife. "J. N. Blair Mexico 1847" is written in pencil inside the fan's box.

According to an article in the "RHS Proceedings," Volume V: "Colonel Blair was a veteran of the Mexican War who, after having seen action in the major battles of that war, had gone to live in Texas with his bride ... Colonel Blair [later] became an officer in the Confederate Army. During the Civil War his family moved to Amelia County, Virginia. After the war Colonel Blair joined the faculty at Virginia Military Institute."

Col. and Mrs. Blair lived in Lexington until their deaths in 1883 and 1908, respectively, and are buried in Lexington's Stonewall Jackson Cemetery. Their daughter Maza Blair married a prominent Rockbridge attorney, William A. Anderson. Two of their daughters, Ruth Floyd Anderson McCulloch and Ellen Anderson, were founding members of RHS. The ancestry of the fan's donor, a Mrs. Frances Lewis of Roanoke, is not known beyond the fact that she was a great-great-granddaughter of Judith Nicoll Blair.

Because of its connection to a Rockbridge family, the fan is a treasure of Rockbridge County history. Perhaps Judith used it to cool herself as she sat in her home on the VMI Post, or wondered at the significance of the 18th-Century scenes on the fan. Perhaps she allowed her daughter to look at herself in the tiny mirror on the outermost stick of the fan.

Like many objects in the RHS collections, the fan illustrates something about Rockbridge people that might otherwise be overlooked. We hope you'll examine your own family's historic keepsakes and documents, and consider what local legacies RHS might help you to preserve and share for generations to come.

-- Margaret Skovira, Collections Chair



The fan, property of RHS Collections, now on display at Campbell House (Skovira photo).

Upcoming Partner Events

Paxton House Historical Society: Jan. 29, 7:00 p.m., Maury River Senior Center, Buena Vista. Local historian Francis Lynn will present a program on one of Buena Vista's earliest industries: The Buena Vista Fire Clay Company.

Civil War Roundtable: February 16, 7:00 p.m., VMI's Nichols Engineering Building auditorium. Naval Historian Dwight Hughes will discuss 'The Cruise of the CSS Shenandoah,' the ship that did not surrender until seven months after Appomattox.

Thanks: Retirements

The end of 2015 brought the retirement of Board Members Jack Ackerly and Otis Mead and Trustee Mary Skutt. They have long given us their expertise, their passion, and their measured assessments of the Society's mission and capacities. We will miss them and honor the high bar they have set for other servants of the Society.

Thanks: Annual Support

Thank you for sustaining your annual membership dues, and pledged commitments to the RHS Annual Fund; we will soon send out our year-end tax letters. Your support in 2016 will be the key to our planning and priorities. There will be news soon of the goals for our fourth Annual Fund Campaign. Please also consider gift memberships, memorial contributions, and planned giving.

Rockbridge Historical Society

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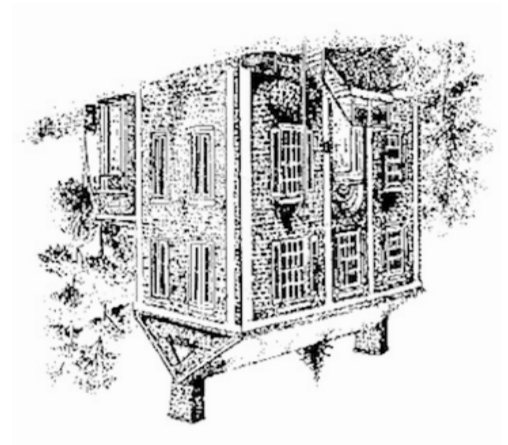
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