

# NEWS - NOTES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

April 2014

## *May Program -- a Sunday afternoon in Brownsburg*

### **"Stones and their Stories: A Stroll through New Providence Cemetery"**

Visit the Civil War exhibit in the Brownsburg Museum, followed by a dessert social and a talk by Dr. Cash Koeniger about the people who attended New Providence Church in the 18th and 19th centuries, whose tombs and monuments now surround the church.

On Sunday evening, May 18th, at 6:00 p.m., Dr. Cash Koeniger, retired VMI history professor, long-time resident of the Brownsburg area, and member of New Providence Church, will present an illustrated lecture, "The Stones and their Stories: A Stroll through New Providence Cemetery." He will focus on some of the more interesting residents of the Brownsburg community who found their final resting places in the church graveyard. Koeniger has scoured both photographic and documentary archives to ferret out these tales of life in the 18th and 19th centuries. At the conclusion of his

talk, listeners are invited to stroll on their own through the cemetery, many of whose occupants will have been made familiar to us during Dr. Koeniger's presentation.

For those who have not yet seen it, we recommend visiting the Brownsburg Museum's excellent exhibit, "Civil War Brownsburg." The display, which was developed under the auspices of Virginia's Sesquicentennial Commission, shows the impact that the Civil War had on Brownsburg and the surrounding farm lands. The Museum will be open from 2:00 until 5:30 so that those who wish can tour the exhibit before the program at the church. Another option would be to arrive a bit earlier to allow time for a walk through this small, picturesque community.

At 5:30, members and guests are invited to join in a dessert social in the rear of New Providence's fellowship hall prior to the 6:00 lecture. Members are asked to bring a favorite dessert which can be shared with other attendees. Coffee and iced tea will be provided. The lecture is open to the public.



View of the New Providence cemetery. (Photo by Kevin Stewart)

#### **Program at a Glance**

**Theme:** *Brownsburg's historic New Providence Church and its cemetery*

**Date:** Sunday, May 18

**Location:** New Providence Church, Brownsburg

#### **Time:**

5:30 p.m. Share desserts in Fellowship Hall

6:00 p.m. program

**Note:** Visitors may also enjoy the Civil War exhibit at the Brownsburg Museum

*Save the Date!*

**RHS Gala 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner and Program**

Monday November 17, 2014

## A letter from the Executive Director

After an earlier prompt to think on the Roads around us, it seems now timely to lend a thought to Bridges. Rockbridge County, of course, is named for one of the most famous bridges in our country. And at the time our county was formed, Natural Bridge was not only the most noted of American bridges and natural wonders throughout a newly emergent nation, but internationally renowned, as well: adorning the wallpaper of 19<sup>th</sup> century Parisians, and exciting the imaginations of Romantic poets and painters on both sides of the Atlantic.

As you know from recent local and national accounts, Natural Bridge remains at the center of some extraordinary efforts in historic preservation and natural conservation. With a lasting vision, and local partnerships, the newly formed Virginia Conservation Legacy Fund has stepped in to purchase and manage the Bridge and its surrounding property; to establish conservation easements and transition the over 1,500 forested acres into a State Park over the next few years; and to renovate the historic Natural Bridge Hotel and update associated facilities. As it protects this unique natural legacy, VCLF will also revitalize its attraction to visitors and tourists, a history at least as old as the ticket office and guest house Thomas Jefferson built on site, shortly after purchasing the patent from King George III in 1774 for 20 shillings. With other local organizations (Friends of the Natural Bridge, Rockbridge Area Conservation Council, and RHS among others), these forward looking commitments, coupled with such long and lived legacies bring both promise and excitement to our county and region as a whole. Among many other things, those efforts, and the monument itself, stand as durable bridges between our locally distinctive history, and the deep time of natural history.

At the Rockbridge Historical Society, we are in a key position to emphasize the many different ways in which History functions as a Bridge between the Past and the Present. No mere cliché, bridges both stretch and inspire, while enabling new travel, exchange, and conversation. Traditionally, the arc of history has rested on the long-established pillars of core disciplines: political and military histories; economic and social histories; and, of particular importance to our local mission at RHS, the keystones of family histories. Looking through our 75 years of programs and published Proceedings – leading records, themselves, among historical societies in the Commonwealth – those approaches have remained central to our attentions, and have enjoyed welcome and sustained audience.

In some of our most recent programming and partnerships, we've also worked to foreground some of the less chronicled angles of Rockbridge lives, with lenses on Natural History and Art History. With the coming arrival of an interactive "Discovery Trunk" -- a historic reproduction of the trunk, tools, and specimens carried by the Corps of Discovery -- we continue to showcase the histories of the Lewis and Clark expedition (not least as they crossed our namesake Bridge when trafficking Rockbridge County on their return). And over the sustained reach of our last three meetings, we've welcomed the opportunity to highlight the color and connections between four internationally recognized artists, whose lives intersected through and beyond their homes in Rockbridge. In the process, we've also been glad to welcome a number of new guests to the RHS fold from the area's rich artistic circles. In our attempts to remain broadly representative, RHS will continue to reach for demographic diversity within our neighborly orbits, and to engage a range of imaginative approaches to our many and memorable bridges to the past.

Stay tuned for more on RHS' journeys in the months ahead: a June 30 Field Trip for a special tour the Daura Gallery in Lynchburg (courtesy its Director/last RHS speaker); an entertaining July stroll down Lexington's Main Street to survey the growing Historic Pavers Project ('The Righteous and Rascals of Rockbridge'); and, come our Anniversary Gala on November 17, a celebration and retrospective on the 75 years of service and leadership that RHS has brought to the full span of Rockbridge County. Thank you as ever for your range of support, and the community bridges you help us to build, and sustain.

*Eric Wilson, Executive Director, RHS*

### **Anniversary Campaign continues**

To honor the Rockbridge Historical Society's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we asked you to extend and advance your support beyond our 2013 inaugural Annual Fund. We are proud to report that your generosity has substantially met that challenge, with 2014 contributions already exceeding donations at this time

last year. Those funds now enable us to proceed with our stated capital objective, the repainting of our historic headquarters at Campbell House. If you haven't yet contributed to the Anniversary Campaign, we hope you'll consider doing so to sustain our legacy and mission.

## RHS Field Trip

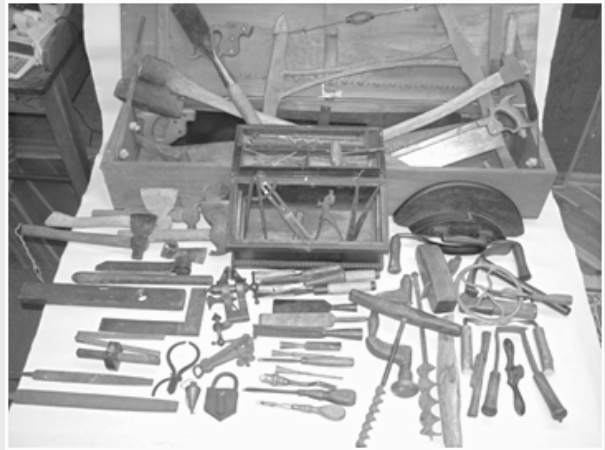
As a postscript to her January program on Pierre Daura, Dr. Barbara Rothermel has agreed to host a special "RHS Tour" of the Daura Gallery at Lynchburg College on Monday, June 30, at 1:00 p.m. If you are interested in carpooling, please meet in the parking lot of the old Kmart at 11:00 a.m. To allow an estimate of numbers, please send an email to [rochist@hotmail.com](mailto:rochist@hotmail.com) or call 464-1058 if you're able to attend.

## RHS acquires Lewis and Clark "Discovery Trunk"

Thanks to RHS leadership in linking Rockbridge County to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, the Lewis and Clark Trust recently offered us an opportunity to acquire a historically authentic Discovery Trunk.

Handcrafted by John Fisher, a historian, scientist, and educator based in Idaho, this hands-on ensemble faithfully reproduces the trunk itself, period tools, instruments, and medicines, as well as the kinds of flora, fauna, and mineral specimens carried home by the Corps of Discovery.

Support from a group of RHS donors has enabled us to purchase one of these rare trunks for our permanent collection. This portable, interactive resource will also allow us to carry these "tools of memory" into local schools and to other RHS educational programs.



When the Discovery Trunk arrives this summer, come reflect anew on our place in Lewis and Clark's historic enterprise, and grab hold of the past!

## Civil War Event

***Muster on the Maury***, May 9-11; Elisha Paxton House, Buena Vista. Living history re-enactments of battles Sat and Sun; canal tours; dinner-dance; re-enactment of 1861 Secession Convention.

This event is sponsored by the Paxton House Historical Society, which is in the process of restoring and preserving the Paxton House (shown). Proceeds from the event will help support this project. More information can be found at:

<http://mustermaury.vpweb.com>



## Historic Preservation Month

The RHS program on the New Providence Cemetery connects nicely with the range of events the Historic Lexington Foundation has planned for Historic Preservation Month.

Centered on "Sacred Places: Historic Churches and Cemeteries in Rockbridge County," events include:

- ★ **May 14** A lecture by architectural historian Dan Pezzoni on the evolution of area church architecture
- ★ **May 17**
  - Guided tours of downtown Lexington churches
  - A presentation on the history of local denominations by retired W&L history professor Taylor Sanders
  - A children's exploration of the Stonewall Jackson Cemetery
- ★ **May 24** A driving tour of six historic churches north of Lexington.

For more information go to [www.historiclexington.org](http://www.historiclexington.org)

**CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL. ARE YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES CURRENT THROUGH 2014?  
 SPRING IS A PERFECT TIME TO RENEW!**

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**ROCKBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
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