

NEWSLETTER



Vol. 46 No. 2 - Summer 2024
Walter Jenny, Editor

2024 Living History Tour

The Historical Society's 2024 Living History Tour at Sinking Spring Cemetery in Abingdon took place on the first Saturday of the Virginia Highlands Festival in July, with over 130 guests.

Volunteer interpreters told the life stories of some of Abingdon's most interesting characters who are buried at the old churchyard, which has been used for local burials since 1776.

Charlie Barnette returned with his workshop on safe headstone cleaning. A new feature this year was Kathy Shearer who demonstrated the practice of using dowsing rods, also known as divining rods, to locate burials. Visitors also were able to view a modern hearse, courtesy of Farris Funeral Home. Frost Funeral Home provided water for the spirits and guides.

Thanks to all our interpreters, guides and other volunteers who worked hard to make this annual fundraiser a success.

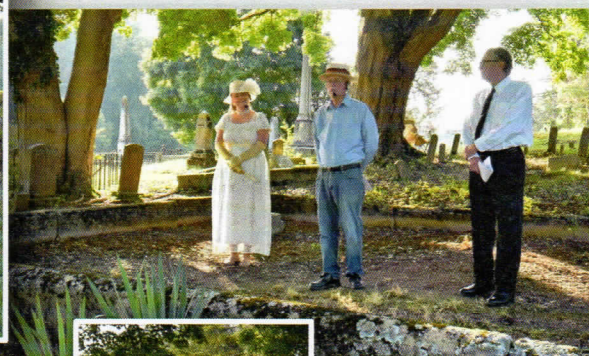


Amber Fiorini depicted Mary Campbell, wife of Gov. David Campbell. She's also on the cover of this newsletter.

Photos by Sarah Campbell



Diana Hulse assisted Charlie Barnette in the headstone cleaning demonstration. Other spirits included Walter Jenny as Dr. Daniel Trigg, Lorin Zehr as Minnie Baugh, and Lacy Dillard, Rick Morgan and Dave Harrison in the Wertz skit.



Guide Shep Parsons at the grave of William King and observing Kathy Shearer at work.



The Society's Fall event at the Cummings cabin in Sinking Spring Cemetery is now scheduled for October 12. You are invited to attend!

Annual Meeting Update

The 2024 annual meeting of the Historical Society was held on June 29 at the Higher Ed Center in Abingdon. About 50 people were in attendance.

The membership heard reports from President Walter Jenny and Treasurer John Neal on the health of the organization. The mortgage on our property stands at about \$42,000 and we are current on our payments. We have money in the bank and our membership numbers remain strong, although we continue to be reliant on donations to meet our budget every year.

The most remarkable news is the robust growth in visitors to our library. Through the end of June, we've had 396 patron visits, compared to 338 during the same six months in 2023 and 200 in the previous year. Of those 396 visits, 193 have been from Washington County, 54 from other counties in Virginia and 149 have been from out of state. We have a full complement of library volunteers.

Our database now has 7,887 books and other publications, 273,942 scanned images, 33,778 scanned pages of local newspapers and over 1,260,000 indexed entries. Our Facebook group has over 12,200 members. All those numbers continue to grow day by day.

The Society elected Sandra Darden and Daniel Smith to new three-year terms on the Board of Directors without opposition.

Volunteers Carol Hawthorne-Taylor and Charlie Barnette were presented with Davis-McConnell plaques for their many years of service to the Society.

David Doan, president of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association, provided the program as Samuel Vance who served under Captain Evan Shelby in the Battle of Point Pleasant. This October 10 will mark the 250th anniversary of the conflict which effectively ended Lord Dunmore's War. Vance is buried at Abingdon's Sinking Spring Cemetery. You can read more about the battle in this newsletter.



(Above) "Samuel Vance" tells the tale of the Battle of Point Pleasant in which many Washington County militiamen participated.

Photo by Walter Jenny

(Below) President Walter Jenny gives his annual report to the Society.

Photo by Charlie Barnette



The Society is involved in upcoming plans for the

250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Last April's "Conversation with Jefferson and Lafayette" program was part of that celebration. During the coming months and years, there will be a number of events focused on the role of Southwest Virginia in America's struggle for independence, including King's Mountain in 2030. For

more information, go to va250.org or visit the Washington County VA250 site on Facebook.

It was good to see so many friends at the annual meeting. Thanks to everyone who attended!



Projects in Progress

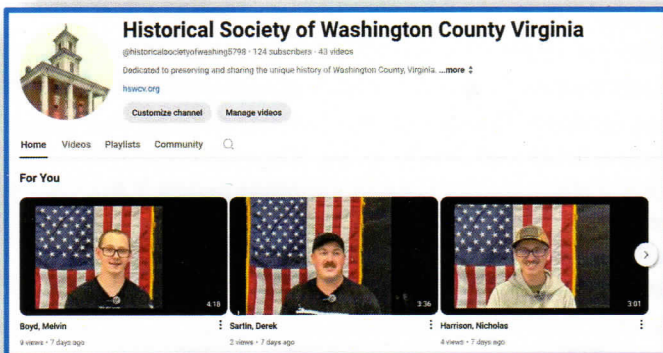
The Historical Society has several projects in the works.

The biggest event on the horizon is the annual **“Evening with the Spirits”** scheduled for October 12. This evening fundraiser invites the public to bring their lawnchairs and blankets to the Cummings cabin in Sinking Spring Cemetery to meet some of the dearly departed, as portrayed by Society volunteers. Our Local History committee has been hard at work planning it, and the event has become a popular October tradition in Abingdon. Popcorn will be provided!



We're excited about a new project with the Town of Abingdon's **Veterans Advisory Board**. Led by Julianne Miles and

Lynn Bennett along with Paul Derden, veterans with local connections are being interviewed about their military service; videos of the interviews are then placed on the Society's YouTube channel. The response has been very strong; with more than three dozen videos now available, the site has received over 3,300 views in the last 90 days. More videos of our veterans will be added in the coming months. Also available is the recording of our “Conversation with Jefferson and Lafayette” event in April and other videos, so be sure to visit our YouTube channel.



Our friends in Saltville will honor the victims and families of the devastating **muck dam collapse** which occurred on Christmas Eve 1924. They are raising about \$20,000 to install a memorial on the Saltville town square with the names of the victims. Society Board member Cheri Heath Fullen is one of the leaders of that effort, and, since most of the victims lived in Washington County, we want to support their efforts as much as possible. Be sure to read about the tragedy in the *Bulletin* which will be arriving in your mailboxes this fall.

Donations of any size for the memorial are sincerely appreciated. If you'd like to help, you can contact them at P.O. Box 730, Saltville 24370, or by sending an email to muckdammemorialcommittee@gmail.com.



An offshoot of our Reclaiming our History programs is our new **“Family Reunion Project”** for folks who want to plan their family get-togethers in Washington County. A page on our website will include contacts for hotels, restaurants, caterers and venues that reunion planners can contact to make their arrangements. If you

operate a business like that, contact our office to get involved. It's a good way for the Society to meet people from around the country with Washington County roots and to encourage their families to pay us a visit.



The Town of Abingdon will be hosting its third annual **Historic Preservation Day** on October 25. While it's not officially a Society event, it's a great primer on historic building preservation with a home tour at 5 pm. ETSU student Noah William Hall will give a presentation about his research on the African American cemetery on Russell Road at 4 pm. To register or for more information, call 276-628-3167.

Our **Facebook** group still continues to grow. We now have over 12,200 participants who generate a lively discussion and share photos about Washington County history and ancestors. Many post photos or tell stories about their families who built Washington County or just passed through. We also list upcoming events on the Facebook page regularly. If you're not on board yet, join us at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/HSWCV> or just search for us by name.

You can find more information about these projects on the Society's website, hswcv.org, on Facebook, or by calling the office. Drop by the library some day and see what's new or just to visit. We can always use more volunteers to make these projects successful and to develop new ones, so please consider that as well.

Almost-Forgotten History - The Battle of Point Pleasant

October 10, 1774

Mention Yorktown, Bunker Hill, Gettysburg - most Americans recognize these consequential battles in U.S. history. But there's one significant military conflict in the formation of the United States that would draw blanks on the faces of most Americans.

This coming October 10 marks the 250th anniversary of the last major conflict with Native Americans before the American Revolution. Lord Dunmore's War, which ended with the Battle of Point Pleasant in northern West Virginia, involved a large number of men from Southwest Virginia who later fought for independence from the British crown.

Today, Point Pleasant is a town of about 4,000 at the junction of the Kanawha and Ohio Rivers - long important for trading for both Native Americans and European colonizers.



Point Pleasant today

So what led to the battle?

The French claimed the land from the St. Lawrence River to New Orleans; the British settled on the coast and migrated westward. By 1754 British settlers outnumbered French colonists by almost 20 to 1. Both sides sought to ally themselves with the natives, caught in the middle, for trading and military leverage against each other.

The first conflicts in 1754 took place in present-day Fayette County, Pennsylvania. British and Mingo soldiers under George Washington fought the French at Jumonville Glen before pulling back to Fort Necessity. French forces followed a month later and drove out the British. It was the 21 year old commander's first combat experience¹.

In response, in 1755 the British sent Major General Edward Braddock from London to lead 2,100 men against a French and Indian force of about 900 at the French Fort Duquesne (now Pittsburgh). It was a disaster. Braddock was mortally wounded, borne off the field by Washington and Nicholas Meriwether to die several days later. Braddock gave his ceremonial sash to Washington, who reportedly carried it with him the rest of his life¹.

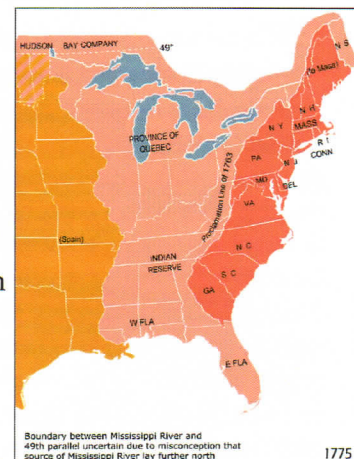
Friction between the French and English continued to escalate, and they declared war on each other in 1756. The ensuing Seven Years War between them and their allies became part of a global conflict; in the United States it's known as the French and Indian War. By its end in 1763, both were nearly bankrupt, resulting in unwelcome tax increases which contributed to both the American revolution in 1776 and the French revolution in 1789.

King George III issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763 designed to prevent white settlement in the new Indian Reserve west of the Blue Ridge. Existing settlers were ordered "forthwith to remove themselves from such Settlements." But the Virginia House of Burgesses had already begun granting western land to companies to explore and settle the frontier.

The Loyal Land Company had been given 800,000 acres west of the Blue Ridge mountains in 1749 on the condition they surveyed what they wanted within four years. The competing Ohio Company also received about 500,000 acres further north that relied on settlement. The settlers were not happy their king in London now wanted them to vacate their homes and move back east of the Blue Ridge.

The Native Americans understandably expected white settlers to abide by their king's promises and go back where they came from. That didn't happen. Theodore Roosevelt wrote that before the Battle of Point Pleasant "they had been seriously alarmed by the tendency of the whites to encroach on the great hunting-grounds south of the Ohio, for here and there hunters or settlers were already beginning to build cabins along the course of that stream.... The savages grew continually more hostile, and in the fall of 1773 their attacks became so frequent that it was evident a general outbreak was at hand."²

Agents of the land companies pressed the governors to negotiate treaties with the Indians moving the boundary further west. But treaties with the Six Nations did not include the Shawnee, who still considered present-day Kentucky and West Virginia to be their hunting grounds.



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Historical Society of
Washington County, VA

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In December 1774, responding to complaints from London about violations of the Proclamation, Lord Dunmore (John Murray, the 4th Earl of Dunmore and governor of the Virginia colony) wrote:

"I have learnt from experience that the established Authority of any government in America, and the policy of Government at home, are both insufficient to restrain the Americans; and that they do and will remove as their avidity and restlessness incite them. They acquire no attachment to Place; But wandering about Seems engrafted in their Nature; and it is a weakness incident to it, that they Should for ever imagine the Lands further off, are Still better than those upon which they are already Settled.

"... In this Colony Proclamations have been published from time to time to restrain them: But impressed from their earliest infancy with Sentiments and habits, very different from those acquired by persons of a Similar condition in England, they do not conceive that Government has any right to forbid their taking possession of a Vast tract of Country, either uninhabited, or which Serves only as a Shelter to a few Scattered Tribes of Indians. Nor can they be easily brought to entertain any belief of the permanent obligation of Treaties made with those People, whom they consider, as but little removed from the brute Creation. These notions, My Lord, I beg it may be understood, I by no means pretend to Justify.

"...(t)hree Considerations offer themselves for His Majesty's Approbation. The first is, Suffer these Emigrants to hold their Lands of, and incorporate with the Indians; the dreadful Consequence of which may be easily foreseen.... The Second, is to permit them to form a Set of Democratical Governments of their own, upon the backs of the old Colonies; a Scheme which, for obvious reasons, I apprehend cannot be allowed to be carried into execution. The last is ... to receive persons in their Circumstances, under the protection of Some of His Majesty's Governments already

established...the measure appeared to me as the wisest, and Safest that could be entered into under the Circumstances above mentioned."³

Daniel Boone was on the cutting edge of the settlement effort. Born in Pennsylvania in 1734, his family moved to North Carolina in 1750. After the Braddock expedition in 1755, he returned to North Carolina, married and started a family - but went on extended long hunts on the western frontier that brought him through what is now Washington County. Castle's Woods, now known as Castlewood, was the western-most settlement en route to Kentucky. In 1769 Boone and a hunting partner were captured by the Shawnee, who confiscated all of their pelts and told them to leave and not return. On another occasion he shot and killed an Indian to avoid capture⁴.

Boone met William Russell who had settled at Castle's Woods. Russell, later a hero of King's Mountain, also wanted to settle in Kentucky. In 1773 Boone moved his entire family to Castle's Woods in a group of about 50 people. Russell and Boone led a party into present-day Kentucky in late September. On October 10, Boone's oldest son, James, and Henry Russell, a son of William Russell, along with two other whites and a slave who were in the expedition were caught, tortured and killed by a band believed to have been Shawnee⁵.

The Russell-Boone incident was but one of many gruesome murders. On May 13, 1774, the House of Burgesses gave Lord Dunmore the green light to muster a military response. He summoned officers to recruit men to gather at Camp Union near present-day Lewisburg, West Virginia - among them, 350 men in the Fincastle County battalion led by William Russell, William Campbell, William Herbert and John Floyd from the Clinch and Holston River settlements⁶. Dunmore would lead the Northern Division with about 1,300 men and Andrew Lewis would command about 1,400 men in the Southern Division⁷.

Historian Virgil Lewis wrote:

This army at Camp Union was the most remarkable body of men that had ever assembled on the American frontier. Of the men comprising it, some had been with Washington at the surrender of Fort Necessity; some with Braddock at the fatal field of Monongahela; others with Forbes at the capture of Fort Du Quesne; and still others with Bouquet in the Ohio Wilderness; and all, or nearly all had been engaged all their lives in the Border wars⁸.

Beginning on September 6, regiments loaded their pack horses and began to move out from Camp Union to the mouth of the Kanawha, a distance of about 160 miles. About a thousand men under Lewis arrived on October 6 and named their camp Point Pleasant. The Shawnee, under

Around the Library

Diana Hulse reviews library policies with new volunteers Scott and Laura Hall.



Cousins from the Musick family reunion in Russell County included a visit to our library in their family research.



their head warrior Cornstalk, monitored their movements and sent word out for reinforcements, but only could muster a few hundred Mingo and other men to fight.

Cornstalk's plan was to cross the Ohio after dark on October 9 and defeat small regiments before they could join Lewis at Point Pleasant. But two young men, on a pre-dawn hunt for deer, ran into hundreds of Shawnee approaching about three miles north of camp. One was killed; the other returned to camp and sounded the alarm. Cornstalk had lost the element of surprise. As the sun rose, Gen. Andrew Lewis sent out battalions who engaged the Shawnee a few hundred yards north of the camp. The battle continued through the day. As evening approached, Lewis sent three companies around to a high bluff to open fire on the Shawnee from the rear. The Shawnee, believing reinforcements had arrived, retreated across the Ohio River and returned to their towns on the Pickaway Plains, about 80 miles to the northwest.⁹

After meeting with his lieutenants, Cornstalk decided to meet with Dunmore and negotiate a peace. Dunmore, not aware of what had taken place, had continued his march north into Ohio with about 1,200 men. Messengers caught up with Dunmore on October 17 about fifteen miles before he reached the Shawnee towns.

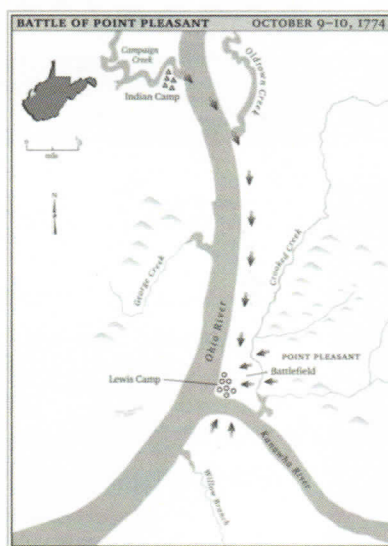
Dunmore and Cornstalk met at Camp Charlotte, which Dunmore had named for his wife. In principle, Cornstalk agreed to accept the Ohio as the southern boundary of their lands, and Dunmore promised no whites would be allowed to hunt north of the river. The treaty was ratified with Cornstalk and other tribal leaders at Pittsburg the following October. Dr. Thomas Walker led the British delegation.

William Russell remained at Point Pleasant until June of 1775, after all the wounded had recovered. He designed and built Fort Blair at the site, which was replaced by the larger Fort Randolph in 1776.

Dunmore's war marked the final time an American colonial militia fought in England's service. 81 Virginians were believed to have died in the battle, and 140 wounded. Only two of 69 Fincastle battalion soldiers were killed. Hundreds of natives were killed, including Puckeshinwau, the father of six-year-old Tecumseh, his not-yet-born younger brother The Prophet and six other children.

During the Revolutionary War, Cornstalk sought to remain neutral, although some dissident Shawnee sided with the British in hopes of undoing the Camp Charlotte

treaty. In October 1777, while visiting Fort Randolph about two Shawnee who had been detained, Cornstalk, his son and the other two Shawnees were murdered by soldiers.



FOOTNOTES

¹A young teamster also getting his first taste of battle was 20 year old Daniel Boone (1734-1820) from North Carolina. Dr. Thomas Walker, the Loyal Land Company agent, was the provisioner of the expedition and was present during the battle. Walker's wife was a first cousin of Washington and his brothers in the Ohio Company. Boone and Walker, neither of whom bore arms, also escaped the battlefield uninjured. Henderson, A. *Dr. Thomas Walker and the Loyal Company of Virginia*. Journal of the American Antiquarian Society, April 1931, pp. 95, 96.

²Roosevelt, T. (1889). *The winning of the West*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, p. 250; Summers, L. P. (1903). *History of southwest Virginia, 1746-1786, Washington County, 1777-1870*. Richmond, Va.: J.L. Hill Printing Company, p. 143.

³Thwaites, R., and Kellogg, L. *Documentary History of Dunmore's War, 1774*. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society (1905), pp. 371-372.

⁴Lofaro, M. (2003). *Daniel Boone: an American life*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky. pp. 30-31; Faragher, J. (1992). *Daniel Boone: The Life and Legend of an American Pioneer*. New York: Holt, p. 86

⁵Hagy, James (1970). *The First Attempt to Settle Kentucky: Boone in Virginia*, "Filson Club Historical Quarterly, pp. 227, 230.

⁶Lewis, V. (1909). *History of the Battle of Point Pleasant*. Tribune Printing Company, p. 8.

⁷Id., p. 40.

⁸Fincastle County was created in 1772 and covered the lands south and west of the Kanawha and New Rivers, including present-day Washington County. Id., p. 29.

⁹Id., at 40-49.



An 84-foot granite obelisk at Tu-Endie-Wei State Park honors Virginia militiamen who fought in the Battle of Point Pleasant.



The Historical Society
of Washington County, Virginia, Inc.
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Evening with the Spirits October 12!

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