

## Cemetery Tour Is A Huge Success

The Sinking Spring Living History tour, absent in 2020 due to COVID, roared back in 2021 with a record number of guests participating in the Society's annual fundraiser.

The tour was held during the Virginia Highlands Festival, and attracted 200 guests - almost double the number who attended in 2019. The spirits presented this year were as follows:

- Rufus Soule (1777-1840, portrayed by Michael Henningsen) operated Abingdon's finest tavern from about 1803 until 1837. He is buried in Tennessee, but several of his nine children are buried at Sinking Spring.
- After Gen. John Hunt Morgan (1825-1864, Charlie Barnette) was killed in Greeneville TN, his body was brought to Abingdon. After a funeral at St. Thomas Episcopal Church, his body was stored in the earthen mound gravesite of the Martin family for a short time before being moved to Richmond for a military funeral. Morgan was removed a few days later and taken to Richmond where he laid in state at the State Capitol before being buried in Hollywood Cemetery. In 1868 his remains were moved once again to a family plot in his home town of Lexington, Kentucky.
- A skit depicting the 1888 shooting on Abingdon's Main Street resulting in the deaths of John Grayson (portrayed by Kelly Moore) and Deputy Sheriff Lilburn Trigg (David Harrison) by gunfire and Trigg's mother, Rachel Findlay Branch Trigg (Lacey Dillard) by heart attack. Trigg is the only officer from Washington County on the National Law Enforcement Officers register who have fallen in the line of duty. Rick Morgan narrated the drama.
- George Washington Hopkins (1804-1861, Mike Hagy), a lawyer and judge who was a member of Congress, a member of the Virginia House of Delegates (succeeding his brother Henry as Speaker of the House), a member of the 1850-51 Virginia constitutional convention, and President Polk's appointee as charge d'affaires to Portugal. As chair of the House Committee on Post Office and Post



*A tour group leaves the Cummings cabin for their trip around the cemetery. More photos inside.*

Roads, he drafted the legislation which began the use of postage stamps in the U.S. Mail.

- Rev. Charles Polk Cummings (1732-1812, Walter Jenny) was the first pastor of Abingdon's Sinking Spring Presbyterian Church, a position he held for 40 years. He also was the first minister to preach in what became Tennessee. The "Fighting Parson" was the probable author of the Fincastle Resolves, the first adopted statement by the colonists in which they vowed resistance to the death to the British crown to preserve religious liberties.
- Miss Minnie Baugh (1857-1935, Donna Gayle Akers) lived her entire life in the Valentine Baugh house across from the Episcopal Church on Main Street. She opened an apothecary in an addition to the house in 1891. She also printed postcards and brochures about Abingdon's history and characters, spearheading the formation of the Society, but died before the Society actually began. Donna's mother Nellie Akers assisted by welcoming our visitors.

We are only as good as the people involved in the Historical Society. As we celebrate our 85th year, we remain indebted to a great crew of volunteers who make the organization successful. We also appreciate the support of the community as we work to preserve the history of Washington County for future generations. Next year will be even better!



# 2021 Annual Meeting

It was an annual meeting like no other.

The Historical Society's 2021 annual meeting was held on June 26 at the Higher Ed Center in Abingdon. Every dues-paid member of the Society is eligible to vote and participate in the annual meeting. Most of the members who attended did so in person, but for the first time in our history, several members met via Zoom. It gave members who live far away an opportunity to participate in the event while also doing our best to protect our members' health during the pandemic.



Refreshments were coordinated by Martha Keys. Many thanks to her and others who assisted with the meeting.

After reports by President Walter Jenny and Secretary/Treasurer Charles Seaver, elections were held for our officers and two of our six directors. Officers serve for two-year terms, and directors serve for staggered three-year terms.

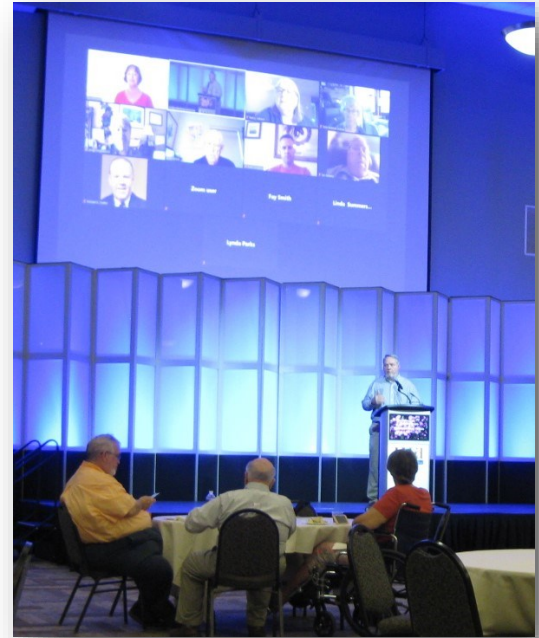
The members approved a plan to set the business membership dues at \$50 per year, a change from the three-tier pricing previously in effect. The goal is to encourage more businesses to sign on to support the organization. Existing dues for individuals/families and students remain unchanged.

A healthy discussion took place about the "Rambling Roots" website after the death of its owner, Diana (Moffett) Powell in California. Although the Society has no ownership interest in Diana's valuable resource, it was agreed that the Society would reach out to the Powell family to try to keep the site active in some way.

The following individuals will serve as the leadership of the Society until our next annual meeting in the summer of 2022:

**President:** Walter Jenny  
**Vice President:** Mark Hagy  
**Secretary/Treasurer:** Charles Seaver  
**Corresponding Secretary:** Karen McClanahan  
**Immediate Past President:** Martha Keys  
**Board members:** Charlie Barnette  
                     Brett Compton  
                     Sandra Darden  
                     Cathy Hagy  
                     John Neal  
                     Daniel Smith

Thanks to everyone who participated in this year's unique Annual Meeting. We appreciate the service of our Board members, and we look forward to a day when we can all meet in person once again.



*President Walter Jenny gave his report to the membership.  
 Photos by Charlie Barnette*

## JANE OAKES

Jane Gardner Oakes, 85, a long-time volunteer at the Historical Society, died on Monday, August 16, 2021, at her home in Brumley Gap in Washington County.

She was the daughter of the late Melvin and Charlotte (Jones) Oakes. Jane was raised in Gladys, Virginia, and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry at Mary Washington College. She had a highly successful career and retired as a supervisor for Abbott Labs in North Carolina.

Jane developed the Historical Society's project to digitize historical records and images, now known as the Jane Oakes Collection. She left an indelible mark on the Society with her commitment and perseverance, and set an outstanding example for all of us. She was also passionate about the preservation of the mountains and animals native to Southwest Virginia.

Jane was buried near her family at Kedron Baptist Church Cemetery in Gladys, Virginia.

Suggestions for those wishing to make a memorial include preservation of their family history for future generations and providing assistance for the protection of animals, both wild and domestic, and of mountains and the streams and springs therein.



## Dooley House Move Successful



The Hiram Dooley house in Abingdon was rescued from demolition in June when it was moved to a new home on Park Street, within shouting distance of where it had stood since 1849.

David and Jill Dalton made arrangements with Sinking Spring Presbyterian Church to remove the brick building and place it on a new foundation. Restoration will begin this fall.

The Daltons also have purchased Grace Hill, home of early Abingdon businessman William King. They are in the process of restoring it as well. King and his brother in law Connally Findlay owned most of the land on the south side of Main along Pecan, and Findlay built his two-story log home in 1797 on the original site of the Dooley house. The Dooleys later sold the structure to Dr. Edward Campbell, who served as a field surgeon in the Civil War and was a nephew of Gov. David Campbell who lived nearby at Montcalm.



The move was quite a spectacle, as hundreds of local residents lined Pecan Street to watch. The story was also covered by local media outlets, and picked up by the Wall Street Journal and the Daily Mail in London.

Crews first removed a wood addition on the back side of the house as well as the brick extension on the north side, which at one time housed a grocery store. Neither dated back to the 1849 original construction. The house survived the move without any damage. A video will be made available soon of the move.

Many thanks to the Daltons and others who gave financial and moral support to the effort.

## An Evening With The Spirits...



Did you like the Living History tour this summer? Then you'll love spending an Evening with the Spirits of Sinking Spring this fall!

This event differs from our summer tour in that there is no "tour." Our visitors gather in front of the Cummings cabin at the Sinking Spring cemetery and are entertained from the front porch with interpretations of some of the cemetery's most interesting residents. Less walking, more sitting, and a perfect cool October evening in which to enjoy the stories.

There's nothing scary about our October program - unless, of course, you just find it a little creepy to be in a huge cemetery in October after dark. We think you'll find it to be entertaining, informative and fun!

No reservations are required. Just show up on October 16 between 6:30 and 7 for your \$5 per person tickets. Proceeds support the work of the Historical Society. The program is expected to run about an hour. Bring your own favorite chair or blanket if you'd like, a flashlight (sunset is at 6:50 p.m.), and dress warm enough to stave off any chill breezes. Oh, and bring a friend!



Four students from Dr. Jinny Turman's history class at UVA-Wise visited the Historical Society library on September 2. They were gathering background information on White's Mill before taking a tour of the facility that afternoon. They plan on returning to the library for additional research.



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Historical Society of  
Washington County, VA

## African American Conference Is A Hit

The Society's African American project, "Reclaiming Our History," on June 19 went well, with 65 people attending via Zoom from California, Washington, Texas, Georgia, Maryland and elsewhere.

Videos from the 6 1/2 hour marathon are now available to the public on YouTube; simply type in the phrase "**Reclaiming Our History**" to access the videos.

The conference focused on genealogical research, but also highlighted successful African Americans connected to Washington County like Dr. Bascom Slemp Waugh, a flight surgeon for the Tuskegee Airmen; long-time educators Frank Trigg and his son Dr. Harold Trigg, jazz great Frank Newton, early Abingdon businessman Fincastle Sterrett, John Broddy of King's Mountain fame, and others. The conference was funded in part by a grant from Virginia Humanities.

A key component of the program is the family tree on Ancestry.com containing information on over 4,000 people with connections to Washington County. The database can be used to locate African Americans beyond the 1870 "brick wall" because we have added Washington County's Cohabitation Register, 1867 voting rolls and other records that are not normally found on Ancestry. The tree will help locate distant cousins whose families were broken up by slavery. Although the tree does not carry any DNA test results, it will be a good research tool for anyone looking into African American ancestors in Washington County.

Anyone can access the Society's tree through Ancestry; the name of the tree is "**WashCoVA African American Family Tree**." New data will be added on a quarterly basis.

COVID permitting, a live conference will be held next June and in years after that. Descendants and researchers will be invited to plan their family reunions in Washington County and share their families' oral histories and photos. The events will include genealogy workshops and other events.

Many thanks go to the team of volunteers who worked behind the scenes for months - in some cases, more than two years - entering the data into the Ancestry database and planning the event.



*The upstairs space in the Society's building was turned into a makeshift studio for the conference. Here, Elijah Staggers interviews keynote speaker Kenyatta D. Berry in California. Other participants included Garrett Jackson, Dr. Jim Hagy, Art Broady and Walter Jenny.*

## New Tenant



Black's Fort chapter of DAR has signed a lease with the Historical Society for office and storage space.

"The DAR organized the Historical Society in 1936, so it's only fitting that the two organizations continue to work together today," said Society President Walter Jenny. "We obviously have a lot of common interests."

Jenny signed the lease, approved by the Board, with DAR Regent Beth Henningsen on September 11.

Watch for the Society's 2022

## BULLETIN

Members can expect delivery in December or January.  
To order extra copies as gifts, contact the Historical Society!



## *Donations May 11, 2021 – August 31, 2021*

1938 <i>Spotlight</i> , Bethel High School Annual	Albert Owens, Bristol, VA
<i>Go and Come Again</i> , by Jerry Jones	Walter & Rose Ann Jenny, Abingdon, VA
Assorted area county newspapers	Troy Taylor, Bristol, TN
Nine copies of <i>History of Washington County, Virginia to 1865</i> , by James W. Hagy	Jim Hagy, Abingdon, VA
WWII uniform jacket and shirt belonging to John Robert Graham, Sr., Washington County, VA	Rebecca Graham Talbot, Roanoke, VA
Three 1873 newspapers; one 1861 newspaper; Summers Law Office print by Roma Baker	Town of Abingdon, VA
1805 Trigg Family Bible	Estate of Christine Burke Hardwick, Abingdon, VA
Diploma from Stonewall Jackson Institute for Miss Tommie LaMar Graham Aerial photo of Martha Washington Inn, by local photographer	Cynthia Baughan Wheaton, Pittsboro, NC
Clark family photographs and memorabilia	Phil Clark & Laura Clark Johnson, Hague, VA
Photo of Southern Gypsum Company employees, North Holston, VA, with names, c. 1924 (Scan of original)	Cheri Heath Fullen
1912 George Wertz photo of the Wesley Men's Bible class, United Methodist Church, Abingdon, VA (Scan of original)	John T. Phipps, III
<i>History of the Dungs who Migrated from Newport, Rhode Island to Smyth County, Virginia (1624-1922)</i> , By Coby Bunch Simerly	Coby Bunch Simerly, Naples, FL
<i>Washington County News</i> , Aug. 16, 1973 and Feb 20, 1969	Mary Jane Lowry Crosley, Johnny Lowry, and Holly Lowry, Abingdon, VA
Ledger from W.C. Parks store in Murrayfield community; notes from Fred Parks' law school days	Leta Cole, Chilhowie, VA
Movie projectors and film reels, c. 1937	Ann Fleming, Abingdon, VA
Myers family photographs and family data	William Myers, Stevensville, MD
Map: 100 Years of Gas Wells in Washington County, Virginia	Charles Bartlett, Abingdon, VA
Map of Winterham; CD: Below Whitetop: Remembrances of Ed Jordan	Ben Jennings, Abingdon, VA
McCray photograph	Elizabeth Craig, Abingdon, VA
Mijamin Priest and His Family, From William Penn's Colony to East Texas, 1684-1884	Rebecca Priest, West Roxbury, MA
<i>Washington County Virginia Minute Book 15 1860-1863, revised edition</i> <i>Washington County Virginia Minute Book 16 1863-1866, revised edition</i>	Jack Hockett, Newark, DE

Plans for a fall banquet have once again been canceled because of the recent rise in Covid cases and hospitalizations.

### Fall Banquet Plans Canceled

The infection rate in Southwest Virginia had dropped late last spring, giving the Local History Committee hope that facilities and travel would open up by October. But the planning team changed course out of concern for our membership when the infection rate spiked again.

The banquet is traditionally part of the Annual Meeting, but that was postponed earlier this year for the same reason.

When conditions improve, the committee still intends to fête Eleanor Grasselli, who has been awarded the *Davis-McConnell Distinguished Service Award* for her many years of service to the Society and the community.

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## *Monetary Donations*

Suzanne Wilmeth Anderson	Cheyenne, WY
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Barb Stewart	Bristol, VA
Greg Thomas	Cleveland, TN
Leigh Van Blarcom	Tega Cay, SC
Augusta Waters	Gadsden, AL
Arthur Wills	Raleigh, NC

## *In Memoriam*

In Memory of Dr. Ed Hardison	by Deborah and Berkley Clear, Jr.	Abingdon, VA
In Memory of Carol Graybeal	by Eleanor Grasselli	Damascus, VA
In Memory of Carol Graybeal	by Doris Wells	Meadowview, VA

*Thanks to all our donors for your support!*

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# The Mystery Of Frank Newton

One of the questions that arose in our African American conference “Reclaiming Our History” in June centered around Frank Newton, the Washington County native who went on to fame in New York City’s jazz world.

Where did a kid from rural Washington County learn to play the trumpet so well?

That’s a question that has baffled researchers for years. Jennifer Wagner wrote an excellent article on “The Search for Frankie Newton” in the 2002 *Bulletin*, and other jazz historians have tracked his career in New York City. But the source of his musical education has eluded them.

Newton was born on January 4, 1906 in the Blacksburg community south of Emory. His parents were Thomas and Fannie (Harrington) Newton. His father died before 1910, leaving Fannie with three children. She remarried, but died at age 37 when Frank was 10. By the 1920 census, he was living with his mother’s widowed cousin in Bristol; young Frank was listed as working in a “pool room.”

Newton never said much about his upbringing. In his only known recorded interview, Newton told jazz critic Nat Hentoff with WMEX Radio in Boston that his first music was played “... in Roanoke, Virginia, at a very early age, with a guy named Johnny Locklear, after which I left Roanoke.”

In an article published in the September 2021 edition of *The Syncopated Times*, Steve Provizer writes that “Newton then played in McKinney’s Cotton Pickers ... before joining the Lloyd Scott band in West Virginia around 1926.” So Frank picked up the trumpet before he was 20. By 1928 he had married his first wife, Page Leamore Allen, in New York City, and in 1930 he was living with her in Harlem.

Phonetics can be deceiving in genealogical research. The transcript of his radio interview indicated his first exposure to music was with Johnny Locklear in Roanoke. We found no **John Locklear** in Roanoke during the 1920s. However, **John Locklayer** and his wife Edith Hazel (Hawkins) Locklayer lived at 429 Rutherford Ave. N.W. in Roanoke. In that year, John was a porter for the Pullman Company, as was his father. But in 1930, the census shows John’s profession to be a pianist in an orchestra, and Edith was a music teacher. A city directory indicates she worked at the upscale S&W Restaurant in Roanoke as early as 1933, while John was still working as a musician.

In 1940, John was playing the piano in an orchestra for a living, while his wife was still



working as a restaurant waitress. Along with his mother and their children and a son in law, however, the family had an interesting boarder, according to the census: Jack Daniels, a 20

year old from McDowell County West Virginia, whose job was playing a trumpet in an orchestra. It appears that Frank Newton was not the last young man to learn how to play the trumpet in the Locklayer household. Jack Raymond Daniels registered for the draft in October 1940, and listed John Locklayer as a friend who would always know his whereabouts. He gave the Locklayers’ address as his home, and indicated he was employed in a local dance orchestra. After his 2017 death in Roanoke, his FindAGrave biography said he “was an accomplished trumpet player.”



*Newton played trumpet in a recording studio with Billie Holliday. He also backed up Bessie Smith in her last session in 1933.*

In February 1942, both John Locklayer and his 20 year old son John Jr. also registered for the draft. The son reported that he was a student at Virginia State University, but the father listed his employer as Temple Emanuel in Roanoke. Temple Emanuel is an Jewish Reform synagogue that is still active today. What he did for them is unknown.

We don’t know how long Frank was in Roanoke, or whether he stayed in contact with the Locklayers after his career took off. As far as we know, he did not stay in touch with relatives in Washington County. But the Locklayer home provided a stable base for the orphaned young man. The Locklayers apparently provided a musical education that developed Newton’s remarkable raw talent that he shared with others and passed along to the next generation of musicians.

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*A Lesson for the Boys*



*At the Greenwich House Music School, where he teaches, Frank Newton gives a demonstration of the fine art of trumpet playing to two spellbound youngsters.*





## Scenes from the Sinking Spring Living History Tour





# The Courthouse After The War

*With the current remodeling and expansion of our county courthouse in Abingdon, we decided to look back at what was involved in building it. The previous courthouse was burned in a fire on December 14, 1864. The following is taken from Jim Hagy's book, **After the War Was Over**, which is available for purchase through the Society's store. As always, many thanks to Jim for his outstanding research and contributions to the Society.*

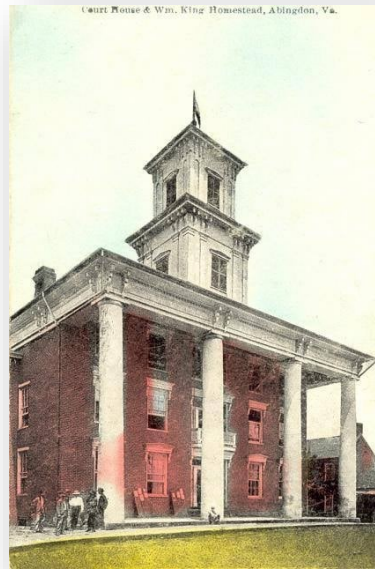
Despite the burning of the courthouse, county government began to function again at its regular meeting day of December 26, 1864. The seven justices who attended immediately began to consider the replacement of the courthouse and jail and put out an order for all members of the court to attend on the 31st to take up the issue. They also took possession of Dunn's Store, which they rented from James Henritze for \$1,500 per year to use as a temporary courthouse, clerk's office, and other county uses. In addition, the court decided that the prisoners who had been freed when the jail was burned would be kept in Marion in Smyth County until a new building could be erected in Abingdon.

Sixteen of the justices showed up for the December 31st meeting at Dunn's Store. First, they authorized the employment of several men to collect the brick, tin, iron, and other materials from the two structures so that they could be used again. A more immediate problem arose over the use of the store. The Confederate Commandant in Abingdon, Capt. J.G. Martin, had commandeered it for use as a guard house without compensation for the owner. When first approached about this by the court, Martin agreed to vacate as soon as he could find another suitable building, but when he consulted with Gen. John C. Breckenridge, the commander ordered him to remain. When Martin informed the court of that, the justices became greatly upset and summoned him to answer why he had not moved out as they were meeting in the same building, but he replied that he would obey the general's command. The captain then ordered his guards to arm themselves, and some entered the room with their weapons in their hands. Unable to deal with armed soldiers, the justices decided not to push the matter further with the local commandant but appealed to the governor and asked him to contact the secretary of war who could order the evacuation of the building. The appeal worked, and there was no further discussion of the matter. When the court next mentioned their place of meeting it was in Dunn's Store.

The contract for the use of the store was for only one year. Before the lease expired James Henritze, the owner, told the court that he wanted to occupy his building once the lease expired. The court appointed a committee to select another suitable building and upon its report, they agreed to move the court-

house to temporary quarters in Temperance Hall which they rented until they could complete the new building.

William Boyd won the contract for building the new jail, and he reported on November 26, 1866, that he had completed the structure. The justices also called for clearing the land around the jail, building a smokehouse, corn crib and privy, and erecting a sturdy plank fence around the structures. Boyd used salvaged iron from the old jail to construct two iron cages for prisoners. The structure cost the county \$385.50. In May, 1867, the sheriff transported the prisoners from Marion to the new jail.



In November, 1866, the justices let contracts for the building of a new courthouse. James and David Fields won the bid to do the brick and stone work; A. Hockman of Lynchburg, the carpentry; David S. Grimm and William Keller, the tin work for the roof and gutters; and Benjamin P. Morrison and Joseph W. Vaughn, the painting. The court budgeted \$15,000 for the building. They entertained some hope that the Federal Government might pay for the public buildings since they had been destroyed by the "United

States forces during the late rebellion," but that dream vanished quickly. They decided that the structure would be financed by selling \$15,000 of stock held by the county in the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad. The General Assembly approved the sale of the stock as well as authorized the county to borrow an additional \$7,000 for the rebuilding, that amount to come from taxes in the next budget year. Before the contractors completed the building, the court, not wanting it to be used as a place of entertainment, ruled that it could "not be used at night for the purpose of exhibiting any show or concert."

In September, 1868, the contractors advised the county officials that the new courthouse would be completed by the next meeting, but such did not take place. On December 5, the authorities stated that the Temperance Hall was inconvenient, uncomfortable, and unsafe. Therefore, the papers and records were moved to the new courthouse. On December 19, 1868, Fields appeared in court and said he had completed his work with the exception of the laying of pavement under the portico and pillars at the entrance of the clerk's office. The court ordered that he be paid with the exception of \$200 until he finished. The following day the carpenters reported that they had not completed their work. As a result, the last payment of \$3,000 was withheld until they too had finished. Therefore the new building saw some use in 1868 but was not completed until early 1869. The claim has been made that this was the first courthouse rebuild in Virginia after the war which may or may not be true. At any rate, it demonstrates that the county recovered rather rapidly from the ravages of the recent war.



The Historical Society  
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