

NEWSLETTER



Vol. 44 No. 3 - Fall 2022
Walter Jenny, Editor



"An Evening With The Spirits"

Sinking Spring Cemetery has a special place in the hearts of history buffs of Washington County. Since the burial of Henry Creswell in the old Presbyterian church yard in 1776, this has become the resting place of generations of pioneers of all backgrounds and creeds who built the foundation of this county. All of them have stories to tell. Nine Revolutionary War veterans and two Virginia governors are buried here, along with veterans of other wars. It's the crown jewel of Washington County's history.

But Sinking Spring is showing its age, with headstones being damaged and graves neglected. It's a challenge for the Town of Abingdon to maintain it. Cemeteries like this always need attention, whether it's caretaking, research, suggestions for new improvements, raising money for repairs, sharing histories or meeting others with similar interests. **Could the descendants of those buried at Sinking Spring organize to preserve it - to ensure those who are gone are not forgotten?**

If you'd like to be involved, regardless of age or where you live, contact the Historical Society office and let's see what can be done.



The Historical Society presented "An Evening With The Spirits" on October 15 in Abingdon's Sinking Spring Cemetery.

The evening began with a color guard from the General William Campbell Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution honoring the nine Revolutionary War veterans and other veterans buried at Sinking Spring.

Cemeteries take on an ethereal aura during October evenings. Unlike our annual cemetery tours of the cemetery during the Virginia Highlands Festival, this fall event imagines what would happen if some of the dearly departed made appearances to visit with an audience gathered in front of the Cummings cabin.



This year's story began with an encounter between the cemetery's sexton (portrayed by Mark Hagy) and a young lady (Amy Baumgardner) with the Cave City Society of Paranormal Seekers, a paranormal group which is committed to proving that "boogers, haints and spirits" exist. Her group hopes to gather evidence of their presence with microphones and drones. The caretaker is a skeptic - until the **Rev. Charles Cummings** (1732-1812, Walter Jenny) appeared.



They listened in amazement as the good reverend proceeded to tell his life story - how, 250 years ago this year, the Presbyterian settlers here on the western frontier called him to serve their spiritual needs. He and

Continued on page three

William Truxton Black (1825-1879) and his wife Nancy Elliott (Sublett) had six children - two of whom are also buried at Sinking Spring - and twelve grandchildren

HS Library A Busy Place This Fall

The Historical Society's library was very active this fall, as COVID restrictions eased and beautiful weather encouraged folks to resume their travels.



Visits to the library continue to rise, with 391 visitors by the end of September year. That's ahead of 334 during the same months in 2021, and 101 in the shortened 2020 season.

Julie Matlock has begun teaching an Appalachian History class at Holston High School for the first time this year. Her students tackled a project to select a historical event from this region, conduct research, and then work with a Senior English class to produce an original work of art or writing regarding that event to be displayed at the new Appalachian Trail Conservancy Center in Damascus.

She brought them to the Historical Society library, where Daniel Smith, Rose Ann Jenny and Walter Jenny taught them how to use our research database and holdings. They took the initiative to develop their own ideas and learn more about our county and Southwest Virginia. It will be great to see their finished product, and we hope they'll return to our library in the future.



We have reduced hours this fall due to a shortage of volunteers. **The library will close for the winter on December 17, and will reopen on Tuesday, February 7.** Between those dates, it can be opened for you by contacting the Historical Society office.



Did you know ...

As of the end of September 2022,

- 42% of our library visitors this year have been from Abingdon and Washington County
- 19% of our visitors have been from Virginia, but Outside of Washington County
- 39% of our visitors have been from outside Virginia



Chaired by Mark Hagy, the Local History committee meets in the library to plan events like the Living History tour, Evening with the Spirits, Conversation with Thomas Jefferson, Reclaiming Our History and the Society's annual meeting.

Thank you all for your dedicated service!

"Our vision is to be an educational resource and community leader committed to collecting, preserving and sharing the records of people, places and events, so that future generations may find common interest and knowledge in the unique heritage of our County and surrounding region."

Continued from page one

his wife Millicent and their three little girls moved to Abingdon, where he continued to serve for almost forty years.

They eventually raised thirteen children, many of whom are also buried at Sinking Spring. He acquired several hundred acres northwest of town and played a major role in the life of Abingdon and Southwest Virginia. Cummings served on the Committee of Safety for Fincastle County (the predecessor of Washington County), which on January 20, 1775 resolved that "we are deliberately and resolutely determined never to surrender" the "free exercise of our religion, as Protestants, and our liberties and properties ... to any power upon earth, but at the expense of our lives." Cummings is believed to have drafted the resolution.



He also officiated over the burial of many of the early settlers buried at Sinking Spring. Just as Rev. Cummings began talking about them, his old friend **Henry Creswell** (1720-1776, Michael Henningsen) appeared. Creswell was one of the Presbyterians who signed the call in 1772 for Cummings to become their minister. They spoke about the horrible day in July 1776 when Cummings, Creswell and others were on their way in a wagon from Black's Fort to the Cummings plantation for provisions. They were fired upon by Native Americans, and Creswell - father of nine with one on the way - was killed. Creswell was the first to be buried in the churchyard.



As Cummings and Creswell disappeared into the cabin, **George Newton Wertz** (1852-1926, Rick Morgan) wandered in. For half a century, Wertz photographed hundreds of people and places of our area, preserving a unique look into our history. But this evening, he was searching once again for his unmarked grave.

At the sexton's recommendation, he headed back into the darkness with renewed enthusiasm toward another possible burial site.

Next to appear was **Mary (Hamilton) Campbell** (1783-1859, Lacey Dillard). She told of her life as the wife of her cousin David Campbell - her lonely years at Montcalm as her mental health declined. Childless, she and her husband are buried on the west side of the First Circle where she said they enjoyed watching the children play in the ballfields.



Along came her husband, **Gov. David Campbell** (1779-1859, Mike Hagy). A successful businessman from the prominent Campbell family, David served as an officer in the Army during the War of 1812. He was elected to the State Senate in 1820, then was elected to three terms as Clerk of Washington County. In 1837 he was elected Governor of Virginia, succeeding Wyndham Robertson. As governor, Campbell promoted better transportation and public education; Virginia Military Institute was created during his term in office. He returned to Abingdon and served as justice of the peace and school commissioner while caring for his wife, who survived him by only six months.



As they left, George Wertz returned with the report that he still couldn't find his grave. The sexton suggested he search in the far corner nearest the spring, so he headed off again.

Suddenly, **Mariah Anastacia King** (1846-1861, Emma Wyatt) and her brother **Alexander McCall King** (1841-1865, Will Clark) appeared. Anastacia was 15 when she died during an epidemic while a student at Martha Washington College.



Alexander joined the Confederacy and became a captain, but was taken prisoner by the Union army. He became part of the "Immortal 600" who were used as human shields at Morris Island, South Carolina as retaliation for the inhumane conditions of Union prisoners held at Andersonville, Georgia and Salisbury, North Carolina. Alexander, 23, died of scurvy and is buried at Ft. Pulaski. But the family, now having lost two of their four children too young, erected a beautiful monument in his memory next to his late sister in Sinking Spring.

Continued on page four



Visit us on Facebook!

Over 9,500 Page Members

Historical Society of
Washington County, VA

Join the discussion with over
9,000 page members!



Continued from page three

While the sexton and the researcher were discussing this sad tale, Parson Cummings returned from the cabin and generously offered to provide a sermon on life among the spirits. The sexton wisely declined, knowing the parson's reputation for pontificating for three hours at a time.

While Cummings persisted, George Wertz returned to say that he still hadn't found his grave and was done for the night. The sexton took that as a good opportunity to conclude the program and send everyone back where they came from.

The Historical Society appreciates the participation of all the interpreters, volunteers, sound and lighting experts, and of course our guests who made the program worthwhile. Special thanks to scriptwriter Mark Hagy, to Walter and Rose Ann Jenny for donating the lanterns, to Wendy Dwyer for the photographs, the Gen. William Campbell SAR Chapter for providing the color guard, and the Abingdon Cinemall for providing the popcorn.

We'll be back next October for another Evening with the Spirits, but don't forget our annual cemetery tour during the Virginia Highlands Festival in July.



Photos by Wendy Dwyer





The "Excelsior" Cook Stove, sold by Scott Bros., near the depot, is the best in the market. Get your wife one for a Christmas Gift.

Overcoats for everybody. Can fit any sized man or "dude." Call and get our prices on clothing. We've got exactly what you need and can afford to buy.

SCOTT BROS.

Abingdon Weekly Virginian, 27 Dec 1888

Christmas is Coming.

ANDREA MANNONT informs his friends that he has just received a large supply of

Oranges, Lemons, Raisins, Figs, Nuts, Candies, Preserves, &c. &c.,

to which he would invite the attention of every body wishing to fix for Christmas. The little boys and girls will also find many things to please them.

Dec. 19, 1857.

Abingdon Democrat, 16 Jan 1858

A Proclamation!

By SANTA CLAUS

BEING ANXIOUS TO DISTRIBUTE MY CHRISTMAS GIFTS TO THE GOOD PEOPLE OF ABINGDON AND VICINITY IN THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND SATISFACTORY MANNER, I HAVE APPOINTED NIDERMAIER & BARBEE MY AGENTS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON OF 1905, AND HEREBY COMMAND EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD TO GO TO THEIR STORE WHERE ONE AND ALL WILL FIND THOSE PRESENTS WHICH THEY MOST DESIRE. THERE ARE SHOWN MY CHOICEST DOLLS, MY PRETTIEST BOOKS, MY DAINTIEST CHINA, AND A HOST OF OTHER THINGS DIRECT FROM MY FACTORY IN TOYLAND. I HAVE CHARGED MESSRS. NIDERMAIER AND BARBEE THAT THEIR FEES FOR THESE BEAUTIFUL GIFTS SHALL BE REASONABLE; THAT THERE MUST BE PRESENTS TO SUIT THE TASTE AND PURSE OF EVERYONE, AND THEY HAVE PROMISED ME IT SHALL BE SO.

MY GIFTS WILL BE ON DISPLAY EVERY DAY AND EVENING FROM NOW UNTIL CHRISTMAS EVE.

DON'T FORGET THE PLACE—NIDERMAIER & BARBEE, Proprietors of the Busy Up-town Corner Store.

Signed: Santa Claus.

Abingdon Virginian, 21 Dec 1905

MUNICIPAL CHRISTMAS TREE

Voting Coupon

THE VIRGINIAN: The undersigned is ☐ favorable to a Municipal Christmas Tree this year. You can depend upon me for \$ and

Abingdon Virginian, 6 Nov 1915

Santy Claus' Headquarters!

Our Store is Headquarters for Santa Claus, and we are showing the largest and best assorted line of Toys, Dolls, Fancy Goods, Fireworks, Etc., ever offered to the people of Abingdon.

No use to go to Bristol for your **Christmas Goods** when you can buy here and get anything in the line you want from a 5c Top to a magnificent Kid Body Doll, as large as a good sized baby.

Our Stock is All in. and ready for your inspection. Come to see us early before the goods are picked over. We deliver free to all parts of the city. Our prices are right. Patronize us and make the little folks glad.

Yours for business,
GARDWELL GROCERY CO.

Abingdon Virginian, 6 Nov 1915

Christmas stationery, all styles, at the millinery store of Minnie L. Baugh's.

Abingdon Standard, 14 Dec 1888

CHRISTMAS

Is a time for joy and merry-making; a time to give and to receive; the time of preparation for this happy occasion has now arrived, and if you are at all puzzled over the question what shall I get and where shall I get it, just pay a visit to

W. G. HAGY

and look over his immense stock of beautiful things and that will decide the question. He has a very large assortment of everything in a regular Jeweler's line to select from—everything that is Good Quality, Stylish and Up-to-Date in every respect. He has many very pretty, but inexpensive articles among his stock that will make Nice Presents for everybody.

Don't Make That Fatal Mistake by purchasing before visiting W. G. HAGY. You could not give your mother, father, brother, sister, sweetheart or friend anything that would be more appreciated than something selected from his handsome line of goods.

EVERYTHING HANDSOMELY ENGRAVED FREE OF CHARGE.

My time is yours, and I will do everything in my power to please and give satisfaction.

Your Leading Jeweler,
W. G. HAGY.

Abingdon Virginian, 21 Dec 1905

Just received a beautiful assortment of Silk Handkerchiefs and Mufflers, just the thing for Xmas Gifts.

C. L. WATTS,
Abingdon, Va.

Abingdon Virginian, 23 Dec 1904



Holiday Clippings From Historic Washington County Newspapers

Many of these images, and others, will be displayed at the Abingdon Visitors Center through the holidays. Thanks to Donnamarie Emmert for assembling the exhibit. Enjoy!

Holly and Mistletoe.

Mr. L. Rosenbalm, of Lodi, will bring to town Saturday morning a wagon load of holly and mistletoe. It is an unusual opportunity to get plenty of either or both for decorative purposes. Those wishing to supply themselves can do so by notifying the Virginian office, as Mr. Rosenbalm will call here early.

Holly and Mistletoe.

The Holly as a soldier roamed
The woodlands long ago,
And met beneath the spreading oak
The maiden Mistletoe,
He bore a sword and slender spear,
And wore a scarlet coat,
And she was in a mantle green,
With pearls around her throat.

The frozen flakes began to fall,
They hid the narrow track,
The happy lovers lost the way,
And nevermore came back.
And still the winter woods they stray
Together in the snow,
The soldier Holly and his bride,
The pearl decked Mistletoe.

—Illustrated Bits.

Abingdon Virginian, 21 Dec 1905

Monetary Donations

August 1 through November 15, 2022

Millie Anderson - North Hampton, NH
 Charlie Barnette - Bristol, TN
 Paul Derden - Abingdon, VA
 EastAve Rare Books (Brett Compton) - Bristol, VA
 Cathy Hagy - Abingdon, VA
 Mark Hagy - Abingdon, VA
 Karen Harvey - Sumas, WA
 Richard Hiebert - Colorado Springs, CO
 Rick and Susan Humphreys - Abingdon, VA

Walter and Rose Ann Jenny - Abingdon, VA
 Nancy Jett - Beaverdam, VA
 Mary Milano - Centerville, OH
 Bob Moore - Altamont Springs, FL
 Richard Morgan - Abingdon, VA
 Carolyn Ryburn - Glade Spring, VA
 Gail Gill Sanders - Nashville, TN
 Daniel Smith - Bristol, VA
 Stephen Wolfsberger - Abingdon, VA

Donations of Items

Date	List of Items	From	Hometown
4/19/2022	Miscellaneous genealogy books of Ina Marbury (12 boxes)	Sarah Corder	Afton, TN
7/12/2022	Col. William Byars photo / Brook Hall Glade Spring: photos, history and papers / information on the Byars family	Jeanne A. Preston (wife of Dr. V. Atwell Motley)	Abingdon, VA
7/20/2022	Books: <i>Documentary History of Dunmore's War, 1774</i> / <i>Wise Co. Courthouse, 1896-1996</i> / <i>Appalachian Coal Hauler</i> / <i>Norfolk & Western's Clinch Valley Line</i>	Kathy Shearer	Emory, VA
9/3/2022	Books: <i>Genealogical Collection of Kentucky</i> / <i>Kentucky Gen. Records and Abstracts Vol. I</i> / <i>Ambrose N. Cox Descendants, 1772-1972</i>	Pat Hatfield	Abingdon, VA
9/30/2022	Items from the late Court of Appeals Judge Emory Widener Jr.: documents, newspapers and maps	Emory Widener III	Denver, CO
10/4/2022	Research books and maps	Kathleen Baldwin	Abingdon, VA
10/11/2022	Books: <i>Down on the North Fork</i> / <i>The Unexpected Heroine</i> / <i>Hero of Jefferson County</i>	Richard Counts	Hazard, KY
10/31/2022	Yearbooks: Virginia High (78-79), King College (1961-63), Glade Middle (1992-93)	Ken Kestner	Abingdon, VA
11/3/2022	18th or 19th century cradle with sleigh feet	The Lion and The Lamb Antiques, Kay Hall and Kim Millsap	Fall Branch, TN

The Board of Directors currently has two membership goals. The first is to increase our overall dues-paid membership from 400 to 600 by December 2024. The second is to increase the number of business memberships in that total to 100 by December 2026. Both goals are achievable, and will reflect support of the community and improved financial stability for the organization. Thank you for your help in meeting these goals.

Thanks to all our donors and members for your support!

Heat Pump Update

Thanks to generous donations from our friends, we have received about \$5,000 in donations for the new 2 1/2 ton heat pump in our office. We expect the final cost to be about \$6,000, and hope to have it installed this November or December before the coldest weather kicks in.

As we reported in the summer newsletter, our building has eight heat pumps, each covering a different area. We replaced the heat pump in the main library in March, but the rest of the units range in age from 18 to 24 years - well beyond the average life expectancy for the systems.

Over the next several years we hope to continue upgrading our heating and cooling systems as funds become available. Thank you for your generous support to help keep our facility up to date and comfortable for our visitors, volunteers, employees and tenants for years to come.



Business Memberships

The Historical Society has set a goal of increasing the number of business members to twenty by the end of this calendar year, and add twenty more for the next four years until we have **one hundred business members** on our rolls.

It's a good way to enlist the support of local businesses without increasing dues for our individual members. Businesses will receive advertising in our newsletters (see the back page) and our annual *Bulletin*, and can keep updated on Society programs and projects.

Our newest business member is **Eye Physicians of Southwest Virginia, PC**, located across Main Street from the Historical Society building in Abingdon. Brett Compton is one of the optometrists with Eye Physicians as well as a member of the Historical Society Board and our Finance and Management Committee.



Dues for businesses are \$50 per year. A business can purchase ten years of membership for \$450, a 10% discount from the annual rate. That's similar to the discount given to individuals who become life members of the Society.

If you have a business or work for a company that would be a good fit, we'd appreciate your help with this campaign. Contact the office for a membership application, or simply make a tax-deductible donation on our website with a comment that it's for a business membership.

Bulletin Update

Since 1936, the Historical Society has issued a publication with interesting, well-written articles covering the history of Washington County. This year's *Bulletin* is in the final stages of preparation thanks to the hard work of Dr. Jim Hagy and Stephen Wolfsberger. Our dues-paid members will receive it free of charge, but if you'd like extra copies for gifts, contact the Historical Society office and you can order as many as you need.

Santa's Wish List

If you've ever wondered what you could give the Historical Society for Christmas, we respectfully submit this wish list for your consideration.

Sometimes it's hard to know what an organization like the Historical Society needs. Extra donations help us pay the bills without increasing dues for members. If you cannot make a donation above the cost of dues, that's fine; but if you'd like to help cover one of our expenses, it will be appreciated.

You can make a tax-deductible holiday donation of any size on our website at hswcv.org, or simply mail a check to the Historical Society office.

Not all donations need to be monetary. Non-profits depend heavily on volunteer labor. Here are a few projects for which we need volunteers:

- Volunteers to staff the library for three hours a week or every other week, starting in February. We'll provide the training and support, of course.
- Volunteers to add names and places to our indexing database. Again, we'll provide the training and support.
- Landscaping - usually not more than the use of a Weedeater every few weeks in the summer.

- Replacement for a 20+ year old heat pump - \$6,000
- One month's mortgage payment - \$700.
- Print the Bulletin - \$650.
- One month's electric bill - \$600
- Ancestry.com annual subscription - \$400
- 500 Forever stamps for three newsletters - \$435.
- Yahoo! annual fee - \$400.
- Printing for one newsletter - \$400
- One month's water bill - \$60
- Archival storage boxes \$50
- Ream or box of paper - \$10/ream or \$50/box



- Researchers, familiar with Ancestry.com, to update our African American family tree. Can be done from home.
- Amateur interpreters for next year's cemetery events.
- Grant researching and writing.

Thank you, and Merry Christmas!



The Historical Society
of Washington County, Virginia, Inc.
P.O. Box 484
Abingdon, VA 24212-0484

Thank you to our Business Members and Sponsors!



Clinch Mountain Press
Kathy Shearer, Author-Publisher

Corps Values
Music Heritage



David and Jill
Humphreys
Dalton

DMDC, Inc.
Abingdon, VA



FROST
Funeral Home
Abingdon, VA

Kenny's
Auto Glass
Services

Landmark Realty



The Martha
The Martha Washington Hotel & Spa



Tombstone
Trackers
Inc.



*We Have Room for
Your Business!*

Your company can support
the work of the Society as a
Business Member for only
\$50 a year or \$450 for ten
years. Contact the office
today for more details.

Historical Society of Washington County, Virginia

276-623-8337
office@hswcv.org



Tues. - Fri. 10 am - 4 pm
Sat. 11 am - 4 pm



www.hswcv.org

341 West Main Street, PO Box 484, Abingdon, VA 24212

VIRGINIA
IS FOR
HISTORY
LOVERS™