



# NEWSLETTER

January 2012  
Vol. 34, No. 1

## From the desk of the President:

The Historical Society of Washington County, VA, Inc. continues to have a home in the historic passenger train station, thanks to the Town Council of Abingdon agreeing to renew the 5-year lease with an option for an additional 5 more years.

Thanks to Carmen Blevins for arranging for HSWCV participation and to Kitty Henninger and Martha Keys for their work during Meadowview Apple Butter Festival in October.

November was a month of public events. The first weekend started with the William King Museum Mistletoe Market, Thursday night through Sunday afternoon. Thank you Jane Bryan, Jane Caldwell, Pat Carty and her sister Adina Crumb, Ruth Copeland, Kitty Henninger, Eleanor Hutton, Blair Keller, Martha Keys, Nancy Leasure, Rubinette Niemann and Doris Wells for your work at Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center.

In the middle of that same weekend, Saturday the 5<sup>th</sup>, the Society Library doors were opened to welcome the arrival of an Excursion Train from Roanoke, and families who waited for their anticipated ride to and from Bristol, VA. The occasion was the first passenger service through Abingdon in many years. Thanks to all: Jerry Belisle, Carmen Blevins, Jane Bryan, Pat Carty, Martha Keys, Nancy Leasure, Jane Oakes, Carol Hawthorne-Taylor, Melissa Watson, who made preparations and welcomed guests in the library before, during and after the arrival of that shiny diesel Amtrak Train, plus a historic Norfolk & Western Powhatan Arrow passenger car. Former President Charles Seaver, an ardent train buff, was on board from Roanoke to Abingdon. (See photo on page 4)

During the Harry L. Coomes Recreation Center Crafts Show, November 18, 19, 20, 2011, the following HSWCV members greeted shoppers and sold merchandise: Carmen Blevins, Emma Clark, Sandra Darden, Kitty Henninger, Eleanor Hutton, Martha Keys, Nancy Leasure, Rubinette Niemann, Carol Hawthorne-Taylor and Melissa Watson.

Saturday, November 19, was the day that Jane Bryan led Jerry Belisle, Martha Keys and unnamed other elves in setting up, decorating, and lighting a Christmas tree in the kitchen of the Fields-Penn 1860 House and Museum. The Society participated in the "O Christmas Tree!" event and placed fifth out of ten in votes.

Happy 2012 to all, Eleanor Grasselli

## New President Starting in New Year

After accepting the early resignation of President Eleanor Grasselli, the Board unanimously approved Martha Keys to be president from January 1, 2012 to April 30, 2013. Martha was elected vice-president in April 2011, and since has chaired the Local History Committee, coordinated the 2012 HSWCV calendar, put finishing touches on the new HSWCV brochure, and is currently working with the Website Committee (please see [hswcv.org](http://hswcv.org)). Martha has asked for the board, the volunteers, and the general membership to join her in helping the Society move forward, grow, and prosper.

At the same board meeting Director Fred Keller was elected to serve as Vice-President from January 1, 2012 to April 30, 2013.

December 7, 2011

### A Resolution

Whereas - *Eleanor Grasselli has served the Historical Society with grace and efficiency;*

Whereas - *Eleanor Grasselli stepped in to save the Historical Society during a time of great need—indeed crisis;*

Whereas - *Eleanor Grasselli has demonstrated outstanding professionalism and unwavering dedication to the Society;*

**Therefore, Be It Resolved** - *This Board of Directors thanks her for her outstanding service and welcomes her as Immediate Past President with fondness, affection, gratitude, respect, and all good wishes.*

Approved by the Board of Directors on December 7, 2011

*Charles W. Seaver*, Recording Secretary

## COLLECT, PRESERVE, ACCESS

In the media center, our mission and our goal is to collect, preserve and access and for seven years we have tried to accomplish just that. During our seventh year, we have slowed down a bit; however, it was certainly not from a lack of available pictures and documents. As a matter of fact, we have a bigger backlog than ever. Processing this backlog is simply a matter of money and manpower, with the latter being dependent on the former. Even with limited manpower, we did make progress. For 2011, we digitized, processed and indexed **3278** pictures, **2310** pages of documents and added **11,801** lines of index. For any other organization that would be a major accomplishment but we are spoiled and have come to expect a greater number of images processed every year.

Our "fascinating find" of the year is the Washington County cohabitation list for 1866. Marriage licenses were not issued to black residents so the Freedmen's Bureau, after the Civil War, did a "census" of these black residents and recorded name, age, occupation, spouse, children, former owner, etc. These are the priceless documents for those having ancestors here during that time frame. The remarkable quality of this story is that we stumbled upon these pages while going through boxes of other old papers. I am told that only about 25 of these lists have been found in the whole state of Virginia. Please read Jim Hagy's article in the current bulletin for more details.

Every year, I say the same thing, "measuring our accomplishments with numbers, as in numbers of pictures, etc., seems to trivialize the real value of these priceless images." Much of what we scan is one-of-a-kind and found nowhere else. However for all the donors, volunteers and supporters, here are the totals for what we have done over the last seven years: **21,039** pictures, **45,805** pages of documents, **110,826** lines of index and the total is 809 gigabytes of data. Progress may have been a little slower this year but we almost ran out of space on our server. We expanded the server to the maximum so when we run out of space again it will mean a new server. Some program changes are going to be made the first part of 2012 that will make searching for these data in the library easier. We will be updating our indexes on our website as well. Please take a look, <http://www.hswcv.org>. 2012 is getting off to a good start for us. A private donation plus the availability of our former intern, Leighann Lloyd, means we are processing images at twice the normal rate. Nothing could be better!

## Just who is Charlie Barnette?

Several months ago, I noticed a Charlie Barnette posting interesting facts and photos on several of the Facebook walls, such as, Bristol History, Historical Society of Washington County, Va., Russell County Virginia Group, along with Charlie's very own page Bristol History in Glass. Just who in the dickens is this Charlie Barnette that is so willing to share his wealth of knowledge to all?



If you go to his Facebook page, you will discover that he lives in Bristol, TN, attended Tennessee High, ETSU and Virginia Intermont College. He served our Country in the U.S. Navy and the Naval Reserves Sea Bees. Charlie has a website <http://www.bristol-tenn-va-bottles.com/>; and has authored a book titled *Spirits & Medicinal Bottles of Bristol, Tenn-VA*. He was also President of the Bristol TN-VA Bottle Club, <http://www.bristol-tennva-bc.org/officers.html>.

Charlie's collecting habits started with collecting matchbooks, stamps and his passion of bottle collecting to be envied by any bottle collector. Charlie started researching his family history and that led him to documenting tombstones and cemeteries. He generously has shared his thousands of pictures on this subject with the Historical Society. The Historical Society is forever grateful for the many man hours, thousands of miles, and diligent effort that has resulted in the ten thousand pictures of tombstones and the identification of cemeteries in Washington County. It is our privilege to share Charlie's story with our membership.

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Lately the wind seems to have blown me onto a much different trail...or, perhaps there was a "guiding hand" at work. I have found myself on a new tangent, one I have become deeply involved and immersed in. It all began in May 2008 as I was doing some genealogical research at the Historical Society of Washington County, VA (HSWCV), located in Abingdon. While perusing a book, I noted there was a Barnett Cemetery in Hayter's Gap. I had never heard of such a cemetery, I was curious to see this cemetery because my great grandparents, Reverend William Garrett and Tabitha (Little) Barnett were buried there and my great uncle, Carliss Barnett. The next chance I got, I drove to Hayter's Gap and located the cemetery by asking some locals about it. In the process, I learned that this Barnett Cemetery wasn't the one noted in the book *High On a Windy Hill Vol.1* as #73, but was a stone's throw away. My great-great-grandparents, Reverend Alexander and Mary Ann "Polly" (Helton) Little and members of their family were buried in #73 as well as my great uncle Philip Snead Barnett's first wife, Ella (Helton) and Chloe Dye, the daughter of my great aunt Ritty (Barnett) Dye. I went to what I call the William G. Barnett cemetery and noticed it had recently been cleared off and fenced by members of the Counts family. The weeds had begun to take over again so Lynn (my wife) and Sonya Jones (my sister) and I went there and using weed-eaters, cleaned the cemetery and leveled up a few graves. We also planted some flowers, replaced a few wooden crosses that were placed by the Counts, and made several more crosses to mark other graves. We have continued to keep this small cemetery clean.

The other Barnett Cemetery (#73) was a mess. Small trees had grown all over, limbs hung down and obscured the view, rotten limbs lay scattered upon the ground and graves, weeds ran rampant, a large cedar tree had fallen across Ella (Helton) Barnett's and Chloe Dye's graves, and many graves were

covered with honeysuckle vines, periwinkle, and yucca plants. Lynn and I began by cutting and picking up limbs, cutting brush and small trees, and opening the cemetery to give an overall view. Then we broke out the weed-eaters and went to work. Several hours later, we had uncovered many more graves marked only with fieldstones. I noted that Margaret Jane Hayter's marker was the oldest in the cemetery and close to it were many fieldstone marked graves on the southern end of the cemetery.

The Littles were mostly buried on the western side and others were scattered within the cemetery. There was an area to the east that was marked mainly by fieldstones. Lynn and I have continued to keep the cemetery cleared as well and we have repair work yet to do on the fence that defines its boundaries.

I soon found another cemetery just up the ridgeline from #73. It had been numbered as #74 in HOWH and buried there were two Dyes and two Counts. I hiked there and Ellen M. Dye's marker had fallen. I broke my potato rake trying to pry it up and eventually got it reset on its base. The cemetery was in deep woods: except for a few scattered fallen limbs, there wasn't much to clear off.

However, this is not the end of my story, it is only the beginning. I began looking and photographing other cemeteries. At first, I merely took pictures of markers with names within my family line and those I found interesting. Later, I began taking pictures of all markers within a small cemetery. Often, I had to rake through vines, weeds, brush, and even search sunken graves for fallen markers. I always reset markers that I could find and began carrying a crowbar in order to pry them from the ground. When I had visited about 100 cemeteries, I made CDs of the pictures and gave them to the Historical Society.

I continued in my quest for family members that often required me to hike over a mile into the woods to small overgrown plots established on high knolls. A 4 wheel drive truck was needed for some cemeteries I visited, which was an adventure. One thing I noticed about the majority of the cemeteries was the sad state I found them. The cemeteries were not only unkempt but markers had been knocked over, broken, and scattered usually by a farmer's roaming livestock. A few cemeteries had a fence; however, many fences were destroyed by cattle that wreaked havoc. Elaborate wrought iron fences and gates were no exception. With time and perpetual butting by cattle attempting to scratch an itch, the wrought iron had fallen. Another problem is the roads that once led to the cemeteries are now washed out, grown over or non-existent which makes it difficult for anyone to access the cemeteries or attempt to maintain them.

The quest for locating family in cemeteries has taken me into neighboring Smyth and Scott counties in Virginia as well as Sullivan and Unicoi counties in Tennessee. I made another CD and gave it to the Historical Society. By that point, I had visited over 160 cemeteries. Currently, the total is over 600 and I have many more to locate and photograph. In the process, I have documented 70 previously "unlisted" cemeteries and I hear of others every week. Finding most of those cemeteries is a challenge but I enjoy that part of my project more than any other. I just gave Jane over 6000 pictures last month.

One day in April 2009 while at the HSWC, one of the volunteers, Jane Oakes, said I should meet John Gregory who assisted in compiling the cemetery readings for *High On A Windy Hill, Vol.2*. Volume 2 was intended to correct errors in Volume 1 and add additional unlisted cemeteries; however in the process, more errors were made. When I met John, he was involved in the immense project of republishing Volume 2 by making corrections, additions, and placing all information into a new volume. John asked me if I would assist him in this undertaking and without pause I said yes. I was already hunting cemeteries and taking pictures but now I am hunting any and all cemeteries and transcribing the names and dates to paper. I do not usually

have to return to a cemetery to photograph a marker so a back-up source for all the pictures is a plus.

Today, over 3 1/2 years have passed since I found one small cemetery that inspired me to seek out more and I have enjoyed every minute of the search. In the meantime I have photographed old houses, barns, mills, animals, plants, creeks, rivers, waterfalls, icicles, insects, and anything else that demands bytes on my digital camera. I have met many great people, made new friends, discovered relatives, and learned my way around most of Washington County, VA.

The downside is the deplorable condition of so many isolated and forgotten cemeteries. Those who rest in these cemeteries were the scribes of the history of our region and should be afforded more respect and attention. Then there's the saddening fact that several cemeteries noted in HOWH Vol.1 no longer exist. In the dark of the night, someone erased all signs. A mobile home sits upon one and another is someone's grassy front yard. Yet another is a bed of weeds along I-81 and not a marker can be found. The thieves of our history need to be stopped. A means needs to be found to ensure these sacred places are given care and barricaded against livestock. It is not the landowner's responsibility to take care of these cemeteries. In my case, surviving family members may not even know where their ancestors are buried or are unable due to health, distance, or means to care for the cemeteries. Perhaps, there are no survivors. Whatever the case may be, it is a problem that begs a solution.

## WHO VISITS OUR LIBRARY?

Ever wonder who uses our library? Logically, you would guess people from Abingdon followed by people from Washington County. Wrong! We did an analysis this year from the sign-in register. For the entire year of 2011 we had 1202 visitors to the library...or those were the ones that signed in. 28.2% were from Washington County, 19.2% were from Virginia (other than Washington County), 2.2% did not record their addresses and an astounding 50.2% were from other states or countries. Expressed another way... 69.5% of our visitors were from outside of Washington County!

## Donations and Acquisitions

**A list of Arlington National Cemetery Confederate Burials** from Una Mae Blackwell McLean, Annapolis, MD (VF-Civil War)

**Photos of the old Washington County bank on Main Street in Abingdon being remodeled** from Helen Wood, Abingdon, VA (Photo Collection)

**Out in Left Field** by Bill (Red) Caldwell, Rural Retreat, VA (SWVA.61)

**Imazighen – Americans: The Hidden Immigrants** by Edgar Howard, Christiansburg, VA (Nat.Mel.03)

**Antique Oak Spool Cabinet for visitor's register**, from Martha Keys, Abingdon, VA (Library)

**The Fighting Parson script** from Beth McCoy, Abingdon, VA (Archives)

**Dr. Teeter's Appt. book circa 1937** from David Hedrick, Gettysburg, VA

**Article titled The Cohabitation List of Freed Slaves and Free Person of Color in Washington County, VA** by James Hagy, PhD., Abingdon, VA (2012 HSWC Bulletin)

**A Census of Walnut Grove Cemetery in Mendota, VA** by Thomas Fleenor, Mendota, VA

**Celebrating the Revolutionary War – Municipal Symbols of a Free Country** by Marvin W. Bubie, purchased by HSWC (War Rev.33)

**Quilt belonging to Sally McGinnis circa 1835** from Sydney Morgan, Raleigh, NC (Archives)

**Dead bolt lock and door handles** from Charles Seaver (storage room, Train Station)

**Mill Folk article from University of Virginia Magazine, Nov. 1908** donated by Pamela L. Schweitzer, Cockeysville, MD (VF-

Widener)

**Maryland Marriages 1634-1779, Founders of Anne Arundel and Howard Co., Maryland and a Radford University Annual, 2000** from Jamie McCoy, Bristol, VA (TBA)

**1927 Washington County Soil Map** from Lisa Andis and Alda Sproles, Abingdon, VA (Map Collection)

**A Genealogical History of the Lewis and Parker Families** from Juanita Pennington, Miami, FL (FAM LEW.05)

**Smith County, VA 1890 Personal Property Tax Lists** by Jack Hockett and Don Helton, Salem VA (TBA)

**The Richard Whiteaker Family of Washington Co., VA** by John W. Whiteaker, Schaumburg, IL (FAM WHI.2)

**Tales from the Moonshine Trade** by Kathy Shearer donated by same, Emory, VA (ART CRAFT.19)

**A Century of Furniture: The Rose Cabinet Shops by WKRAC**, purchased by HSWC (ART CRAFT.18)

**Abingdon High School Newspapers the Talon, back issues** from Merry Jennings, Abingdon, VA (ARCHIVES)

**Photos of Mendota, Virginia by Mike Pierry, Jr.**, donated by Mike Pierry, Jr., Abingdon, VA (Photo Collection)

**The Heritage of Charlotte Co., VA, Vol. II** purchased by HSWC (STA VA C.6.4)

**The Beacon – Abingdon High School yearbooks** from Merry Jennings and Pam Necessary, Abingdon, VA (TBA)

**GPS device for use on cemetery project** from George Metcalf, Abingdon, VA

## Monetary Donations

Elizabeth Hayter, New York, NY; Dan & Gerry Lambert, Fresno, CA; Eileen N. Shaffer, Ridgeland, MS; David W. Snodgrass, Greenwood Village, CO.

## Picture & Document Donors

Charlie Barnette - Bristol, TN; Jerry Belisle - Abingdon, VA, Jane Bryan - Abingdon, VA; Connie Hagy Counts - Abingdon, VA; Hubert Gilliam - Kingsport, TN; Jim Hagy - Abingdon, VA; Kitty Henninger - Abingdon, VA; Jimmy Hurt - Bristol, TN; Jay Lewis - Mendota, VA; Lonnie Lewis - Damascus, VA; Audrey Loyd - Abingdon, VA; Ina Stephenson - Marbury - Bristol, TN; George Metcalf - Abingdon, VA; Ed Mitchell - Bristol, TN; Joseph Mumpower - Muncie, IN; Juanita Neese - Meadowview, VA; Al & Julia Onstad - North Plymouth, MN; Mike Pierry, Jr. - Abingdon, VA; Melba Powell - Charlotte, N.C.; Marty Quillin - Bristol, VA; Donna Denton Sisk - Blountville, TN; Jimmy Sisk - Bristol, VA; Troy Taylor - Bristol, TN; Doris Wells; Ronald Wimmer - Abingdon, VA.

## Donations are Important—

The Society is a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) organization, donations are tax-deductible. Monetary donations may be designated for specific purposes or given to be used for general operating expenses. Please also consider including the Society in your estate plans.

## Genealogical Connections

**Laurence Kinsolving:** [elianna@embarqmail.com](mailto:elianna@embarqmail.com)

Looking for information on David McHenry Kingsolver, (1835?-1880?) and his father Charles Kingsolver (1774?-1850?).

**Roberta Richardson:** [storyteller@mprint.us](mailto:storyteller@mprint.us)

Researching Tullys and Toncrays.

**Kay Hentz:** [rangerk@panola.com](mailto:rangerk@panola.com)

Researching Thomas and Alexander Meek. They lived in the Abingdon area during the 1700's; Thomas's wife ran an inn.

To list your Family research surnames, please email **your name, email address and surnames** to [Karidancer@aol.com](mailto:Karidancer@aol.com)



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## **Excursion Train stop in Abingdon**

On November 5th, passengers stepped off a train at the Abingdon Passenger Depot for the first time since 1969, when the last passenger train ran. The **Roanoke Chapter, National Railway Historical Society** arranged this eventful excursion.



## **Family Reunions:**

If you have a family reunion taking place this year, we welcome your family notice in our newsletter. Please submit your request to [Karidancer@aol.com](mailto:Karidancer@aol.com)

## **Come join us** in learning, sharing and preserving Washington County, Virginia history.

Annual dues are \$30 per year for individuals/families, \$50 for businesses, \$20 for libraries, and \$300 for life membership. Members receive one *Bulletin* and four newsletters per year. To become a member of the Society, send your check to the Historical Society of Washington County, VA. Attn: Membership, P.O. Box 484, Abingdon, VA. 24212-0484, or visit the Society's website [www.hswcv.org](http://www.hswcv.org) and join online.

## **Hours for the Library**

\* Reopening February 1, 2012

The Historical Society Library hours are from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, 11:00 a. m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Closed for legal holidays and inclement weather.

## ***Electronic Mailing***

Please give us your email address so that we can inform you when the latest newsletter can be found on the web site <http://www.hswcv.org>. With your email address we can also let you know of events which might be scheduled too late to be included in the newsletter.

The *News/letter* is published four times a year by the Historical Society of Washington County, Virginia, P. O. Box 484, Abingdon, VA 24212-0484.

For information, call 276-623-8337, email [office@hswcv.org](mailto:office@hswcv.org), or visit our website at [www.hswcv.org](http://www.hswcv.org).