

# NEWSLETTER



Vol. 44 No. 1 - Spring 2022  
Walter Jenny, Editor

## HS Acquires "Rambling Roots"

### "Rambling Roots" is safe.

The website is a treasure trove of information about Diana's Ryburn ancestors and other pioneer families of Washington County. The index lists almost 700 family surnames.

The project was a labor of love of the late Diana Moffett Powell, a Society member in California who died on Dec. 7, 2020 in California.

Arrangements were made with Powell family members to have her research records sent to Abingdon, with Martha Keys leading the effort. The Historical Society will store the documents and decide the best way to preserve and utilize them for future researchers.

The website will remain up and running under the Historical Society's oversight, and can be accessed both through the original web address [ramblingroots.com](http://ramblingroots.com) and the Historical Society's website.

Jack Hockett wrote, "Diana was one of the very most enthusiastic, dedicated, thorough historical and genealogical researchers I ever knew; her Rambling Roots is superb and I hope it will be preserved to help future researchers. She will be sorely missed."



Charlie Barnette looks over some of the sixteen boxes of research files after they were delivered to the Historical Society.

The Society's Library Committee volunteers have begun the process of reviewing the sixteen boxes of Diana's research, and a decision will be made about how to proceed. Diana didn't log any updates after 2013. Should the collection remain as she left it, or should we undertake to follow her lead and continue expanding it?

Four Board members pitched in to pay the \$1,072.50 cost of shipping the records from California to Abingdon. Without their donations, the documentation behind Diana's work would have likely been destroyed. Many thanks to them for their generosity.

# SAVE THE DATE!

# June 25

## Annual Meeting



The 2022 annual meeting of the Historical Society will convene on **Saturday, June 25**. We'll have a program, dinner, annual report and a little bit of business. **Have you paid your dues?** Registration details will be sent to dues-paid members in the next few weeks. Until then, save the date!

We expect to have the meeting available by Zoom again for those who live far from Abingdon - but you'll miss the great meal and camaraderie, so we hope as many of you as possible can attend in person, COVID permitting.

If you have questions, feel free to contact the office at [office@hswcv.org](mailto:office@hswcv.org) or 276-623-8337. See you there!

# Graybeal Hired As New Office Manager

The Board of Directors has hired Nathan Graybeal as our new office manager.

A native of Emory, Nathan graduated from Patrick Henry High School, and attended Emory & Henry before transferring to James Madison University where he received his degree in data processing with a minor in business administration. He has worked in the Commonwealth Attorney's office since 2015, and previously served as the Sports Information Director for Emory & Henry College for almost twenty years. Nathan has worked 36 NCAA national championship events in football, basketball, baseball and softball, promoting E&H athletes with ESPN, NBC and Sports Illustrated. He has won numerous national awards for sports publications and web design, and was recognized by the National Football Foundation for his career contribution to football. In 2011 he was inducted into the E&H Sports Hall of Fame.



*Nathan Graybeal*

Nathan has a healthy interest in history and genealogy. He is a direct descendant of Sarah Boone, sister of Daniel Boone, and enjoys researching other ancestors in Southwest Virginia.

The office manager is the primary contact person for members of the Society. He handles incoming emails and mail, including dues checks, and helps prepare sold items for shipment. He also will manage the membership records and the purchase of new items and supplies. You'll find Nathan at the office about twenty hours a week.

Long-time office manager Carol Hawthorne-Taylor will provide training for Nathan as he learns the ropes around the office.

We welcome Nathan to the Historical Society family, and thank Carol once again for her invaluable dedication and assistance.

## In Other News...

We will have a few items of business to address at the 2022 Annual Meeting on June 25.

Under our Bylaws, the three year terms of Cathy Hagy and John Neal will expire this year. While they have expressed a desire to continue serving on the Board, the seats are open to the will of the membership.

In a planning session in February, the Board discussed the idea of giving a 10% discount to business members who purchase ten years of dues in advance. President Walter Jenny has recommended a goal of twenty new business memberships a year for the next five years, and a continuation of a goal of forty new individual/family memberships until we reach a goal of 600 dues-paid members. The business membership idea will be finalized at the May Board meeting for presentation to members at the annual meeting.

Other "wish list" suggestions included an upgrade to our History Search Plus database; more speakers and programs at the Historical Society; a greater focus on family and local history for young people; programs coordinated with local family reunions; an elevator to improve access to the second floor of our building; improved landscaping; website improvements; marketing of our digital newspaper collection, and more.

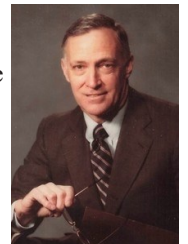
Many of these ideas will depend on additional volunteers and financial resources, but there is no doubt we have a lot of enthusiasm and interest in growth for the community.

## TOM AND EUGENIA PHILLIPS



The Historical Society lost two good friends and long-time supporters in the past twelve months.

Eugenia (Summers) Phillips, 93, died on June 10, 2021. She was an active Society volunteer both at the depot and earlier at the courthouse.



Her husband, Thomas Caldwell Phillips, 92, died on Feb. 20, 2022. He served as president of the Society in 1970-1972, and on our Board of Directors from 1973 to 1984.

Tom graduated from William King High School, then received a bachelor's degree in history from Virginia Military Institute and a law degree from the University of Virginia. After a 30 year career in the Army Reserves, he retired with the rank of colonel. He was always engaged in numerous community activities, including a stint on the Abingdon Town Council.

Both were active at Sinking Spring Presbyterian Church, where they were married in 1951.

"Tom wrote our bylaws, was instrumental in obtaining approval for the Society to occupy the Station, and negotiated the transfer of the Summers Law Office to the Town," recalled Secretary/Treasurer Charles Seaver.

# "Conversation" Returns To Abingdon

The Historical Society's popular fundraiser with Bill Barker interpreting Thomas Jefferson returns to Abingdon after a one-year hiatus due to COVID. This year he's bringing a friend.

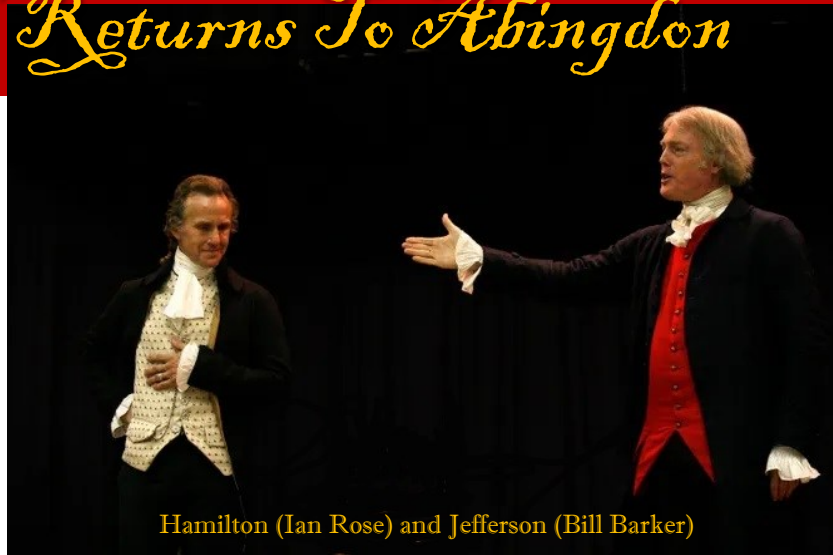
"Conversation with Jefferson and Hamilton" introduces another Founding Father to our area in the person of Ian Rose of Philadelphia, who has performed as Alexander Hamilton for over two decades.

Barker, who now portrays Jefferson full-time at Monticello, and Rose have paired up in these roles frequently. Hamilton served as Treasurer of the United States under President George Washington from 1789 to 1795, while Jefferson served as Minister to France from 1785 to 1789 and, from 1790 to 1793, Secretary of State under Washington. They butted heads often over many issues that faced the new Republic, some of which still linger today. Hamilton was killed in a duel with Jefferson's vice president, Aaron Burr, in 1804.

Barker is recognized as the foremost interpreter of Jefferson. His deep knowledge of Jefferson's voluminous writings and uncanny resemblance brings the Sage of Monticello to life for modern audiences. Besides appearing as Jefferson at the White House and on stages across the country and Europe, he has posed as the model for statues of Jefferson at the Capitol Visitors Center in Richmond and at West Point.

This will be the first time Ian Rose has appeared in Abingdon. He has portrayed Hamilton across the country since 2001 at venues ranging from The State Department to Valley Forge and in numerous films. He is also the "fight director" at Temple University where he teaches students sword-fighting techniques. He has appeared in off-Broadway shows, television commercials and many Shakespeare festivals.

"Conversation" began with Barker's solo performance at the Barter in 2019, followed by a two-person show with Richard Schumann as Virginia Gov. Patrick Henry in 2020. The event could not return to the Barter this year because of scheduling and remodeling conflicts, so it has been moved to the historic ballroom of The Martha Inn and Spa across the street. We've also decided to present it during the Virginia Highlands Festival



Hamilton (Ian Rose) and Jefferson (Bill Barker)

which brings thousands of visitors to the area. Because the ballroom is half the size of the Barter's main auditorium, there will be two performances - the first at 10 a.m. and the second at 7 p.m. With this schedule, the audience will be seated closer to the performers, and can fit either event into their schedules during the Festival. Each program will run about 90 minutes, and the evening program will include a cash bar between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Conversation is not just a discussion between two people; it can also mean the ability to talk socially with others. Not only will Jefferson and Hamilton spar with each other over many issues that divided them, but they will also engage the audience as if they were on a trip to Abingdon and strolled into the Martha to converse with the local citizenry. It's a rare opportunity to see and interact with world-class historical performers in Southwest Virginia and understand how their issues resonate with the world in 2022.

Tickets are \$25 per person, and each paid adult may bring a student 12 or under at no additional cost. In the past, Bill has made a point of visiting local schools, but that option isn't available during the summer. This will make it possible for school-aged children to meet Messrs. Jefferson and Hamilton without excessive cost.

Tickets will be available in advance at the Society office, online through the Society website store and EventBrite, and at the door until sold out. All proceeds benefit the Historical Society, and all citizens in the area are encouraged to attend.



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8,200 page members!

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hswcv.org

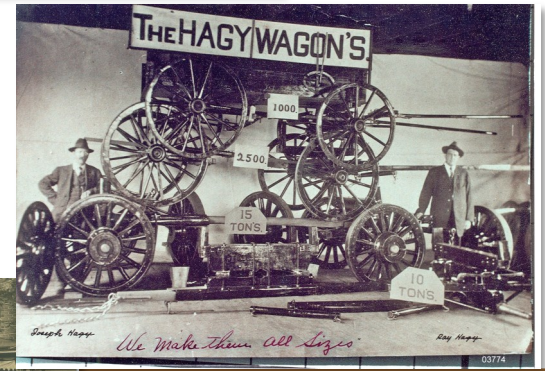
We now have 7,887 books, 29,876  
newspaper pages, 202,547 images,  
1,260,053 index entries, our store  
and Rambling Roots!



## Local Businesses Of The Past Exhibit

The Historical Society is presenting an exhibit called "Local Businesses of the Past" which opened on March 1.

Displays include a wide range of advertisements, signs, receipts, letterheads and promotional materials from many Washington County businesses that no longer exist. The exhibit also features photographs from the Society's collection of over 200,000 indexed images.



*The Hagy Wagon Company was founded by James Alexander Hagy (1832-1904) in 1855. It was one of the largest manufacturers of coaches, buggies and wagons in this area, and their wagons were marketed in several surrounding states.*

*The Jennings Drug Store, also known as the West End Pharmacy, was owned by Dr. Charles Henry Jennings (1865-1946), who settled in Abingdon in 1883. He married Hattie McChesney Jones (1870-1917) in 1884; in 1918, after her death, he married Mary Rachel (Collings) Montgomery (1876-1959). He served on the town council, the school board, and the House of Delegates. All three are buried in Abingdon.*

*This original Hawthorne chair, manufactured near Meadowview, and the chemical scale from the PET evaporated milk plant in Abingdon are part of the Society's inventory of historical artifacts from Washington County.*

## Living History Tour, Workshop Set for July 23

Abingdon's Sinking Spring Cemetery will be busy this year during the Virginia Highlands Festival.

The Society's Living History Tour of Sinking Spring cemetery in Abingdon is slated for **Saturday, July 23** with more spirits and more stories to tell.

The tour attracted 200 guests last year, and we hope to build on that success this year. Tickets are \$5 per person and will be available for sale, cash or check, at the cemetery gate. Be sure to wear comfortable walking shoes and sun protection; water will be provided as in the past by Faris Funeral Service.

We're still open to adding one or two more individuals to the program. Whether you're related to someone buried there or are simply interested telling someone's story, feel free to contact us through the Society office. While it's fun to dress in period attire, it's not a requirement. We also have openings for tour guides and other volunteers, so now's a good time to get involved.



Also busy that Saturday will be Charlie Barnette, who will put on a seminar in the cemetery at 10 a.m. on the proper way to clean monuments and headstones without damaging them. Charlie has been doing this for many years in Washington County, and if you see a cemetery with a gleaming white headstone it's probably one of Charlie's projects.

Sinking Spring cemetery was part of a 55 acre tract purchased from Dr. Thomas Walker 250 years ago by local Presbyterians for a place of worship. It is a valuable asset to the history of Washington County, and the Living History tour brings that history to life.

## *Donations September 1, 2021 – February 28, 2022*

<i>Records of the Moravians Among the Cherokee</i> <i>Conquistador's Wake</i> <i>Native American Tribes: The History and Culture of the Shawnee</i> <i>Point Pleasant 1774</i> <i>Mound Sites of the Ancient South</i>	Dr. James W. Hagy, Abingdon VA
Vintage Christmas Cards	Carol Hawthorne-Taylor, Bristol TN
Orfield/Durham World War II letter collection and miscellaneous pictures	Kenneth Kestner, Abingdon VA
Notebooks on Counts, Farris-McFadden, Grubb, Jessee and Taylor families	Donna Grubb Rotenberry, Abingdon VA
Apple butter stirrer	Herb and Janet McClelland, Bristol VA
Two framed prints of Old Abingdon	Peggy Semancik from the estate of J.H. Combs
World War I uniform (jacket, pants, cap and canteen), draft letters and card, report cards, war medals, random newspaper clipping about Abingdon history, 1954 William King High School graduation documents, three pairs of glasses (credit to Stuart Hutton Ornduff) and baby shoes	Larua Ornduff, Black Mountain NC
<i>History of Rife and Riffe Families</i>	Michelle Facchina, Gaffney SC
<i>The Sharp Family of Scotland and America, The Scottish Presbyterian Rebellion and the American Revolution</i>	Michael Shaver, Abingdon VA
H. Emory Widener's judicial robe and cords	H. Emory Widener
HSWCV Bulletin, Series 2 No. 8, Abingdon brochures	Christine Koomen, Salem VA
Martha Washington College yearbooks - 1913 Cameo, 1921 Cameo and 1924 Cameo	Brett Compton, Bristol VA
Assorted volumes of <i>Appalachian Quarterly</i>	Jeri Whitely, Bristol VA
Metal plaque from William King High School, Class of 1935	Robert Bundy, Abingdon VA

The Society is always interested in accepting donations that reflect the history of Washington County.

In some cases, we cannot accept gifts because of space or administrative concerns (no real estate or livestock, please!) and sometimes a gift may duplicate something we already have, such as a school yearbook. We can scan photos and return the originals to you. Family histories are great! Society donations are tax deductible.

If you are interested in making a donation, feel free to contact us. Our Library Committee will review the proposal and make a decision under our gift acceptance policy. Thank you for supporting your Society!



## *Monetary Donations*

David Wayne Snodgrass	Greenwood Village CO
Dr. James W. Hagy	Abingdon VA
Vickie Pendergrass	Chesapeake City MD
Carolyn Ryburn	Glade Spring VA
Joella Johnson Barbour	Glade Spring VA
Carol Noonkester	Abingdon VA
Jo Hofman	Ft. Lauderdale FL
Janet Woolwine	Abingdon VA
Patricia M. Hatfield	Abingdon VA
Nancy Cooper Bennett	Phoenix AZ
Suzanne Anderson	Cheyenne WY
Kathleen Morrow	Rockwall TX
Harry E. and Carolyn C. Ryburn	Glade Spring VA
Anonymous	

## *In Memoriam*

In Memory of Jane Oakes	Angela Anderson, Abingdon, VA William H. Mitchell, Charlottesville VA
In Memory of R. L. Knott III	Linda Ann Summers, Hutchinson Island FL C. M. and William A. Young Jr., Petersburg VA Sandra C. and William S. Howson III, Fredericksburg VA Patricia and Michael Church, Suffolk VA Edward and Julia Bochart, Virginia Beach VA Michael and Sharon Garber, Midlothian VA Calvin and Dolly Crowder, North Prince George VA Disputanta Ruritan Club, Disputanta VA Mary Ann Hepp, North Chesterfield VA Anne Huber, Midlothian VA

*Thanks to all our donors for your support!*



# Ready To Roll

The Confederate soldier statue, a fixture at Main and Court in Abingdon since 1908, was moved April 2 to make room for a major expansion of the Washington County courthouse. The twelve ton monument will be restored by Washington County to represent local soldiers from all wars, and displayed at the county administration building along with a 1999 granite marker identifying five Civil War generals with connections to the county.

## “Reclaiming Our History” 2022

Plans are underway for the Society’s second conference on African Americans in Washington County.

Our first conference last June, “Reclaiming Our History,” was a virtual conference attended by 65 people from coast to coast. Keynote speaker was Kenyatta D. Berry, genealogist and host of the PBS program “Genealogy Roadshow.” Videos of the conference can be accessed through the Resources page of the Society website. The program was sponsored in part by Virginia Humanities.

This year, the conference will build on last year’s success. It will once again be virtual. We have continued to add to our “WashCoVA African American Family Tree” on Ancestry.com which tracks African Americans who lived in the county prior to emancipation as well as their descendants. The site currently includes over 4,000 people. Our target audience will include other historical societies so they can learn how to use this approach to explore their histories, as well as descendants seeking to learn more about their ancestors.

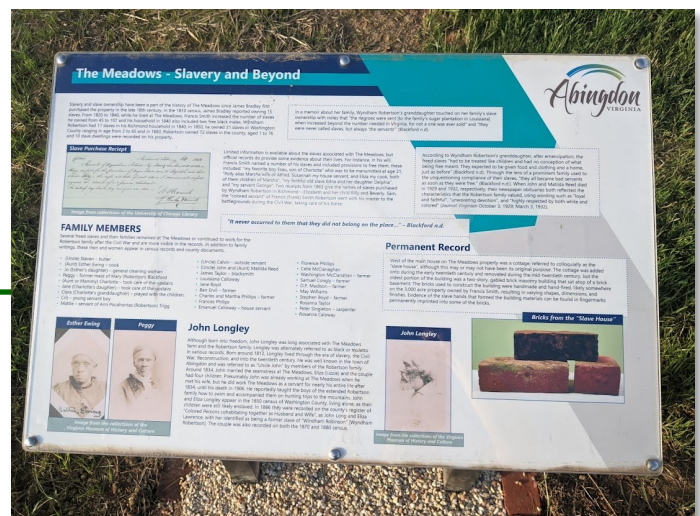
We’ll also research and tell the remarkable stories of more African Americans with connections to Washington County.

If you enjoy doing research on Ancestry.com, we can always use volunteers on the WashCoVA tree. Over a thousand hints need to be investigated, and of course there are errors to correct and improvements to be made. If you are interested, contact the Local History Committee or Walter Jenny at [wjenny314@comcast.net](mailto:wjenny314@comcast.net).

The Town of Abingdon installed four new historical message signs at The Meadows as part of the grand opening of the sports complex in April. If you’re in the area, stop by and learn a little about this historic property that once was a “summer home” of a Virginia governor that covered 3,000 acres of Washington County. Several Historical Society photos were used in the displays.



Historical Society volunteers participated in the Abingdon town-wide yard sale in April. In addition to donated items, we sold a number of books, t-shirts and other extras we have accumulated over the years. Thanks to all the volunteers and visitors, we raised several hundred dollars to help fund our operations.





The Historical Society  
of Washington County, Virginia, Inc.  
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