



NEWSLETTER

COMMITTED TO COLLECTING, PRESERVING, AND SHARING THE UNIQUE HERITAGE OF OUR COUNTY

October 2013

Vol. 35, No. 3

This issue of the Historical Society *Newsletter* is featuring some wonderful articles written by our members. Enjoy!

Two Petitions

The County Seat Should be Further West, 1777

When legislation was passed in late 1776 to divide Fincastle into Montgomery, Washington, and Kentucky counties, Black's Fort was designated as the county seat for Washington. The legislation went into effect on January 1, 1777. At that time, the southern border of Virginia had not been determined in the area, and many people believed that it was at the South Holston River. The people who were living in what is now East Tennessee thought they lived in Washington County. For them, Black's Fort was too distant. They petitioned the General Assembly for a more convenient center of government. They stated that they

"...were greatly injured in the Division of Fincastle in the year 1776 by the manner in which the line was directed to be run."

At that time, Montgomery County bordered Washington County, and the petitioners showed their displeasure that the border of Washington County was only thirty miles from the Montgomery line and twelve miles from North Carolina. They pointed out that what they believed to be the lower border of Washington County was seventy miles from Black's Fort. They wanted the seat of government to be near the center of the county. Approximately seventy-five men signed the petition. Had their petition been acted on, the county seat could have been in present-day Tennessee.

In 1779-1780, the border with North Carolina was laid off which was roughly where it is located now, but because of disputes, the issue was not finally decided until the Supreme Court ruled on the matter in 1893. Meanwhile the eastern border of the county was modified with the formation of Wythe County in 1790 and Smyth County in 1832.

The Capital of Virginia Should Be Further West, 1832

Williamsburg served as the capital of Virginia until 1778 when it was replaced by Richmond. At that time most of the population of the Old Dominion lived in the eastern part of the state, but as people moved into the West, the center of population was no longer east of the Blue Ridge. Richmond was far away for people in Washington County. When the legislature chose David Campbell as governor in 1837, he and his slave attendant had to travel by stagecoach for five bruising days and nights with almost no sleep to reach the capital city.

Five years prior to that, Campbell was the first to sign a petition from Washington County to the General Assembly to remove the seat of government saying

"there are many reasons which present themselves, to render such a removal important to the general interests of the state. It is believed that a position, as near as may be to the centre of population and territory, is the most suitable of all others for the location of the seat of government. Many seats of government, disregarding their large towns, have fixed on the center of population & territory. This is conceived to be justice to all the citizens of the Commonwealth. But there are [other] reasons for the removal, particularly applying to the city of Richmond. The public property and records of the country are in danger of destruction for a public enemy in times of war, and also from a more terrible, because domestic, foe. From this danger it is believed we should be relieved by the removal to some town west of the mountains, where from the salubrity of the climate, ... the Legislature might convened ... in the summer, and the length of its session thereby, from the absence of all temptation to dissipate time, be much curtailed."

Therefore, they argued that Richmond was too distant, the city too expensive, the public records subject to foreign invasions and domestic uprisings, the summers too hot for continued sessions, and the city not easily accessible by Westerners. The petitioners wanted to follow the examples of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia, states which had relocated the capitals from coastal area. The petition contains no information about its disposition, which probably means it was tabled without consideration.

The petition was signed by sixty-four men.

JWH

Col. James Lowery White of Abingdon (1770-1838):

Great X4 Grandfather

By John White Stuart, III, Ph.D.

September 8, 2013

Abingdon, Virginia's Col. James White amassed such wealth in the early nineteenth century that it took four decades after his death to settle his estate. The range of his operations initially extended from merchandising to mining. With the resources acquired in those fields, he acquired two plantations with substantial populations of slaves, 65 of whom, according to the census, continued to reside on Washington County land with his widow in 1850, twelve years after his death, an unusually large number for the area. With interests that spread from Virginia to Alabama in an era predating widespread rail transportation, White's Virginia Highlands-centered operations seem particularly remarkable to those used to the instant-communication and high-speed-travel times of two centuries later.

The White Family Bible Records in the digital archives of the Historical Society of Washington County (HSWC) in Abingdon show that Col. James White was born in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, on February 22, 1770. The "1850 Census of Washington County, Virginia, Annotated" identifies his parents as William and Ann Maria (Lowery) White, daughter of Joseph and Ann Lowery.

Online genealogies trace the White line in America to the early eighteenth century. Hugh White fathered son Moses in 1705 at Chickies in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and Moses' death occurred in the same county in 1757. A younger Moses had been born to him in 1725, who with Mary McConnell White parented James' father William, February 4, 1743, also in Lancaster County.

William, identified in one source as "Patriot," a likely reference to unspecified Revolutionary War service, evidently became the first White in the American branch of the family to move beyond Pennsylvania. He married Ann (born c. 1750 in Lancaster) before 1769 at St. James Episcopal Church in Lancaster County; subsequently lived in Carlisle; sold property in Chambersburg according to a deed book entry of March 28, 1783; and moved to Abingdon, Virginia, perhaps at the same time as his son James in 1795. Unlike James, however, William kept relocating, settling on a 200 acre farm in Harlan County, Kentucky seven miles north of Cumberland Gap and establishing a store and tavern there in 1800. He died in Clay County, Kentucky, in 1813 and is buried on his farm. Ann died in the same county in 1826.

James was 27 when he married Elizabeth (Eliza) Wilson on January 4, 1798. Aged fifteen, twelve years younger than he, she was born September 15, 1782, in Pittsylvania County, Virginia. Though both Whites were age 68 at their deaths, the disparity in their birth years meant that Eliza survived her husband by almost thirteen years, her death occurring on April 7, 1851; James died October 20, 1838. Eliza's parents were Ignatius James and Eleanor (Conn) Wilson. Neither James' nor Eliza's parents are mentioned in the White Family Bible Records, but the dates of c. 1753 - April 15, 1837, and c. 1746 - April 1832 are given there respectively to William Young Conn and Jane Conn, Eliza's maternal uncle and his wife, surrogate parents for Eliza and her siblings after their parents died of disease.

The esteem in which the Conns were held is evident in the Whites' twice naming sons for William Young Conn and also naming a daughter for Jane. Their first two of thirteen children were Jane Conn White (b. March 10, 1800) and William Young Conn White nearly two years later. The infant boy died in 1803. Three other births in the family, including a boy who was named for his father, preceded that of William Young Conn White (WYC) II in 1812. He would become grandfather to Sallie Preston White Stuart, great grandmother to the present writer. The Whites' final child was born in 1830.

Though he had reached his early 40's by the time of the War of

1812, James served his nation in some capacity then. His designation as "Colonel," however, is likely more honorary than military. At his death in 1838 he was also said to have served as a magistrate for four decades. Two portraits of him in the HSWC digital collection depict an imposing presence. In image #5264, as a young man in a high-collared dark jacket and white neckerchief, sitting on a Windsor style chair, he sports lengthy locks gathered perhaps in a ribbon at back. He appears slightly stout, quite earnest, and aglow with ambition. A later view of James, #5088, shows somewhat thinned curly hair, a dark vest and jacket with a velvet sheen and dressy white bowtie, a direct gaze with large bright eyes, few wrinkles but possible laugh lines about the mouth which seems about to speak, and a stately column base as a background feature. Both portraits convey a degree of firmness tempered by warmth of personality.

The program for a portraiture exhibit in Abingdon that included images of James and Eliza and a brief biographical sketch of James commented, "At his death in 1838 [in the courthouse in Wytheville, Virginia, seat of the county where his lead mining interests were] his holdings were estimated to be worth three quarters of a million dollars. He is the progenitor of one of the state's most prominent families."

Two collections of papers offer more insight into the White fortune: the "White Family Papers" in the library of the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, and "Inventory and appraisal of the estate of Colonel James White, 1839-1873" in the Library of Virginia, Richmond. A guide to the former collection notes that before James' arrival in Abingdon, he "had worked for Talbot, Jones & Company, a Baltimore merchandising house, who supplied him with enough goods to set up his own business," eventually leading to his involvement in forty-five mercantile interests in Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia. He partnered with a Mr. Henderson in Abingdon and William Lynn in Alabama. James held investments in "lead mines in Wythe County [Austinville, Virginia], iron furnaces [and iron ore mining at Brumley Gap], cotton plantations, and slaves." This source highlights the importance of James' leasing the salt works at Saltville, Virginia, which supplied him with resources to acquire such landholdings as Limestone plantation [in Washington County Virginia, according to "Inventory and appraisal . . .," and, if so, likely under the management of WYC, though the guide to the "White Family Papers" places Limestone in Alabama]; Bellefonte plantation in Jackson County, Alabama, near Huntsville, managed by WYC's younger brother Thomas; and property in Clay County, Kentucky where James' parents had spent their final years.

The Col James White family home in Abingdon stood on the south side of Main Street prior to a fire there and the subsequent construction of its 1819 replacement across the street, a large brick residence that still stands near the town courthouse. The home has been enlarged and also partly rebuilt following another fire, this one a result of the hostilities referred to as Stoneman's Raid in the Civil War in 1864 that resulted in the destruction of the courthouse. An image of the home can be found in Nancy King's "Places in Time," Vol. I.

The iron-gated White family cemetery stands beyond Sinking Spring Cemetery atop a hill north of Main Street in Abingdon, just above the base of a water tower off Leonard Street. Its central feature is a marble pillar attesting to James' patriarchy and "loved ones" whose remains rest there with his.

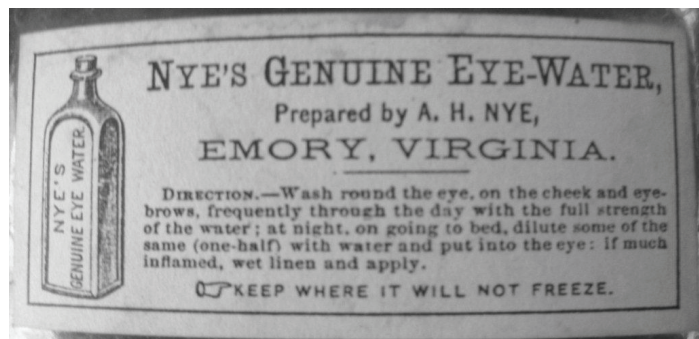
James' estate was left to his children, but Washington County Chancery Notes show that the heirs were challenged to some extent by Daniel Davenport who had made James' acquaintance a few years before his death. Litigation of the estate was not completed until 1878. Eliza, moreover, faced a suit begun in 1843 by her son-in-law John R. Humes, who had married Jane Conn White.

Another surviving artifact of James' empire is White's Mill, which had been in existence since 1790 and he had purchased shortly before his death. The mill is just over four miles north of Abingdon. WYC continued to operate it until his death in 1882, when like his father, he too was addressed by the "Bristol News" as Colonel.

The Stephenson Medicine Co of Emory VA

By Charlie Barnette

I never knew of this company's existence until a few days ago. A lady donated some old letters and docs to the HSWCV and mentioned letters from the company as being part of the booty. Of course, being a bottle collector, I had to get nose and look at same.



Apparently, the company grew out of the Nye Medicine Co., also of Emory (per John Gregory). Not much at all is known of the Nye Company. John has an old medicine bottle label for NYE'S GENUINE EYE WATER, prepared by A H Nye. It has a picture of an early/older cork stopper type bottle on the label. That is the extent of my current knowledge. I do wonder if this Nye was in any way affiliated with or related to the Nye Lithia Springs Co. of Wytheville VA?

The Stephenson Medicine Company, of which J. Eugene Stephenson was the Proprietor, offered several types of medicines, including a Bitters and a Sarsaparilla: this during the 1920s when Prohibition was in effect. Both products were usually high in alcoholic content, thus their popularity. Bitters first appeared in Great Britain as a way to evade taxes on alcohol and eventually made their way to the US.



Recipes for the aforementioned products were in one envelope as well as a label for STEPHENSON'S FACE & HAND LOTION...Price 35c.

Recipe for one gallon Sarsaparilla: (sic)

Coler water first with Red Cake Colerog. 1 table spoonful

Then use a small vessel to mix in.

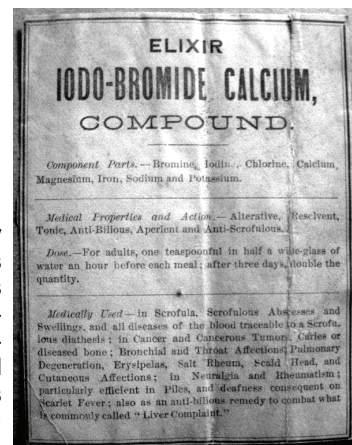
4 table spoonful Cape powdered Ales
1 table spoonful F.E. Wild cherry
1 tea spoonful Spt. Amenia
1 table spoonful Oil Sassafras
1 tea spoonful Sodium Benzeate
Coler water first.

Recipe for One gallon Burdock Bitters: (sic)

Coler Water with Caramel

4 table spoonful Cape Ales
1 tea spoonful Spt. Amenia
1 table spoonful F.E. Wild cherry
1/2 tea spoonful Oil Wintergreen

*(these recipes do not call for any type of alcohol, but I am sure it was added just to keep the ingredients in suspension. Being during Prohibition, any type of alcoholic beverages were prohibited by Law and punishable. No doubt the recipes and labels intentionally omitted mention of such).



In 1923, John Gilliam of Rogersville, Tenn. wrote, "while I were in Toms Creek Va. I bought \$4.50 of your Burdock Bitters and I am out, it did me so much good I feel like I ought to have some more."

In 1925, Riners Department Store (formerly Castlewood Grocery Co Inc.) of Castlewood VA, ordered 2 dozen bottles of Golden Crown Sarsaparilla Compound for \$10.00.

In 1927, Philip Hackney of Gilmer, W VA., enclosed \$2.00 and wrote, "please send me 3 more bottles of your Cherokee Indian Herb Remedy."

Also in 1927, the well known Bodecker Drug Co of Richmond VA notes Stephenson invoiced them for 1/2 dozen bottles of the Burdock Bitters at 50c per bottle and wanted to know the retail price they were to charge their customers for same.

In 1928 Will Jeffrey of Pocahontas, Va. ordered 12 bottles of Burdock Bitters and 12 bottles of Golden Sarsaparilla Compound for \$14.00. He was obviously a repeat customer, as in 1929 he ordered 2 dozen large size bottles of the Burdock Bitters, "as soon as you can." He enclosed a check for \$10.00.

Another customer, one J H Skeen of Castlewood VA, noted in 1928 he was returning his bottles as instructed to be filled and returned.

So, we now see that Stephenson prepared and sold more medicines than a Bitters and a Sarsaparilla. It would be interesting to learn what all he did sell and if any of the actual bottles survive. Being a small operation, and the fact he had to refill his bottles, there may not have been many to begin with and all likely bore only labels and are thus indistinguishable from any others. Also, being small, I guess he managed to escape having to abide by the provisions of the Pure Food & Drug Act of 1906 as well as visits by the Feds, i.e. "revenooers."

I'm still seeking additional info about Stephenson as well as Nye. Please share anything you may have.

LIVING HISTORY TOUR OF SINKING SPRING CEMETERY by Charlie Barnette

This tour was a first time event for the Historical Society and was held on August 4, during the Virginia Highlands Festival & Abingdon's 2nd Annual Civil War Weekend.

Donnamarie Emmert & Martha Keys coordinated the tour and served as guides, as did Mark Hagy and his niece, Lauren Baumgardner. Other HSWCV "enactors" briefly told of the lives of their "spirit" - as if they were the person whose tombstone they stood beside - and how they may have met their end. Some were dressed in period costume as befitted their roles.

Carol Hawthorne - Taylor was a grieving CSA widow at the Unknown CSA Dead section of the cemetery. I was Col Samuel V. Fulkerson. Killed in battle in 1862, his remains were shipped back to Abingdon smothered in charcoal. Garrett Jackson portrayed his ancestor, Alonzo Jackson - who has a most unusual tombstone. Eleanor Grasselli honored her ancestress Sarah Colville Vance. Kitty Henninger was Parson Cummings' wife, Millicent, and welcomed guests to the Cummings' cabin. Ron Dickenson was a very apt study as Governor David Campbell. And the Irishman William King was portrayed by another Irishman, Oliver Craughwell, who is from the same small town in Ireland as was Wm King.

The Tour was judged much fun and a great success by all involved. We are planning to hold another Tour during the 2014 Highlands Festival. All willing "spirits" are invited to participate. Come join us!



Historical Society
Of Washington County, Virginia, Inc.
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COMING SOON!

THE 2014 HISTORICAL SOCIETY CALENDAR

Keep watching for the Calendar to appear for sale online at hswcv.org. It will be \$12, including tax. And there's a surprise this year.....!

**Start your Christmas Shopping
at the Historical Society's Booth!**



Mistletoe Market

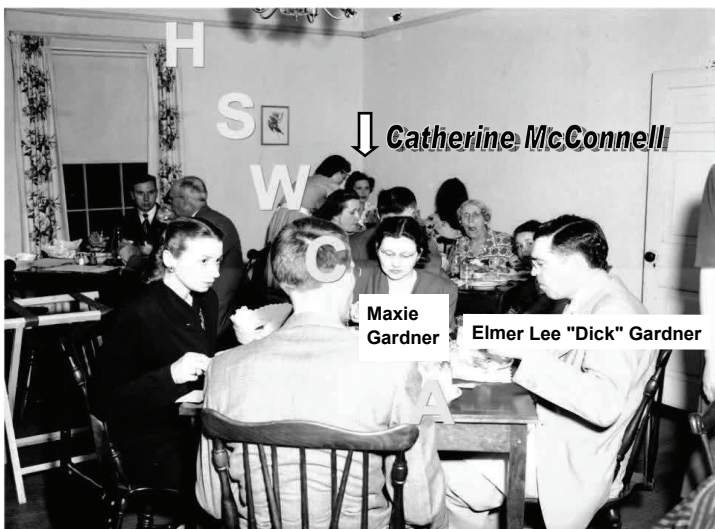
November 8-9, 9 am – 7 pm

November 10, 11 am – 5 pm

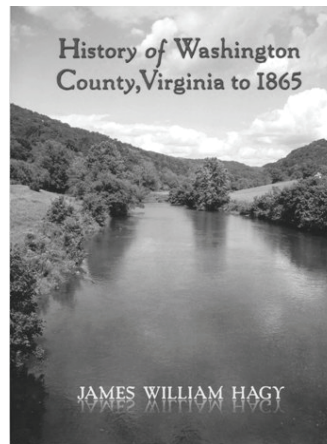


Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center
located at exit 14 in Abingdon, Virginia

**Thank you to Kitty Henninger for recognizing her mother Catherine
McConnell and Elmer "Dick" Gardner & his wife Maxie.**



AB2-5 The Crabtree Opening night June 3, 1947



James Hagy is a Washington County native and retired professor of history at the College of Charleston, Charleston, SC. Dr. Hagy currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Historical Society of Washington County, VA.

The book is divided into 12 chapters, organized according to subject from "The Land and the People" and "Earliest Times", to the "Civil War". To quote the author, "I have sought to give an accurate account of the events in Washington County

until the end of the Civil War and to make known much that has been overlooked in the past."

Hardcover, 2013, 306 pgs. including index
Item: 328 Price: \$47.50

Dr. Hagy's book can be ordered online at the Society's Web site, hswcv.org

Your membership in the Historical Society is appreciated. Please help us stay in touch with you!

- send a change-of-address card when you move,
- or call our offices at 276-623-8337,
- or e-mail us at office@hswcv.org