

NEWSLETTER

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President's Message

Dear Friends,

As the new president of the Historical Society, I want to thank you for your support and involvement in this organization. Since 1936, we've sought to preserve the history of this remarkable area for present and future generations, and it wouldn't be possible without you.

I also want to thank Martha Keys for her years of dedicated service as president of the Historical Society. She will continue serving on the board as Immediate Past President, and I look forward to working with her and others to continue building the organization.

There's a lot going on! The Media Center continues digitizing documents at a dizzying pace, building what is surely one of the most remarkable resources of its kind in Virginia. We're making plans for the second "Conversation" event at the Barter in February as a major fundraiser, and working on other programs for the coming year. *Cemeteries of Washington County, Virginia* continues to sell well as a supplement to *High On a Windy Hill*. The Wertz photography collection continues to grow, and the new library has seen an increase in visitors now that we have a "Main Street" presence in Abingdon.

As you've seen from the last newsletter, membership dues make up about 14% of our revenue. We have over 400 dues-paid individual members and a handful of business members. One of my goals is to expand that membership to 600. To do that, **I'd like to enlist each of our current dues-paying members to serve as an "Ambassador" for the Historical Society.**

All of us know someone who is interested in Washington County history or genealogy but is not yet a member. Ask them to join! You may have children who are now grown who deserve their own membership. You may know people at work, at church or elsewhere in the community who should join. A membership is a great Christmas present for a friend or relative, a library or a school. Simply contact the office at 1-276-623-8337 or go to our website at <http://hswcv.org/store.html#Memberships> to purchase a membership. We can easily reach this goal if half of our current members sign up just one new member. In doing so, we can generate \$7,000 in new income for the organization *without raising dues!* But we need a bit of help from you as an "Ambassador" to make it happen. Thank you in advance for your help.

Also, if you're interested in volunteering at the Historical Society library, contact us at volunteer@hswcv.org. **We need more volunteers!**

I hope you enjoy this newsletter and the other benefits of membership. If you have any suggestions or requests, please don't hesitate to let us know. I look forward to hearing from you and being of service.

Sincerely,

Walter Jenny, President
wjenny314@comcast.net

Walter Jenny, HSWCV President, portraying the Rev. Charles Cummings in the 2019 Living History Tour of Sinking Spring Cemetery in Abingdon.



The following article was submitted from one of our members visiting us from Delaware, but her roots and her heart are in Washington County.

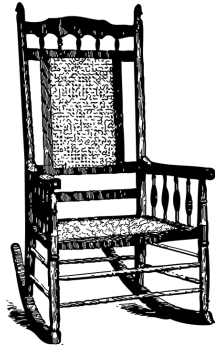
REMEMBERING MY GRANDFATHER

Grandparents are a family's greatest treasure, the founders of a loving legacy, the greatest storytellers, the keepers of traditions that linger on in cherished memory. Grandparents are the family's strong foundation. Their very special love sets them apart. Through happiness and sorrow, through their special love and caring, grandparents keep a family close at heart.

Author unknown

From the age of six and a half, I was one of those kids with a resident grandfather. That was a great blessing, but I regret very much that I didn't ask for more details of his early life. Born in 1864, he could remember times just after the Civil War. Imagine the memoir he could have written!

Actually, he wasn't my grandfather—he was my great-uncle and my mother's foster father (James Albert Akers) but he was "Granddaddy" to me and my three younger sisters. He and my grandmother (Mary Smyth Akers) were strong, hardworking, gentle people who loved us dearly. Sadly, I am the only one of us who remembers my grandmother, who died in 1936 when I was not quite six years old. Their home was a Victorian two-story house my grandfather built with the help of his brothers in Abingdon, a pre-Revolutionary town in southwestern Virginia. The house was near William King High School which my mother attended, the same one all four of us would attend years later. The school was one of those classic brick buildings with big white columns found in so many towns of that period.



After their marriage in 1892, my grandparents lived on a farm northeast of Abingdon in the Yellow Springs area. As children, my mother and her cousins and friends attended the local rural school. One of their favorite forbidden pastimes was jumping across a small creek and sometimes, especially in warm weather, falling into the water. When they were not in school, children had chores to do: carrying dinner (the mid-day meal) and drinking water to the men working in the fields, gathering eggs from hens' nests, bringing in cows from the pasture, and helping in the garden and the house. They also rang a brass hand bell (which I now treasure) to call everybody in for supper, or to get help in an emergency.

The decision to sell the farm and move to town was based at least in part on the opportunity for my mother to attend high school in town. I always had the feeling that she gladly exchanged farm chores and mud for housework and town sidewalks. As an added attraction she had friends and cousins in town, as well as three half-siblings from her father's second marriage ... and that brings us to the "foster parent" part of the story.

My mother's future father (George M. Akers) had been keeping company for an extended period with a lady whom everyone expected him to marry. Then in 1905 he met a much younger lady (Alice Chambers), fell in love, and they were married shortly thereafter. In 1906 my mother was born, and Alice died of peritonitis within a week. The widower father agreed to have the baby brought up by his childless brother and wife, who became "Papa" and "Mama" to my mother (Alice Chambers Akers). As she grew up she always knew her biological father

and the family he established. I was invited to stay at their house to attend special events when I went to William King High School, as we were then living in the country, a few miles away at Green Springs.

Granddaddy was a practical man of many talents and skills, as people tended to be if they lived in the country. He could build anything from a house to a workshop, a garage, a barn, or fine furniture. I still have some examples of his work: a low table he made for me so my parents wouldn't scold me for playing tea party on grownups' furniture, and a cradle-sized doll bed (with an embroidered coverlet and pillowcase made by my grandmother).

Granddaddy was also a blacksmith, making tools, repairing farm machinery and shoeing horses. He could do bricklaying (in later years, while supervising whichever grandchild wanted to play in the mortar with a trowel). He was a good cook, having grown up with four brothers and one sister. All of them learned to help their mother, as well as work the farm.

They grew up in a two-story log house in rural Washington County, VA, not far from where Granddaddy and Grandmother lived after their marriage. That log house was still standing in the 1960's, but was torn down to allow for widening the road.

After my grandmother died early in 1936, Granddaddy lived alone until the Fall of that year, when he came to live with us. That was entirely agreeable with the grandchildren and a great help to my parents. With a new baby and a live-in "hired girl", that made eight of us in the household. My mother was starting work as a legal secretary, and Granddaddy was the household supervisor and helper wherever needed. With much love and a moderate amount of spoiling, he raised my youngest sister—and protected her from retaliation as she grew old enough to annoy her sisters. We children did not know the real reason behind the changes: that my father, at age 36, was beginning to have heart problems that would probably shorten his life. My parents were doing all they could to provide for our future, and Granddaddy was a vital part of that effort. My father lived to be 46, the last three years of which we lived on a larger farm at Green Springs he had inherited from his father (Matthew Gilpin).

During the years of my father's failing health, and after his death in 1946, Granddaddy was the ever-present solid foundation in our household. He was an essential support and guide to my mother when she was widowed at age 40, with four daughters ages 9-15—though she didn't always listen to his advice. He came from hardy stock and lived a long, useful life, active and in good health until he had a fall that led to a short period of decline and his death at age 93. Three of his brothers lived into their mid-90s. That genetic heritage may take me past the age of 100.

Granddaddy loved to sing, and could read music written in old-time "shaped notes" in his hymnal. He had the joy of rocking and singing to the baby boy (Ken Martin, Jr.) whose mother (June Gilpin Martin) and grandmother (Alice C. Akers Gilpin) he had raised ... and I have the pleasure of telling stories about him to my own grandchildren.

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A Busy Year At The Historical Society!

44.4% of our library visitors this year have been from outside Virginia.

More than half

of our visitors in May, June and July have been from outside Virginia.

More than **349** people have visited the library during the six months ending July 31

Membership is **411**, up from 400 in 2018 and 375 in 2015

Revenue from book and estate sales totaled

\$8,252 as of July 31, up from \$2,772 in 2018

The Historical Society holds over

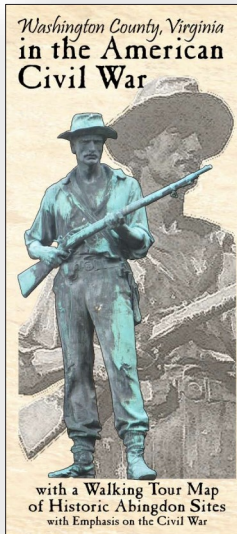
180,000

digital images

Historical Society volunteers

logged **627 hours**

of service in 2018



Want to visit some of Abingdon's Civil War related sites? We have a fascinating new walking tour brochure at our website, www.hswcv.org. Download it to your phone at no cost or print out a hard copy, and start exploring the rich history of Abingdon.



Abingdon's annual Town-Wide Yard Sale is coming up, and we'll be participating! We'll have an Estate Sale at the railroad depot Friday Sept. 13 and Saturday Sept. 14. There are lots of nice items that we need to sell. Come on by and find that treasure!

Board members, staff, volunteers and friends of the Historical Society met August 22 at the public library in Abingdon in a strategic planning session. On Sept. 19 the Board will discuss their suggestions and develop new goals for the organization - all in an effort to make the Historical Society better, healthier and more responsive to the needs of the members and our community.

If you have suggestions, feel free to email Walter Jenny at wjenny314@comcast.net and he'll make sure you're included in the process. Thank you for your input!



Donations January 8, 2019 — August 15, 2019

U. S. Navy Reserve Seabees 1984-1988	Charlie Barnette, Bristol, TN
<i>My Buskill Family</i>	Helen Roesch, Geneva, NY
<i>Bicentennial History of Lee County, Virginia</i>	Sandra H. Coomes, Galax, VA
<i>A Bright Shining City Set on a Hill</i>	
<i>The Cumberland Gap Region</i>	
<i>Old Kentucky Entries and Deeds</i>	
<i>The March of the Sages</i>	
<i>Kentucky Records</i>	
<i>The Ideals Guide to American Civil War Places</i>	Stephen Wolfsberger, Abingdon, VA
<i>National Parks of the Mid-Atlantic</i>	
Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Damascus, VA 1908, 1913, 1925, 1936	Rick Morgan, Abingdon, VA
4' x 8' Banner for <i>Conversation with Thomas Jefferson</i>	Jerry's Signs, Abingdon, VA
Washington Co., VA Minute Book 27, 1887-1889	Jack Hockett, Newark, DE
Washington Co., VA Minute Book 28, 1889-1891	
Washington Co., VA Minute Book 29, 1891-1894	
<i>Legacies of Our Great Grand Mothers – Early Tennessee Women, Vols. 1&2</i>	Rosanne L. Sietins, Dickson, TN
G. N. Wertz photograph	Carter Baker, Nashville, TN
5-Volume Set VFW Pictorial History of WWII	John Crigger, Abingdon, VA
Abstracts of Wills, Inventories, & Administrative Accounts of Frederick Co., VA	Patricia Hatfield, Abingdon, VA
Will Book 1 Amelia County, VA, Wills and Bonds	
Vintage Double Barrel Shotgun (Civil War or Earlier) Handed Down from Grandfather	Ron Edins, Damascus, VA
Letters from 1930-1932, 1950s Bristol Newspapers, Meadowview School newsletters	Diane Hayes, Marion, VA
2 G. N. Wertz photographs	Gwen Wright, Damascus, VA
1700-1800 Deeds and plots for White's Mill Rd., slave-made brick of Col. James White, various awards and memorabilia, folk art	Martha White, Abingdon, VA
1920 Program for Green Spring Grade School musical presentation	Myrtle Bowe, Wilmington, DE
<i>Register of Colored Persons of Washington County, VA Cohabiting Together as Husband and Wife on February 27, 1866</i>	Connie Catron Hunt, Limestone, TN
Digital photo/video display frame	Walter Jenny, Abingdon, VA
<i>A Brief History of the Fleenor Family</i> , Lebanon Memorial United Methodist Church	Mindy Bonin, Abingdon, VA
1917 Wedding Invitation (Snapp/Brosins)	Virginia Nihart, Marion, VA

Monetary Contributions January 8, 2019 — August 15, 2019

IN MEMORY OF GERRY HENNINGER

Carol Lee Shankel	Newnan, GA
Robert and Elizabeth Craig	Abingdon, VA
John B. Dellis, Jr.	Abingdon, VA
Nancy Leasure	Abingdon, VA
Nancy S. Boren	Concord, GA
Patricia Carty	Abingdon, VA
Doris Wells	Meadowview, VA
Michael and Catherine Smeltzer	Roanoke, VA
Lois and Wickham Ringley	Bedford, VA
Dr. and Mrs. J. H. Bowden, Jr.	Abingdon, VA
Sandra Darden	Abingdon, VA

IN MEMORY OF OVA ELLIOTT

Black's Fort USDAR	Abingdon, VA
Doris Wells	Meadowview, VA

IN MEMORY OF RICHARD BLACKWELL

Hazel Blackwell	Edison, NJ
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IN HONOR OF JOELLA BARBOUR

Linda Adams	Abingdon, VA
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IN HONOR OF WALTER AND ROSE ANN JENNY

Parke & Margaret Deans	Abingdon, VA
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Monetary Contributions con't.

Karen and Ted Northup	Abingdon, VA
Patricia Hatfield	Abingdon, VA
Anna Stonewall Jackson/Ann Carter Lee Chapter UDC	Abingdon, VA
Mamma Mia Italian Restaurant	Abingdon, VA
James Buchanan Ballard	Houston, TX
Rolfe Hillman, III	Abingdon, VA
James R. Fleenor	Richmond, KY
Michael Harreld	Washington, DC
Marsha Stanley	Oakton, VA
Tony L. Hughes	Abingdon, VA
Fielden and Susan Sanders	Wytheville, VA
Alma Sue Ray	Abingdon, VA
Helen and Donald Wood	Abingdon, VA
Coy and Melba Powell	Charlotte, NC
Eileen Karp	Tampa, FL
Joyce Ferratt	Abingdon, VA
Frank B. Edmondson	Abingdon, VA
Mary B. Kegley	Wytheville, VA
Snodgrass Law Firm	Abingdon, VA
Linda Bailey	Novi, MI
Ronald Cassel	Los Gatos, CA
Jim Glanville	Blacksburg, VA
Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Davenport	Houston, TX
Shelly Hart	Moses Lake WA
Teddy and Phyllis Helton	Bristol, VA

Foxglove Antiques & Etc.	Abingdon, VA
Pamela Jamarik & Charles Wallace	Abingdon, VA
Virginia Kysh	Brentwood, CA
Sheila Stevenson	Maurertown, VA
Robert Moore	Wagontown, PA
Sandra Kruse	Friendswood, TX
Greg Thomas	Cleveland, TN
Doris Wells	Meadowview, VA
Mary J. Cox	Richmond, VA
Mary Ann Hinshelwood	Abingdon, VA
S. B. Montague	Abingdon, VA
Michael Smeltzer	Roanoke, VA
Jeni and Eddie Neely	Abingdon, VA
Jean Dilworth	Abingdon, VA
George Bird Metcalf, Jr.	Abingdon, VA
John and Annette Legard	Abingdon, VA
J. H. Combs, Jr.	Abingdon, VA
Barbara Farris and Family	Abingdon, VA
Audrey Simpson Honegger	Des Moines, WA
Katherine Burland	Southfield, MI
Bob Buchanan	Berkeley, CA
John and Ann Myhre	Garner, NC
Dixie Avey	Heber Springs, AR
Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Jonas	Bristol, VA
Randall and Mary Sue Smith	Abingdon, VA
Lowell and Iris Caldwell	Abingdon, VA

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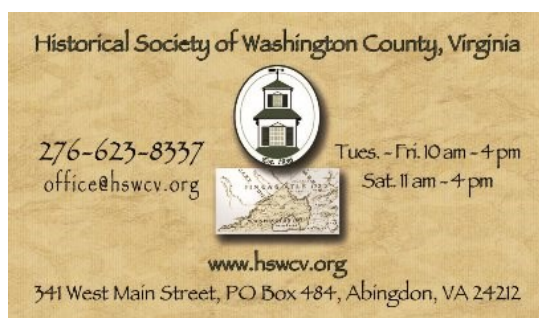
2019 Sinking Spring Cemetery Tours - Summer and Fall!

The Historical Society of Washington County, Virginia's ***Living History Tour of Sinking Spring Cemetery*** took place on Saturday, July 27, 2019. Approximately 100 persons walked through the cemetery, stopping by the graves of seven "Spirits" to hear them tell their stories of life and death in Washington County in years gone by.

The summer Tour is an annual fundraiser for the Society and provides an opportunity to take our services "outside the walls", meet the public, and introduce them to us and to the treasure that is the Sinking Spring Cemetery. It is held in conjunction with the annual Virginia Highlands Festival.

Based on the success of the popular July tour, and requests for a Fall event, we invite you for ***An Evening with the Spirits of Sinking Spring***. Some of the more popular Spirits from the past eight Tours will be there. This will be a seated event with limited tickets available. Mark your calendars for **Saturday October 26** at 6pm at the Cummings Cabin in Sinking Spring Cemetery.

Please monitor the HSWCV web site or our Facebook Group Page for updated information.



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