

# NEWSLETTER



Vol. 47 No. 1 - Spring 2025  
Walter Jenny, Editor

## Annual Meeting June 21

The Historical Society's 2025 annual meeting will begin at 6 pm on Saturday, June 21 at the Higher Education Center in Abingdon.

Our Local History committee has put a lot of time and effort into planning this year's event, and it will be great to see everyone together again.

The evening will begin with a social time at 6 pm with a free wine bar (tips or BYOB are welcome).



We will, of course, have a bit of business to handle, scheduled to begin at 6:30 p.m. All of the officers on our Board of Directors will be voted on, along with Board positions now held by Cathy Hagy and Bob Maiden. Our Corresponding Secretary, Cheri Heath

Fullen, was recently elected Mayor of Saltville and decided not to serve another term with us. We all appreciate her service.

The Society's Nominating Committee, consisting of Charlie Barnette, Brett Compton and Diana Hulse, will announce the following recommendations:

- That Cathy Hagy be elected to a new three-year term on the Board;
- That our Vice President, Mark Hagy, be elected to the position of Corresponding Secretary;
- That Bob Maiden be elected to serve as Vice President;
- That Carl Coalson be elected to fill Bob Maiden's seat as a Board member.

Carl has deep family roots in Washington County, dating back to the 18th Century. He received degrees in psychology and special education at Cumberland College (now University of the Cumberlands) in Kentucky and Nova Southeastern University in Florida. He worked as a regional project manager for the Florida Department of Education until he retired in 2019, at which time he and his wife Mary returned to Bristol TN. He'll be a great addition to our Board.



Kurt Smith, who portrays the young Thomas Jefferson at Colonial Williamsburg, and Monticello's Bill Barker will be in Abingdon in July See details inside on page three.

The membership will also consider a proposed amendment to the Bylaws which are covered in more detail on page 2 of this newsletter.

Our after-dinner program will be provided by Robert Sorrell, author of *Historic Theaters of the Tennessee Tri-Cities* published earlier this year. He will have copies of his book available for sale after the meeting for \$25; cash, check or credit cards accepted.

Thanks to generous donations, the cost of this year's catered dinner has been reduced to **\$30 per person**. It's not a requirement that you pay for the buffet dinner to attend the business meeting, but payment will be required if you dine with us. Our dinner, catered by Bristol Cakery and Catering, should begin about 7 pm. **If you have not yet renewed your dues for 2024, you can do that at the event as well.** We'll need to provide a head count for dinner by **Saturday, June 7**, so your reservations for dinner are **required** by then. You can make reservations by calling Nathan at the office - the number is 276-623-8337 - or by email at [office@hswcv.org](mailto:office@hswcv.org). Payment can be made at the door or at our office, but either way we will still need your dinner R.S.V.P. by June 7.

We look forward to seeing you at our 2025 annual meeting! Thank you for your ongoing support!

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# Bylaws Amendment and Other News

During their January 2025 meeting, the Society's Board of Directors proposed an amendment to our Bylaws that will be considered by the membership during our annual meeting on June 21.

The Bylaws now require the appointment of a Financial Review Committee each year to review our finances and bookkeeping procedures and to make recommendations for improvements. The process is designed to make sure your dues and donation money is responsibly managed.

It's been increasingly difficult to recruit three or more Society members to perform this function every twelve months, then turn around and begin the process again for the next year. There have been no significant adverse findings or recommendations for changes in how we conduct business. So the Board's recommendation is to conduct this review once every two years instead of annually.

The current language is as follows:

## CURRENT LANGUAGE:

*Section 5.7 FINANCIAL REVIEW COMMITTEE. The President shall, with the approval of the Board of Directors, designate, within 60 days after the end of the fiscal year, a Financial Review Committee composed of not less than three (3) Society members who are not members of the Finance and Management Committee and which committee shall:*

...

*Section 5.7.2 Review annual financial statements. Review the Society's annual financial statement and any report or opinion rendered by the Independent Auditor in connection with those financial statements.*

Here's the proposed new language:

## PROPOSED LANGUAGE (emphasis on changes)

*Section 5.7 BIENNIAL FINANCIAL REVIEW COMMITTEE. The President shall, with the approval of the Board of Directors, designate, within 60 days after the end of the each even-numbered fiscal year, a Financial Review Committee composed of not less than three (3) Society members who are not members of the Finance and Management Committee and which committee shall:*

...

*Section 5.7.2 Review annual financial statements. Review the Society's annual financial statements for the preceding two fiscal years and any report or opinion rendered by the Independent Auditor in connection with those financial statements.*

An independent auditor can be retained if needed, but in recent memory has not been deemed necessary. Our Bylaws require the approval of at least two thirds of the members attending an annual or special Society meeting to amend our Bylaws.

If you have any questions about this proposal, please feel free to contact one of the directors or officers for more information.



*Photo credit: David Edwards and Virginia Department of Historic Resources*

## Courthouse Ribbon Cutting Set for June 30

The long-awaited ribbon cutting for the Washington County Courthouse renovations is scheduled to take place on June 30, 2025 at 10 am, according to the office of the county administrator. The public is invited to attend.

The project was originally expected to cost over \$27.8 million, but change orders have reduced that figure to less than \$22.6 million. About 28,000 square feet of space were added and another 23,000 square feet of existing space is being renovated. Court has been held at or near that site for almost 250 years.

## Errata

In our last newsletter, we gave full credit to Stephen Wolfsberger for our library's new three-volume study of Washington County residents who fought in the Civil War.

He was quick to contact us with a correction.

Carol Hawthorne-Taylor and Jim Hagy participated in the project as well. We apologize for the oversight. Thanks to all three of you for this outstanding addition. It will be a useful research tool for years to come.



# Virginia Highlands Festival

Robert Porterfield's dream of a unique cultural experience in Southwest Virginia will continue this year as the 76th Virginia Highlands Festival, and the schedule will be chock full of history-related events.

The schedule begins at **10 a.m. on Saturday, July 26** with a dedication of the historical marker in front of Grace Hill, the home built by William King in 1803. It has recently undergone renovations by David and Jill Dalton who are moving to Abingdon from Charlotte.

Kurt Smith, who portrays Thomas Jefferson at Colonial Williamsburg, will be present for the ceremony as well as a meet and greet at Emmitt Yeary's log structures a half-block away on Plumb Alley. Court Street between Main and Valley Street will be closed for the free event.



The historical marker is sponsored by the Virginia Lewis & Clark Legacy Trail. William Clark recorded a visit to "the brick house" in Abingdon in his 1809 journal. Their website at [valewisandclarklegacytrail.org](http://valewisandclarklegacytrail.org) provides more information.

Charlie Barnette will host a cemetery headstone cleaning workshop in Sinking Spring Cemetery at **1:30 p.m.** later that day. There is no cost for his popular program.

Saturday evening is the date for our annual Living History tour of the cemetery. Tours will begin at **4:45 p.m.** and the cost is \$5 per person, cash only.

**Sunday, July 27** will be the first of two "Conversation" programs at The Martha Washington Inn ballroom with Kurt and Bill Barker, who interprets Jefferson at Monticello. Cost is \$25 per person. The doors open at **5:30 p.m.** with a cash bar, and the program begins at 6:30. Tickets are available at our office, online at the festival's website, [www.vahighlandsfestival.com/](http://www.vahighlandsfestival.com/) and at the door.



Kurt and Bill will be featured again in a free workshop on **Monday, July 28 at 1:30 p.m.** at the Higher Ed Center. It's a rare glimpse behind the scenes as America's foremost historical interpreters of Jefferson will give advice and answer questions about the art of historical interpretation. If you've ever considered donning colonial attire and telling stories, this is a must for you!

In case you were busy Sunday evening, Bill and Kurt will repeat the "Conversation" program for a new crowd on Monday evening. You won't want to miss one or the other!

There will be two more programs at the Higher Ed Center. On **Wednesday, July 30**, Michael Henningsen will give a presentation about Rev. Charles Cummings, exploring his background and the issues he faced both in his home country and in America.

On **Thursday, July 31**, Society president Walter Jenny will give a lecture about the men from our area who were involved in the Fincastle Resolution, making the first declaration that they were willing to lay down their lives for their religious freedom. Both Michael's and Walt's programs will be free of charge.



From **July 24 to July 29** at the Higher Ed Center parking lot, the VA250 mobile museum titled "Out of Many, One" give an immersive experience for young and old into Virginia's rich history. The exhibit is free, but we need more local volunteers to make it a success. Contact our office if you'd like to help out.

The Festival's Historic Homes and Buildings Tour will take place on **Saturday, August 2 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.** You'll get a peek behind the doors of some of Abingdon's preserved architectural treasures. Cost of the program is \$25.

For a complete list of events and more background information, be sure to get a copy of "Highlander," the Festival's free publication that will be distributed before and during the Festival. The schedule is also online.

You'll find more events in coming months as we prepare to celebrate America's 250th birthday. We'll be marking anniversaries for Washington County in 2026, Abingdon in 2028, and the march to King's Mountain in 2030. You can follow the "Washington County VA250" Facebook page for more information.



## YouTube and Other Updates

Have you visited our YouTube account lately?

Since joining YouTube on October 15, 2020, we've had pretty good success. Here are a few facts and figures.

- 172 subscribers (it doesn't cost to become one);
- 63 videos, including dozens of veterans with roots in Washington County, last year's "Conversation" event, and several videos about African American history in our area;
- We've had 17,450 views. Our first video, "Sorghum Syrup at Fairview Farm," has now been seen 10,406 times. It's featured on the opening page of the National Sweet Sorghum Producers and Processors Association website (under NSSPPA Member Operations). You can reach their website at <https://nssppa.org/>

Paul Derden is taking the lead managing the site these days. Julianne Miles and Lynn Bennett are the volunteers who create the veterans' videos. We owe them a great "thank you" for the time they contribute to our site's success.

So if you like watching videos and are interested in our area's history, drop by our site for a visit. The easiest way is just to go on YouTube and search for "Sorghum Syrup at Fairview Farm" and it'll pop up.

Be sure to subscribe!

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The Local History Committee is making plans for this summer's "Living History" tour at Sinking Spring cemetery, but they have other projects in the works as well.

Preparations are being made for the 2025 *Bulletin*. Martha Keys will serve as editor. If you have stories of interest you'd like to submit or recommend, feel free to contact her. If there's not enough room in this year's edition, we can always include them in next year's publication.

The committee will also head up this fall's "Evening with the Spirits" program in October. Volunteers are needed for both programs - everything from characters to guides and water bearers.

Have you ever thought about historical interpretation? Do you have an ancestor or favorite local figure whose story you'd like to tell? Don't miss the workshop that Bill Barker and Kurt Smith will be putting on during the Highlands Festival. They have over 40 years of experience interpreting Thomas Jefferson, and might give you just the information you need to embark on a new adventure. Colonial Williamsburg has a great interview with Kurt about what he does, titled "Making History Live: Character Interpretation." Here's a link to it:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1AsD5tQVM4/>



The Library Committee has an exhibit now on the early schools located in Washington County. Our exhibit room is full of photos and memorabilia about public education.

Since its creation in 1777, Washington County has emphasized good education for its citizens. Early individual teachers were followed by the Abingdon Male Academy in 1803, Emory & Henry College in 1838, the Martha Washington College in 1860, the Villa Teresa Catholic boarding school, the Kings Mountain Freedman's school during Reconstruction and the Stonewall Jackson Female Institute in 1868.

By 1850 the county had 1,512 students attending thirty-six one-room common schools with one teacher per school. By 1860 there were 1,861 students with forty-eight schools and teachers.

This exhibit includes photos from many of the local schools that have existed in Washington County through the years. A large map shows the known locations. Also on display are desks, books and other artifacts that were commonly in use. The exhibit pairs well with the Society's growing collection of yearbooks from local schools.

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We're also in the middle of a \$25,000 upgrade to our unique computer database. The new service will be more reliable, faster, and will expand our capacity for growth. Any donations to offset the cost of this project would be greatly appreciated.

Did you know we have 1,260,053 indexed records in our database - and it's growing? We currently have a backlog of data entry to be done. We also have 273,942 images scanned, as well as digitized images of 33,778 pages of local newspapers like the Washington County Journal, the Journal-Virginian, the Glade Spring Citizen, the Washington County News, and the Political Prospect, many of which are not available anywhere else.

Drop by our library one of these days and our friendly volunteers will give you a tour!



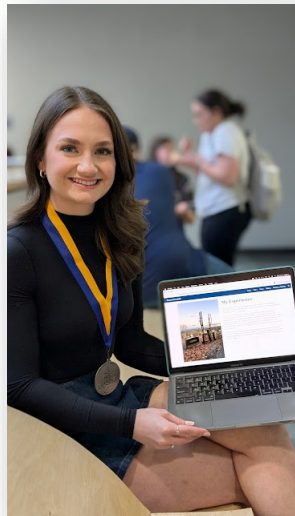
## *HS Blessed With Youthful Interest*

If you think young people are not interested in history, think again.

The Historical Society continues to reach out to the next generation of history buffs. Two good examples are Kylie Blankenship and Shep Parsons.

Kylie graduated from Emory & Henry this spring and will be pursuing her master's degree, also in history, at Loyola University this fall. She was a Bonner scholar with the Society for the last several months, splitting her time between working in our archives with Nancy Leasure and a research project involving the Town of Abingdon.

The Town has received a grant to create an app that will provide convenient information on buildings for visitors. Kylie's research will form the core of the information available through the free app using QR codes that will be placed at the buildings, and can be expanded with more venues in future years. It's a modern twist on work that has been done over the generations to tell Abingdon's history.



Shep, who is 14, caught the history bug at last summer's "Conversation with Jefferson and Lafayette." He participated in the Society's "Evening with the Spirits" last October and spent his spring break this year at Colonial Williamsburg. He now has his sights set on attending William & Mary after high school.

His passion for American history has been quickly recognized. He won first place *nationally* in the DAR's Junior American Citizen Contest in their Individual Community Service Project category. Shep logged over 25 volunteer hours in nine months with the Society and the General William Campbell Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution. The Ft. Chiswell Chapter of the DAR in Bristol recognized his accomplishment with an awards ceremony and reception in April.



*Shep with Regent Jan McCart of the Fort Chiswell Chapter, DAR*



Shep's interests are not limited to American history. He also is making a name for himself in competitive swimming. Earlier this month at a tournament at the University of Tennessee he scored in the top 35% fastest nationally in his age group in 6 out of his 7 races, and barely missed being in the top 15% nationally. He was the youngest to race in the 800 meter freestyle.

His mother and chauffeur Shana Parsons wrote on our Facebook page, "I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the Historical Society of Washington County

for welcoming my son into the fold, encouraging his participation and giving him a place where his passion for history and reenactment can grow through volunteerism. Without the caring people in the Historical Society, this would not be possible. The old adage of 'It takes a village' still rings true."

We're more than happy to play a role in the lives of both Kylie, Shep and other young people as they learn more about our American history.



If there's a young person in your family, consider bringing them to some of our events and see if it sparks their interest. We still have a lot of stories to tell!



**Visit us on Facebook!**

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## Fincastle Committee, Part Three

In our last newsletter, we reviewed the biographies of the men who signed the Fincastle Resolution in January 1775 and briefly discussed the March 1775 meeting of “the freeholders and a number of the inhabitants of Fincastle County.” What happened next?

Fincastle County included present-day Washington County and much of Southwest Virginia. The group who met in March issued the following statement:

March 1775

To his excellency the right Hon. John Earl of Dunmore, his Majesty's Lieutenant and Governor General of the Colony of Virginia.

The Address of the freeholders and a number of the inhabitants of Fincastle County.

My Lord, Notwithstanding the unhappy disputes that at present subsist between the mother country and the colonies, in which we have given the publick our sentiments, yet justice and gratitude, as well as a sense of our duty, induce us collectively, to return your Lordship our unfeigned thanks for the great services you have rendered the frontiers in general, and this county in particular, in the late expedition against our enemy Indians.

In our former wars with the savages, we long suffered every species of barbarity, many of our friends and fellow subjects were inhumanly butchered and carried into captivity, more to be dreaded than death itself, our houses plundered and burned, and our country laid waste by an enemy, against whom, from our dispersed situation, and their manner of carrying on war, it was impossible to make a proper defence on our frontiers.

Your Lordship being convinced of this, proposed to attack the enemy in their own country, well judging that it would be the most effectual means to reduce them to reason, and be attended with little more expense to the community, than a partial defence of such an extensive frontier. The proposal was cheerfully embraced, and the ardour of the militia, to engage in that very necessary service, could only be equalled by that of your Lordship in carrying it on. That the plan of an expedition should be laid when the season was far advanced, and near three thousand choice troops raised in a few counties, and put under the command of many brave and experienced officers. That those forces should be equipped, and fully supplied with provisions, and march several hundred miles through mountains to meet the enemy. That so many nations of warlike Indians should be reduced to sue for peace; that those troops should return victorious to their homes by the last of November, and all this without any publick money in hand to defray any part of the expense, shows at first view, the immediate utility of the undertaking, and must be a convincing proof that the Almighty in a peculiar manner, blessed your Lordship's

*The Isle of Man, a small British dependency between England and Ireland, has a long tradition of creating artistic postage stamps. To honor the US bicentennial, they created a series that included a four-stamp set about William Christian. Shown at the right is one of the stamps, "Carrying the Fincastle Resolutions." The stamp carries the legend: "William Christian carrying the Fincastle Resolutions to Williamsburg." It depicts a mounted, galloping horseman over a copy of the Virginia Gazette against a backdrop of mountains.*



attempts to establish peace, and stop the further effusions of human blood; but that your Lordship should forego your ease, and every domestick felicity, and march at the head of a body of those troops, many hundred miles from the seat of Government, cheerfully undergoing all the fatigues of the campaign, by exposing your person, and marching on foot with the officers and soldiers, commands our warmest returns of gratitude; and the rather, as we have no instance of such condescension in your Lordship's predecessors on any similar occasion.

We should be wanting in point of gratitude, were we to omit returning our thanks, on this occasion, to the officers and soldiers who entered into the service with so much alacrity. The memory of such as fell nobly fighting for their Country ought to be very dear to it.

That your Lordship may enjoy every domestick blessing; that you may long govern the brave and free people of Virginia, and that the present disturbances may be amicably settled, is the ardent wish of the inhabitants of Fincastle.”

Though not dated, the "Address" was most probably promulgated at a meeting of the Fincastle Committee in late March 1775. It was first printed in Dixon & Hunter's *Virginia Gazette* on April 8, 1775, where it was accompanied by Lord Dunmore's answer:

"I am very much obliged to the freeholders and inhabitants of the county of Fincastle for their address, and am happy to find they think the service I undertook upon the occasion of the Indian disturbances merits their public thanks. I assure them that they will ever find me equally ready to exert my best endeavours for every purpose which may tend to the security, or promote the happiness, of the people of Virginia."

But by July the tone of the Fincastle men had taken a sour turn. On March 20, Patrick Henry delivered his fiery “give me liberty, or give me death!” speech to the delegates of the Second Virginia Convention in Richmond, which



sent representatives to the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia in direct defiance of Dunmore's orders. Henry was also encouraging militias throughout the colony to muster in "a posture of Defense" against royal authority.

Rumors spread that, as rifts widened between patriots and the royal government, enslaved African Americans would be freed by Dunmore and armed against the colonists. Before dawn on April 21, Dunmore had soldiers transfer gunpowder from the Williamsburg powder magazine onto a ship in the James River. Henry and other colonists protested Dunmore's actions forcing him to pay for the gunpowder. On May 1, Dunmore's wife and children left the Governor's Mansion; Dunmore followed on June 8.

On July 10, the Fincastle county committee met again, chaired by William Christian, and issued a scathing censure of Dunmore.

"The committee taking into their consideration the clandestine removal of the gunpowder from the magazine of this colony, by order of our governour, are clearly and unanimously of opinion that his lordship's conduct reflects much dishonour on himself, and that he very justly deserves the censure so universally bestowed on him.

"Resolved, that the spirited and meritorious conduct of Patrick Henry, esq; and the rest of the gentlemen volunteers attending him on the occasion of the removal of the powder out of the magazine in Williamsburg, very justly merits the hearty approbation of this committee; for which we return them our thanks, with an assurance, that we will, at the risk of our lives and fortunes, support and justify them with regard to the reprisal they made."

Resolved, that the council of this colony, in advising and co-operating with lord Dunmore in issuing a Proclamation of the 3d of May last, charging the people of this colony with an ungovernable spirit, and licentious practices, is contrary to many known matters of fact, and but too justly intimates to us that those who ought to be mediators, and guardians of our liberties, are become the abject tools of a detested administration.

"Resolved, that it is the opinion of this committee, that the late sanguinary attempt and preparations of the king's troops in the colony of the Massachusetts Bay is truly alarming and irritating, and loudly calls upon all, even the most distant and interior parts of the colonies, to prepare and be ready for the extreme event, by a fixed resolution, and a firm and manly opposition, to avert ministerial cruelty, in defence of our just and reasonable rights and liberties."

Sources:

<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/gunpowder-incident>

Harwell, Richard B., *Proceedings of the County Committees, 1774-1776, the Committees of Safety of Westmoreland and Fincastle*, The Virginia State Library (Richmond, 1956)

Black's Fort Chapter  
Daughters of the American Revolution  
*Sentimental Tea*  
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July 9, 2025 2 PM  
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\$30 per person  
Call Sandra Darden  
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April 1, 2023 through April 30, 2024

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Jack Davenport Mechanicsville, VA

Ben and Merry Jennings Abingdon, VA

Steven Lollis Abingdon, VA

## Donations of Items

1939 Wallace High School Yearbook

Newspapers from 1930s and 1940s

Books, including *Index to Loudon Co. VA Land Tax List 1782-1802* by Patricia B. Duncan and *Sunlight on the Southside* by Landon Bell; cookbooks, rug

*Looking Back: A Memoir and More* by Laurence Kinsolving

Bonnie Burrette, Bristol, VA

Joel Coulthard, Abingdon, VA

Pat Musick Hatfield, Abingdon, VA

Laurence Kinsolving, Marianna FL

*Thanks to all our donors for your support!*



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*Annual Meeting Notice Inside!*

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