

SCHS News



The Newsletter of the Stafford County Historical Society

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BROWN (c. 1884-1967)**

**PALMER HAYDEN HONORED WITH VIRGINIA
HISTORICAL MARKER**

...AND MORE

WE WILL NOT SELL
DENY OR DELAY
JUSTICE OR RIGHT

SCHS News is published by the Stafford County Historical Society, a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization founded in 1965. The Society's mailing address is Post Office Box 1664, Stafford, Virginia, 22555.

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The Society's web address is www.staffordhistorical.org.

Cover Illustration: An artist's rendering of Stafford County's colonial-era seal.

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THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

Dear SCHS Member,

As I sit here “Social Distancing” myself and pondering how much this virus has changed our daily lives, I can’t help but think of those in the past who faced similar plights. In Stafford County, there are a number of inscribed gravestones that have death dates between December 1814 and February 1815. Generally speaking, inscribed gravestones are a rarity in Stafford. Most folks simply marked the graves of their loved ones with field stones, perhaps due to the prohibitive cost of inscribed markers. The number of existing inscribed stones bearing the above range of dates indicates that a very serious illness affected these people during that winter so long ago. Researchers have concluded that some sort of epidemic affected much of the eastern part of Virginia, especially the Northern Neck, during this time. Total casualties and actual death rates will never be known due to the lack of records and the scarcity of inscribed tombstones, but the infection seems to have been devastating. One of the few surviving records (from another county) indicates that a whole family was lost save a small boy and neighbors burned the house to the ground with the bodies in an attempt to prevent the spread of the disease.

Interesting, a little over 100 years later, the most severe pandemic in recent history (according to the CDC) was caused by the H1N1 (or Spanish flu) outbreak of 1918-1919. Again according to the CDC, “one third of the world’s population became infected with this virus.” There were about 675,000 deaths in the U. S. alone.

I have always liked to look back on history to help evaluate the present and in so doing I see that other people in other times experienced similar trials and tribulation. There were losses, often times great losses, and each time the best and worst of humanity was exhibited. Today, the scourge of 1814-1815 means little to us. It is all but forgotten. I have heard stories of the more recent 1918-1919 outbreak. A friend told me that an elderly lady related to him how his grandmother, then in her early 20s, at possible peril to her own life, had administered care to that woman and her family who were ill.

Those people were just like us, but lived at different times. They had hopes and dreams and they suffered, some more than others, and the ones who made it through went on with their lives. Now we look back on their times as little more than history, except that almost 100 years later we face a similar threat. Even with all our technology and advancements in science and medicine, it fascinates me that something we can’t even see can create such havoc on the whole world. It’s quite humbling, I think. I respect everyone’s beliefs, but I for one believe that there is a God who has promised to take care of us whether we live or die and, like those before, have that hope that tomorrow will be brighter and together we can make it through this and that someday soon this too will only be history.

With best regards
Rick MacGregor

FEATURE ARTICLE: THE VIRGINIA RESERVE MILITIA, COMPANY 90, “MINUTE MEN,” CONCLUDED

In the January 2020 newsletter, we shared part of the handbook distributed to Stafford’s members of the Virginia Reserve Militia. Too long to include in its entirety in that issue, we continue in this edition.

Company 90 of the Virginia Reserve Militia, consisting of 3 officers and 46 enlisted men, was sworn into service at Falmouth High School. Heading the company was Capt. Daniel M. Chichester with Frank P. Moncure as first lieutenant and Herbert L. Thornton, second lieutenant. Clem Goodman was first sergeant and William N. Cleverley was company clerk. Company headquarters were established at the Four Gables Restaurant on U. S. Route 1 a few miles north of Falmouth. Part of this facility remains standing to the immediate south of Drew Middle School on the west side of U. S. Route 1.

The company was divided into two platoons of four squads each, squads numbering five men. Lt. Moncure was in command of the first platoon embracing Aquia and Rock Hill districts and Lt. Thornton’s second platoon was responsible for the Falmouth and Hartwood districts. Squads were formed at strategic points in the county so that the men could hastily assemble and move on short notice to any location required. All Minute Men were to provide their own arms, ammunition and transportation.

A newspaper article noted, “Captain Chichester has named a committee to confer with the board of supervisors and seek a county appropriation for the purchase of uniforms for enlisted men. The three officers will provide their own uniforms but it is thought that the county should buy uniforms for the men who are subject to call at any time without compensation. Uniforms as prescribed by the state cost about \$5 each.”

One of the first duties performed by Company 90 was to assist Falmouth residents during the flood in the fall of 1942.

Throughout World War II, the VRM was especially concerned about sabotage to bridges and they kept careful watch over them. What were designated as “Critical Points” included the Route 1 highway bridges over Aquia Creek, Austin’s Run, Accokeek Creek, Potomac Creek, and the Rappahannock River. Also monitored were the R F & P Railroad bridges over Aquia, Accokeek, and Potomac Creeks.

A company memo dated Mar. 23, 1943 advises, “The attention of each and every member of this company is called to the fact that it was organized during the present emergency solely for the protection of the lives and property of the citizens of Stafford County. As an organization it must not, and will not, enter into political campaigns, nor shall it seek to promote the political fortunes of any individual or group of individuals.”

HISTORICAL PLAQUE UNVEILED FOR STAFFORD ARTIST PALMER HAYDEN

On Feb. 1, 2020, a large group gathered at Wide Water State Park for the unveiling and dedication of a Virginia historical marker for artist Palmer Hayden. Peyton Cole Hedgeman (1890-1973) was born in Wide Water to James Hedgeman (1857-1933) and his wife, Nannie (Cole) Hedgeman (1860-1946). He served in the U. S. Army during World War I, at which time he changed his name to Palmer C. Hayden. He became one of the noted painters of the Harlem

Renaissance, much of his work depicting the everyday life of African Americans. The SCHS extends our appreciation to Marsha Wilkins who spearheaded this project.

AN ARTIST'S RE-CREATION OF THE STAFFORD'S MISSING COLONIAL COURT SEAL

A year ago, the SCHS newsletter featured an article about the mystery of Stafford's missing colonial-era court seal. Since then, Dimas Pinzon of the Stafford County Sheriff's Department has worked with artist James "Jay" Coleman to re-create the seal based upon the two extant newspaper descriptions of it. We sincerely thank both of these men for their efforts.

As a recap, the seal was stolen from Stafford Courthouse in 1862 by one of Gen. Daniel Sickles' soldiers. It ended up in the possession of another of Sickles' men who, after the war, made his way to Silver City, New Mexico. Edgar M. Young of Fredericksburg had also moved there where he had taken a job as clerk of court. Young acquired the seal and brought it back to Fredericksburg when he returned to Virginia to visit his family. According to the newspaper account, Mr. Young gave the seal to William Seymour White, who was then Commonwealth's Attorney for Stafford. Nothing more is known of it. The two newspaper articles, dating from 1891 and 1901, provided such detailed descriptions of the seal that it was possible for the artist to re-create what is likely a close facsimile.



Meet the Artist:

Jay Coleman studied art at the University of Mary Washington. After graduation, he moved to Washington to pursue his art career. Jay has done art shows in Europe and all over the U. S. He and his family presently reside in Stafford and he teaches art at a private school in Maryland. Jay also teaches Jujitsu, paints, sculpts, and works on documentary films.

STAFFORD TRIVIA:

In 1908, Miss Margaret Moncure signed a teacher's contract to be paid \$28.00 per school month. Working hours were 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with one hour for lunch, "and she shall see that a fire be made each morning & floors to be regularly swept and 1% of pay to be deducted for Retired Teachers Fund."

THEY CALLED STAFFORD HOME

Harry Selah Brown (c.1884-1967) was a native of New York City, but spent much of his adult life in Stafford. In 1909, he opened one of Fredericksburg's first movie theaters. An accomplished musician, he played the piano while the silent movies were being shown. Shortly thereafter, he took a job, possibly as secretary or clerk, at the Austin Run Pyrite Mine whose large operation was located just west of the Wal-Mart on Garrisonville Road. That company went out of business in the early 1920s. In 1927, he founded Brown's Motel, one of the early motels and tourist camps that were built after U. S. Route 1 was paved between Richmond and Washington. Some of the buildings from that establishment still stand across Route 1 from Drew Middle School. Harry retired as a foreman of the FMC Avisco plant in Spotsylvania County.

MORE ABOUT THE AUSTIN RUN PYRITE MINE

From the *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), Aug. 17, 1910:

"Extensive preparations are being made for the shipment of iron pyrites, dug from the mines in Stafford county, from Cole landing, in Aquia creek, to the sulphuric acid making plant at Alexandria and also to Baltimore, Philadelphia and other points in the north. The Stafford mines were opened about two years or longer ago, but as yet only a small quantity of the ore has been shipped. The plant was recently fitted with new machinery and about the beginning of the coming month the shipping of the material by vessel will be started. Sailing craft and barges will be loaded at Cole landing, and a trestle, on which cars from the mines can be run out upon to dump their loads direct into the holds of the vessels, is being built. The material will be brought from the mines by a narrow-gauge railway which has been built and is in operation."

The Austin Run Pyrite Company went out of business and the Old Dominion Sulphur Corporation took over the works. That company also failed and in 1918 the State Corporation Commission "granted a charter to the Western Pyrites Company with a capital stock of \$90,000. This concern has taken over all of the property of the Old Dominion Sulphur Company, Garrisonville, Va., and will immediately proceed to operate the mine on an extensive scale producing pyrites at the rate of 100 tons a day and delivering it to the sulphuric acid manufacturers in [Alexandria] and Philadelphia. The capital stock is \$90,000 and officers: U. B. Curtis, president; Frank Porter, secretary, both of Washington" (*Alexandria Gazette*, Oct. 21, 1918).

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

For many years, attendees of our monthly meetings have enjoyed gathering after the meetings to visit and sample refreshments that are generously provided by various members. In order for that to continue, **we need a Refreshment Coordinator**. This volunteer calls or emails the person or persons who have signed up to provide cookies and beverages for the upcoming meeting. He/she also keeps the Historical Society's stock of plates, napkins, cups, etc. and brings to the meetings whatever items are necessary. This position does not require a great investment of time or effort, but we will not be able to continue having the refreshments without a coordinator. Please consider helping out! If you're interested in filling this slot, please contact Jerrilynn MacGregor at staffordhistory1@verizon.net or 540-659-8206.

BULLETIN BOARD

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

April 16—"Patowomeck Artifacts Found at Aquia Archeological Dig" with Lauren McMillan
Tentative based upon COVID-19 situation

May 21—"The Civil War in Falmouth" with John Hennessy

June 18—"The Union Raid at Hartwood Church" with Frank O'Reilly

NEWSLETTER DISSEMINATION:

Successful dissemination of our newsletter requires that we have your current email address or that we are made aware of your specific lack of access to a computer. Please contact Doris McAdams at (dmac200592@msn.com) or 540-720-1321.

DUES WERE DUE IN JANUARY!

Dues for 2020 were due January 1st. Membership benefits include a subscription to the newsletter and participation at special events. Please don't forget to renew your membership so you'll not miss out on any of our 2020 activities. Mail your check or money order made payable to Stafford County Historical Society (SCHS) to:

Treasurer
Stafford County Historical Society
P. O. Box 1664
Stafford, VA 22555

NOT A MEMBER? JOIN TODAY! WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP:

\$15	Individual Annual Dues	\$5	Student
\$25	Family Annual Dues	\$200	Individual Life Member

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STAFFORD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 1664

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