

SCHS News



The Newsletter of the Stafford County Historical Society

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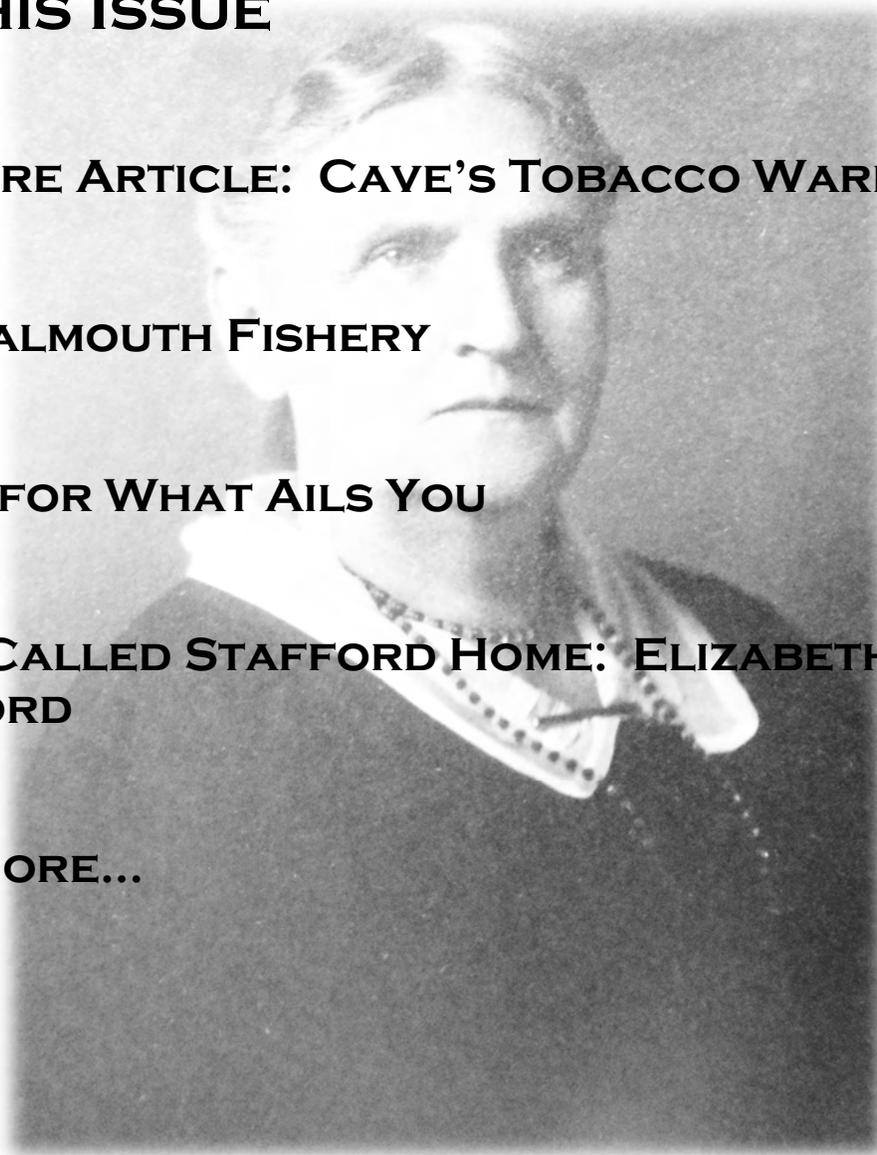
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PRESIDENT'S PEN

Dear Members,

Happy Fall!

My thanks go to all of those who made the first Via Colori Stafford event a great success. The Society had a booth, offering information and merchandise, that was manned by several of our dedicated members and we did well with sales. We also had many interesting conversations with guests, both local and out-of-staters. We offered a one-time, free one-year membership at this event and signed up 60 new members. It is our hope that some of these will become long-term, active members.

We are still negotiating with county administration and Transurban on the fate of the Aquia sandstone obelisks in the median of I-95. We are told that the obelisks will not be impacted by the current construction and, therefore, may have to remain in place. There is, however, a possibility that Transurban will provide a grant to remove the monuments at a future date. We have only been working on this for about ten years, so who knows?

Thanks to all of you for your support!

Best wishes,
Rick MacGregor

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FEATURE ARTICLE: CAVE'S WAREHOUSES

Until the early nineteenth century, tobacco was an important part of Virginia's economy. Each early Virginia county had official tobacco inspection stations (warehouses) that were situated at locations convenient to the region's planters.

At the end of the growing season, the tobacco was cut and hung in barns to dry. It was subsequently stripped from the stems and packed in large wooden barrels called hogsheads. A hogshead fully packed with tobacco weighed from about 950 to 1,200 pounds.

In Stafford, inspection stations were located in the town of Aquia, at Marlborough, Belle Plain, and at Falmouth, all of which were on the navigable waters of Aquia Creek, Potomac Creek, or the Rappahannock River. A very early warehouse was also built near Richland Baptist Church, but the Rappahannock wasn't navigable at that point the facility seems not to have operated for very long.

The earliest sustained European settlement in Stafford occurred along Aquia Creek and the little village of Aquia had its own tobacco warehouse. This was quickly followed by settlement along Potomac Creek from which tobacco was also shipped.

As purely utilitarian structures, these buildings were of simple design and were often of frame construction. However, Stafford featured an abundance of Aquia freestone, which seems to have been used in the walls of the warehouses at both Aquia and at Cave's near Belle Plain.

To facilitate the loading of the heavy hogsheads of tobacco onto ships, the warehouses were built very close to the water and, typically, each had its own wharf. The proximity to the water made them extremely susceptible to flooding and even to destruction by violent freshets. The use of stone may have made the buildings slightly less likely to be washed away, but to the writer's knowledge, not a single colonial-era tobacco warehouse survives in all of Virginia.

The stations were staffed by one or more court-appointed tobacco inspectors. These men had the important duty of inspecting, grading, taxing, and safely storing this vital commodity until ships arrived to carry it abroad. The inspectors issued crop notes to the planters who deposited their tobacco in the warehouses. These notes were the equivalent of cash and could be used to pay for anything from land to store goods.

It may have been William Cave (1700-1742) who built the first tobacco warehouse on this property just upstream from Belle Plain. He acquired the land by way of his marriage to Anne Travers (c.1705-c.1748), the daughter of Giles Travers (c.1661-1717). The building was standing by May 1742 when the inspection was made official and the Virginia Assembly agreed to pay the inspectors there a salary of £25 per annum. The warehouse site is presently known as Stone Landing, that name being derived from the quantity of stone that litters the edge of Potomac Creek, likely all that remains from the ruined building and/or a stone wharf.

Colonial records contain the names of inspectors at Cave's from 1742 – 1780, but these records aren't necessarily complete:

1742—Charles Waller (1702-1749) and William Mountjoy (1711-1777)

1750—William Mountjoy and Thomas Monroe (1745-1777)

1761—Thomas Hay and Andrew Edwards (1725-1788)

1773—Col. William Garrard (c.1715-1787) and Thomas Mountjoy (1739-c.1818)

1777—Thomas Mountjoy and Edward Raleigh

1778—Raleigh Travers Brown (1753-1803) and Alvin Mountjoy (1745-1827); Jonathan

Finnal (died 1792) was assistant

1780—Andrew Edwards (1725-1788)

Tobacco warehouses often drew various types of businesses that benefitted from the flow of people around those facilities. It's not known to what extent this was true at Cave's. Falmouth merchant, William Allason, noted that James and Rawleigh Chinn were blacksmiths at Cave's in 1760.

During the 38 years for which there are records pertaining to this facility, the warehouse and its immediate vicinity were quite busy. To the south of Cave's, perhaps within view, was the courthouse and a considerable number of the county's population lived within a few miles of the site. The court met once each month, an event that brought people from near and far. Just to the northeast of the warehouse was Potomac Church.

During the early years, the water at the landing at Cave's was deep enough to allow ocean-going sailing vessels to dock, off-load goods, and take on tobacco. A road, albeit primitive, long existed between Cave's Warehouse and Falmouth. This long-used byway later became the stage road out to the steamboat landing at Belle Plain.

By 1772, silting had substantially reduced the depth of water at Cave's, making it difficult for larger ships to tie up there. A petition asking that the inspection be closed noted, "The water in the Creek, at Cave's Inspection, is so shallow, that a Boat, with four Hogsheads of Tobacco, cannot easily go down it, and it is daily growing worse." In spite of this, the county court ordered Thomas Mountjoy, one of the inspectors, to build a second warehouse. Andrew Edwards, a former inspector at Cave's, complained that the project had been completed "in a private, unfair, and illegal Manner, and for a much larger Sum than the Work is really worth." A petition to the Burgesses claimed that "the Expenses of the said Inspection considerably exceeds the Money it brings into the Treasury" and asked that it be discontinued.

At the outset of the Revolution, a limited amount of tobacco was still being inspected at Cave's, but a change of function was at hand. In 1776 the state awarded James Hunter (1721-1784) a contract to supply and distribute naval stores within the Potomac River District. Unable to warehouse such a quantity of goods at his own iron manufactory above Falmouth, the Potomac Creek buildings offered substantial storage space, a convenient shipping point (despite the limited water depth), and was well upstream from the Potomac River making it less vulnerable to English discovery and destruction. In October of 1776, the House of Delegates passed "An act to establish public storehouses, at the head of Patowmack creek for the reception of naval stores." This act authorized the "use of the said land for a publick warehouse...for the reception and safe keeping of the naval stores and materials for ship building." Although Hunter's petition was granted, it wasn't without a vigorous complaint from neighbors who didn't want undisciplined sailors traipsing over their property. In 1779, Andrew Edwards, within whose plantation the warehouses stood, claimed that such use would cause him "many inconveniences and impositions." He also said that his pastures and orchard "would be under the mercy of lawless and ungovernable people, the men belonging to the different ships." How long Hunter used Cave's warehouses is unknown, but the facility was officially discontinued as a tobacco inspection in February of 1780.

During the War Between the States, Union forces established a landing downstream at Belle Plain, but found the water too shallow and soon moved further downstream to Waugh Point. If there were any usable building materials remaining in or around the warehouses, they may have been collected and used by the troops. Any easily retrievable stone or bricks remaining after the war might likely have been scavenged by local residents. Other than the previously-mentioned quantity of stone resting along the edge of the creek and a number of old bricks around the courthouse site, little physical evidence of these old buildings remains. Today, the area is occupied by the Potomac Creek Estates subdivision.

FISHERY TRIVIA:

During the 1800s, there were no fewer than eight large commercial fisheries operating in Stafford County. Sturgeons were routinely caught in the Rappahannock River at Falmouth until the mid-twentieth century.

THE FALMOUTH FISHERY

The broad sandy beach at Falmouth, now enjoyed as a swimming hole, was for many years worked as a commercial fishery. Two articles from the *Fredericksburg Daily Star* are of interest:

“Big Run of Herring. George W. Payne Catches 4500 Wednesday Night. Fish are certainly running in the Rappahannock at Falmouth. Mr. George W. Payne threw in his nets Wednesday morning and at two hauls caught 700 herring. Wednesday night he caught 4500 more. They are very fine, a large proportion being roe herring. His wagons were selling them on the street Thursday at 60¢ per dozen” (*Fredericksburg Daily Star*, Mar. 7, 1918). The following day the newspaper announced, “Falmouth Catch of Herring. Most Successful in History of Shore. Mr. George W. Payne caught 4,300 herring in his nets at Falmouth on Thursday night. The fishing of the past three days at Falmouth has been the most successful in the history of the shore. There have been over 10,000 herring caught. Herring were retailing Friday at 40 cents per dozen. In lots of 100 or more \$3 per hundred. It is said the cause of the big run of herrings at this point is due to the ice destroying the traps in the lower Rappahannock and the fish got by” (*Fredericksburg Daily Star*, Mar. 8, 1918).

DREDGING AQUIA CREEK

From the *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), May 20, 1917.

“Dalecarlia Transferred There From Anacostia Channel. For the time being the United States army engineer service dredge Dalecarlia has stopped work on the Anacostia river improvement near Benning and has gone to Aquia creek, a Potomac tributary, to deepen the water in that stream. The dredge is now at work deepening the basin at Coles landing at the head of navigation on the creek. At this point barges go to load pulp wood, railroad ties, lumber and pyrites. Much sediment is brought down the creek by the water, and in the past few years there has been a fill of several feet at the landing. The Dalecarlia will deepen the water to about nine feet, and will be on the work for about three weeks. She will then, it is said, return to this city to take up work on the Anacostia.”

GOOD FOR WHAT AILS YOU

We continue sharing home remedies as we have done in previous newsletters. Charles D. Green (1873-1957), well known store keeper and resident of Brooke, kept a little book of hand written home remedies that included this treatment for lock jaw (tetanus). Fortunately, this malady isn't very common these days. Directions in the book told readers to “apply turpentine to the face, neck and along spine. Also pour warm turpentine into the wound, small quantity, keep patient in

a dark room free from excitement. Give strong tea or meat broth.” There were no notations regarding the efficacy of the treatment or the lack thereof. As with the other remedies we have passed along, it may be best not to try this at home.

THEY CALLED STAFFORD HOME: ELIZABETH ALLEN FORD (1856-1938)



Elizabeth “Lizzie” Allen Ford was the daughter of Nathaniel Waller Ford (1820-1880) and Margaret Ursula (Waller) Ford (1821-1901). Nathaniel raised his family at Woodstock, the home on this tract being located about where the Aquia Harbour County Club now stands. Margaret grew up at nearby Bloomington, part of this property now being occupied by Patawomeck Park on the south side of Wide Water Road (Route 611). Elizabeth married her neighbor, George Vowles Moncure, Jr. (1854-1939), of Chelsea (now the site of the Chelsea Manor subdivision in Wide Water) and they resided at Bloomington. Both are buried at Aquia Church. Many of their relatives remain in Stafford.

TRIVIA FROM THE HARTWOOD AREA

From the 1760s until about 1810, a Quaker settlement spanned the area through which Poplar and Ramoth Church Roads pass. This was known as the Poplar Settlement and it included a meeting house and cemetery. Many of those of that faith who resided there were employed at James Hunter’s Iron Works and its subsidiary, Rappahannock Forge. Between 1810 and 1812, most of the families moved west, many of them settling in Belmont County, Ohio.

Stony Hill Road (Route 662) in Hartwood was named after the Stony Hill tract that was owned by David Briggs (1760-1835), a Scots merchant in Falmouth.

FALMOUTH WAS A BUSY PLACE

The *Fredericksburg Weekly Advertiser* of Jan. 8, 1853 carried the following merchant advertisement:

ELM FACTORY GOODS, manufactured by Duff Green, Falmouth, Va. WHITE & GREEN, Sole agents for the sale of Elm Factory Goods, in Fredericksburg, would invite the attention of Farmers and Merchants to their stock of the above goods, among which may be found

Cotton Yarns, Nos. 4 to 19,
Carpet Warps, white and colored,

Oznaburgs, 28 and 30 inches, plain and twil'd
Bagging, 23 and 24 inches, plain and twil'd
Sewing and Knitting Cotton,
Wool Rolls, Cotton Batts, &c., &c.,

Together with a stock of heavy Kerseys and Linseys from several Virginia Factories, just the Goods for servants Clothing. Also, a large stock of Blankets.”

THE LATE STORM

The *Alexandria Gazette* of June 28, 1871 reported:

From Mr. T. S. Hawxhurst, who has just arrived from Clifton, Stafford county, Virginia, we learn that the storm of Saturday last was the most destructive that has occurred in that vicinity during the last hundred years. The mill dam at Richland, which is at least a century old and had withstood all previous floods, was washed away. Houses were unroofed, trees, fences and wheat shocks blown down and corn washed up by the roots. The principal losers were Gen. Fitzhugh Lee, Messrs. John Hawxhurst, Withers Waller, George Moncure, John Suttle, and others whose names have not been ascertained.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

October 21—Members Only field trip to Wide Water State Park for a program with park personnel
November 18—“America’s Florence Nightingale and Her Time in Stafford” with Jane Conner
December 16—Annual Christmas Party at the Rowser Building—SCHS members and their guests only

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 ARE DUE IN JANUARY!

Please don’t forget to renew your membership so you’ll not miss out on any of our 2022 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

Please make checks payable to Stafford County Historical Society (SCHS) and mail them and the completed form (below) to the **Treasurer** at:

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