

# *The Pittsylvania Packet*

*Fall 2003*

*Number 50*



**Pittsylvania Historical Society**

**Chatham, Virginia**

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## **President's Report**

As we enter the fall season, our thoughts turn toward harvest. The Society has experienced growth during the summer. I believe that some of the objectives of the society are being accomplished. As we approach the time when the Society will not have the constant presence of Herman and Helen Melton, we will continue to benefit from the leadership of this family through the scholarship project (see pp. 5, 6).

I would like to thank the Meltons for all the nice things that you have done for the community, and your untiring efforts in service to the Pittsylvania Historical Society.

I would like to take this means to thank all the people who helped to make the summer picnic a success. The use of the wonderful facility at the Davenport farm made it possible for the society to produce an effective program.

- Fuller Motley, President

## **Note from the Editor**

Happy upcoming holidays! Remember that books, gift subscriptions, and other items from the Pittsylvania Historical Society make wonderful gifts.

- Sarah E. Mitchell, Editor

## **Chris Smith Resigns from Board**

The Historical Society is sad to announce that Chris Smith will not be continuing on the board. He is taking over many new duties at Chatham Hall. Chris will be continuing to volunteer at organizations in Chatham.

## **Correction Regarding Pittsylvania County Heritage Book**

In previous press announcements, misinformation was given out concerning whether authors of articles in the Heritage Book would each receive one free copy of the book when it is published. Actually, free copies are to be given to those who attended planning meetings.

Articles are still being collected for the book. Please send your articles to Pittsylvania County Heritage Book, P.O. Box 185, Ringgold, VA 24586, or contact Anna Dodson, who is heading the project, at 434-822-6671 or at roganna@gamewood.net.

## **Fall Meeting on October 20th: Keister Greer is Planned Speaker**

The Pittsylvania Historical Society will hold its Fall Meeting Monday, October 20, 2003, **7:00 p.m.**, at the 1813 Clerk's Office.

Keister Greer, the planned speaker, is the author of *The Great Moonshine Conspiracy Trial of 1935*.

Mr. Greer was a Marine during World War II, studied law at the University of Virginia, practiced

law in Virginia and California, helped found the Franklin County Historical Society, and has been involved in the banking industry. Mr. Greer also served on the Board of Visitors at the University of Virginia. We look forward to hearing him speak!

**Christmas in Historic Chatham  
on December 5-6, 2003**

The annual Christmas in Historic Chatham celebration will be held December 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. Watch for more details in the *Star-Tribune* closer to the date of the event.

**Herman and Helen Melton  
Move to South Carolina**

Two beloved Pittsylvania County civic leaders and historians, Helen and Herman Melton, have moved to South Carolina. In recognition of the great impact that Herman and Helen have had on our community through their tireless devotion to the Pittsylvania Historical Society and their outstanding contributions to local historical research, the Board of Directors of the Historical Society has established the Herman and Helen Melton Historical Fund.

This permanently endowed fund in honor of the Meltons will be established through the DPC Community Foundation. The fund, when fully endowed, will generate proceeds which will be available as grants for charitable organizations and scholarships that support historical research and preservation activities in the Pittsylvania County area.

The Historical Society is making an initial gift of \$10,000 to establish the Fund and will make additional contributions over the next three years.

Any organization or individual may also make contributions to this fund.

For further information on the fund, see the next article.

**Herman and Helen Melton Historical Fund  
Created with  
DPC Community Foundation**

The Pittsylvania Historical Society announces the establishment of the Herman and Helen Melton Historical Fund with the DPC Community Foundation.

The fund will honor the Chatham couple who have contributed significantly to the research and documentation of county history. The Meltons left Chatham in September for retirement in South Carolina. (They hope to visit Chatham often.)

The Herman and Helen Melton Historical Fund will support historical research and preservation in the Pittsylvania County area. Individuals interested in receiving funds may contact the DPC Community Foundation, but applications will not be considered until the fund has matured for one year.

While the Historical Society has begun to endow the fund, organizations and individuals are encouraged to support the fund with additional donations. Gifts should be noted for the Melton Historical Fund and mailed to DPC Community Foundation, P.O. Box 1039, Danville, VA 24543. (A contribution envelope is included in this issue of the *Pittsylvania Packet*.)

Born and raised in the Texas Panhandle, Herman came to Pittsylvania County as plant manager for Transco Gas Pipeline in 1959. He has

published numerous books on Pittsylvania County history. Helen Melton also has published two fictional novels based on Pittsylvania County history.

"We are so pleased to announce this fund," said Robert Vaughan, chairman of the DPC Community Foundation Board of Directors. "The Meltons' influence will continue to impact our area for years to come."

The DPC Community Foundation is a public charity with total assets exceeding \$10 million.

For more information on the Herman and Helen Melton Historical Fund or DPC Community Foundation, contact the Foundation office at 434-793-0884, P. O. Box 1039, Danville, VA 24543 or visit its web site [www.dpccf.org](http://www.dpccf.org).

## **Calland Cemetery to Be Restored**

by Susan Worley  
Courtesy the *Star-Tribune*

Briars and brambles cling to the surviving stones of a wall that once protected the graves of Samuel Calland and his family. Periwinkle carpeted the site which welcomed its last occupant more than 150 years ago.

Samuel Calland was born in Scotland in 1750 and died in 1808. His wife, Elizabeth Smith (1760-1828), was the daughter of John Smith of The Pocket, a large plantation in the bend of the Smith River.

Annie Laurie Cobbs, who lives in the original Calland house and owns property surrounding the cemetery, decided it was time to pay homage to the



legacy of a man who had a profound affect on a community.

The Cobbs have owned Calland's land for 143 years. They came to the area from Halifax County in 1860. W. W. Cobbs purchased the property 52 years after Samuel Calland's death. Laurie and her late husband, Thomas, acquired the farm in 1947.

"The stones in the cemetery had fallen everywhere. The community is a little unconcerned about it and that bothered me. I decided to do something," said Mrs. Cobbs. "[Samuel Calland] came here as a young man and established himself. He operated a store and the community thought enough of him to have the community named Callands. He was a man who deserved respect. I think reclaiming the cemetery will give him that respect."

It is said that young Calland wrestled a fortune from the frontier in the classic American tradition and built an impressive 22-room house at the foot of Turkey Cock Mountain.

He was a merchant in the true sense and not only sold basic supplies, but offered elegant imports to some of the well-to-do families of the area.

He remained loyal to Great Britain as the conflict for independence raged. But his Americanism soon took hold and he took the oath of allegiance in 1778. Calland later served as a justice of Pittsylvania and as sheriff.

All that remains of the large Calland home is a story and a half, six-room structure with earthen basement. Still prominent is the high ceiling in the main room, pine wainscoting, a corner staircase leading to an upstairs bedroom and the tall brick chimney.

Mrs. Cobbs has hired Clinton Tate of Ringgold to complete the cemetery restoration. The cost so far is estimated at \$2,000.

The Calland family plot in the walled enclosure can be reclaimed, but Mrs. Cobbs says there are many graves of slaves that have no markers. That area will be cleared and seeded in grass.

The existing stones are weathered with many of the names worn away. In addition to Calland and his wife, other family members buried on the site are sons Ralph, James, Samuel Jr., Barker, John, William; daughter Anna Callaway; grandson John Calloway; and granddaughter Matilda C. Smith.

A daughter, Elizabeth, is not buried there.

An article appearing in the *Virginia Gazette* on December 2, 1808, is a befitting epitaph.

*“Samuel Calland departed from this life lately at his seat in Pittsylvania County. Samuel Calland Esq.,] high sheriff of the county aforesaid, [was] in the 59th year of his age.*

*“He was a native of Scotland and came to this country just before the Revolutionary War. By trade since the war he has acquired a very large estate of property. He possessed a vigorous mind, high improved by reading and an extensive intercourse with the most enlightened part of society.*

*“But he was most admired when seen at home. There no one ever visited him without leaving him with the impression that he was a man formed for the enjoyment of happiness, as a husband he was affectionate, as a father kind, as a master indulgent, as a friend warm. His hospitality was proverbial.*

*“His death will long be lamented by his family and numerous friends and the public will lose in him a diligent intelligent and virtuous public servant.”*

Editor’s Note: Mrs. Cobb is a new member of the Pittsylvania Historical Society. We are glad to welcome her!

## **Sgt. William Yeatts’ Letter from China during World War II**

Sergeant William Saunders Yeatts, who was with the HQ 308th Bomb Group (H) AAF in China for two years, wrote the following letter on June 30, 1943 to Daniel Haskins, who lived on Route 2 in Chatham. The letter was of general interest, and was published in an August 1943 issue of the *Star-Tribune*.

William Yeatts was in China for two years. He returned to Chatham and married Virginia Moses, with whom he had corresponded during the war. (Virginia was a cousin of Preston Moses, the late *Star-Tribune* editor and PHS president.) He and his wife were blessed with one daughter, Linda, who provided the following letter and the information on her father.

After the war, William became co-owner of the Chatham Hotel (then located at the present site of Woodfin’s Pharmacy) and was a Chatham Town Council member and, later, Vice-Mayor of the town. He also owned interest in local enterprises, including the Pure Oil gas station, a fruit stand, and some farms in Pittsylvania County.

Mr. Yeatts passed away in 1958.

*Dear Mr. Haskins:*

*News travels very slow out here and I have heard very little as to how you all are getting along . . . . From what little I have heard the spring was late this year but every one had about finished planting their tobacco. I have not heard how the wheat crop turned out. I never did hear whether any of your boys had to go into service or what amount of help you have for this year's crop. I hope you all are fine and getting along fine with your work.*

*I have traveled quite a bit since I was last home, from coast to coast in the United States and then through the Pacific and Indian Oceans to the large country of India and then to China, half way around the world.*

*I have seen all types of farming. Most of the people are very backward and have nothing like the opportunities and equipment that we have in the U. S. I am now located in a section of China that raises wheat and rice. When I arrived two months ago they were harvesting their wheat crop. Now they have finished planting the same little field in rice. This is the rainy season and we have had a very heavy rainfall for the past few days. It is very muddy all around our quarters and the rice fields are flooded. This is what they want for the rice crops and the prospects are for a good crop. Each family has a very small plot of land to till and make their living from. Most all the work is done by hand. A few [have] a water buffalo to do their plowing, but most of them dig their land up by hand.*

*This is a very beautiful place and the green fields with the small mud villages make a beautiful scene. We are close to a large city*

*and I have seen many strange and interesting things there. However, everything is very dirty and the odor is very bad. We found the same conditions in India. I spent one month there and was in the large cities of Bombay, Calcutta and then in the desert, mountains [,] and jungle land. Their money is called rupees and anna here in China. They have dollars, however our dollar will buy about sixty Chinese dollars. In Australia they used shillings and pence for money. So I have had many varied experiences in many lands and have seen many wonderful and strange things.*

*I have enjoyed my travels very much. It has been a great experience for me and I will have many things to tell after the war is over.*

*The food here is very good and my health is good. So all in all, I am getting along just fine. However, I will be glad when it's all over and I can get back to the States. . . .*

*Give my regards to each member of your family and my best wishes for the good health of each one. I remain yours sincerely, SGT. WILLIAM YEATTS.*

## **History within A Day's Drive**

by Sarah E. Mitchell

I would like to draw attention to two lesser-known, wonderful historic sites in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Reynolda House and Museum of Historic Art is housed in the mansion built by Katharine and

Richard Joshua Reynolds in 1912-1917. The home has 64 rooms; now displayed inside are an art collection from the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; an Edwardian period fashion collection; and some of the original family furnishings.

Reynolda House is adjoined by a village of farm buildings and homes, many of which have now been converted into antique, clothing, and gift shops. A greenhouse with plants for sale is located in the village section, and one can wander through the formal gardens, the stone dam overlooking the remnants of Lake Katharine, and the nature trails for free from dawn to dusk.

House tours are usually conducted Tuesday - Saturday and Sunday afternoons, and cost \$6 for adults, \$5 for seniors, and free for students and children. There is no cost to visit the shops and the grounds at Reynolda. For more information about group tours, hours, upcoming events, etc., call 336-758-5150 or 1-888-663-1149; or visit their website at <http://www.reynoldahouse.org/>

Historic Bethabara Park is the site of the first Moravian settlement, begun in 1753, in the Winston-Salem area. A 1788 church, archaeological ruins, reconstructed gardens, four buildings dating from 1782 to 1816, and a modern visitor's center are located at the site today. A nature trail also meanders through the 175-acre preserve.

The grounds can be toured for free; tours of the church and other buildings and viewing the film on the history of the area costs \$1. Call 336-924-8191 for more information on days when tours are being conducted. The grounds are open daily from dawn to dusk.

## Family Queries

### Brumfield



I am enclosing a picture of my great-great-grandfather, William Thomas Brumfield, born 1836, died 1915, all in Pittsylvania County.

Can anyone explain the significance of the neck hair? Was it a religious thing, or was it just the fashion of the time? This picture must have been taken in the 1890's, or in that era.

I have seen pictures of other men during that period that also let their neck hair grow to form the ruff around their neck. My guess is that it was

religious, but I would like to hear theories from other people, and maybe someone has actual knowledge of why this became the fashion of the time among certain men.

My mother's side of the family was Amish, and men had to shave until they got married, then they were to grow a beard. I would say that it was kind of hard for the Amish to meet other women when they were wearing a beard. There was no reason to take off your wedding ring, as you were already marked. Imagine if an Amish man came home to his wife with his beard shaved off. There would be a hot time in the old barn that night.

Dean Ab-Hugh  
521 South Shore Dr.  
Southport, NC 28461

Editor's Note: According to A. Lawrence Kocker and Howard Dearstyne, beards became popular during the Civil War when soldiers grew them to protect against cold weather and attacks of neuralgia [severe pain along nerve paths] (reference: A. Lawrence Kocker and Howard Dearstyne, *Shadows in Silver: A Record of Virginia, 1850-1900*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1954, p. 151). However, I have not located any specific information on the particular beard style pictured above.

### **John Whitehead's Parents**

I am a descendant of John Whitehead, Revolutionary War Soldier, and I am trying to find information on his parents.

According to the facts that I have, John Whitehead was born in Nansemond County or New Kent County, Virginia, circa 1735 and died circa



1787 in Amherst County or Pittsylvania County, Virginia. He married Sarah Burcher, born in Virginia circa 1735, died 1792. The couple had 16 children.

Their son, James Whitehead (my great-grandfather), was born January 7, 1781 in Amherst County, Virginia, and died in Polk County, Georgia June 14, 1865. His first wife was Eliza Ann Markham; they had 3 children together. His second wife was Martha Washington Coats who was born in Virginia January 31, 1801 and died in Polk County, Georgia on March 22, 1871. They had 7 children together.

William Andrew Whitehead (my grandfather) was born in Pittsylvania County, Virginia on February 29, 1836, and died at Rockmart, Polk County, Georgia, January 12, 1929. His first wife (married October 25, 1859) was Mollie Henley, born in Virginia in 1840; they had 5 children together. His second wife (married January 20, 1878) was Anna Lenora Reese, born in Floyd County, Georgia on November 2, 1859 and died at Rockmart, Polk County, Georgia on March 17, 1923. They had 3 children together.

Charles Oliver Whitehead (my father) was born at Rockmart, Polk County, Georgia on September 19, 1880 and died at Vicksburg, Warren County, Mississippi on February 12, 1958. He married Bessie Lackey Vining on November 28, 1906. She was born in Columbus, Marian County, Mississippi, and died in Jackson, Hinds County, Mississippi in October, 1980. They had 5 children.

I would appreciate information regarding John Whitehead and his unknown parents. I will be pleased to share information with descendants of John Whitehead.

I am also curious to know whether the Chatham merchants, J. W. Whitehead and Son, were descendants of my John Whitehead.

Bessie M. Patton  
P. O. Box 73  
Crystal Springs, MS 39059

Editor's Note: According to research notes on the Whitehead family compiled by Thelma Fay Cain Prince (copyright 1998), J. W. Whitehead was a great-grandson of John Whitehead.

## **Property Queries**

### **Maud Carter Clement's Former Home 241 North Main Street, Chatham, Virginia**

I am in search of information, recollections, and pictures concerning the history of the house and gardens. I will be glad to copy any photographs or other information and return the originals.

All items will be used to assemble a history of the property.

Any contributions would be beneficial and appreciated. Please contact the new owner of the home, David Kahler, Box 306, Chatham, VA 24531, [kahlerd@hotmail.com](mailto:kahlerd@hotmail.com), 434-432-8972.

## **Deadline for Submissions**

Please submit any announcements, articles, etc. for the next issue of *The Pittsylvania Packet* by December 14, 2003.

## Books, Etc. For Sale

To order, send check or money order to: Susan Worley, 380 Greenbay Road, Chatham, Virginia 24531. All prices include postage.

Maud Carter Clement, *History of Pittsylvania County, Virginia*, reprinted in hardcover. \$24.00.

Maud Carter Clement, *War Recollections of the Confederate Veterans of Pittsylvania County, Virginia 1861 - 1865*, softcover. \$12.00.

Roger Dodson, *Footprints From the Old Survey Books*, softcover. \$12.00.

Madelene Fitzgerald, *Pittsylvania Homes and History of the Past*, hardcover. \$20.00

Madelene Fitzgerald and Frances Hurt, *Eighteenth Century Landmarks of Pittsylvania County, Virginia*, softcover. \$12.00

Frances Hurt, *An Intimate History of the American Revolution in Pittsylvania County*, Illustrated and Fully indexed, hardcover. \$17.00.

Kenyon McCann, *Ride Into Darkness*, Pittsylvania County's first historical novel based on actual 1840 mass murder. Softcover. 217 pages. \$12.50.

Kenyon McCann, *A Cruel Wind Blowing*, Author's sequel to *Ride into Darkness*. Historical novel set in Pittsylvania County. Softcover. \$13.50

Herman Melton, editor, *Old Fast & Perfect: Sketches from the 54 Year Life of the Franklin & Pittsylvania Railroad 1878 - 1932*. 28 pages, softcover. \$3.75

Herman Melton, *Pittsylvania County's Historic Courthouse: The Story Behind Ex Parte Virginia and the Making of a National Landmark*. Softcover, indexed, illustrated. \$13.00

Herman Melton, *Thirty-Nine Lashes Well Laid On*. 400 pages, Hardcover, indexed. \$24.00.

Herman Melton, *Picks, Tracks, and Bauteaux*. Hardcover. \$24.00

Mary Catherine Plaster, editor, *Idle Hens Don't Lay*. Historical Cookbook. Softcover, \$11.93

Gray's Map of Chatham, Virginia 1878. Rare, full color print, suitable for framing. Many names and features. \$3.50.