

Strasburg Heritage Association



S T R A S B U R G , V I R G I N I A

SHA Community Meeting Sunday, June 7th 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Do you like to have fun, visit with friends and relatives, look at and perhaps buy Shenandoah County "stuff"? Do you like going where you might find something unique or interesting or old or maybe even something you actually need and, if you're lucky, find a real treasure? Then you need to attend an auction!

If you can't do that, or even if you can, come to our spring community meeting to hear local auctioneer Hoyle Laughlin. Hoyle will share "auction stories" from his family's business that began in 1986, tell us how things have changed in the business over the past 10 or 15 years and will bring along a few special Valley items to show and discuss.

Join us on Sunday, June 7 from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Strasburg for an interesting and entertaining program and refreshments.

Old Queen Street Cemetery

Last year, under the direction of Gloria Stickle, SHA funded a preservation project of the 18th C. headstone of Obadiah Funk in the old Queen St. Cemetery. We're exploring other preservation projects that we might do there including better signage at the entrance and perhaps a brochure with information about the cemetery and historic Strasburg citizens buried there. Please contact us if you would like to be a part of this initiative.

President's Message

Barbara Adamson

I'm pleased and honored to be writing to you as the new president of Strasburg Heritage Association. Many thanks go to Kathy Kehoe who ably served as interim president this past year and to Dee Keister who has been our vice-president since 2006. Congratulations to our newly elected officers Judy Troxell, Vice-President, Wendy Pieper, Secretary and Richard Seelbach, who continues as our Treasurer. We welcome Wendy as a new board member and appreciate her willingness to jump in and help out with the important position of secretary. We also welcome Sue Foster as our other new board member this year and know that her energy and enthusiasm will serve us well.

We had an excellent turn-out for our annual meeting in February with Carole Nash's fascinating presentation about the history of Native Americans in our area. In April we had a good group to conduct litter pick-up on Rt. 11 South. The group included Michael Whittle, Mary Ann Littrell, John Adamson, Dee Morrissey, Dan Kitzmiller, Michael Marcheterre, Craig Morris, Richard Seelbach and Judy Troxell. Thanks to their hard work we collected about a dozen bags of trash (and one inner tube).

Save the date – be sure to join us on Sunday, September 27 when Strasburg historian Richard Kleese will lead us on a tour of the Fishers Hill Battlefield. I hope some of you will read elsewhere in the newsletter about other activities and will become involved and suggest ideas of your own. We would welcome your participation.

SHA Board of Directors 2009

Barbara Adamson, President
Sue Foster
Dennis Hupp
Martha Jones
Kathy Kehoe
Dee Keister
Donald LeVine
Maggie Maloney
Wendy Pieper, Secretary
Richard Seelbach, Treasurer
Marie Spence
Tim Taylor
Judy Troxell, Vice-President
Michael Whittle

A Moment From The Past

Barbara Adamson

Many senior citizens may remember an incident that occurred on November 1, 1950 in Washington DC involving Shenandoah County native Leslie Coffelt. Two Puerto Rican revolutionaries, outraged at the put down of an attempt to gain Puerto Rican independence from the United States, tried to assassinate President Harry Truman.

The two gunmen approached Blair House, where the Trumans were living during renovations at the White House, from opposite directions. One gunman engaged Secret Service agents in a shootout in which the gunman and one agent were wounded, neither fatally.

The second gunman approached the guardhouse where White House policeman Leslie Coffelt sat on duty and shot Coffelt three times. He then walked around the guardhouse where he encountered another White House policeman who drew his gun, but was shot three times in the torso and was unable to fire back. The gunman shot yet another officer, who, moments before, had been wounded by the first assailant. Meanwhile, Coffelt, with mortal wounds to the chest and abdomen, staggered out of the guardhouse, knowing to the end that his job was to protect the President. He spotted the gunman, aimed and fired, hitting him in the head and killing him instantly. Coffelt then staggered back into the guardhouse and slumped on his chair. He died on the operating table at Emergency Hospital in Washington. The first gunman and two guards were wounded in the attack while the second assailant and Coffelt were the only people killed in the attack.

Leslie Coffelt was born and raised in Oranda, two miles west of Strasburg, son of Will and Effie Keller Coffelt and one of five children. He graduated from Strasburg High School and went to Washington to become a police officer, something he reportedly had always wanted to be. His upbringing in the country, and his love of hunting, trained him well and he was known as an excellent marksman. He died at age 40, leaving a wife, many family members and friends and a grateful country. Leslie Coffelt's actions were truly heroic.

This account was taken from the Northern Virginia Daily and from the book, "American Gunfight: The plot to kill Harry Truman", by Stephen Hunter and John Bainbridge.

This moment from the past was presented by the Shenandoah County Historical Society.

Local Treasure

Marie Spence

Settlers have resided in the beautiful northern Shenandoah Valley since the 1700's and have left behind a rich heritage, intermingled with traces of earlier Native American cultures.

Strasburg Museum, Inc. (a chartered, non-profit educational corporation) is an all-volunteer-staffed repository of items reflecting local history. Strasburg Virginia became well-known for its pottery manufacturing, with the first local pottery dating back to 1761. At least 17 skilled potters produced earthen and stoneware commercially until just beyond the end of the 1800's.

The museum building was constructed in 1891 for use as a steam pottery, and served in that capacity until circa 1909 when the last local pottery closed. In 1913 the Southern Railway Company purchased the building for use as a passenger and freight depot, and it served these functions for many decades before being vacated in the 1960's.

A group of Strasburg citizens, who were interested in the preservation of the rich historic and cultural heritage of the area, met and organized Strasburg, Inc. The initial project was the creation of a community museum. The former steam pottery/depot was determined to be an excellent location for this effort to preserve and educate about the area's rich heritage.

The acquisition of a long-term lease from Southern Railway of the old depot, and a fund raising campaign sponsored by the Museum group and aided by local citizens and organizations, made the heritage project a reality. The Strasburg Museum officially opened to the public on July 5, 1970. Eventually the Strasburg Museum was able to purchase the property.

Items of interest for museum display were given or loaned by local individuals or families. Exhibits are 18th, 19th, and 20th century pieces in authentic condition and include items from Colonial farms, barns, and homes, Native American artifacts, War Between the States articles, blacksmith and cooper collections, an Old Country Store display, three Victorian-style rooms, antique clothes, a whiskey still, a telegrapher's key, an extensive photo history of local architecture, a railway baggage car and red caboose, a

working model railroad, as well as a large collection of antique Strasburg pottery.

Building improvements and expanding exhibit projects continue. The Museum is open 7 days a week with all volunteer docents from the first day of May through the end of October, from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. A Yearly Old Fashioned Apple Butter Making and Sale remains a very popular project. This year a special "Reliving History Program" honoring the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Sixty-fifth Anniversary of D-Day during the Second World War was held Memorial Day Weekend. Further activities later this year will include a Railroad Celebration, and a Special Weekend remembering the Sunset Hill and Queen Street Schools in our community.

Support from local people and businesses, as well as paid visitor admissions, have made it possible to provide an outstanding museum which reflects the heritage of Strasburg and its surrounding areas.

Visitors come from almost every state and from numerous foreign nations to enjoy and learn more of local history. In 2008 visitors came to the museum from 74 Virginia locations. One hundred-eighteen local Strasburg community citizens signed our guest book, and visitors from eleven foreign nations including Australia, England, South Africa, Scotland and Sweden came to explore our local treasure house. Visitors from thirty-five states visited our museum during last year as well.

The Strasburg Museum is a Registered Historic Landmark located at 440 East King Street next to the railroad tracks on Route 55. Come visit and explore more about our local history.

Strasburg's 250th Celebration Coalition

The Town's 250th anniversary is approaching. 2011 may sound like a futuristic date to some of us baby boomers, but it is the year for our town to celebrate its past. Many interested persons and organizations are involved in the preliminary planning. We are working on a year long calendar, various writing projects and many interesting activities to commemorate 250 years of our growing and changing home town. Advisors for the Coalition are Mayor Tim Taylor and Assistant County Administrator Mary Beth Price. Heading up as Coalition Chair is Leila Mauck, with committees of Activities, Finance, History and Entertainment. If you are enthusiastic about this celebration and wish to join us, contact Leila. We have lots of fun projects to choose from.

Strasburg Heritage Association
PO Box 525
Strasburg, VA 22657

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone Number () _____

E-mail address _____

Membership: _____ Cost is \$20.00

Additional Donation: _____

Total Enclosed: _____

Please mail completed form to:

Strasburg Heritage Association
P O Box 525
Strasburg, VA 22657