



Strasburg Heritage Association

Volume 12 Issue 1

Strasburg, Virginia
www.strasburgvaheritage.org

Winter 2012

SHA Quarterly Meeting

SHA Annual Meeting and Program

***On Sunday, February 26, SHA will hold it's 2012 Annual Meeting
at St. Paul Lutheran Church from 3:00-5:00pm.***

We hope you will join us for a presentation by local photographer Andrew Thayer of his trip in 2009, **The Shenandoah River Journey, From Brock's Gap to Harper's Ferry**, on the North Fork of the Shenandoah River from it's headwaters to its confluence with the Potomac River. Andy's trip took two weeks in April and May of that year. With his excellent photography and interesting narrative he will share with us the story of our beautiful river, it's wonderful wildlife, friendly folks along the way and the good friends and family who helped make the trip a success. Andy is a photographer for the Northern Virginia Daily. He and his family live here in Strasburg.

We will also conduct a brief business meeting and board elections. Please join us at St. Paul Lutheran Church W. Washington St. Strasburg for fellowship and refreshments.

Nominating Committee Report

Seven of our board members are up for re-election this year. Wendy Pieper and Judy Troxell, serving as our Nominating Committee, have reported that Barbara Adamson, Bill Foster, Sue Foster, Dee Keister, Marie Spence, Polly Wilson and Linda Williams (elected in 2011 for one year to complete Mike Whittle's term) have all expressed a willingness to serve another term of two years. Mary Hitchings has decided that she cannot continue on the board and we're pleased to announce that Laura Ellen Beeler Wade has agreed to stand for election to complete the second year of Mary's term. We thank Mary for having served and know that she will continue to give her support. Elections will be held at the Annual Meeting on February 26. Continuing on the board are Dennis Hupp, Kathy Kehoe, Wendy Pieper, Richard Seelbach, Tim Taylor and Judy Troxell.

President's Letter

Barbara Adamson

Happy New Year to Everyone! What a busy year we had in 2011 with so many 250th activities. We've confessed to each other that we enjoyed it, but we're awfully glad it's done. Elsewhere in the newsletter we'll be thanking those who helped make the 250 events sponsored by SHA such a success. I also want to thank SHA board members for our support of the community dinner program, which we hosted on January 4 at St. Paul Lutheran Church. At our board meeting in January we discussed possible projects for this year. Several years ago we discussed an interest in participating in improvements at the Old Queen St. cemetery. We became distracted with other things but now would like to return to that idea and hope to work with the town, the UDC and the Sons of Confederate Veterans, as well as with the cemetery's neighbors, to see what we can do. We would welcome the help of any of you who would like to become involved too. Hope to see you at our meeting and program on Feb. 26th!

Thank you for a Successful 250th Celebration

Barbara Adamson

The SHA Board wishes to thank everyone who participated in our SHA sponsored 250 Celebration events. Without all of you we would not have been able to share with the community our town's wonderful history. The Town of Strasburg staff is indispensable, always willing to accommodate us when requested. BB&T Bank made a generous contribution of \$2,500 to 250 activities for which we are very appreciative. To recap our activities and acknowledge participants below:

Strasburg's Early Days & First Families and Monument Dedication – co-sponsored by SHA and the 250 Committee, we thank Daniel W. Bly, Virginia Hinkins Cadden, Strasburg Fire Dept., Strasburg Fire Dept. Auxiliary, Rinker & Frye Memorials, The Flower Basket, Buggy B's, Al's Sign Shop and other volunteers who participated to make this a highlight of the year. Temperatures in the 60s on February 27 was pretty special too!

Our Strasburg Pottery Fest in June was great fun. We thank the Strasburg Museum for co-sponsoring with us this celebration of an important part of our history and culture. Our thanks also go to presenters and participants Dr. Gene Comstock, Shenandoah Valley Potter's Guild, Chris Fry, John Huntsberger, John Adamson, Debbie Ritenour, Fred Ritenour, Donna Huntsberger, Bob Baker, Mary Beth Price, Tom Price, Kermit Orndorff, Frances Orndorff, George Trimble and Jane Trimble. We had good June weather for this event as well.

In September we held our second Strasburg Family History Share Fair. Our thanks for this event go to St. Paul Lutheran Church, John Horan, Jim Artz, Tim Taylor, Dee Keister, Daniel Bly, Phyllis Wright/Hottel Keller Memorial, Laura Ellen and Bill Wade, Martha Baker Jones, Kathy Kehoe, Jan Hood/Shenandoah County Library, Janet and CF Wagniere/Shenandoah County Historical Society, Glenna and Ray Loving, Nick Racey, Graham Conner, John Adamson, Bob Bowman and Leila Orndorff/250 Committee.

The community welcomed the homes tour back this year after having taken last year off. We enjoyed showcasing some very special homes this year and thank our homeowners for their generosity. They

include Jim Whitehead and Sheila Cleary, John Massoud, Sam and Mary Hitchings, Keith and Rita Fagan and Steven and Rachel Schetrom. We also thank Massanutten Garden Club members, our partners for the homes tour. Our appreciation goes to all of our many volunteer docents, who come from throughout the community, and without whom there would be no tour! Many thanks to our ticket outlets that include Peoples Drug Store, Hotel Strasburg, First Bank, Strasburg Chamber of Commerce and Walton & Smoot Pharmacy. This year we enjoyed serving our refreshments and providing easy access to the Schetrom home at the Strasburg Emporium. Thank you!

In 2011, we were pleased to be able to offer the reprint of "The Story of Strasburg", first published for the Bicentennial in 1961. This new version includes an update chapter and excellent new historical research by Daniel W. Bly. We thank The Northern Virginia Daily for their assistance and support with this publication. (The book is available for \$8.00, call 465-5570 for more info)

Finally we want to acknowledge the hard work of the 250 Committee. 2011 was a memorable year.

Litter Pick-Up

We've scheduled our spring litter pick-up on the Valley Pike for Saturday, March 31. (Rain date is May 5) We start at 8:00am and meet in the old mill parking lot at Charlie's. We'll be finished by 10 o'clock! Our thanks go to those who helped out in November including Ginger Aliotti, Sue Foster, Linda Williams, Bill Foster and Barbara Adamson. Ginger deserves special recognition. By Sunday, the day after we left the roadway looking neat and tidy, someone had spilled a large bag of debris across the road! Ginger stopped and picked up as much of it as she could. Thank you very much, Ginger. It's always discouraging to see that first piece of trash blowing around after we work so hard.

Heads up for Sesquicentennial program in June

On Saturday, June 2 we'll be sponsoring a lecture and walking tour by historian Richard Kleese focusing on Jackson's Valley Campaign and Bank's Fort. More information about the program will be available later on in our spring newsletter. Another part of this day that we wanted to inform you about is our participation with the Library of Virginia and VA Sesquicentennial Commission efforts to identify and locate original manuscript material related to the Civil War. Library of Virginia staff will be in Strasburg on June 2 to scan private-held manuscript materials to be included on Library and Va Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission websites. This is an effort to document and preserve for future generations materials such as letters, diaries, photographs, claims for damages, hand-drawn maps and sketches, military passes, discharge papers, pension materials and other Civil War era materials. If you or any family members or friends may have such materials, we hope you'll consider adding them to this important archive. We'll have further information in the spring newsletter but hope some of you may, in the months ahead, consider being a part of this valuable effort.

Dues Reminder

Your dues contribution of \$20.00 each February is much appreciated. With your help SHA has been able to support Strasburg's 250th anniversary celebration, publish our newsletter, present interesting programs, help finance the historic building plaque program and more. As a member, your copy of the newsletter will come to you in the mail.

Join us to plan future programs and projects.

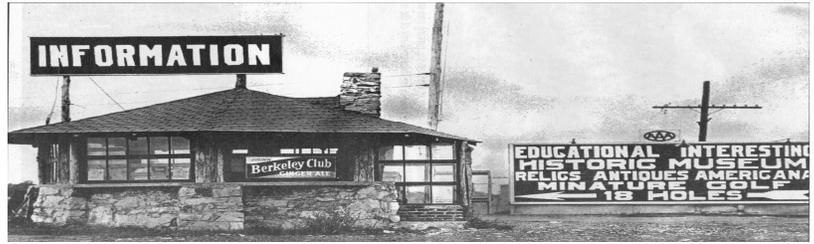
Thank you!

A Little Folk History

By

Kathy Kehoe

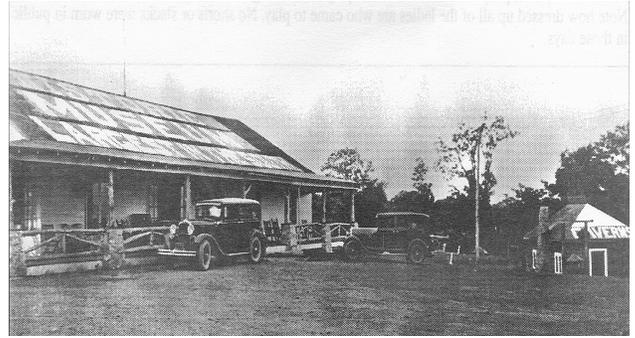
On the edge of the Historic District of Strasburg, there is a piece of property with historic significance to our town.



In 1864, it was a place where soldiers died. In 1930, it was a place of entertainment. In the 1960s, it was a place where people roller-skated. In the 1980s, it became a museum. And in the 21st century, it was reopened as Hupps Hill Civil War Museum and Park and the Gateway to the Shenandoah Visitor Center.

Few people are living who remember going to the Crystal Caverns and Zoo in the 1930s. At the museum at Hupps Hill, a Northern Virginia Daily article by Carolyn Keister Baker is part of a display entitled "Caverns, Zoo, A Great Place to Work and Play." The article describes a popular place of entertainment in the 1920s and 30s. Baker quotes James A. Poland, whose father E. W. Poland leased and operated the caverns. When a teenager, James worked there as a guide. Local author Doug Cooley includes the Caverns and Zoo in his book "Strasburg Community Memories". One photograph that Doug includes in his book is of an information booth at the entrance with a huge sign: "Educational, Interesting, Historic Museum; Relics, Antiques, Americana, Miniature Golf, 18 Holes." The roof of the building housing the museum was painted with large white letters "Historic Museum; Largest in the South." Other pictures in Doug's book show the two large viewing towers, the museum showcases and one of the large limestone fireplaces. These photos are also part of the display at the Hupps Hill Museum. There were telescopes in the top of the wooden observation towers used for viewing the Civil War battlefields, Signal Knob on Massanutten Mountain, Powell's Fort and the town of Strasburg. Poland describes the zoo as having "spotted and black leopards, poisonous snakes, including copperheads and rattlers, deer, coyotes, monkeys, an eagle, a lion and a big black bear." Poland's father loved to wrestle the bear, which greatly pleased the audience. Poland told the NVD, "He got hurt a few times. He did it because he liked to show off. He really did draw people." The museum, said Poland, contained "Wild Bill Hickok's .45 caliber pistols." and was "filled with old things such as stills, baby carriages, a covered wagon and Civil War and Indian artifacts." Pictures of the inside of the museum show the covered wagon and buggies, and horseshoes and lanterns hanging from the rafters. The display describes Crystal Caverns as a "favorite family gathering place from 1920s through the 1950s". Many social events were held there, including dances and shows. Mary Neff remembers going there with her brother Harry Neff to see old time country music comedian "Grandpa Jones". Mary was a little girl then in the late 1940s and Louis Marshall "Grandpa" Jones was actually a young man who, Mary remembers, had to apply makeup to look like the elderly "Grandpa" character. Terri Davison Shrader remembers her father, Dick Davison telling her he went there for dances and picnics. Crystal Caverns closed in the 60s after Interstate 81 opened and tourist traffic bypassed Rt. 11. Frankie Howard bought the property and opened a skating rink in the old museum building until about 1971. Wayside of Virginia operated a Civil War museum and the caverns until 2010. Today the property is leased to the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation.

In the 1960s, many residents remember the museum building as a roller rink. Kitty Jean Morris Miller remembers how " I went every Friday night, but my parents would not let me go on Sundays!" Sue Fultz Fox and many others remember skating every Friday night and Sunday afternoon. Sue's father Leon "Bud" Fultz would take a carload of kids to the roller rink and skate with them. Vickie



Miller Edwards tells us that Friday night seemed to be the most popular. Sharon Bly Ferguson's parents would drop her off at the rink on Friday nights and go out to the Stone Shop until closing time. Terri Davison Shrader remembers it cost 50 cents to skate and 5 cents for a soda. Vickie Cameron McDonald's favorite snack at the rink was a bag of salted peanuts in a bottle of cream soda. Bud McDonald remembers how his sister Gracie, "while learning how to skate, went right through the drywall into the furnace room. She didn't get hurt!" I remember sometimes getting fresh gum flattened out halfway around my wheel, even though it was against the rules to chew gum on the rink. Sometimes it was done on purpose, says Sharon Bly Ferguson, by some of the boys, because it would make a loud repeated clicking sound at every revolution of the wheel and the boys thought that was neat. Mr. Howard would make them come in from the rink and remove the gum before they could skate again.

Teenagers around Strasburg seldom heard polkas or waltzes unless they were watching "The Lawrence Welk Show" on TV with their parents. But on weekends, if you went roller-skating at Crystal Roller Rink, you skated to polka and waltz music from Mr. Howard's 33-rpm records. The music was piped onto the rink through little brown speakers on the wall. When Mr. Howard started the music, it was time to skate. When he went out to the middle of the rink and blew his whistle, it was time for a game. This was a time for us to show off our expertise in skating. Betty Jane Robinson Miller recalls how she could dance the two-step on skates. Brenda Kenny Stensney's memories are of spending many hours practicing how to skate backwards

Marilyn Burns LaManna reminisces about the rink: "My mother (Alma Burns) taught 5th grade in Middletown and every year she would take her class to the roller rink; I remember being the end of the 'whip' more than once! I can almost still hear the scratchy old records they played while people skated....ahhh....what fun!" The Whip game was when skaters, each with their hands placed on the waist of the skater in front of them, formed a line and the leader would skate in an "S" pattern. The wider the "S" or "whip" of the line, the harder that last little girl would have to hold onto the waist of the person in front of her to keep from rolling away. The limestone fireplace could be a dangerous spot to roll into, said Marie Spence, because you could end up "eating the stone fireplace."



Mr. Howard would blow his whistle and announce "couples only" and kids and adults would pair up in the skater's pose until he blew the whistle to change partners. He'd also announce "adults only." The "Penny Race" was Sharon's favorite game; two teams of skaters would bend down to pick up a penny without stopping, and place it at the other end of the line. The first team to move all the pennies won. Another game was the "Squat" where one skater squatted with their hands on the toes of their skates; a 2nd skater stood behind them, leaning forward with their hands placed on the back of the 1st skater. The first pair to get to the finish line without losing contact with their partner was the winner. If the standing skater pushed too hard, they could send their squatting partner rolling away which meant they'd be out of the game.

Roller Rink status increased if you had your own shoe skates. Mary Neff still has the skates that her sister-in-law Betty Neff gave her when she stopped going. Sharon still has the skates she wore to the rink. If you didn't have your own shoeskates, you wore the skates from the shelves that attached to your shoes. Sharon remembers with a laugh, how the room where everyone changed from their shoes to their skates smelled. A skate case was really special, though most people carried their shoeskates over their shoulder by the shoelaces tied together. The case was usually a very shiny boxy suitcase with gold locks. But the real status was in the pom poms you attached to your skate. The most popular were purple and white, our school colors. They were expensive, but we learned to make our own from yarn. And then a fad started; we would attach troll dolls to our skates. We'd save our money so we could go to the Newsstand to buy a troll. Trolls were little dolls with chubby baby tummies and cute little belly buttons. Their hair stood straight up and came to a point that was easy to tie to your skate shoelaces.

"I miss that place—wish it was still there." reflects Sharon Bly Ferguson. She still has a Crystal Roller Rink ticket in a scrapbook. Those times at the Crystal Roller Rink gave us exercise and socialization in that huge rustic room and gave us an appreciation for music we would otherwise never listen to. Even today, forty-five years later, I never hear a waltz or a polka that I don't feel like skating. For the memories, we thank you Mr. Howard.



Ticket shared by Sharon Bly Ferguson

DEUTSCHAMERIKANERS

by
Marie Spence

Strasburg, Virginia was settled originally by Europeans of German heritage. These people may have had ancestors of their own personal history by way of Germany, Switzerland or Pennsylvania. Some few of these German settlers arrived in the northern Shenandoah Valley as early as the 1730s. It is known that the area which would later be designated as Strasburg had permanent pioneers of Germanic origin as early as 1732.

Today, Deutschamerikaners (roughly meaning people who have Germanic American roots) are the largest ethnic group in the United States. Fifty-eight million citizens claim to be solely or partly of German descent. This totals 16.5% of our nation's population (1990 census).

The earliest documented large-scale immigration of Germans into the middle area of eastern North America was circa 1680s. However, these numbers were few. By the next century, significant numbers of European and Pennsylvania Germans (some estimated eight million) had arrived. These immigrants were attracted primarily in hopes of acquiring land. Some were fleeing religious punishment.

Most Germanic arrivals prior to the 1850s were farmers by multiple generations. People in Pennsylvania who could not hope to acquire land there were widely attracted to the rich lands of the Valley of Virginia. Once many of these people arrived in the Shenandoah Valley a good number of settlements were located along the northward flowing Shenandoah River.

By the time Peter Stover and his kin arrived, other settlers (including people of English heritage) were already present nearby. Stover (Stauffer, Stoever) purchased hundreds of acres from several other men who were already in the area. Stover kept sections near the Shenandoah River and the wagon trails. Stover surveyed much of his land into lots. In 1761, Stover's small town (which had been known by varied names) was officially chartered as Strasburg.

Americans of Germanic heritage, whether by native birth or by immigrant choice, have been influential in almost every field of our nation including agriculture, architecture, science, politics, government, theology, literature, sports, the military, and industry. Deutschamerikaners established the first kindergartens in America, brought the tradition of Christmas trees, organized the first U.S. gymnastics programs and introduced hamburger, wieners (hot dogs) and sauerkraut to the American diet. Men such as Eberhard Anheuser, Adolphus Bush, Adolph Coors, Frederic Miller, Frederick Pabst, Bernhard Stroh, and Joseph Schlitz, dominated mass production of beer brewing and distribution. These names are still familiar today.

As the 21st century began, approximately 11.7% of Virginia citizens listed themselves of sole or partial German descent. This translates into roughly 974,438 people. Few Virginians are fluent in German as spoken today. Deutsch was once widely spoken in the Valley of Virginia for many decades of history. Indeed German was the primary language spoken in Strasburg until around 1830 to 1850. Mayfest and Oktoberfest celebrations are still widely held in many locations across America, including Strasburg,

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Membership Application & Renewal
(Members 2011 dues are now due.)

Name: _____
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MEMBERSHIP: _____ Cost is \$20.00

Additional Donation: _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: _____

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