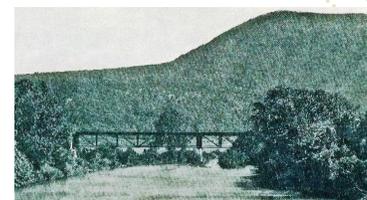


Strasburg Heritage Association



Volume 18

Winter 2018

Issue 1

Strasburg, Virginia

NEWSLETTER

strasburgvaheritage.org

The Story of the Frederick Mowery Family of Clary & Lebanon Church and Descendants

Join us at our annual meeting and program when historian Don Silvius will share discoveries of his Mowery family history and descendants that will include families Strosnider, Racey, Brill, Connor, Bowman, Rudolph, Orndorff and more from a database of 29,000 names.

**Sunday, February 18, 2018
2-4PM
193 St. Paul Lutheran Church
W. Washington St. Strasburg**

Free. The public is welcome. Refreshments follow.

President's Message

Tim Taylor

As another year has come and gone, I hope everyone has had a great start to 2018. Looking back at the last quarter of 2017, SHA hosted two of our most popular events that proved to be very successful. We sold 230 tickets for our sixth annual ghost/graveyard tour. Big thanks to Sam Saliba and the Hotel Strasburg for being our home base for the tours, Ms. Heather Hiserman's FCCLA members for serving as tour guides and the various SHA board members that assisted. Mother Nature provided us with excellent weather which helps make the event even more enjoyable! Our second event was our Holiday Homes Tour. We want to thank the homeowners that graciously shared their homes with us this year. They were Barbara Plitt, Carrie and Andy Herbaugh, Elizabeth and Fred Keefe, Michelle Burdette and Mindy Shane, Craig Morris and Mike Marcheterre, and Rhonda and Tim Taylor. We sold 165 tickets for this event and we were blessed with a light snow for the day to add to the holiday spirit! A big "thank you" to the Massanutten Garden Club, Joan Williams, the Homes Tour Committee Chair, and all of our board members that helped make this event so special.

As we begin this new year, I want to remind all members that is time to pay your annual dues of \$20. Your dues help SHA to meet our goals of preserving local heritage, present educational programs, provide a \$500 college scholarship to a graduating Strasburg High School senior majoring in history, help provide two community meals and receive our newsletter three times a year. We are always looking for new members, so we would appreciate if you would ask your relatives, friends, and neighbors if they would be interested in joining SHA. A membership application can be found in this newsletter. If you have any questions about SHA, do not hesitate to contact me or any SHA Board Member. I hope everyone has an enjoyable, healthy and history-rich 2018!

Due are Due!

Send your annual dues of \$20.00 and continue to have the SHA newsletter mailed to you. Members get the newsletter first. Your dues helps the SHA support our preservation and sharing of our area history.

SHA Board of Directors

2018

Tim Taylor

President

Laura Ellen Wade

Vice-President

Sue Foster

Treasurer

Barbara Adamson

Secretary

Kathy Kehoe

Newsletter Editor

George Hoffman

Dee Keister

Nick Racey

Marie Spence

Carla Wallen

Joan Williams

Linda Williams

Polly Wilson

SHA Board Elections

Each year one half of SHA’s board members stand for re-election. We’re pleased that in 2018, all of those whose terms are expiring have agreed to continue to serve. At the annual meeting board members Barbara Adamson, Sue Foster, Carla Wallen, Linda Williams, Polly Wilson, Dee Keister and Marie Spence names will be proposed for re-election to a two-year term. We thank them for their service and willingness to continue.

Shenandoah Valley’s Germanic Heritage

Free lecture, *Shenandoah Valley’s Germanic Heritage*, to be presented by local historian and genealogist, Karen Cooper, Thursday, Feb. 22 at 7PM. Location: Shenandoah County Historic Court-house 103 N. Main St. Woodstock. Open to the public. Hosted by the Shenandoah County Historical Society.

Historical Society Sponsors Barn Project

The Shenandoah County Historical Society is sponsoring a project to survey and document the barns of our county. Barns are important icons of our agricultural heritage but their survival is threatened by changes in agricultural techniques and high maintenance costs. The Historical Society plans to survey, photograph and document as many county barns as possible in order to raise awareness of their historical role and encourage preservation of these local landmarks.

The SCHS Barn Project is led by John Adamson who began the work of surveying county barns in 2017. John estimates that there may be as many as 1000 old barns in Shenandoah County so it is expected that survey efforts may take years to finish. Partnering with John is local artist, Sally Veach, who continues to expand her portfolio of barn art. Sally has scheduled several art shows and hopes to use a portion of art sales to fund barn awareness and preservation efforts.

The Historical Society public program for March will be “The Barns of Shenandoah County”. Using photos from the survey, John Adamson will present the history and architecture of local barns. Sally Veach will share her inspiration for barns and display examples of her art. The free program will take place at 7 p.m., Tuesday, March 20 at the St. Paul’s Heritage Center located 106 S. High Street St. in Edinburg, Virginia. For more information visit the SCHS website: www.schs1795.com and also Sally Veach’s website: www.sallyveach.com

2018 Shenandoah County Heritage Day to Feature World War II

The annual Shenandoah County Heritage Day 2018 will be held Saturday, April 14 at Charterhouse School in Edinburg from 11AM-3PM. This year’s focus is World War II. There will be ample space available and all who are interested in exhibiting memorabilia from WWII are invited to request table space. It is expected that there will be uniforms, letters, medals, photographs, family information and other items. You are also invited to bring home front items from the era to share such as war bonds, ration stamps, letters, diaries, photographs and household items from the 1930s/40s to include quilts and other home goods.

While WWII is the main focus this year you are encouraged to exhibit your own family history, history of houses or other buildings, farms, businesses, church or cemetery history, or any local history. In an effort to bring attention to the statewide commemoration of WWII and to add to our knowledge of the era, Heritage Day 2018 is hosted by the Shenandoah County Historical Society, Shenandoah County Archives and Shenandoah County Tourism. The VA Profiles of Honor Tour vehicle will be present. If you would like to exhibit at Heritage Day or would like to help prepare an exhibit, call SCHS at 459-1795 or email schs.va@gmail.com There is no fee for exhibiting or requesting a table.

A Little Folk History *Stover Funeral Home* *by Kathy Kehoe*

"The funeral experience is not a pleasant one for any family. Death is difficult, but the funeral home can make that experience the beginnings of healing for the family."
--Rev. Wendell Schurtz

Every time I've stepped onto the porch of Stover Funeral Home I felt a wave of emotions. But I kept going, like so many others, until I walked inside to the soothing, calming voices of the funeral home staff. It's a place where every small town resident goes at least once. Then there are those who make it their life work to serve their community. It takes a special kind of person to help grieving families and to help them well, as the Stover, Kitchin and Morehead families have served our town since 1878.

The following is the history of Stover Funeral Home as Stanley and Patsy Morehead wrote on their website,

<http://www.stoverfuneralhome.com/history>: "The Stover Funeral Home was established in 1878 by Francis Marion Stover. The funeral home was first operated in connection with a cabinet shop and later in combination with a furniture store. Prior to Virginia licensing laws Francis M. Stover earned a diploma from the Massachusetts School of Embalming on December 5, 1895. About 1910 Mr. Stover's son, Frank Carson Stover, joined his father in the business and received his license under Virginia law on June 12, 1920. Shortly after this, due to his father's health, Frank Stover took over the active management and in 1924 built a completely new funeral home, separated from the furniture store that was known as Stover & Stover Furniture. This structure housed the establishment until September 1973 at which time the addition and renovations were completed by Mr. Frank L. Kitchin, son-in-law of Frank C. Stover, and his wife, Madolyn S. Kitchin. Mr. Kitchin joined the firm in 1936 and became manager in 1965. He retired in 1980 and in 1985 he and his wife, Madolyn Stover Kitchin sold the funeral home to Stanley & Patsy Morehead. Stanley Morehead graduated from the Kentucky School of Mortuary Science in August 1975 and came from his family's funeral home in Austinville, Virginia in 1977 and was named manager in 1978. Stanley Morehead serves as president and his wife, Patsy serves as treasurer and secretary of the corporation. They continue to carry on the Stover family traditions by pledging to every family we serve our commitment of honesty and fairness in all our business operations."

Stephanie "Tep" Kitchin Dudley is the great-granddaughter of Frances Marion and Mary Margaret Stover, the founders of Stover Funeral Home. Tep shared her memories of her family and the funeral home. She tells us that Frances and his son Frank Stover also built handmade furniture and operated a furniture store in Strasburg. In the beginning, the furniture store made the coffins for the funeral home. Frank married Mary Virginia and their daughter Madolyn married Frank Kitchin. Tep has many memories of her grandparents and her parents living in the upstairs apartment over the funeral home. Tep's mother Madolyn and her sister, "Peg" Marion Paige grew up in in the apartment above the funeral home. Peg married Charles Cooley and they lived in the apartment also after they were married. Charles' brother Doug Cooley, Strasburg author and local historian, once told me how he and his wife Pauline were at the Stover's apartment on a Saturday night in 1947. They were playing cards with his brother Charles and his wife Peg. Mr. Stover told the two young couples that he was going to run an errand and asked his son-in-law, "If you get a call for the ambulance, you boys



Frank C. & Mary Funk Stover

can take the ambulance out for me." It happened that was the night the pharmacist was shot and killed in Peoples Drug Store. When the call came in for the ambulance, the two young men started driving towards the drug store but they could not get the ambulance out of first gear. They had the siren blasting and the light flashing but were going so slow that "people running down main street were going faster than we were." Doug laughed at the memory, saying that "it wasn't funny at the time because it was so tragic but we can laugh now at an ambulance moving slower than people could run."

Tep remembers how different the funeral home building looked before the remodeling of 1973. At the end of the funeral home was an upstairs sunporch and under that was a sandbox where Tep and her cousins made mud pies. Her Grandmother Stover would put the mud pies in the oven and "bake" them. No one ever mistakenly ate them though, because her grandmother always made sure there was plenty of real food to eat. "She was a wonderful cook." said Tep, "I remember when she made candy. It was rectangle in shape, two inches long, soft and pliable." Tep could remember the delicious scent but



Frank L. & Madolyn Stover Kitchen

could never quite figure out what that scent was. "It took forty years to figure out the recipe" she said, "found it in old cookbook and discovered the recipe had almond extract. That's why the smell of Jergens hand lotion always reminded me of my grandmother's kitchen."

There were no cabinets in the kitchen, but she could remember the old time porcelain sink and the old time icebox. The ice was delivered from the locker plant, a concrete building on King Street that faced what is now the Handy Mart. When someone wanted to call the funeral home, they picked up the receiver and asked the operator for number "one". The Stover Insurance office next door was number "123". Tep and sister Susan Reiley worked there selling fire, home, auto and life insurance. Caskets were stored in the middle section of the building. The Stover's built the caskets to fit size and height of the deceased. They had huge bolts of crushed velvet to use to line the hand-made caskets. "They still had crushed velvet up there when I was in high school" added Tep, "I had a dress made from it." The Keisters next door remember hearing the Stovers "hammering away in the middle of the night making caskets." Tep doesn't remember the coffins being silk lined but the Strasburg Silk Mill made silk that was sold to use in coffins so likely would have sold to Stover's. During WWII, the Silk Mill made parachutes. Perhaps the velvet was used more during that time.

Tep recalls when her cousin, (Peg's daughter) was about 9 or 10 and visiting her grandparents, she "walked in her sleep." She was upstairs asleep, got up in middle of the night, went downstairs, crawled into one of the caskets and went back to sleep. The little girl was so accustomed to being around caskets that "it didn't faze her because she grew up around that--all we knew since we were born." said Tep. "People used to ask us, how can you stand to live up there?" Tep added, "I was born in 1947 and from the time we were old enough to remember, everything was around the funeral home, it was everyday life." She added "My husband didn't like living there" and my father told him: 'It's not the dead ones you have to worry about, it's the live ones.'

Tep remembers the story her Grandmother Stover told her about how Max Strother, who did odd jobs at Stover's "and often worked upstairs with grandmother", passed away and his body was downstairs in the coffin. Mrs. Stover accidentally left the water running in the kitchen sink. The sink overflowed and the water leaked through the floorboards and flooded Max's coffin with water. "Grandmother said Max would have gotten a kick out of that." Tep added that "When my father died, Stanley hired a limo for the family. When we got ready

to leave Riverview Cemetery the limo wouldn't start." Tep said Stanley apologized "but we just walked the short distance home and told Stanley Dad would have gotten a kick out of that."

Stanley and Tep have had many discussions about her father. They both believe Mr. Kitchin sometimes haunts the funeral home because he was so attached to the place. There is no smoking in Stover's but sometimes there is a wisp of the smell of cigarette smoke that seems to move down the hall. Back in the days when Mr. Kitchin worked there, there were no rules against smoking, but now it is not allowed anywhere in the building. Mr. Kitchin smoked Pall Malls. (pronounced Pell Mells). One day a man came into the funeral home to talk to Stanley and asked him "Who was that man out there holding the door open?" Stanley didn't know and went to the front door to see who he was talking about but there was nobody there. "He was a real nice man" he said, and pointing to a picture near the front door, he told Stanley, "That's him right there." The picture was of Mr. Kitchin. "Another time" said Tep, "Dad used to rest sometimes on a sofa and an outline of a person was on the sofa. Stanley assumed it was Dad again." Some people believe that ghosts do exist, but they don't linger in funeral homes, they move on to places and people they loved in life. So maybe Mr. Kitchin sometimes lingers there, where he spent so much time for so many years caring for the people of his town after they had crossed over to the other side, still offering a bit of comfort for those of us still here—even if all he can do is hold the door open.

Tep's father Frank Kitchin was from Rutherford, New Jersey. When he went to Lynchburg College, he met Madolyn Stover from Strasburg. They eloped in 1932, in the midst of the Great Depression. Frank got a job with the war department and the young couple moved to DC into an apartment so small that when they let down the wall bed, they couldn't open the apartment door. Tep remembers her father saying that one day he went to the store to buy a loaf of bread which cost ten cents, and he only had nine cents, but it was during the Depression and the grocer let him have it for nine. Frank had studied history and was so interested in his wife's family history and her ancestors, "my 5th great-grandfather Peter Stover founded the town in 1761" said Tep, that he learned more about the Stovers than his wife did. When Frank Stover wrote them letters asking them to move to Strasburg because of Mrs. Stover's poor health, they left DC. Frank decided to join his father-in-law in the family business, went to New York to Renaud School of Embalming for 9 months, and then did a 3 year apprenticeship to become licensed. During WWII, Frank was an embalmer on a naval hospital ship. Tep said "He spent 3 or 4 years in the Pacific and in the Panama Canal and then the ship went to England." Though separated by war Frank would come to their house on the corner of Massanutten and Brown Street whenever the ship came to port. Mr. Stover had to run the funeral home by himself then, because all the young men were in the military. "I remember the stories about how my mother had to go down to the cellar to shovel coal into the furnace at least once a day in the winter while her husband was away." said Tep. Her father returned to Strasburg and his career in the funeral home in 1946.

When Stanley started working at Stover's in 1975, he worked under Frank Kitchin. "Stanley got to know the people and know who is related to who.....makes an impression when you walk into a place and they ask how you're doing." Tep said, "That's what dad tried to impress on Stanley and it took. My father wasn't from around here either.....he had to learn who was, (from around here) and the Stovers go way back. You'd never have known after a few years he wasn't from this area." Rev. Wendell Schurtz said, "Stan started at Stovers as an employee the year I started my career as a minister in Shenandoah County. I've seen Stover's evolve over the years with Stan to become what I consider one of the top funeral homes in the area. I have nothing but praise for Stan and his staff at Stover's."



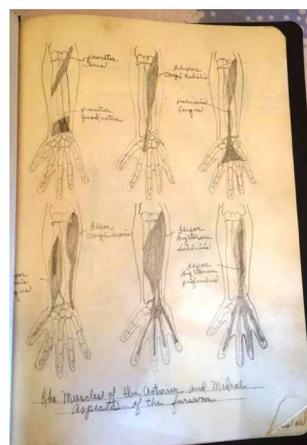
Ginger Sager Glading's father Clayton Sager was an embalmer at Stover's until his death in 1972, when he was in his forties. Ginger remembers that "Dad would read scripture if family didn't have a preacher." He kept a handful of ammonia capsules in his pocket in case someone fainted. The tablets had a nylon thread around them that could be broken open to place under a person's nose to revive them. "When I was little," said Ginger, "before the town had a volunteer rescue squad, the only emergency vehicle to transport someone to the hospital was the funeral home ambulance. We had a box installed at our house. Whenever Clayton was on call, the box would ring to let Clayton know someone needed to go to the hospital or a body had to be picked up to bring back to the funeral home. "When the siren was sounding and the light flashed on top, someone was on the way to the hospital." Ginger remembers. She remembers spending a lot of time at Stover Funeral Home with Mr. and Mrs. Stover while her dad worked. One day she opened the embalming room door looking for her dad. He wasn't there, but "I could see the bare feet and a head in a shower cap." She closed the door immediately. "I was probably in the 3rd grade and had probably gotten off the school bus there. It didn't creep me out because I spent a lot of time there. I was never scared to go into the funeral home--that was where my dad worked." Clayton had a good sense of humor. "I remember Dad saying these kids would always get off the bus at the funeral home and they would come in to see the body of someone who had passed away." It was customary in those days for the body to be ready for viewing. People would come in to sign the guest book and pay their respects at the open coffin. But these boys were only coming out of curiosity to view a dead body. They were intrigued by the mystery of the unknown, daring each other to walk forward. Clayton wanted to discourage this, but since the viewing was open to the public, he could not tell them they couldn't come in. Instead, he hid behind a curtain next to the coffin, made a few scary noises and scared the boys. They ran out the door and stopped coming into the funeral home without adult supervision after that. "Dad and his brother had a farm back of Fairview" said Ginger. "He had a couple farm hands to help out on the farm and sometimes he would take them along to do a pick up for the funeral home." Her dad told a story about picking up a body in D.C. one night. It was dark and Clayton stopped at a gas station to get gas. "Sometimes bodies will expel air or make other noises," Ginger recalled her dad saying. Evidently the body made a sound which scared the helper as Clayton was paying for the gas. "That guy jumped out of the car and I had to chase him down two blocks to get him to come back in the car." Clayton told Ginger. Another story Ginger remembers her dad telling was about driving the ambulance fast through the woods in a bumpy hurried ride to pick up someone who had died in the woods. The passenger wanted Clayton to slow down and said to him, "you don't have to drive so fast, he's already gone."

Stanley Wright was a friend of Claytons and he told Ginger that "when your father would see me on the street, he'd get out his tape measure and say, 'I got a coffin just your size!'" Stanley died a few years ago, long after his friend Clayton, but he was still laughing at his friends teasing from those many years ago.

Ginger has a collection of interesting memorabilia. She lost her dad when she was a teenager and has



kept many things that belonged to him. She has crates labeled "embalming fluid", books on embalming and a wooden box that a coffin was stored in. She remembers when the pine box was stored in the cellar of their house and used for storage. She has some small metal tubes, 6 to 7 inches long that were used to hold jewelry to be placed in the coffin for burial. Ginger describes a woven seat rack that was used to hold small baby caskets, fans labeled Stover Funeral Home, and catalogs and free giveaways from funeral home conventions. Most interesting are the small thermometers labeled "ambulance service." But the old tombstone is the most interesting relic from Stover's.



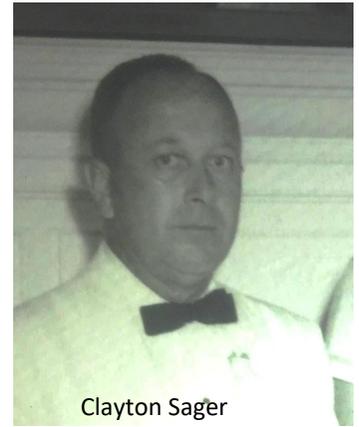
When she was growing up, their house sat on a hill and there were rock steps in the yard. The last step was a tombstone. Evidently, Ginger relates, the tombstone was made with a mistake on military information and a new one had to be made for the cemetery, so Clayton brought it home to use as a step. After Ginger's mother passed away and her house was sold, Ginger retrieved the rectangle piece of concrete. It is now in her flower bed marking the spot where her beloved cockatoo bird rests, as a memento from her father's career.



Another employee, Max Whittington worked under Mr. Kitchin at Stover Funeral Home 1962. His daughter Brenda Whittington Pedersen, who was Max's oldest child, recalls that when she was a little girl, she would spend time in the apartment playing with Mrs. Stover's granddaughter. She remembers in the cellar of their house was a wooden box where they stored apples and potatoes. She said the box was shaped like a coffin but she doesn't believe it was a coffin, but the box that the coffin was stored or shipped in. Brenda also remembers once riding in the car with her father and there was a small box on the back seat that looked to her like a Styrofoam cooler, it was small and had a white lid. She believes it was a coffin for a child that her father was transporting. She doesn't remember ever being afraid to be at the funeral home and she had fun playing while her father worked.

Sometime in the 1960s when Martha Rennie was working as a beautician out of her home, a relative passed away and the family asked her to go to the funeral home to set the relative's hair for the viewing. After that, Clayton Sager hired her on a regular basis. Usually, said Martha, Stover's would call her to style the hair for people she knew, or whose hair she'd been cutting and styling, because she knew the hairstyle the woman normally wore. Martha would follow the family's instructions for the hairstyle and she would set the hair and comb it out around their face. "At first," she said, "it was hard to get used to." But she hoped she could help comfort people who had lost their loved one. Martha's daughter, Diane Rennie Little was at the funeral home one day helping her mother. Diane remembers that it was quiet

in the funeral home that day and there was only the two of them with the deceased. They heard strange noises that startled them until they realized it was Clayton Sager teasing them from behind the curtain. It seemed no one was spared Clayton's sense of humor but all appreciated his way of relieving stress from their sometimes too serious work.



Clayton Sager



We have an unsolved mystery in our town involving Stover Funeral Home. Stanley Morehead told me the oral history. About a hundred years ago, a man who was traveling from Chicago to North Carolina died on the train. When the passenger train stopped in Strasburg, assuming at what is now the Strasburg Museum, the conductor called Mr. Stover and asked him to come and get the body. Part of the man's belongings on the train was an oak desk so the desk was left in Strasburg as well. Speculation is that since this was around 1918, the man might have died from the flu pandemic, which could cause death in a matter of days in otherwise healthy people. This was before flu vaccines or even antibiotics. We will never know why this man passed away. Mr. Stover kept the desk for payment, did the embalming, provided a coffin and gave him a proper burial in Riverview Cemetery. They never found a family member to notify. Mr. Stover placed ads in North Carolina and Chicago newspapers but no one ever claimed the body. The desk is still upstairs at Stover Funeral Home but it contains no clue to the man's identity. On the desk is a metal plate with the words: Wootons Rotary Desk Patented.

The desks were oak and were constructed with dividers and slots in each drawer to organize papers and files. The written documents of the man and burial can no longer be found at Stover Funeral home so all we have is the oral history handed down to the funeral directors, but we hope someday the man's name will be recovered and the "googling" can commence. Maybe someday descendants of the man who died on the train will take that step onto the porch of Stover Funeral Home. Maybe it will be good news that will solve a hundred year old mystery.



Strasburg Heritage Association

PO Box 525

Strasburg, A 22657

Strasburg Heritage Association

www.strasburgvaheritage.org

Membership Application

Dues are Due

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email address: _____

MEMBERSHIP: _____ Cost is \$20.00

Additional Donation: _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED: _____

Please Mail Completed form to:

Strasburg Heritage Association

PO Box 525

Strasburg, VA 22657