



Volume 20

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Issue 1

Strasburg, Virginia

NEWSLETTER

strasburgvaheritage.org

2020 Annual Meeting and Program

Legacy: A History of St. Paul Lutheran Church Strasburg VA 1700-2000

Join us for a presentation by Gloria Stickley and Rev. William Hall about their new book, *Legacy: A History of St. Paul Lutheran Church Strasburg, VA 1700-2000* as they share their extensive research into the history of this prominent Strasburg church. The presentation will feature historical information, anecdotes and photographs. The book is currently being produced and hopefully will be available for purchase and signing

Sunday, February 23rd

2-4 pm

***St. Paul Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall
156 W. Washington St., Strasburg***

Free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served

President’s Message

Tim Taylor

I hope everyone is doing well in 2020. This month we will be having our Annual Membership Program Meeting in which we will act on our slate of Board Members and our Officers. Although we are happy to welcome new members to the Board, it is sad when we have to say “goodbye” to some that will be stepping down. This year we would like to thank Sue Foster and Polly Wilson for their service on our Board. Sue served as our Treasurer for many years and maintained our membership. Polly will be missed for her community knowledge and her awesome cookies! You both will be missed!

Nominating Committee Chair Laura Ellen Wade has reported that newly proposed board members Ginny Hamrick, JoAnn Guay and Dennis Hupp have agreed to serve a two-year term. Up for re-election to the board are Barbara Adamson, Dee Keister, Marie Spence, Carla Wallen and Linda Williams. Officers are elected by the board from the board and will continue with Tim Taylor/ President, Laura Ellen Wade/Vice-President, Barbara Adamson/Secretary, Kathy Kehoe/ Newsletter Editor and Treasurer (vacant).

We also want to thank our generous homeowners who opened their beautiful homes for our 2019 Holiday Heritage Homes Tour. Many thanks go to Kathleen & Craig Ernst, JoAnn & Paul Guay, Liz & Mike Marx, Alice Mullerweiss & Kevin Watson, Anne Owen and Susie & Wayne Powars for making the tour a great success!

We have some exciting events coming up! Gloria Stickley and Pastor William Hall will share the history of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church and share information about the book they authored during our Membership Program Meeting on Sunday, February 23rd. We hope there will be books available for people to purchase and for them to sign! More information about this event is in this newsletter.

Elsewhere in the newsletter you will read about Shenandoah County Heritage Day, to be held this year in Strasburg. We hope many of you will participate either with exhibits or as visitors.

More events will be shared in future newsletters. We look forward to another exciting year and decade of sharing the Strasburg Community’s culture, heritage, and history.

Sincerely - Tim Taylor - SHA President

Dues are Due for 2019—Send your annual dues of \$20.00 and continue to have the SHA newsletter mailed to you. Members get the newsletter first. Your dues help:

Funds update of walking tour brochures; \$500 Scholarship to a SHS graduate planning to study history; Printing of the newsletter; Help with costs of historic bronze plaques; Community Dinners - twice a year; Ads for events; Off set costs for our Christmas Home Tours and Ghost/ Graveyard Tours; Joint projects with the Strasburg Museum: Mt. Olive Drum restoration, pre-Civil War quilt restoration, repair of Museum roof, and restoration of the Miller Family Bible

Shenandoah County Heritage Day 2020 to be held in Strasburg

Shenandoah County Heritage Day 2020 will be held on Saturday, April 18 from 11AM-3PM at the Strasburg Fire Hall.

The annual Heritage Day event moves around the county each year, with a focus on different areas of the county. This year the focus is on Strasburg and surrounding communities and their families, community histories, churches, schools, cemeteries, buildings, Civil War and other topics. Nearby areas would include Fisher’s Hill, Oranda, Clary, Strasburg Junction, Lebanon Church, Sandy Hook and more. While the event focuses on a particular area of the county, exhibits about any aspect of general county history are also welcomed.

Exhibits do not have to be elaborate. Many exhibits will be simple tri-folds, photographs, binders, objects and such. We encourage anyone with information that they would like to share to reserve a table (or a partial table if you have limited information). There is no fee to participate.

The event will include lectures and an architectural walking tour. The historic 18th C. Dosh House, owned by the Sons of Confederate Veterans, will be open for tours. Local historic preservation organizations will attend with local history books for purchase and other information. We invite you to bring historical materials to be scanned for inclusion in the Truban Archives at the Shenandoah County Library. If you have questions about these materials you may call library archivist, Zach Hottel, at 984-8200.

Call 459-1795 to reserve a table by April 3. The event is hosted by the Shenandoah County Historical Society, the Shenandoah County Library & Truban Archives and the Strasburg Heritage Association.

Board of Directors

2019

Tim Taylor, President

Laura Ellen Wade, Vice-President

Sue Foster, Treasurer

Barbara Adamson, Secretary

Kathy Kehoe, Newsletter Editor

Dee Keister

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A Little Folk History

Grace Eberly's Neighborhood

By
Kathy Kehoe

***"I have always wanted to have a neighbor just like you," --
Fred M. Rogers, Mr. Rogers Neighborhood***

Grace Hottel Eberly had wonderful neighbors. She grew up in Lebanon Church, a rural community a few miles outside the town of Strasburg. At age 44, she married a widower and local potter and moved to Strasburg where she lived until the end of her life some sixty years later. In 1918, she was widowed after only a year of marriage when her husband, Daniel Letcher Eberly, drowned in the Shenandoah River. Letcher, as he was known, left behind four children. The names of his children are not verified, but likely were those buried at Riverview Cemetery. They would have been teenagers at the time their father died.

Grace Eberly's neighborhood thought of her as a proud and self-sufficient woman but as they watched her grow older, they noticed when she needed something and stepped up to help.

Born ten years after the Civil War, Grace Eberly lived to be 103 years old. She lived through the Great Depression and WWII, when she, like everybody else in town, grew her own vegetables in the back yard and canned them to store in her cellar. She made a little money during the 1950s renting out her upstairs bedrooms and she raised chickens and sold eggs and flowers from her flower garden. In the 1960s as she aged into her nineties, she lived in two downstairs rooms, as the steps to the upstairs became difficult and she couldn't afford to heat the 8 room house. Widowed for 57 years, Grace Eberly made do.

Grace Eberly's next door neighbors were the Ritenour family, who had four children: Deb, Pam, Fred and David. Deb Ritenour Truban remembers that when she was around ten years old, her mother would send her over to Mrs. Eberly's house to check on her. "I remember as Mrs. Eberly's hearing and eyesight were failing, we would sometimes check on her by standing on a rock that was under one of her front windows. We didn't want to startle her, and she didn't always hear you knock on the door." Satisfied that she was safe, the kids would report back to their mother. Deb also remembers how neighbors Estelle and Aubrey Johnson "looked after her. Estelle would buy her groceries, and make sure to include cat food for her cats and bird seed for her parakeet." Deb added, "Mrs. Eberly was just a very sweet person".



Another neighbor was Julia Heishman who lived across the street and remembered her as "a nice lady". Julia's daughter Virginia liked to visit with Mrs. Eberly and feed her parakeet. Before they married, Julia's husband Ray came to Strasburg to work for the Northern Virginia Daily and he and his brother Roy both lived in Mrs. Eberly's house. In the 1950s, this was one of the ways she had an income. Julia remembers that Mrs. Eberly always called Ray and Roy Heishman "my boys." Jim Artz also lived across the street. His father, John Artz, owned and operated Artz Esso Service Station a block from Mrs. Eberly. When Jim was a teenager working for his dad, Mrs. Eberly would call and ask for a can of kerosene. Jim would deliver a five gallon can of kerosene to the house and pour it into the tank on the back of the heating stove because it was too heavy for her to lift. The Artz's, and their business, were also good neighbors.

Gloria Stickley recalls talking with Dick Funk, who was another neighbor. Dick remembered as a boy, his mother would send him to Mrs. Eberly's after supper with a plate of food. Dick recalled that she was a proud lady and his mother instructed him what to say when he got to her house. "Mrs. Grace, would you help us out? We had this left over from supper and Mom didn't want to throw it out." In this way, the Funks made sure she had a hot meal while preserving her pride, and at the same time ensuring she would accept.

Many people remember how Paul Neal, a town policeman and police chief, befriended Mrs. Eberly and checked on her frequently to make sure she was ok. His son Jay Neal remembers how his father would check on Mrs. Eberly in winter to make sure she had heat. Paul would often bring her groceries. Jay said "I remember in the yard there were a gazillion tulip bulbs but the house needed a lot TLC." This was likely the flowers she used to sell in the spring. I remember walking past the house as a child thinking it was haunted because the front porch was overgrown with bushes and ivy and the clapboard was unpainted. In her hand printed Last Will and Testament, Mrs. Eberly left Paul Neal her spinning wheel "as payment for his many services to me." She wanted him to have the antique, but a few days after she passed away, someone broke into the house and stole the spinning wheel. Paul Neal had a suspect, but could not prove it, and it was never found. Jay remembers helping his father empty the basement in the house for the auction, which Mrs. Eberly instructed in her Will: "I direct that all my personal property located in residence...be advertised and sold at public auction.....". The current owners, Mike and Liz Marx, still find pottery shards in the yard, where they also raise chickens and have parakeets just as Mrs. Eberly did. When the Marx family bought the house in 1996, they restored it to much of its original charm. The Marx family also found a Eberly Pottery accounting book in the rafters of the attic which they displayed for the SHA Homes Tour in December. As she requested, Grace Eberly's possessions were auctioned from the back porch of her house.



When Jay Neal helped empty the basement he was surprised at the amount of broken pottery and pottery molds, which he describes as large and heavy. The items had not been removed after Mr. Eberly passed away. Jay did not realize the value of the molds until he saw how much they went for at the estate sale. "Broken and unbroken molds went for \$500, \$1000. and even \$3000. each." Deb Ritenour Truban said: "I do remember that she didn't seem to think that all the pottery molds that her husband had made and left in the basement were of extraordinary worth." Strasburg was once known as "Pot Town" because of the many potters and the rich clay in the area. Eberly Pottery was one of the thriving businesses in the town until the early part of the 20th century.

Angela Alsberry Wilkins remembers after graduating from college, she worked as a registered nurse at Shenandoah Memorial Hospital Long Term Care facility. Grace Eberly was a resident there when Angela started in 1974. As Mrs. Eberly's nurse, Angela remembers how she had a glass of prune juice and a raw egg every morning for breakfast. She laughs and wonders if that is the secret of longevity. It was perhaps a lifelong habit for Mrs. Eberly as she raised chickens, so eggs would have always been available. One hundred and three years would be 37,595 days of prune juice and a raw egg.

"She was a tiny frail thing." said Angela. "A little tiny frail lady who wore round wire rimmed glasses, a sweet gentle lady. I remember she was the oldest patient we had in Long Term Care." Angela remembers that Paul Neal was a frequent visitor. He came about once a week and would always ask how Mrs. Eberly did during the week. "That's how I got to know Paul Neal" said Angela. He told her that Mrs. Eberly loved the Northern Virginia Daily. She subscribed and "saved every one." Paul Neal told her there were "...stacks of newspapers all bundled nice and neat" and she also saved National Geographic magazines. "She was apparently a reader" said Angela. Paul told Angela that Mrs. Eberly had outlived all of her family and that she had stopped going upstairs, living in one room in the house.



She was legally blind at the time" said Angela. "She would remember me by voice and by touch. She would touch my hands and my arms and knew my voice." Angela recalls how Mrs. Eberly always got up in the morning and sat in the chair for breakfast. The staff didn't seem to mind that she was eating a raw egg because as Angela said, "whatever the patient wanted, the staff made it happen."

In her Will, Grace Eberly instructed several loans be repaid, "loaned to me at various times" including repayment to Estelle Johnson. Mrs. Eberly didn't forget those who helped her.

She also requested money be given for a "memorial window" at the United Methodist Church of Shiloh in memory of her father Henry Harrison Hottel; and funds to the Lebanon Church cemetery where her father and mother (Amanda) are buried. Grace Eberly was buried alongside her parents in Lebanon Church cemetery while her husband is buried in Riverview Cemetery beside his first wife (Estelle Golladay Eberly) who died in 1914. She also instructed a grave marker be put at Riverview for James Eberly "like the other brother's". (assume the other brother is Frank Eberly who died in 1958). Riverview Cemetery lists a James Eberly born in 1905 who died in 1950, so this is likely one of her stepsons. The house was left to Grace "as her dower interest." then at her death, the house was inherited by Dwight L. Eberly, "sole heir-at-law" of Daniel L. Eberly."



Dwight is not buried at Riverview but is likely another son. Elsie Eberly, also buried in Riverview Cemetery, is likely Daniel Letcher's daughter. She lived to be 74 but she too, passed away before Grace, who died in 1976.

Grace Hottel Eberly worked hard to take care of herself. But when she grew older, her neighbors in her small town were there for her. They made sure she was warm in the winter and that she had enough to eat. And children stood on a rock outside her window making sure she was ok without disturbing her.

Those were beautiful days in that neighborhood.

To Our Readers: If you have memories to add to folk histories, please contact Kathy Kehoe by emailing strasburgheritage@gmail.com, calling 540-465-4185 or contacting any SHA Board Member.

Strasburg Heritage Association

PO Box 525

Strasburg, VA 22657

Strasburg Heritage Association

www.strasburgvaheritage.org

Membership Application ANNUAL Dues are Due in February

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