



Volume 26

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Issue 1

Strasburg, Virginia

NEWSLETTER

strasburgvaheritage.org

***Strasburg Heritage Association
Annual Meeting and Program***

Sunday, February 15th, 2026

2 to 4 pm; St. Paul Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall

156 W. Washington Street, Strasburg

"History of Basket Weaving in the Valley"

Jean Whetzel and Virginia Stultz, veteran school teachers in Shenandoah County, have been teaching basket classes since 1991 to adults, kids of all ages, and for the Shenandoah County Parks and Recreation. They will talk about the history of basket making in this area and in Virginia. Baskets made of oak, ash, hickory, vines, and willow will be shown and their usage discussed. They will share some of their own. Then they will talk about modern day basket making - the mechanics of making them, materials used (rattan, bamboo, paper twist), styles, and shapes.

They will share some of their baskets, then ask attendees to share and ask questions.

The public is invited. Join us for refreshment and fellowship afterwards.

President’s Message

Tim Taylor

I hope you enjoyed a wonderful holiday season. As we step into 2026, the Strasburg Heritage Association is honored to continue serving our community and preserving the rich history that defines us. Please join us for our Annual Membership Meeting on **Sunday, February 15, at 2:00 PM** in the St. Paul Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall. Following a brief business session to elect our board members and officers, we are excited to present our featured program: **“The History of Basket Weaving in the Valley.”** It promises to be a fascinating look at a foundational local craft. More information about the program is in this newsletter.

As we conduct our annual business, your presence is vital—we require a 10% membership quorum to approve our leadership for the coming year. It is also the season for membership renewals. Your \$20 annual dues and additional donations directly fund:

- Scholarships for Strasburg High School seniors.*
- Community meals and local outreach.*
- The preservation of folklore through our newsletter and podcast.*
- Our Holiday Homes Tours and Ghost Tours*
- Major events like Vintage in the Valley and Shenandoah County Heritage Day*

This is a momentous year as we celebrate the

Semiquincentennial (250th anniversary) of the United States.

We look forward to honoring our nation’s birth through special events planned throughout Shenandoah County. Additionally, we are already preparing for our popular **Holiday Homes Tour**. If you would like to showcase your home this year, please reach out to me or any board member. I want to thank the current board members and you for keeping Strasburg’s heritage alive and for your steadfast support.

Sincerely,
Tim Taylor

President, Strasburg Heritage Association

Slate of Board Members for a two-year term:

- Barbara Adamson
- Dee Keister
- Wendy Tiefenbacher
- Mark Loving
- Linda Williams
- Dennis Hupp

Slate of Officers for a one-year term:

- President - Tim Taylor
- Vice-President - Laura Ellen Wade
- Secretary - Barbara Adamson
- Treasurer - Ruth Hoffman

Reminder: February is the time for members to pay annual dues.

Shenandoah County Celebrates 1776!

Save the Date!

The Shenandoah County Historical Society is planning a grand Countywide celebration of the birth of our nation on June 20th in Courthouse Square and downtown Woodstock. The event will feature Revolutionary War reenactors in full uniform with their horses, cannons, and weaponry. Distinguished authors will speak about aspects of the War, the Declaration of Independence, and Shenandoah County's role in the conflict. Reenactors will portray famous Revolutionary patriots such as Patrick Henry, Peter Muhlenberg, Daniel Morgan, Billy Lee, and the Marquis de Lafayette. There will be live demonstrations of period weaving, blacksmithing, leatherworking, woodworking, music and dancing. A Children's Activity Center with crafts and 18th-century games is planned. A variety of food options, event parking, and transportation will be available. The opening ceremony will be at 10 am at the Courthouse. June 20th promises to be an immersive day featuring a dynamic lineup of authors, musicians, artists, and historians. Mark your calendar and plan to attend the Celebration!

AA

Shenandoah County Historical Society

Dunmore County Volunteers and the Williamsburg Powder Alarm of 1775

Tuesday, March 17th, 7pm.
 St. Paul's Heritage Center
 106 S. High St. Edinburg. Refreshments follow.

When the Redcoats marched from Boston to seize military supplies at Concord, the Royal governor of Virginia was plotting to do the same in Virginia. Volunteers from all over the Old Dominion marched to Williamsburg to recover the gunpowder seized by Lord Dunmore, not yet knowing that America was at war. Neville, author of *The Last Men Standing: the 8th Virginia Regiment in the American Revolution*, will tell the story of Dunmore (Shenandoah) County's revolutionary committee, its volunteers who rallied to Patrick Henry's call, and how it all ended (for the time being) with a barbecue (likely at the Snapp house at Fisher's Hill!)

Hosted by Shenandoah County Historical Society

"Keep track of the 2026 events celebrating our nation's history at the Shenandoah County Historical Society's website, www.shenandoahhistory.org."

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A Little Folk History

Wyatt's Recreational Center

"The Happy Hour"

by

Kathy Kehoe

"We danced the jitterbug there before the war." – Loretta "Tillie" Campbell

Few people around town today realized The Gables or Flagles apartment building on 477 Stover Avenue near the Old Mill was ever anything but what it is today. But I did find a few people who remembered it or heard stories about the dances at Wyatt's Recreation Hall. "I believe my mother called it the Happy Hour." said Lisa Asher.

"I used to go there with my husband Norval (Stickles) on Saturday nights and dance the jitterbug." said 105 year old Loretta Tillie Campbell. "It must have been late 1930s and early 1940s" she told me, because it was "before the war". Her husband was drafted into the Army in 1943 and sent overseas. But in the years before the war, she and Norval "Wimp", took their four children to her sister to babysit on Saturday nights and they went dancing.



Wyatts Recreation Hall. Courtesy Morrison Studio, Shenandoah County

Ninety-one year old Fay Sonner remembers when her mother-in-law and sister-in-law used to go dancing there, much to the disapproval of her father-in-law Lewis Sonner. "It was a really nice place and they had good dances." said Fay. Lisa Ramey Asher, niece of Fay, remembers her mother Elaine Ramey and her grandmother Mae Sonner telling her they danced there. Loretta "Tillie" Campbell said, "A lot of people went there on Saturday night. It was an interesting place." Lisa Ramey Asher's parents, Elaine and Roger, met at Wyatt's in the late 1930s. Lisa remembers her mother telling her that her dad would come to the dance with a group of Front Royal boys and Elaine noticed how "tall and handsome" he was when he came through the door.

"Several advertisements from 1939 and 1940 in the Northern Virginia newspaper advertise that square dances were held every Wednesday and Saturday night at the hall. One ad from 1940 noted the admission was 40 cents per couple. The 1938 and 1939 Northern Virginia Checkers Tournament was held at Wyatt's Recreation Hall as well." -- From the Shenandoah County Library archives

Lisa Asher shared a photograph of Wyatt's that was taken sometime in the 1940s. A sign on the side of the building advertises "For Sale; Valuable Property; Bathing Beach". The last line on the sign and evidently the lawyer representing the sale was: *Newton W. Borden Atty.* Fay said around 1953, she took a job



Photo courtesy of Lisa Asher, circa 1950



with Newton W. Borden. Borden had a law office" said Fay, "on the left end of the Kaplan building" that was on the corner of King and Fort streets (destroyed by fire in 1998). She recalled how much she liked working with John O. "Jack" Marsh, Jr. who was partnering with Borden at that time. Jack Marsh was a well known local lawyer who became a Virginia congressman and Secretary of the Army under President Reagan.

The Shenandoah County Library archives shared a photograph of the building from the Morrison Collection. The archives states that : "Initially, the property included 4 acres and bordered the river behind it. The owner, Mr. Wyatt, auctioned the bathing beach, equipment and the 4 acres on July 29, 1939, leaving him with the Recreation Hall only." The Bathing Beach was a popular swimming hole in the Shenandoah River behind Wyatt's. (See SHA newsletter Fall 2013).

Don LeVine, who currently owns the property, shared his views on the architectural structure of the building. Don said he can see that the building was not originally designed for apartments. "I can see they improvised." He observed how the front of the building differs from the back part. The upper floors are wood and the bottom floor is concrete. Don said the apartment in front is designed differently from the back apartments, he can tell by the plumbing, that it is an "awkward layout".

In Lisa Asher's photo, a car and two boys are pictured. Lisa said she thinks the tall boy is her brother Jerry Ramey, who was born in 1942. It appears the boy is not older than ten, which would mean the photograph was taken no later than 1952. The sign above the door appears blank, but the words "Happy Hour" is on a sign advertising Royal Crown Cola soft drink. Gone is the sign that had been above the door advertising "Sandwiches; Rooms; Meals-Bath" though the coca-cola signs are still there. This indicates it was at that time a boarding house. The "for sale" sign of the Bathing Beach appears on the side of the building indicating it is before 1939, though it's possible the sign would have remained on the wall for years after the sale.

Every picture tells a story. These two photos, one from the county library archives and the other in the personal collection of Lisa Ramey Asher, help to put together the story of an almost forgotten place where people once gathered to socialize and dance. It still lives in the memories of a few of our oldest residents. I like to think that long ago social chatter, the laughter and the echoes of the square dance caller, still linger in the building--the fun of their youth settled in the old walls, still feeling the "Happy Hour".



Right: Jerry Ramey

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To Our Readers: If you have memories to add to our folk histories, contact Kathy Kehoe at 540-481-0651 or any board member.

SHA Scholarship

Each year the SHA offers a scholarship opportunity for Strasburg High School graduating students to help with college expenses. Priority is given to students who are interested in majoring in history or a related field. If you would like to donate specifically to our scholarship fund, please send to: Strasburg Heritage Association, Scholarship Fund, PO Box 525, Strasburg, VA 22657. Note "Scholarship Fund" on your check. Information on our scholarship will be at the Strasburg High School guidance office soon. Thank you for your donation.

Daughters Plan Improvements At Old Grave Yard

NVD 1942

Stover Camp Chapter, United Daughters of Confederacy voted at a recent meeting to undertake the task of making certain much needed improvements in the condition of the Queen Street grave yard and Miss Frances Jenkins, who is trustee of a State Fund for the maintenance of Confederate Soldiers graves was appointed chairman of this new undertaking also. There seems to be no record of the ownership of this burying ground other than that it was so designated on the original plot of the town laid out by Peter Stover in 1761. Here we find many graves of the early settlers of the town. The earliest date of death legible on a stone is that of Elizabeth Morris, 1838. Other family names found here are Spengler, Hupp, Borum, Wilson, Cline, Machir, Crabill, Lee, Hurn, Ramey, Finley, Kenner, Ritenour Jennings, Pinkey, Tewalt, Grover, Nicholas, McFarland, Stover and Fisher. Older residents of the town say that there are a number of unmarked graves, which cannot now be located. This grave yard has long since ceased to be used.

There are very few surviving members of the families buried here still living in Strasburg and in many cases it will be impossible to locate any relatives, thus it looks like a big undertaking to think of getting a sufficient amount of money to pay for all the work needed there. For some years Stover Camp Chapter has had this grave yard cleaned once a year when the graves of Confederate soldiers were taken care of. There are two families who look after one plot each of two graves each and last fall a third family had the entire yard cleaned and burnt over. That was fine and certainly improved the appearance.

Many of the graves are sunken making it impossible to cut the grass with a lawn mower and yet the graves are so close together that it is very difficult to cut it with a scythe, however it is the hope that it can be gotten in condition and taken care of before it is long enough for a scythe. Miss Jenkins said: "Our plans are to fill in the graves (this will have to be done before the stones can be straightened. We hope to have this dirt given to us); straighten the stones (many are leaning and some entirely down); paint the front fence (this is a 6-foot iron fence, erected through the efforts of Miss Sarah Spengler, now deceased. It will be necessary to scrape this fence with a steel brush before it can be painted). "The wire fence on two sides is overgrown with wild-honeysuckle and should be dug out as it will again grow over the yard, though it was all raked off and burnt last fall.

"After all this is done we hope the Strasburg Town Council will consider it possible for the town to give occasional attention. In order to get this before the council Miss Jenkins and Mrs. F. D. Maphis appeared before this body and presented the cause. It was received with sympathetic interest, many questions were asked and plans were discussed. We were encouraged with the decision of this body that we put the grave yard in condition and then come back to them.

"To do this work it will take approximately \$100 or less however, if we do not have to buy and haul the dirt for leveling. There are fifty stones to be straightened at a cost of 75c each. Paint for fence \$8.75. Labor leveling ground and painting fence \$30.00. We are making an appeal to every one who is any way interested in this burying ground for any financial help they may be inclined to give. "You may send your contribution to Miss Jenkins or to Mrs. M. E. Artz, President of the local U. D. C. Chapter. We trust the response to this appeal will be sufficient to complete the work and also that it may be immediate so that the work can be completed this spring or early summer." —Northern Virginia Daily, Volume 60, Number 77, 31 March 1942

Board of Directors 2025

Tim Taylor, President, Laura Ellen Wade, Vice-President, Ruth Hoffman, Treasurer, Barbara Adamson, Secretary, Kathy Kehoe, Newsletter Editor

Mary Cottrill, Sue Foster, George Hoffman, Dennis Hupp, Dee Keister, Mark Loving, Mary Redmon, Wendy Tiefenbacher, Joan Williams, Linda Williams

THE HISTORIC BUILDING PLAQUE PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION: Our plaque program hopes to increase awareness of, and pride in, buildings important to the history of Strasburg and Davis District. Obtaining a plaque is purely voluntary. Real estate taxes will not increase, nor will any limitations be placed on the property. There are neither restrictions nor covenants associated with obtaining a plaque.

ELIGIBILITY: The building must be at least 60 years old. - Thus, in 2025, the structure must have been built before 1965. - What matters is the year the original house was built. Additions do not affect eligibility. The building must be within Strasburg or Davis District.

PLAQUE COST: \$120.00

APPLICATION PROCESS:

The application should be filled out as completely as possible. Please make your check payable to Strasburg Heritage Association and mail it, along with the completed application, to Strasburg Heritage Association, 196 Maynard Lane, Strasburg, VA 22657.

Once the Association ensures the application is complete and the building is eligible, your plaque will be ordered. Delivery, which includes hardware for mounting the bronze plaque, should take approximately 6 weeks.

RECOGNITION:

The Strasburg Town Council or Shenandoah Board of Supervisors will be asked to recognize the building as important to the culture and history of Strasburg and the greater Davis District. This is purely an honorific statement, with no legal status or financial implications.

Strasburg Heritage Association
P.O. Box #525 Strasburg, VA 22657

Historic Building Plaque Application

The goal of the Historic Building Plaque program is to obtain insight into people, places and events that make up our Strasburg and Davis District history. Informal stories and anecdotes about previous owners and uses, as well as important or funny events associated with the building are encouraged. Even strange or (allegedly) ghostly incidents are acceptable! Recollections of any sort that involve the building are what the program is about.

Photographs, drawings, plats or any other graphical material would be interesting (originals will be copied and returned). Documented history of the building derived from the deed, tax and will record books in the Shenandoah County Court House (Woodstock) would be appreciated. Contact us if you need assistance with your research.

Please submit the following:

Building's Present Owner _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone # _____ Cell # _____ Email _____

Street Address of Historic Building _____

Previous Owners, if known _____

Date Built _____ (must be associated with some record).

If the date is not known exactly, acceptable sources would be:

Deed Book _____ Page(s) # _____

Tax Book _____ Page(s) # _____

Will Book _____ Page(s) # _____

Date engraved or marked in woodwork or masonry _____ and the location of the marking on the building _____

Other examples of sources may be: (Grandfather Joel recalls the structure being built in 1912) _____

Plaque Mounting Required: Front mounted (wood surface) _____ or Rear mounted (all other) _____

Please use extra sheet(s) for any stories, anecdotes, etc, about the building. It is hoped these will be the basis of a future booklet on Historic Strasburg and Davis District. Also, any photos for original molding, floors, windows would be appreciated and provide additional information on the age of the building.



https://gcr.sh/5BmA



Would you like to give your historic house the recognition it deserves?

If your home was built before 1960, you can obtain a custom bronze historic plaque for your house. Scan the QR code herein, or visit our website strasburgvaheritage.org for details.



PO Box 525
 Strasburg, VA 22657

Strasburg Heritage Association

www.strasburgvaheritage.org

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New Renewal

SHA Membership dues are \$20 per year for an individual, couple, or household. Lifetime membership dues are \$150.

Membership Dues \$ _____
 Additional Donation \$ _____
 Scholarship Fund \$ _____
 Total Enclosed \$ _____

Name(s) _____
 Address _____
 Email Address _____
 Contact # _____

Emailed newsletters save us postage. Can we send your newsletters and other correspondence to the email listed above?

Yes, please send to my email address.
 No, I prefer postal mail.

Please mail your completed application to:
 Strasburg Heritage Association
 P. O. Box 525
 Strasburg, VA 22657

Questions? Contact Tim Taylor (President) or Ruth Hoffman (Treasurer) at strasburgheritage@gmail.com.