THE PRESIDENT’S REPORT

As was the case during the Fall quarter, much of your President’s time was spent on historic preservation. Prudence dictates that the identity of the historic home offered the Society be not publicized yet. It appears that a private foundation will be formed by the donor to accommodate the proposed generous endowment. As The Packet goes to press, the matter is where it belongs: In the hands of a legal firm, which will no doubt be calling on the Society for advice and assistance soon.

More repairs to our county historic buildings will have been accomplished by the time you read this.

By far the most exciting news your President can report is the developing story of the Willow Del Commissary. Your Society fielded a search team on a snowy January day and members Buddy Overbey, Danny Ricketts, your Editor, and some out of town visitors located a vital part of the facility. (See accompanying story).

Membership hovers near the 600 level, but do not be surprised to see it climb to near 700 by years end. If you have not paid your membership dues yet, please do so before or at the February meeting.

The Society lent its support to the Christmas in Colonial Chatham celebration on December 2nd and made it a crowning success. Net receipts were in the $4,000 range. Dozens of Society members looked elegant in their colonial attire, and, for a day, the town reverted to an 18th century village.

The Packet is always receptive to the submission of stories from your childhood in Pittsylvania County and there are jobs waiting to be done in the Society. Interested? HEM

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THE FEBRUARY MEETING

Gary Grant, noted Danville Author/Historian and member of the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, was a founding father of the Lady Astor Preservation Trust. As much as any living person, he is responsible for preserving the premier historic Danville home which was the birthplace of Nancy Langhorne, Viscountess Astor, the first woman to sit in the British House of Commons. Her sister, Irene, who was also born there, married the artist, Charles Dana Gibson. He immortalized his wife as the Gibson Girl, the international fashion ideal of the turn of the century. Both were granddaughters of Pittsylvania’s historically prominent Elisha Ford Keen.

Gary will cover the historically important story of the Langhorns, who, incidentally, were related to some of our PHS members.

Program Chairperson Frances Hurt, who will introduce the speaker, informs us that those present will enjoy hearing the miraculous story of how this birthplace of two world renowned natives was saved from extinction and destruction by dedicated people.

Meeting time is 7:30 p.m. on February 19th in the 1813 Clerk’s Office in Chatham. The Packet foresees this as another outstanding presentation.
Chatham's Great Fire

Large Portion of Town Destroyed 94 Years Ago

By Preston B. Moses

When John Pride Hunt Sr. closed his large grocery store on the night of March 14, 1902, little did he think that a large part of Chatham's Main Street business section would be destroyed before daybreak the next morning.

When the wealthy Chatham grocer went to bed that night, he remarked to his wife, "This March wind is really blowing tonight."

It was about 12:30 o'clock later that night that Mr. Hunt was awakened by the town constable banging on his front door yelling, "Mr. Hunt, your store is on fire."

He jumped out of bed, slipped on his pants, shoes and shirt. Woke his son, Pride. They started racing out the front door as Mr. Hunt's wife, Molly, was hollering, "Put on a sweater, it's mighty windy out there." The two didn't stop but kept running. When the father and son arrived at the store and opened the front door, black smoke was so thick they couldn't enter. It was only a few minutes later that the building became engulfed in flames.

All this time the town's fire bell in the courthouse clock tower was ringing incessantly bringing out a large crowd of citizens who gathered to watch as the flames began licking out of the windows of the store.

At that moment, a loud explosion was heard. Mr. Hunt knew it was the gun powder and shotgun ammunition that were part of stock on the shelves that was exploding - tearing away the walls between the adjoining buildings.

The March blustery wind was whipping the fire, quickly spreading it in both directions.

"Where is the fire department?" was being asked by the people who came to watch in amazement as the fire in all its fury seemed sure to bring the town down.

But the town had no fire department as such like the town has today. Then it had about 200 feet of cotton hose that rolled up on a two wheel push-pull carrier that would be brought out by volunteers for a local fire.

The hose was old and leaked so badly it had been sent to the factory to have it relined. It was not in Chatham at time of the fire in 1902 that night.

The March wind was gathering force and so was the fire. It spread to engulf Dr. John Anderson's office, there on the two-story frame building occupied by George W. White, local tinner. It roared on to destroy Adkins Jewelry Store, and there was a loud moan from the crowd when the flames spread northward to Chatham Hotel. Smoke and fire quickly began to pour from the hotel windows as it burst into flame.

The fire roared southward destroying Lanier's Furniture Store next door to Hunt's grocery. It jumped across the alleyway to the DeMott frame building (later known as Overbey's Hardware.)

The fast moving flames made short order of several small frame buildings further down the street including two saloons, and a shoe harness repair shop where the street car cafe is today.

The Seymore Livery Stable off to the southside of Depot Street (Route 57) had a large stock of hay at the side of its building. Sparks flying from the burning frame buildings set the hay on fire. However, volunteers with rakes and pitchforks managed to extinguish the hay-fire and saved the building. (It was later purchased by Whitehead brothers for a livery stable.)
In 1955 Jack Hunt (grandson of J.P. Hunt Sr) converted it into Hunt Chevrolet garage. (It is now the offices of the Pittsylvania Social Services Department.)

When the fire was first roaring at the Hunt Store, so much heat was generated that it set a fire to J. Wyatt Whitehead Department Store and C.A. Stutz Grocery Store across the street, and the heat caused the glass windows to pop out of the roof hall in the brick building which is now the Chatham Square Restaurant.

Volunteers came to the rescue of the Whitehead and Stutz buildings by using soaking wet blankets to smother out the blaze and thus preventing the fire from jumping across the street.

At that year (1902), there were wood plank sidewalks along Chatham's Main Street. The fire that wiped out such a large section of building on the west side of Main Street also burned away the plank walk along with the posts that provided the support for kerosene lantern lights at night.

Reflecting back to Chatham's great fire of 1902, it is recalled as being the town's worst fire. It destroyed everything on the west side of Main Street from what is now Central Fidelity Bank to the Dollar General Store in the bottom.

No one ever knew what started the fire on that windy March night 94 years ago in Hunt's Grocery Store which is now the Pizza Place.  

POSTSCRIPT: One of Chatham's distinguished citizens was born the night that Chatham's great fire was raging.

Dr. and Mrs. John M. Jones (Chatham druggist) resided in a dwelling just a couple hundred feet to the rear of the Chatham Hotel. While the hotel was burning down on the fateful night of March 15, 1902, Mrs. Jones gave birth to a son.

This was Langhorne Jones who became a leading Chatham Attorney, President of the Virginia State Bar Association, member of the Virginia General Assembly, Superintendent of the Presbyterian Church Sunday School for 33 years and Judge of the 22nd Judicial Circuit.

Incidentally, while Mrs. Jones was giving birth to her son, the house caught fire from the shower of sparks coming from the roaring blaze in the hotel. Volunteers managed to extinguish the fire by using wet blankets.

Editor's Note: Preston Moses is a retired Editor of the Star-Tribune. An active member of the Pittsylvania Historical Society, he also is a well-known artist and former Editor of The Packet.

THE NOVEMBER MEETING

Scores of Society members present had the opportunity to view, touch, and marvel at the exquisite Society owned Booker Stone coverlets at the 1813 Clerk's Office in Chatham. Moreover, they were treated to a remarkable lecture on antebellum textile and weaving techniques by one of the nation's best authorities on the subject.

The speaker, Lynwood Wright of Dan River Mills, delighted the crowd with consummate wit, while he used his inordinate knowledge to explain why the coverlets are so treasured.

Program Chairperson, Frances Hurt extended herself to procure the coverlets from storage in Martinsville and had them on attractive display at the meeting.

Thank you Frances, for arranging and conducting this extraordinary program.
The Willow Del Commissary

Pittsylvania's Secret Confederate Supply Base

By Herman Melton

After the eruption at Fort Sumter in April of 1861, hundreds of Pittsylvaniaians rallied to the Confederate colors as the first tocsin sounded. At their forefront was the popular Isaac Hughes Watson, a man of property, mainly in the manufacture of tobacco. Isaac Watson descended from Thomas Watson I, known as "The Scotsman" and the founder of the family in Pittsylvania County. He was a very early settler, having patented land on Cherrystone Creek around 1740. Thomas Watson II maintained his father's holdings and perpetuated the dynasty near Chatham.

John Watson Sr. was a son of old Thomas and purchased land on Harpen Creek during the Colonial era, thus forming another branch of the family. It was into this family that Isaac Hughes Watson was born, and by 1861, he was the owner of Willow Del, the Watson plantation of Harpen Creek.

Isaac Watson was in full sympathy with the Southern cause, and soon headed up a company of volunteers called the Pigg River Invincibles. Watson was commissioned a Captain and the Invincibles became Company C, 2nd Battalion of the 46th Virginia Regiment - a part of the Wise Legion CSA. This unit, also known as the Wise Brigade, saw most of its service in what is now West Virginia.

Watson was not reelected to his command in 1862 and returned home. There was chaos on the home front and the Confederate government needed his service badly. As a Captain, he was assigned to the Confederate Quartermaster Corps and given the task of collecting all kinds of farm produce such as corn, wheat, cattle and hogs to be delivered to General Lee's Army.

The need was critical and eventually the Tax in Kind Bureau was formed and administrated by the Confederate Quartermaster General. A "tax in kind" was levied on agricultural produce beginning in 1863. After reserving specified quantities for their own use, farmers and planters were required to pay and deliver to the Confederate government, one-tenth of the wheat, corn, oats, rye buckwheat, rice, potatoes, hay, beans, sugar, molasses, cotton, wool, tobacco and peas.

Depots were founded and maintained by the Subsistence Department of the Commissary General's Office. According to records in the archives of the Government of the CSA, Virginia's depots were located at Richmond, Danville, Lynchburg, Dublin, Boykins, Milford, Charlottesville and Staunton.

The Tax In Kind Act provided for the appointment of Quartermasters by Congressional Districts, and their assistants were appointed to collect and distribute the produce received.

With service to the Confederacy foremost in his mind, Isaac Watson went at his job with alacrity no doubt.

In almost complete secrecy, the dynamic Watson founded a huge commissary at Willow Del. According to a Watson descendant/chronicler, Henson Overbey, now deceased, he operated the commissary without the knowledge of county citizens. Overbey wrote that Willow Del consisted of hundreds of acres and that the commissary was located in an obscure part of the plantation where its stores would be safe from foraging Yankee troopers. Indeed he could have had several facilities scattered over the plantation.
Pittsylvania County Court records contain some entries that appear to shed some additional light on the CSA supply base at Willow Del. In the year 1862, William Watson, an older brother of Isaac, filed an application with the Court to erect a grist mill on Harpen Creek. It is significant that Watson's application came in July, only two months after his brother Isaac returned from the battlefront. Whereas most applications to erect grist mills in that era required from one to two months and sometimes longer, Watson's took only four days. Something was in the wind.

This potentially historic mill site is on the right bank of an open bend of Harpen Creek at a point approximately a mile from the Willow Del mansion house. The mill's location was known to native Ella Osborne, the present owner of the site and to former Pittsylvaniaian, Rodney Hudson of Durham, NC who visited it forty years ago. They came to the assistance of a team of Pittsylvania Historical Society researchers headed up by Buddy Overbey, a Watson descendant.

The team found the site easily after being directed by Osborne and Hudson. Its location was remote and obscure in its time, and it appears to have been a well engineered mill. It had two "runs" or pairs of millstones - four of which remain on the site. The large size of the dam ruins and that of the millstones suggest that it was a facility with considerable grinding capacity.

Overbey believes that since this was the only grist mill erected in Pittsylvania County during the Civil War, and that it was built on what was once a part of the Willow Del plantation, it was meant to serve the Confederacy, at least in part, as a Willow Del facility.

Herman Melton, a county mill historian, agrees. Like its parent, the Willow Del Commissary, the existence of the mill has only recently come to light. Additional research should give the mill more historical importance. There is little doubt that some of its output went to the Army of Northern Virginia - and perhaps most of it did for the next three years.

As for Watson's operation of the commissary, he used the resources at hand. Slaves from the region were placed under military orders, and under the supervision of Captain Watson, ranged far and wide collecting produce from county farms to be stockpiled at Willow Del. It is logical to assume that Watson's operation was under the command of Major William T. Sutherlin of Danville, who was Lee's chief Quartermaster for the region.

After the carnage ended at Appomattox and the trying days of the Reconstruction came to a close, Willow Del once more became a tobacco plantation. Watson resumed his position of leadership in the county and crowned his career by representing it in the Virginia General Assembly.

Finally it is appropriate to note that the Willow Del Commissary is no product of the imagination of latter day romantics. According to Henson Overbey, the existence of the Confederate supply center has been proven by the pension department of the Commonwealth. Several men who worked under the supervision of Captain Watson received pensions, giving proof to that effect. She wrote that after Appomattox, the location of the commissary was made known. It became a landmark and a symbol of pride for Pittsylvaniaians who, with inordinate personal sacrifice, yielded their measure of supplies to the Army of Northern Virginia.

arcanum arcanorum - Willow Del
New opportunities for Historical Researchers

By Helen Melton

A new arrival at Chatham's Pittsylvania County Library has area historical researchers excited. The acquisition is a copy of Microfilm Reel #2: *Historical Inventory of Pittsylvania, Patrick and Powhatan Counties*, compiled in 1937 by the WPA Writers Project.

Library patrons will find scores of listings from area cemeteries and graveyards. A partial listing of family names includes Coles, Coleman, Craft, Gregory, Saunders, Stone, Swanson, Townes, Tunstall, Williams, Wilson, Womack and Wooding. Also noted are names of Union soldiers buried in the United States Cemetery at Danville.

Early Baptist Association minutes appear, as do some early sermons, church minutes, membership lists and historical significance of churches that include the first Episcopal church in the county - at Callands, Emmanuel (Chatham), Epiphany (Danville), Dame Memorial; First Baptist (Chatham and Danville), Greenfield, Kentuck and Straightstone Baptist; Hebron Meeting House (Methodist, Chatham), Providence, St. Andrews, Siloam (Toshes) Methodist; Rice's Meeting House; and First Presbyterian (Chatham and Danville.)

There are lists of old documents; a few wills, including John Ward's; old letters; newspaper clippings; court proceedings; ledger pages from area stores; diaries and character sketches of prominent citizens. There are descriptions of antiques owned by some of the early county residents together with other interesting items that researchers will find of value.

Disappointing is the fact that listings within the inventory are often incomplete, missing one or more pages from the original document. Such omissions indicate that, particularly before copying machines came into being, researchers simply tore-out the page from a source book rather than hand copy the desired information. Unfortunately, such omissions are lost forever. Nevertheless, there is a wealth of information available on Reel #2 that any citizen may examine by requesting it from the librarian on duty.

Pittsylvania County is fortunate to own a copy of this resource which was made possible by donations from Pittsylvania County Library, Pittsylvania Historical Society and some interested individuals in Chatham.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

1. **Pittsylvania County's CCC camps**. Narrated by one who was there.

2. **The Border Book Club**. Pittsylvania's oldest book study club

3. **A Visit to the Old Green Rock Quarry**.

4. **The Last of Pittsylvania's Old Time Sawyers**: The passing of Anderson Tuck.
February 1996 Queries

(Free to members to aid others with similar interests.)

Dear Mrs. Brown,

Enclosed is my check for membership dues. Sorry I am late. Thanks for all the good and interesting items that have appeared in The Pittsylvania Packet. At your convenience, please include the following inquiry:

My great-great-grandmother, Balzora SCOTT m. Coleman BRUCE 10 April 1848 in Pittsylvania County, VA. Her birthday is Oct. 1829 - Virginia. She may be the daughter of Pinckney or Thomas SCOTT of Pittsylvania County, VA. Any information pertaining to that branch of the SCOTTS will be greatly appreciated.

Lloyd R. BRUCE, 1507 East 24 Place Tulsa, Okla. 74114.

*****

Dear Mrs. Brown,

I'm enclosing a $10 check for membership to The Pittsylvania Historical Society and The Packet. Mr. Melton sent me The Packet for the Summer of 1995.

Query for The Packet:

Seek information on CURRY & GARNER, James A. CURRY, born 17 May 1800, Pittsylvania Co., VA. They married 28 Sept. 1824 in Maury Co., TN. Her parents were William GARNER, born 15 June 1777 Pittsylvania Co., VA and Sarah Ann KIRKPATRICK. Elizabeth is reportedly related to John Nance GARNER IV.

Sincerely, Martha TANNER 13235 Glen Brae Dr. Saratoga, CA 95070-4429.

*****

MCHANEY-WATKINS

Dennis MCHANEY married about 1740 to Frances WATKINS, daughter of John. Children: Cornelius married Mildred HIX, Mary married James TURNER; Andrew married Mary DILLON; Terry married Sarah LUCK. This family lived on Straightstone Creek and Cornelius died in Gretna, VA and is buried in Somersett Baptist Churchyard. I would like to hear from anyone on these names. Ruth BOCK 5200 S. County Road 1210 Midland. Texas 79706. Phone 915-697-6823.

*****


I will forever appreciate anyone who could introduce me to Sarah ADAMS' parents and siblings. Also I will be grateful to anyone informing me as to who was my William WATSON's wife, plus names of his parents and siblings.

Jo Ann GILE 111 Sharon Lane, Garden City, MO 64747.

*****

Am interested in the family name TRAHERN. The name may have been spelled TRAYHERN, TRAHERN, Trehern, Treahern or TRAYHORN. If anyone has information about this family, please contact Genevieve HERTEL, 1606 N. Ninth St., Garden City, Kansas 67846.
Dear Editor:

I was grateful for your publication of my query in your Fall '95 Packet. However, a quite natural mistake was made in the address. Pittsburg, California was listed as Pittsburg, PA. Perhaps you will be so kind as to allow me to revise my query so that it is more specific and at the same time correct my address. Resubmission enclosed. Richard BRADLEY.

Editor's Note: Of course, Richard, you are being very patient. The Editor added another New Year's resolution: Strive to be more careful in editing The Packet in 1996.

Query: PARKER, BENNETT, DALTON, ATKINS, BARKER, RIGNEY:

Elijah Parker married on June 5, 1819 Elizabeth BENNETT, Surety by Richard BENNETT, possibly father. There were three Richard BENNETTS of this era. I favor the Richard BENNETT married to Asenath (Asenna or Cinna) DALTON. Looking for proof or to eliminate other Richards. Elijah's father, William PARKER (Will 1839) had land on Pigg River and Cherrystone Creek. Searching for his wife and origins. Elijah's son Richard PARKER (b 1821) was convicted of forgery in 1877 at Chatham Court House. Looking for newspaper or other information into this. Also researching ATKINS, BARKER, RIGNEY.

Richard BRADLEY 1353 Pine Street, Pittsburg, California 94565.

*****

Am engaged in genealogical research on the following Pittsylvania family lines and would welcome an opportunity to share and exchange information on ancestors and descendants of these men and women:

Joseph REYNOLDS (1750- ) m. 1780 Margaret DEVIN;
William ADKINS (1760-1848) m. Sarah _____?
Naaman MAHAN (?,1810 - ) m. 1837 Elizabeth Maynard ROYSTER;
Nathaniel PRICE ( - ) m. Mary PIGG;
Write Rita Marshall BAGBY - 9204 Lyndonway Drive, Richmond, VA 23229

*****

Researching FULLER beginning with great-great-grandfather Henry P. FULLER b. 1809 Pittsylvania Co., died (?) m. 1841 Levinia HUCHERSON. (Bondsman Nathan HUCHERSON) b. 1825 (VA)?. Family in Pittsylvania County 1850 West Virginia 1860 (?), 1870 Pickens Co. GA, 1880 Caldwell Co. Texas. Both died there 1892/93. Who were Levinia's parents?

Also interested in parents of Susannah Dill FULLER b. 1847 Va. d. 1897 CA. m. 1866 Lawson Bedford KILLIAN b. 846 GA. d. 1917 CA. What is the DILL connection.

Frances Killian SCHARTMAN, 9142 900 Ave. E. Oak Harbor, WA 98277. Phone 1-360-675-8585.

*****

Seeking any information about Bertha Virginia COX b. 1878 who m. 31 Mar. 1901 as his second wife, James Edward WALKER and had children Clarence Waverly WALKER (1902-1976) and Rheba WALKER, who was born in about 1904 in Danville. Bertha may have m. secondly a Mr. TALLEY and moved to Chicago.

Linda Van BUREN, 43 Eardley Crescent, London SW5 9JF, United Kingdom.

*****

Dear Mrs. Brown,

I've enjoyed my first issue of the Pittsylvania Packet tremendously and would like to submit a query for the next issue as follows:

Looking for information regarding my great-great-grandfather, Edward Cannon STIMSON, b. in Virginia ca. 1818. I suspect that he may have been a grandson of Erasmus STIMSON Sr. but I have been unable to verify his parentage. I will be most grateful for any information regarding the STIMSON family and will happily pay for copies and postage.

Evelyn L. MURTHA, 3207 Deer Trail, Bolton, Texas.

*****
(QUERIES -- CONTINUED)


Phyllis Vaughan MOODY, 5042 Tangle Lane Houston, Texas 77056-2114.
Phone 713-621-1884, Fax 713-621-1886.

Editor's Note: Re: your request for back issues of The Packet. Sorry Phyllis, We had an enormous and completely unexpected run on back issues last fall. None are available. Moreover, we are not really geared up spacewise for stocking large quantities of anything. However, at least one copy of each issue is retained for posterity.

*****

The November issue of The Packet was read and enjoyed from cover to cover. What a great job you are doing!

I haven't received any answer to my query concerning the father or sons of Joel ATKINS who married Sarah STANDLEY in 1800 in Pittsylvania County. Then I realized my address was not included with the query. Would you please put it in again and include my name and address. Thank you. Nell ATKINS 21807 Gatewood Lane, Houston, TX 77073.

*****

THOMAS-BLAKELEY

Would like to exchange information on the family of Rachel THOMAS b. ca. 1775, daughter of John THOMAS. She married Benjamin BLAKELEY in Pittsylvania County in 1809. They were the parents of Allen BLAKELEY of Laurel Co., Ky. Contact Nancy O'BANNON, 115 East Loma, Vista Drive, Tempe, AZ 85282 Ph. (602)-966-7871.

*****

I would like to contact anyone who is related to these families. They lived in northern Pittsylvania County in the early 1800s:

PARKER, SNOW, TOLER, GOFFING, WALKER, REESE, JETER, WAPPETT, DOOLEY, RUCKER

Ted PARKER, 24405 South Grabe Road, Peculiar, Missouri 64078.

*****

Dear Mrs. Brown,

Enclosed is my check for membership and payment for two books. While spending a month in Pittsylvania County recently, everyone in the area made feel welcome. My great-grandfather left there ca. 1870 for Tennessee, but somehow I felt at home. I would be interested in research on Elizabeth H. TABB's ancestors (ca 1795-1865). Also George BOYD (ca. same era) Elizabeth H. TABB married Henry MOTLEY. George BOYD m. Nancy HURT.

Lawrence Thomas MOTLEY Sr. 8629 Ft. Caroline Rd. Jacksonville, Vla 32277
Phone 904-744-0438 or 904-744-4029

*****

I wish to submit the following query:

BURGESS: Edward and Margaret BURGESS whose daughter Amelia (Milly) married Captain James WILSON or WILLSON on December 10, 1792 and moved to Kentucky in 1811. Write Phyllis Hutson RICHERSON, 18130 23rd Ave. N. Plymouth, Minn. 55447.
GLEANINGS FROM OUR READERS

The following request was received in response to The Packet's listing of the number of members in each state in the Fall 1995 issue:

1197 Eden Isle Blvd. NE
St. Petersburg, Fla. 33704
December 2, 1995

Please put a One (1) in the State of Florida in the map on Page 3 of the Fall 1995 Pittsylvania Packet as I am a member in good standing and hate being left out.

Cordially,
Rebecca Bishop

Editor's Note:
The embarrassed Packet Editor claims full responsibility for omitting the great State of Florida from the list of those states having members in the PHS. What is even more grievous about this error is that there are at least eight other PHS families in the Sunshine State. They are: Henry Conway Jr. of Amelia Island; Bobbie Harden of Ormond Beach, Ann Jernigan of Tallahassee; Allan Davis DDS of Groveland; Quinton Walters of Maitland; the John Bews of North Miami and Linda King of Hobe Sound. If there are others, please advise. Meanwhile, until further notice, please chalk up 10 for Florida everybody! Thank you Rebecca for helping the Editor correct this injustice, HEM.

3207 Deer Trail
Belton, Texas 96513
November 17, 1995

Dear Mr. Melton,
Thank you so very much for your prompt response to my letter and especially for taking the time to add the notations at the bottom of the page.
I have previously run across the Erasmus Simpson that you mentioned and there is certainly a possibility that he was my great-great-grandfather. With a little more effort, I may be able to establish that.
My membership fee to your Pittsylvania Historical Society is in the mail today to Jeannette Brown. Thanks again.

Evelyn L. Murtha

A Christmas card with this inscription:
"A special thanks to you and Preston Moses for the work you have done on The Packet. It is super! Enjoy the season."

Betty Bruno
Dear Mr. Melton

Have mailed in dues for membership to the Society. Though my mother never claimed any distinction to Daughters of the Revolution, I feel honored to be a part of the group of individuals showing an interest in Pittsylvania County and making an effort to recognize its importance in the founding of this glorious nation. And, while you aptly noted that this is a historical society 'rather' than a genealogical one, I appreciate the fact that through research of history, especially that located in and of Pittsylvania County, the links with my descendants have been located and appreciatively recognized - - - - - - - -.

Thanks again for all efforts and may you have a nice Christmas.
Preston Glenn Humphreys
203 East Northpoint Ave.
High Point, NC 27262

Welcome aboard, Preston. We need more like you. HEM

Dear Mr. Melton,

Thank you for taking the time to send a follow-up letter about the Burgesses. I will research further!

I have joined the Historical Society and hope to visit the county next summer. It's rather frustrating to be up here in a little house on the prairie when all my roots are in Dixie. It makes summer trips very precious.

Sincerely,
Phyllis Richerson
181300 23rd Ave. N.
Plymouth, Minn. 55447

Dear Mrs. Brown,

Please apply the enclosed check to my membership for two years, 1996 and 1997. The Packet is an awesome encouragement.

Yours truly,
William I. Booth Jr.
915 West Anderson Drive
Phoenix, AZ 85023

Dear Mrs. Brown.

Enclosed is my check for $15 which is a membership gift to: Mr. and Mrs. H.V. Fitzgerald 1826 Martha Ave. Harlingen, TX. Since Van was born and grew up in Chatham, I hope they will enjoy receiving The Packet and I know he will know many of the persons mentioned. I enjoy it for my roots for generations (back to 1770) are in Pittsylvania County even though I lived there only a few years. Thank you,

Mary Jane Vaden
2438 Memorial Ave. SW
Roanoke, VA 24015

Editor's note:
This was thoughtful of you, Mary Jane, and we appreciate the many ways in which you and your distinguished family have contributed to historical preservation in Pittsylvania County. For example, the Society continues to distribute Madeline Vaden Fitzgerald's books at a respectable rate. Thanks HEM.
Dear Herman,

Thanks so much for your quick reply. I certainly do want to receive The Packet. Also thanks for the two addresses of the people interested in the Watson line. Also thanks for showing personal interest in my letter. I made some corrections on my William Watson family group sheet. I made the mistake of placing his children's births in Logan County, KY. instead of Pittsylvania County, VA. On the next page, I am writing a Watson and Adams query. I thank you for being a person who is interested in research and the researcher.

Your Mo. Friend,
Jo Ann Gile
111 Sharon Lane
Garden City, MO 64747

Pittsylvania Remembrances

By Robert Harris

Yesterday's Country Store

Most all youngsters enjoy going places and seeing things. In this story, that youngster was myself. We're talking about a trip to the "country store." The two words meant exactly that, and not just a name, such as might be given to a certain location in these "modern times."

If it's okay with you, I'll just go ahead and name places etc. This was visit to Grant's Store, located in Dry Fork, VA.

Before I get to the "ole country store" part, let me mention a mini story that fits right in with the "rest of the story."

Best as I can recollect, grandfather, my uncle, and myself, made this three to four mile trip in my uncle's '34 Ford. It had rained much of that summer day in the late 'thirties, and for some reason grandpa had brought along his shotgun. I reckon he thought about getting him a nice young rabbit down in the 'bottoms' or low grounds, as we often referred to the land on each side of Bear Skin Creek.

Well guess what? He did...get a rabbit that is. I was riding in the back seat of the car, and grandpa put the rabbit in the floor beside my feet.

Now just stay with me, and we'll get back to this thing shortly, I promise.

As I mentioned before, it was raining and sometimes really hard. We had to ford Puddin Creek on our way. No problem you say. Well, usually it wasn't, but to you who have never forded a stream, it simply meant there was no bridge over the water, and you go right on across anyway.

As you might guess, if enough water fell, then there may be a problem. I'll tell you all about it on the way back from the store, hold on, okay.

The store itself was a long frame building, a porch on the north end, and a stoop on the south side. Built in the forks of the Dry Fork road and the White Oak Creek road, with plenty of shade and located across the yard from the old frame Hopewell Methodist Church.

One only needed to step inside, and your young eyes would dart quickly here and there trying to see everything at once, yet wanting to stay longer gazing at all that stuff.

My mouth would water at the sumptuous looking candy and cookies. Those huge, tan, golden coconut haystacks or coconut mounds, juicy orange slices, large enticing suckers, candy bars as large as your hand, fat cookies and of course, a prize in themselves, cold-cold "soda pops."
Material things always fascinate, and with young kids, that is an
understatement. I'm sure we can all remember places and things that later on we
could reminisce about.

Some other items of interest to those not old enough to remember... I don't
believe you can duplicate in today's businesses, the sights, sounds and smells of
yesterdays stores.

Walk down the aisle on the wide oiled stained floors, peek into a barrel of
nails, the pickle barrel, the hand turned coffee grinder, the molasses barrel, the
live chickens in the spring of the year, all sorts of grains, feed, fertilizer, rubber
boots and galoshes, a polished wheat cradle, hanging on the back wall.

How about old thermometers, a big red Coke sign, a smiling young lady on a
picture advertising Clabber Girl baking powder, and a big poster of a young boy
with a large slice of watermelon telling us about "when it rains it pours,"
Morton Salt.

I'm sure that all the while the youngsters were salivating over these goodies,
that the older folks were very business like, and with funds being in short supply
in the thirties their thoughts were quite a ways different from us little folks.

As we previously stated, the inside of the country store was fascinating to say
the least. The candy counter was large, mostly glass, and the wood part of it all
dark and glistening, like maybe mahogany. There were two or more sliding doors
on the back that Mr. Grant would open so quickly and quietly.

Yes, of course his name was Mr. Grant. Small of statue, with dark rectangular
reading glasses down on his nose so it seemed he was always looking down. His
voice was mild and mellow to every one. Norman Rockwell probably would
have him on the cover of the Saturday Evening Post, as America's Mr.
Storekeeper.

Could we ever forget the varied types of harnesses for working the horses and
mules as well as for dogs and cows. All this and so much more would certainly
push your sight, sound and smell buttons.

Some sounds that I vividly recollect are: Ever hear floor boards creak and groan
when walked on? How about the gurgling sound made when vinegar, oil or some
other liquid comes out as the stopper is pulled from the old wooden barrel,
probably lying on its side on the floor, or on a platform a foot or so off the
floor.

Ever hear this?... a farmer has a hen in a burlap bag, maybe to trade for coffee
or sugar, and the hen is cackling and fussing, someone else is taking down a #2
wash tub from a nail on the wall, banging and clanging, the wagon team of
horses tied outside the window is getting restless and picking on each other.
Another person is weighing seeds in a scale that's mounted to a beam overhead.
Someone else is dragging out a heavy chain, possibly, a logging chain.

And we must not forget the National Cash Register with the hand lever and
loud bell. Now, do you get the "picture of the sounds."

My hope is that, in some way, I've stepped back in time a few years and
shared with you in the way I remember something about my trip to the country
store.

Oh, to finish the first part of the story concerning fording Puddin' Creek...

When we got back later, the water was pretty deep at the crossing, and as we
started across, the water came up inside the car, and the engine died out. I guess
this came from the distributor getting wet or maybe the coil.

Anyway, the part I remember most about this scenario was telling my
grandfather to get that rabbit out before he drowns.

Thanks for going along on my trip.
Reprinted from a scrap found in the files of The Packet:

THE CARTOON CAPTION UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE YEAR

"Oh, for heaven's sake, George...200 years from now, what difference will it make where we slept?"

Will the publication that printed this originally, please identify itself so that we can give proper credit?

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