

HISTORIC LEXINGTON FOUNDATION

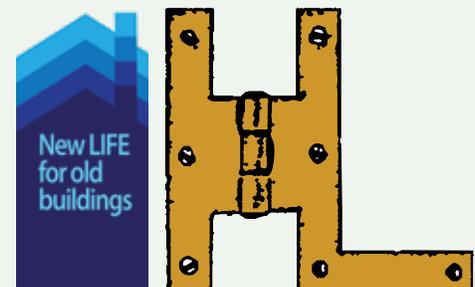
Summer 2019

Newsletter



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- > Lexington's Historic Cemeteries
- > The Barns of Rockbridge
- > Architectural Review Board Design Guidelines





From the President's Desk

Dear Friends of HLF,

To drive on country roads in Rockbridge County is to be struck with the beauty of its rural landscape, its hills and valleys, hazy blue mountain ranges, and rolling farmland. And the barns. Everywhere the barns. Picturesque weathered red barns, early log crib barns, bank barns built into a hillside, timber frame barns, and dairy barns with their towering silos.

In 2019 HLF has been raising awareness of historic barns, those iconic—and endangered—symbols of our agricultural landscape. We've held community gatherings in restored barns. We've heard speakers relate the history and explain the construction techniques of early barns in our valley. Others have discussed the restoration, preservation, and adaptive reuse of these very barns. A month-long exhibition in May at the Nelson Gallery showcased barns through the eyes of local artists. And until the end of the year, we invite you to visit the Campbell House for an exhibition that includes the history of barns, farm tools, artwork, and photographs.

During these months, we've shared knowledge, listened, and invited conversations. Along the way we've generated considerable interest in the significance of our historic barns. We've learned that barns tell an important story of our region's development from the 18th into the 20th century. We've seen that the use of local materials and local construction traditions speak of our place and its people. These venerable barns remain a practical expression of a way of life, erected by hand before the advent of the factory farm. We understand that old barns are a victim of changing agricultural technology, economic shifts, and development pressures. And yet, these simple, functional structures remain evocative and worthy of wise stewardship. They keep a powerful story alive for all to experience. And in so doing they enrich our present and inform our future.

Suzanne Barksdale Rice
President

Cover images:

Top Left: Slave quarters Castle Carberry, now known as Verdant Acres Farm

Top Right: Buffalo Forge slave dwellings

Bottom Left: Slave dwelling at Whitehall

Bottom Right: Slave kitchen at Mulberry Grove

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Post Office Box 901
Lexington, VA 24450
540-463-6832
hlf@rockbridge.net
www.historiclexington.org

Documenting and Preserving Slave Dwellings and Cemeteries

The National Register of Historic Places is overseen by the National Park Service. On its website, NPS has the following statement: “Our nation’s history has many facets, and historic preservation helps tell these stories. Sometimes historic preservation involves celebrating events, people, places, and ideas that we are proud of; other times it involves recognizing moments in our history that can be painful or uncomfortable to remember.”

One such moment involves the institution of slavery. While slavery did not play a role in Rockbridge County to the extent of many other parts of Virginia, it was critical to facets of commerce and industry, most particularly the iron industry. In his superb book, *Bond of Iron*, Charles Dew tells the story of the relationship between master and slave at Buffalo Forge. He was able to research the history thanks to meticulous ledger records kept by William Weaver and his nephew Daniel Brady. At its peak, some 150 enslaved persons worked the forge, the mill, and the fields at Buffalo Forge or in the plantation home there, Mt. Pleasant.

Two extant brick slave quarters are located near the home. All of the many log slave dwellings, mostly along Buffalo Creek, were lost over time. A slave cemetery sits on a hill above the plantation house. With the South’s surrender at Appomattox, the slaves became Freedmen. A group of them purchased land from Brady to build a log church and a cemetery they called Mt. Lydia, just to the south of the plantation. Most of the graves in this cemetery, now abandoned, are identifiable only by sunken earth or small field stones.

Another noteworthy property with a slave connection is Whitehall near Brownsburg. It was the home of Henry Boswell Jones whose diary (1842–1871) documented commercial, religious and everyday life in and around Brownsburg and the greater Rockbridge area. It includes the August 17, 1857, entry, “I am digging a cellar for the Negro house.” Directly behind the manor house sits an impressive, albeit in need of restoration, two-story brick structure that was used as a slave dwelling. The slaves presumably worked the farm and perhaps other endeavors of Jones such as Wade’s Mill and even the North River Navigation System.

Slave labor would have been used on other big plantations in Rockbridge County. When he researched his own home for placement on the National Register, HLF Executive Director

Don Hasfurther learned from tax records that in 1846, for example, the Grigsby family owned 17 slaves above the age of 16. They were listed as property along with the number of horses on the farm. The slaves probably worshipped in the church gallery at nearby Falling Spring Presbyterian Church where Reuben Grigsby was a trustee. “Sadly, I was never able to find a record of a slave cemetery on the property,” notes Hasfurther. “Makes it difficult to show respect to those forced to provide service on the farm.”

Today a number of organizations in Virginia are trying to document and preserve structures in the state associated with slavery. The Virginia Slave Housing Project (www.savingslavehouses.org) seeks to compile information on domestic architecture of slavery in Virginia. It gathers information from archaeological sites, period documents and surviving buildings. Virginia Humanities, a state council, is also documenting slave dwellings using Google Earth Outreach. Justin Reid, Director of African American Programs, has been to Lexington to meet with HLF to learn more about African American sites in Rockbridge.

If you would like to help in this statewide effort to document slave dwellings, cemeteries, and other slave sites, please contact HLF with information on Rockbridge slave sites or an expression of how you might be able to assist in this effort.



Mt. Lydia Cemetery contains sunken graves of former Buffalo Forge slaves.



Preserving and Interpreting Lexington's Historic Cemeteries

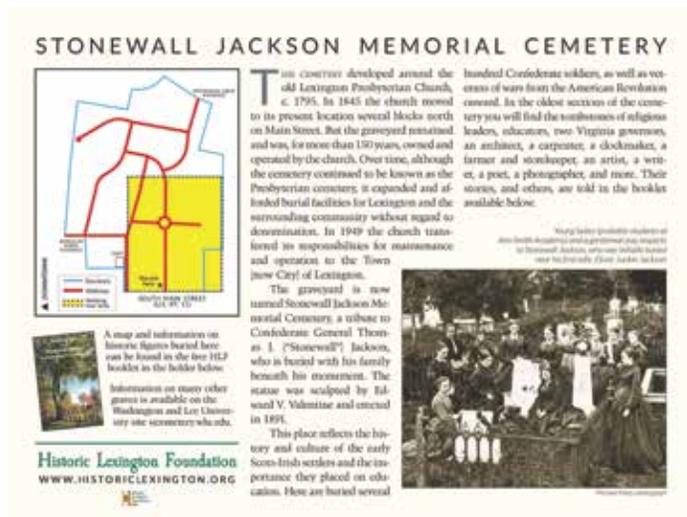
For the past three years, HLF has sought to draw attention to the preservation and maintenance needs of Lexington's two historic cemeteries, Stonewall Jackson Memorial Cemetery (SJMC) and Evergreen Cemetery. Although the City of Lexington owns both cemeteries, they, like other municipalities, have taken the position that maintenance of gravestones is the responsibility of the families of those buried there. As a consequence, many stones go unrepaired and are deteriorating.

To better acquaint the public with the historic importance of SJMC, HLF published a walking tour guide to the cemetery in 2018. Text and photos were largely the work of Don Hasfurther, while board member Bob Keefe was responsible for the design and production of the brochure. Additionally, HLF hired a nationally-known conservator to make preservation plans for

Lexington's two cemeteries. The plans specify preservation needs, establish repair priorities, and provide cost estimates. The plans were presented to city officials. Additionally, in 2018 HLF organized, with the support of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, a cemetery preservation seminar for area residents.

The walking tour brochure is available in the HLF office and on its website and at the Visitor Center on W. Washington Street. But it has been unavailable at SJMC and thus not to the many visitors to the cemetery.

This is about to change. Thanks to the efforts of board members Suzanne Rice, Skip Ravenhorst, Bob Keefe, and former board member Arthur Bartenstein, HLF has designed a display for the cemetery with a brochure mount of the walking tour guide. This will replace a sign placed in the cemetery in 1983 by the local branch of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities. As this newsletter goes to press, the display is under fabrication and will be installed by the Public Works Department in the fall.



HLF display for SJMC will be installed later this year.



Computer generated image by Skip Ravenhorst shows position of display.

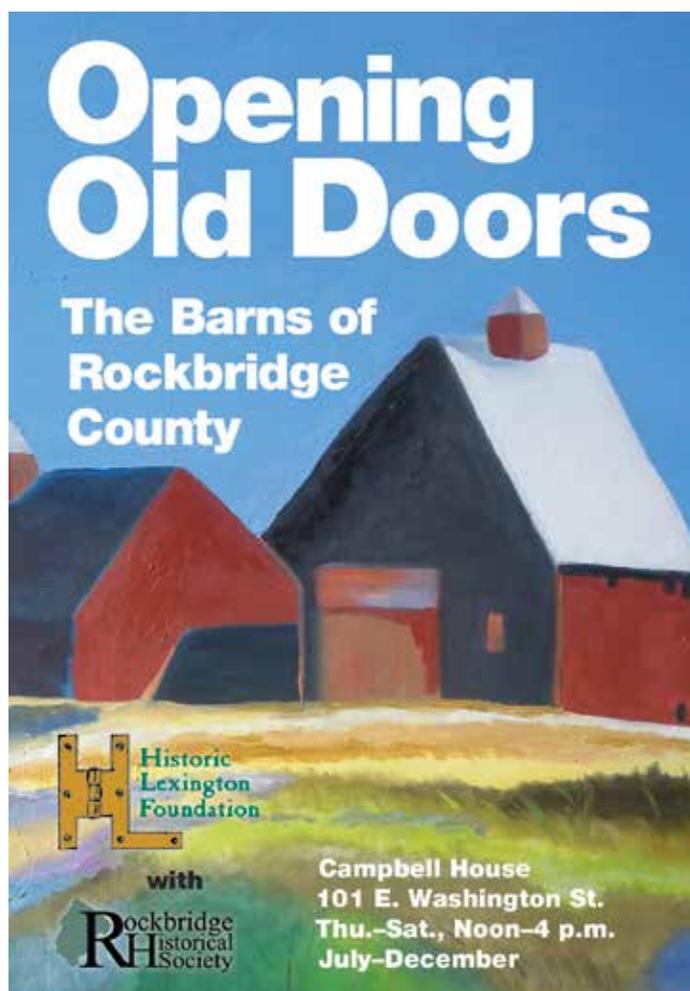


The tabletop gravestone of Annie Baxter has long lain broken from a fallen tree limb. Baxter was the daughter of Col. William Fleming and wife of George A. Baxter, longtime minister of Lexington Presbyterian Church and the rector of Washington Academy and then president of Washington College. Repair of the stone and placement on new legs is happening thanks to the family of Mary Coulling. Her husband, the late Sidney Coulling, was a direct descendant of Baxter.

Highlighting Historic Barns

Since broadening its mission to include preservation activities in all of Rockbridge County, HLF has sought to expand its preservation awareness work beyond Lexington. For the organization, 2019 has been the year of historic barn preservation awareness. In furtherance of this theme, HLF opened an exhibition on historic Rockbridge barns in July in the Rockbridge Historical Society's Campbell House at 101 E. Washington Street in Lexington.

HLF's barn activities began in April when it hosted its annual meeting in an early 20th century barn in the lower Buffalo Creek section of the county. Several events were held in May during National Preservation Month. They included a month-long exhibition at the Nelson Gallery in Lexington of barns as depicted by Rockbridge artists. In an engaging afternoon at Maxwellton's timber frame barn near Rockbridge Baths, presenters traced barn development and preservation in Rockbridge County and beyond.



The Campbell House exhibition expands these earlier programs in an effort to educate visitors on various barn types such as log crib barns, bank barns, horse barns, and dairy barns. The barns are explained in text and illustrated by photographs and paintings. The paintings have been contributed by HLF board members Beverly Tucker and Bruce Macdonald. The exhibition also includes farm elements that would have been found in area barns a century or more ago.

Some of the more interesting county barns are in the Brownsburg area. To help showcase these barns, the Brownsburg Museum has provided HLF with framed photos and descriptions of some of these barns for use in the exhibition. In 2017, the Brownsburg Museum received an HLF Founders' Award for its efforts in interpreting and presenting the rich historical heritage of Rockbridge County.

The historic barn focus has connected with a broad audience interested in the subject, notes HLF Executive Director Don Hasfurther. "We have had folks approach us to show HLF archival photos of area barns, relate stories of barns built by family members generations ago, and tell us of their work to restore historic barns." He was recently contacted by a couple in Charlottesville asking for assistance in recommending a driving tour of Rockbridge barns.

HLF is grateful to the Rockbridge Historical Society for opening its historic Campbell House for the exhibition. RHS has also contributed their own panels to the exhibition. The barn exhibition will run through the remainder of the year, Thursdays through Saturdays from noon to 4 p.m. For those unable to attend, the exhibition catalog will be made available on the HLF website: www.historiclexington.org.





Architectural Review Board Will Receive New Design Guidelines

Thanks in large part to Arne Glaeser and the staff of Lexington's Planning and Development Department, the city's ARB will soon get design guidelines to assist in its determinations. After a Request for Proposals, the city selected Frazier and Associates of Staunton, Virginia, to write design guidelines. In its draft Historic District Design Guidelines document, the firm notes that "In 1971, the local government passed an 'Historic Area' ordinance to create a locally designated historic district in the core of the downtown and set up an architectural review board (ARB) to provide design review for changes to properties in the district."

The ARB has operated ever since on the basis of zoning regulations, but it will soon have design guidelines to help direct its decision-making. According to Bill Frazier, "Design Guidelines for Lexington's locally designated historic districts will provide detailed information on building projects that require review by the Architectural Review Board." The guidelines will be finalized after a public comment period.

As Frazier notes, "These guidelines will help all involved—the property owner, tenant, architect or designer, and contractor—better understand the professional preservation standards that are used throughout the U.S. With ample illustration and links to more detailed information, all parties involved will have the necessary guidance upfront before coming before the board and before planning their project." The guidelines will help members of the ARB better understand building types and construction of those contributing to the historic district.

Prior to meeting with the ARB, Frazier met with Glaeser, HLF Executive Director Don Hasfurther, and ARB chair Robin LeBlanc. Hasfurther noted that it is important that ARB members visit the sites of projects that go before the ARB for deliberation. He stressed the importance of understanding the building's history and construction before making decisions that would alter the appearance of the structure, such as the recent approval of a deck off one side of the symmetrical former Ann Smith School. He noted that in placing an historic easement on the former Presbyterian Church manse, he and then-HLF board member Arthur Bartenstein had written protections for the many Gothic Revival elements of the building, interior and exterior.

As noted, the guidelines will be an important document not just for the ARB but also for the Lexington community. According to Frazier, "The quality of historic preservation and the review process should improve when everyone has an opportunity to better understand more detailed guidelines that the ARB use in their decision-making process."



Bill Frazier meets with ARB.



William G. McDowell Home (1891) Queen Anne style shows multi-color wood trim typical of Victorian architecture.



Hopkins House (mid-1840s) Classical Revival exhibits white as single trim color and doors painted an accent color.

Thanks To Our Contributors

*Our sincere thanks to all who have given so generously to sustain the work of HLF.
We acknowledge these gifts received from August 2018–July 2019.*

We strive for accuracy in our acknowledgments. Please share corrections with us.

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2019 in Photos



April - Mary Stuart and Russ Harlow receive Founders' Award for restoration of 106 W. Preston St. from HLF board members Gene Sullivan and Suzanne Rice.



May - HLF façade grant helps with facade improvements to Heliotrope Brew Pub soon to open on S. Main Street.



April - HLF board members Mary Newman and Suzanne Rice present Founders' Award to Lisa McCown for her work at Washington and Lee University's Special Collections.



May - HLF façade grant supports re-pointing and other repairs to Lawyer's Row building designed by Thomas U. Walter.



July - Barn exhibition Curator Beverly Tucker welcomes Dale Gibb of Alexandria, Virginia, and Keys MacManus of Merida, Mexico, to Campbell House exhibition.