

HISTORIC LEXINGTON FOUNDATION

Winter 2020

Newsletter



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2019
Annual
Report
Issue



From the President's Desk

Dear Friends of HLF,

For more than 50 years, HLF has remained steadfast in its commitment to preserve, educate about, and advocate for the places that matter to us in Lexington and Rockbridge County.

As we begin a new year, we remain mindful of the founding of HLF and the early community activists who saved downtown Lexington from demolition by neglect. And we offer heartfelt thanks to our loyal supporters who partner with us in the stewardship of this place we hold dear.

Our efforts are ongoing. We believe that our historic places—our homes, schools, churches, cemeteries, barns, and, yes, our slave dwellings—tell the stories of who built, lived, learned, worshipped, and worked in them.

In partnership with Virginia Humanities, HLF has embarked upon an initiative to document Rockbridge slave dwellings. We know that this is a complex, difficult, and painful history. But we believe that it is important for us to recognize and understand if we are to move forward together. It's not a separate history, but a shared history, one integral to who we are.

While I was born and grew up in Lexington, I've lived in many places since. In each move, I've carried with me a love of my home and a signed copy of *The Architecture of Historic Lexington* (1977). When I returned home and joined the HLF board, I was fortunate to help shepherd its companion volume, *The Architecture of Historic Rockbridge* (2015), to publication. Both books remain my go-to references for information on our historic places. I recommend them to you.

What a joy it has been to serve as HLF president for the past three years. I have learned so much from wise and thoughtful board colleagues and from the knowledgeable guidance of our executive director, Don Hasfurther. It is now my pleasure to return the gavel to Beverly Tucker's dedicated, talented care.

I look forward to HLF's future in the belief that protecting our historic places helps build a viable and meaningful community for us now and for those who come after us.

Best wishes in the new year,

Suzanne Barksdale Rice

Cover images:

Top Left: Canal Gauge Dock taken December 2019

Bottom Left: Gauge Dock in 2016 before removal of dam

Top Right: Strong water flow though millrace in 2016

Bottom Right: Stagnant water in millrace, December 2019

Board of Directors 2020

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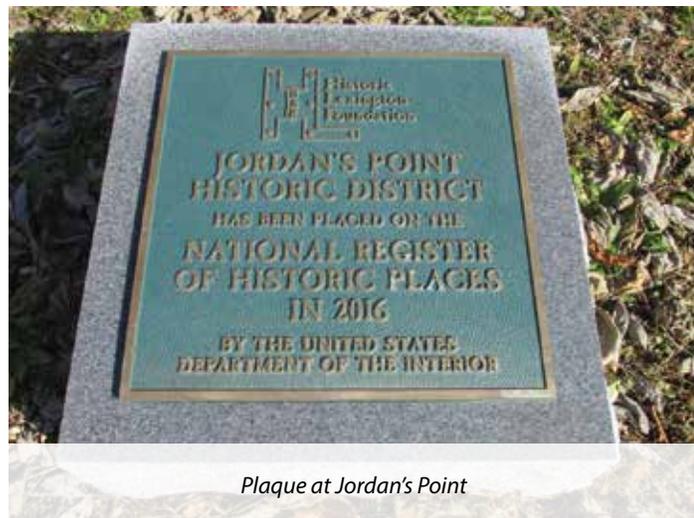
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Preserving Lexington's Industrial and Transportation Heritage

The exhibits at the Miller's House Museum at Jordan's Point educate visitors to Lexington's industrial and transportation past. The structure was purchased by Historic Lexington Foundation and deeded to the City of Lexington in 2001. Following rehabilitation of the structure, HLF worked with others in the community to turn the Miller's House into a museum. The museum's board of directors is presided over by Dick Halseth, and its members include Skip Ravenhorst and Gene Sullivan, both HLF board members.

Jordan's Point along the Maury River is an important reminder of Lexington's industrial and transportation past. With this in mind, in August of 2016, HLF had the area placed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). More than three years later, the organization cautions that as a result of the removal of the dam on the Maury River, several of the contributing historic structures in the NRHP nomination might be lost, thus jeopardizing the area's historic district status.

Specifically, HLF is worried that the c. 1806 millrace that provided waterpower to the industries there, together with the c. 1860 canal gauge dock, might be lost. Among the industries that once stood along the millrace were a merchant mill and cotton factory. The foundations of those structures are visible today. The gauge dock at the end of the millrace and the upstream terminus of the North River Navigation Company Canal provided the means for weighing canal boat cargo to be off-loaded at Jordan's Point.



Plaque at Jordan's Point

The large cut stones that line the millrace and gauge dock are supported by hewed timber. The concern is that without a flow of water the timbers risk rotting and the stones collapsing. With removal of the dam, the flow of water has largely ceased.

HLF first made its concerns known in a March 2016 letter to Lexington's mayor and city council after the city announced its intent to remove the dam. HLF President Suzanne Rice subsequently voiced HLF's concerns before an open meeting with the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) and later Lexington's City Council. DGIF was the state organization offering to remove the dam. HLF also became a Consulting Party to DGIF and made its concerns known in comments to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding Adverse Impacts to Historic Resources associated with the dam's removal.

On October 24, 2018, HLF Executive Director Don Hasfurther received comments from the U.S. Department of Interior's Virginia Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office responding to HLF comments to the MOU. In the letter, an official in the office notes "that there will be times when the millrace is dry." The letter also states "that the portion of the gauge-dock timbers that will be exposed to air will likely deteriorate, but that portion under the adjacent wall will not likely deteriorate since it is buried."

With the removal of the dam this year, water has virtually ceased to flow through the millrace. With the summer's drought, sections of the millrace were completely dry. Following the rains of this fall, there is some water, largely standing, in the millrace. Similarly, there is little water in the canal gauge dock.

This summer, the City of Lexington contracted with the consulting firm Land Planning & Design Associates (LPDS) of Charlottesville to prepare a master plan for Jordan's Point Park. In September, Jessica Mauzy, the master plan project manager, met with representatives of HLF, the Rockbridge Historical Society, and the Miller's House Museum. The three organizations subsequently sent a letter to Mauzy stating that the loss of water flowing through the millrace "severely affects the preservation of the only remaining gauge dock between Lexington and Richmond." The organizations stressed that water flowing through the millrace illustrates to visitors the source of power to industries that once operated at Jordan's Point.

See Jordan's Point, page 5



Documenting Rockbridge Slave Dwellings

Over the last several years, many state historic and humanities organizations have established programs to document structures that had been dwellings of enslaved persons. Historic museum properties in Virginia, including Monticello and Montpelier, now have programs to interpret slave life on those sites. With the exception of Buffalo Forge, as chronicled by Charles Dew in *The Bond of Iron*, little has been done to document slave life in Rockbridge County.

To rectify this, Historic Lexington Foundation has begun an effort to document slave dwellings in Rockbridge County in order to encourage their preservation. On October 30, representatives of HLF and the Brownsburg Museum, together with officials from Virginia Humanities, visited four slave dwellings in the Brownsburg area. The structures were photographed and measured as an initial effort at documentation. Participating on behalf of HLF were President Suzanne Rice and Executive Director Don Hasfurther.

Virginia Humanities has been documenting slave dwellings throughout Virginia but primarily in Tidewater and the Piedmont sections of the State. The organization was founded in 1974 with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Instrumental in its founding and serving as its first executive director was Washington and Lee University graduate Robert Crews Vaughan III. He was appointed by then University of Virginia President Edgar Shannon, also a W&L graduate and Lexington native.



Jobie Hill, preservation architect and founder of "Saving Slave Houses" takes notes outside Whitehall slave dwelling, while Peter Hedlund takes photographs and Justin Reid measures the structure. Videoing the process is Bruce Young.

Participating in the visit for Virginia Humanities were Justin Reid, Director of African American Programs, and Peter Hedlund, Director of *Encyclopedia Virginia*. Joining the Virginia Humanities officials was Jobie Hill, a preservation architect and founder of "Saving Slave Houses," a national program dedicated to the preservation of slave dwellings and the education of the public about the structures. Ms. Hill has assisted Virginia Humanities in documenting such structures.

The visit to the four structures in the Brownsburg area was arranged by Paul Hahn, Isabelle Chewning, and others affiliated with the Brownsburg Museum. Their efforts were critical in contacting the property owners and obtaining permission to access their properties. All owners were pleased to provide access and, indeed, were interested in learning more about the slave dwellings adjacent to their homes.

The day began with a tour of the Brownsburg Museum followed by a visit to Whitehall, the 19th century home of Henry Boswell Jones. Jones is best known for the diary he kept between 1842 and 1871. An entry for August 17, 1856, noted that he was "digging a cellar for the Negro house." This together with his ledger provide researchers with important information on his commercial, religious, and personal activities.

The slave dwelling at Whitehall is two stories with two rooms on each level. There is also a substantial basement that Ms. Hill theorized was also lived in, in part because the walls are plastered and whitewashed. She suggested that with some archaeological research one might have a better idea of other uses of the cellar. While at Whitehall, the structure was thoroughly measured and photographed.

Additionally, the group visited c. 1790 Mulberry Grove, c. 1775 Sleepy Hollow, and Castle Carberry (now known as Verdant Acres). The slave quarters in Mulberry Grove include a large cooking fireplace and loft, attached to the main structure. Sleepy Hollow and Castle Carberry both have freestanding brick slave dwellings adjacent to the manor houses. As with Whitehall, the Virginia Humanities officials took photographs and together with Jobie Hill took measurements.

Reid, Hedlund, and Hill plan to return to Rockbridge to meet with interested parties to discuss their activities and to address how these parties might assist in their efforts. Included in the forum will be discussion of the documentation of slave dwelling as part of Virginia Humanities "Mapping Virginia's Slave Dwellings: Preserving Black History with Street View." Using Google Street View technology, Virginia Humanities is able to film the slave

structure and make the images and audio information available to the public, especially students grades K through 12. This is important as most sites are not readily available for public visitation.

A longer-term goal will be documenting more slave dwellings and bringing them to the public's attention on *Encyclopedia Virginia*. To this end, HLF hopes to bring Jobie Hill back to Rockbridge County in the summer to investigate additional slave dwellings in the county.

To further this project, HLF needs the input of area residents who might have a slave dwelling on their property or know of slave dwellings in the county. As such, residents are urged to contact HLF's Hasfurther (hlf@rockbridge.net or 540-463-6832) with any such information they might have. While the major effort will involve extant structures, Ms. Hill urges HLF also to include ruins of potential slave dwelling in their efforts. She notes that they will take much less time to document but could still be important to understanding slavery in Rockbridge.



Peter Hedlund, director of Encyclopedia Virginia, photographs the Whitehall slave dwelling.



Justin Reid, director of African American programs at Virginia Humanities, measures Whitehall slave dwelling.

Jordan's Point, continued from page 3

As noted by HLF board member Skip Ravenhorst, "the master planning process is a valuable tool for sorting out the various possibilities for future uses at Jordan's Point Park. However, that process takes time, and even more time may be involved before the selected improvements are realized." Noting that without water the submerged foundation timbers and entire stone structure will be jeopardized, he stated, "These stone walls are the last remaining vestiges of the 19th century infrastructure at the Point, and it would be a shame to lose them through neglect."

Learning of the situation, on October 7 Mike Pulice of the Western Regional Office of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources wrote HLF a letter in which he states, "We at DHR feel strongly that the millrace remains and gauge dock are critical to the historical integrity and interpretation of the historic district" and were critical to the approval of the historic district nomination. He concluded by urging that a means be found to maintain water.

HLF shared the letter with the City of Lexington and others, including the Virginia Military Institute. While a city representative notes that the City awaits the recommendations from the planners at LPDA before addressing the problem, HLF does not believe the City has that luxury and has urged the City to decouple the millrace and gauge dock from the master planning process.

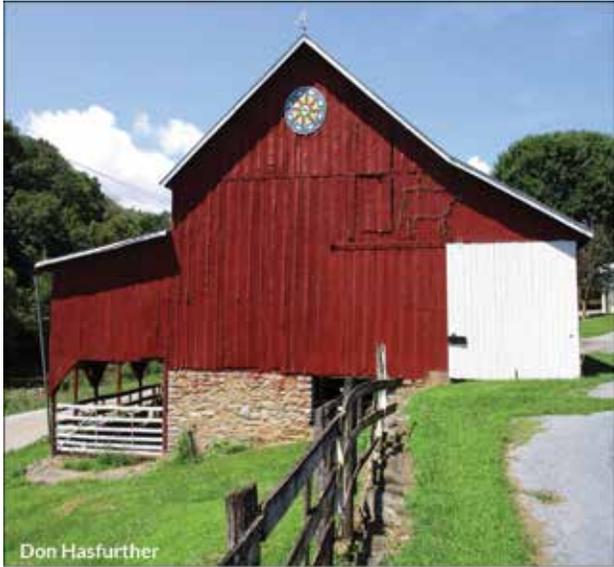


Site of the Jordan's Point dam that was removed in 2019. In low water, the river is not navigable at this point. Also note the last piers that once supported a railroad trestle over the Maury River. The others were removed at the time of the dam removal.



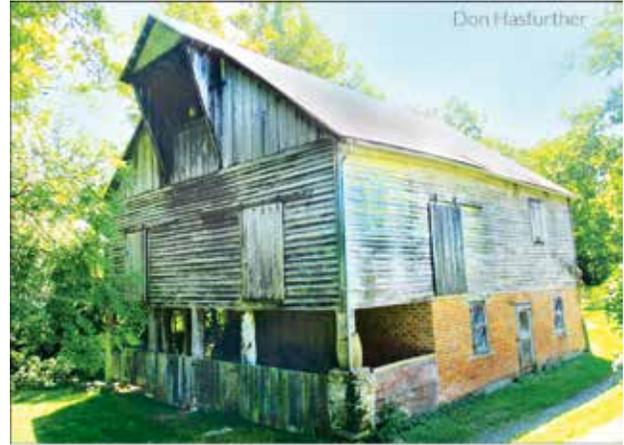
“Opening Old Doors” Exhibition Concludes

After a well-attended opening on July 5 and a steady stream of visitors during the following months, HLF took down its barn exhibit at the Campbell House in December. The four panels on this page represent just some of the many illustrations in the exhibit catalogue. If you were unable to see the exhibit and would like the catalogue, write or email HLF and we will mail it to you.



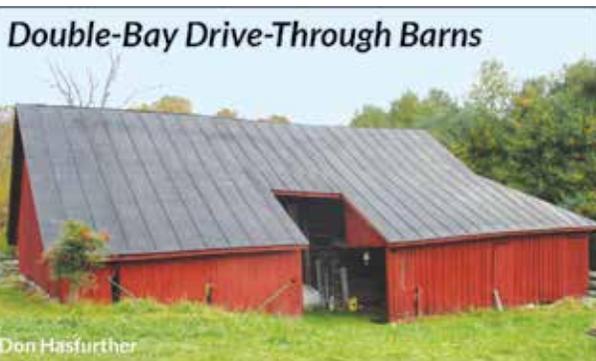
Bank Barns

Bank barns were built into a hillside or had an earth-ramped side so that both upper and lower levels are accessible from ground level. Livestock was generally housed on the lower level. The bank barn form was ultimately German or Swiss in origin and referred to as a “Swisher” or “Sweitzer” barn. This barn is above Buffalo Creek on Collierstown Road, not far from Murat.



Horse Barns

Work horses were an important part of farm life in 19th-century Rockbridge County. Stables were generally situated below, with work areas above. This example at Buffalo Forge is of heavy timber with mortised joinery. The brick used for the foundation and lower level was fired on the property. A frame upper haymow level projects out to create a wrap-around sheltered work area on two sides.



Double-Bay Drive-Through Barns

As farming needs grew in the Valley of Virginia, so did barn dimensions, often with the addition of a second bay and a center drive-through all under the same roof. The drive-through was often used as a threshing floor. The barn here is located west of Lexington by Whistle Creek. The earliest section is log and the later section of frame construction.



Log Crib Barns

As early settlers entered the Valley of Virginia from Pennsylvania or westward over the Blue Ridge, they found a wealth of timber. Early homes, barns, and other out-buildings were constructed with round or hewn logs. Log barns for cattle or hay were usually left unchinked for better ventilation. This log crib barn is on Bethany Road.

Interpreting and Conserving Our Historic Cemeteries

As reported in this summer's newsletter, HLF had been working on a display to provide visitors to Stonewall Jackson Memorial Cemetery with information on the history of the cemetery. Thanks to the Lexington Department of Public Works, the display is now in place at the entrance to the cemetery on South Main Street. The display also has a brochure mount for the HLF walking tour guide to the cemetery. The brochure provides location and historic details on 45 individual graves and family plots in the cemetery.

One of those graves in the brochure is that of Anne "Annie" Baxter. As also noted in the summer newsletter, the Baxter tabletop gravestone had long lain broken from a fallen tree limb. Thanks to the family of Mary Coulling, the stone has now been repaired and placed on four new legs to ensure its stability. Her husband, the late Sidney Coulling, was a direct descendant of Baxter.

The Baxter stone was one of many identified as of high priority for repair in the preservation plan commissioned by HLF in 2018. There are many others awaiting repair in this, one of the state's most historic cemeteries. HLF hopes to work with the City of

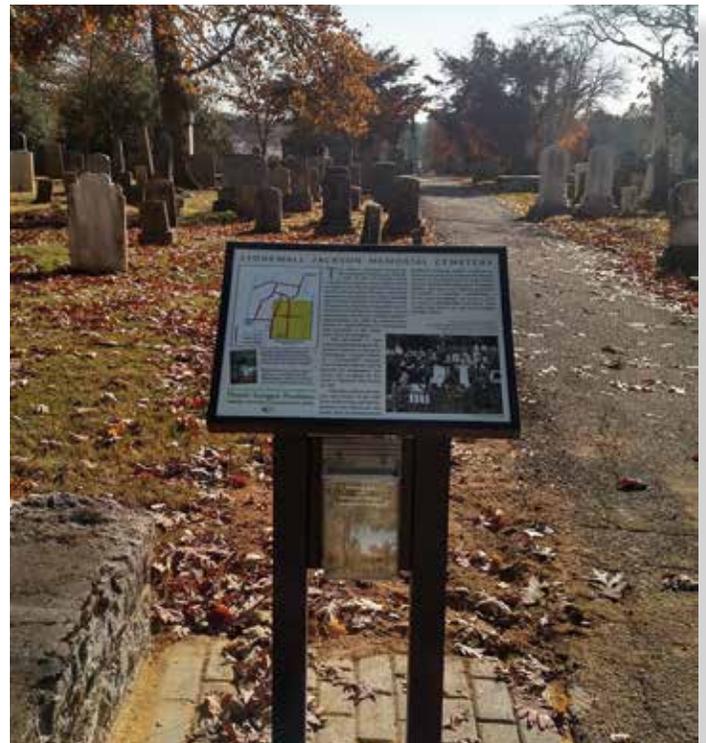
Lexington, other preservation organizations, and the families of descendants of those buried in the cemetery to encourage additional repair and maintenance efforts. HLF plans to do the same in historic Evergreen Cemetery. Individuals are encouraged to make donations to the HLF cemetery fund.

Another major improvement to the cemetery was performed by the Blue Ridge Garden Club. An affiliate of the Garden Club of Virginia in Richmond, the Blue Ridge Garden Club each year selects an important community project. In 2019, it chose the Stonewall Jackson Memorial Cemetery. It provided the funds for the removal, blasting, repainting, and resetting of the wrought iron fencing and gates at the entrance to the cemetery. The project also served to commemorate the centennial of the Garden Club of Virginia.

For many years now, HLF has been working with others in the community to maintain the historic McDowell Cemetery near Fairfield. This past summer, HLF took part in a ceremony arranged by McDowell family descendants to dedicate a new stone honoring early settler and surveyor John McDowell. McDowell is best known for his survey work on the Borden Tract.



Anne Baxter Coulling and her mother, Mary Coulling, stand at the repaired stone of Anne "Annie" Baxter



Stonewall Jackson Cemetery Display

A Look Ahead in 2020

Black History Month Documenting Slave Dwellings in Virginia

HLF in Collaboration with Virginia Humanities

Justin Reid, Director of African American Programs
Peter Hedlund, Director of *Encyclopedia Virginia*
Jobie Hill, founder of "Saving Slave Houses"

Saturday, February 22, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

Brady Chapel of Lexington Presbyterian Church

Free and open to the public

Save The Date:

May is National Preservation Month

Lucia "Cinder" Stanton,
Former Shannon Senior
Historian
Monticello's Thomas
Jefferson Foundation

Author of "*Those Who
Labor for My Happiness*":
*Slavery at Thomas
Jefferson's Monticello*

Cinder Stanton is the
leading interpreter of
Jefferson's life and the lives
of his slaves.

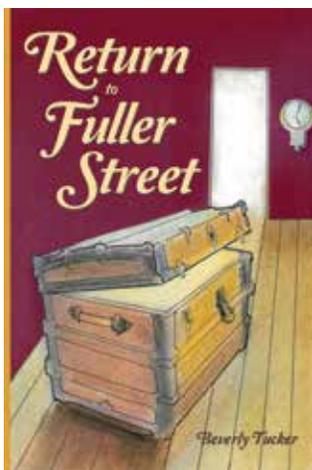
She will speak on
"Following Slavery to
Freedom: Thirty Years at
Monticello"

May 7, 2020, at 5:00 p.m.

Kendal at Lexington

Open to the public
with no charge

*Please consult
historiclexington.org for a
complete listing of activities
sponsored by Historic
Lexington Foundation*



Coming Soon *Return to Fuller Street* By Beverly Tucker

Book Signing

Sunday, March 1, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

First Baptist Church in Lexington

Books for sale. The public is welcome.

Annual Membership Meeting

A review of 2019 and plans for 2020

Presentation on the History and Many Stories of Sunnyside
By Arthur Bartenstein, ABL Landscape Architects

Presentation of 2020 Founders' Awards

Sunday, April 5, 2020

2:00 p.m.

Historic Sunnyside House at Kendal at Lexington