

News & Views

on the preservation issues that affect our historic city.

The month of May was a very busy one for us. We launched a four part program that coordinated the activities of Historic Lexington Foundation goals and interests with those of the Southern Shenandoah Valley Branch of Preservation Virginia. It was called, "Artists & Artisans: Early Industry in the Valley of Virginia." There were four parts, on four separate days and over two weekends: **Saturday, May 14** was called "All Fired Up in Botetourt-19th Century Bricks and Pots." Virginia Department of Historic Resources director Michael Pulice provided a fascinating lecture on early colonial era bricks and brick making – in the town of Buchanan, followed by a walking tour of downtown. Visitors were able to see example of early bricks and kilns where they were made.

On **Sunday, May 15** there was a second event, this one back in Lexington-in the old (now restored) Courthouse. This one was entitled "All Fired Up in "Rockbridge: 19th Century Bricks and Pots." This was a panel discussion, which consisted of Sean Devlin, Staff Archaeologist at W&L University and HLF Board member, Kurt Russ, Virginia Heritage Resources Group and vice director of Preservation Virginia branch, and Michael Pulice, architectural historian, continuing his lecture from the day



Mike Pulice and Sean Devlin



Kurt Russ and visitor

before (see above). Visitors witnessed early brick-making in 19th Century Rockbridge County. We saw actual examples of bricks and pots in their early state: early making sites recently excavated, including the Pug Mill and hand made (1830 methods). We learned what "Frogged Bricks" were the process of drying and burning with hickory wood in early kilns. Many of these sites had been recently excavated. Sean Devlin talked about anthropology and the study of material remains. Finally Kurt Russ, Virginia Director of the Southern Shenandoah branch of Preservation of VA, talked about how the early pots were made. He estimated that there were as many as 450 potters across the state, most bringing the craft from their origins in England, or Germany, where stoneware was prominent.



Proud collector



Saturday, May 21 was devoted to early life in colonial Rockbridge County. It was titled, appropriately, "The Development of the Frontier: Early Weapons and Dress in the Valley of Virginia." The lecturer, dressed in authentic frontier clothing, was Wallace Gusler, a retired Colonial Williamsburg Master Gunsmith. From Mr. Gusler we learned that the earliest trading post in our area was in 1768, somewhere between Lexington and the Cowpasture River Valley. He showed us what an early Frontiersman hunting shirt looked like and described the fierce habits of the Shawnee and other Native tribes. We learned that the VA riflemen were the most feared by the Indians and French because of the accuracy of their long flintlock rifles, and saw excellent examples of early rifles, muskets and shotguns, including other weapons of the day, like tomahawks. The artistic skills required and common in these early rifles was prodigious. The barrels required master forgers and rifling experts, the lock - a clocksmith, the stock - woodcarver and the ornamentation - often a silversmith.

Finally, on **Sunday, May 22** the venue moved north of Lexington to view the early gravestone carvers in the historic graveyard of Timber Ridge Presbyterian Church. Here Dan Pezzoni of Landmark Preservation Associates, along with Wallace Gusler, showed visitors the methods of early gravestone carving and the types of stone used and when. The title of this last event was called "Early Gravestone Carvers: Conserving the Historic Mackey Gravestone." All the events were well attended. The weather was good and the interest was high.



Wallace Gusler in frontier garb



In the graveyard at Timber Ridge Presbyterian Church

The Historic Lexington Foundation and News & Views would like to invite you to visit our new web site at

<http://historiclexington.org>

We will now be able notify you of upcoming events and share a gallery of wonderful images of our projects as well as the greater Lexington/Rockbridge area.