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# The Messenger

OF THE CHESTERFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA

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Number 100

January 2012

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## January Quarterly Meeting

Sunday January 22 1 pm  
Salisbury Country Club, 13620 Salisbury Rd.,  
Midlothian

### Speaker: Robert 'Peppy' Jones

Please join us for our Quarterly Meeting. Peppy Jones, newly named Mid-Lothian Parks Administrator, will talk about the coal mining industry in Midlothian and share a brief synopsis of the Salisbury story. Salisbury was the home to many famous Virginians including Governor Patrick Henry, and General Edward Johnson. The original home burned down in 1923, but its likeness is preserved in the Country Club. The current subdivision of Salisbury dates to 1958 and includes many fine homes. So please come join us to learn more! [source: "*Patrick Henry Slept There*," by Harry Kollatz, Jr. in Richmond Magazine, 2006]

Our tradition is to have a sit down lunch with the meeting. The menu is Chicken Bruschetta. Balsamic grilled breast of chicken with roasted tomato and basil confit and Italian cheeses served atop marsala sauce, fresh vegetables, homemade rolls, non-alcoholic beverages and French silk pie. Vegetarian selection (Portobello plate) available upon request. **To attend, please send in your check (\$20 per person), made payable to CHS, by January 13.**

## Grand Opening of the Heirloom Seed Exchange Free Seeds Feb. 2 & Every Thursday at Castlewood

CSHV is the center for recording and maintaining books, documents and artifacts on Chesterfield's history and now sees a need to preserve our gardening heritage by offering heirloom seeds. Heirloom plants have been defined (per Wikipedia) as a plant or "cultivar that was commonly grown during earlier periods in human history, but which is not used in modern large-scale agriculture." Heirloom plants are our part of our cultural heritage. In opening the Heirloom Seed Exchange, it is our goal to encourage more gardeners to grow heirloom crops. The Exchange requires an annual membership fee of \$5. You have to dry and return about two times the amount of seeds given to you. We currently have over 160 varieties of fruit, vegetable, herb, flower and ornamental seeds available. CSHV will offer the following seminars for a nominal fee to raise funds for the Society (10% discount to CHS members). Most seminars will provide some hands-on, recipes, helpful hints and instructions to help you and your family enjoy heirloom plants and vegetables.

- How to Grow Food from Seeds
- How to Get Your Kids to Eat More Veggies with Less Hassle
- How to Can and Preserve Your Harvest
- How to Cook with Herbs (Cooking Class with Recipes)
- Baking from the Herb Garden (Baking Class with recipes)
- Cooking from the Garden (Cooking class with recipes)
- How to Dry Seeds

Check out our website and Event Calendar for more information on attending a class. Patty Watts will be chairing this project and can be contacted at 768-0616 for more information.



## Mission Statement

*The Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia serves as the center for Chesterfield County history. Its purposes are to collect, preserve, interpret and promote the county's unique past for the education of present and future generations*

**CHS Events See the detailed event information on the back cover.  
View our website for the most up-to-date information – editor**

**Thru January** Veterans Exhibit: *Vietnam: A Retrospective (Museum)*. \$2 Admission  
**Thru June** Police & Sheriff Exhibit: *Protecting our Citizens: A History of Law & Order in Chesterfield County (1892 Old Jail, Tours start at Museum)* \$1 Admission

## From the President -

Last September the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) met in Richmond at the Marriott Hotel. This national convention was attended by over 900 people who are passionate about local history. Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia (CHSV) is a member of AASLH and three of our members attended several of the 80 sessions held. Lynn Waymack, CHSV Board member and volunteer at our house museum, Magnolia Grange, chose to attend a session called "Small Museum-Friendly Grants." Though CHSV gratefully receives a recurring grant for the County Museum, we could use help in applying for more. If you have a passion for history and are interested in grant writing, please let us know. This is your opportunity to assist CHSV. Tamara Evans, Curator of Magnolia Grange, attended a session titled "New Beginnings: Historic House Museums Adapt for the Future." After the large turn-out at Magnolia Grange for the Christmas Open House, we know we have lots of things going for us. There are opportunities at Magnolia Grange. Do you attend the wonderful teas? For a small fee you and your guests can see Magnolia Grange at its best, enjoy tea, and hear great speakers. Cornelia Owens Goode, Chair of our African-American History committee, attended a session on "Finding Our Future Supporters." The panel suggested that we: Think big, rethink, look at things through our visitors' eyes, instill good will and interest, look at local history relevancy. As a member, would you think about how the Society and its individual members could identify key audiences and widen our net? How can we project our relevance to residents and visitors alike? We have six Winter Lecture Series programs coming up in January, February, and March. Bring friends to each and every one. See this edition of *The Messenger*, call the office, or see our website for information on all our buildings, Civil War sites, and programs. Don't forget the opportunities to visit the County Museum and Old Jail with their changing and permanent exhibits. Members visit our houses and museums free. There are opportunities galore to enjoy and participate in Chesterfield County history. The most important is what you all have already done – become members of CHSV. Thanks.

Tra Wagenknecht

**From the Messenger editor** – please e-mail by March 10 any submissions you would like to see in *The Messenger* to [lipowicz1@verizon.net](mailto:lipowicz1@verizon.net). Your stories, research, and photos are all welcome. If your submission is handwritten or typed, please provide to Diane Dallmeyer.

This is issue #100 of *The Messenger*. Thank you to all the editors and contributors who have made this possible. And a special thank you to my wife Rachel who proofreads every issue. You might wonder why #100 occurs in our 31<sup>st</sup> year. *The Messenger* was published twice a year for several years. Also, one issue number was inadvertently skipped. Do you know which one? Answer comes next time.

It is with sadness that I report the passing of Society member and former *Messenger* editor **Mason Tudor Chalkley (May 6, 1934 - December 21, 2011)**. Mason was a Charter Member of the Society, served as *Messenger* editor from 1996 until 2003, and served two terms on our Board of Directors. He was a retired Major of the Chesterfield County Police. He was a longtime member of Woods United Methodist Church, where he taught Sunday School for many years.

## Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia

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### Castlewood Office & Library

Diane Dallmeyer – Administrator  
Hours: 10-4 Mon-Fri  
(804)796-7121

### Magnolia Grange & Gift Shop

Tamara Evans – Curator  
Hours: 10-4 Tue-Fri & 10-2 Sat  
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### The Museum

Pat Roble - Curator  
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### Historic Sites Specialist:

Bryan Truzzie  
(804)751-4946

### Event Reservations:

(804)796-7003

### Messenger Editor

Peter Lipowicz

## **An Opportunity to Recapture the Oral Histories of Our African-American Elders**

Sarah Gregory and Audrey M. Ross

On February 5, 2011, the Chesterfield County Museum opened its doors to the African-American History Committee's (AAHC) Black History Month exhibit entitled *FourScore and More: Capturing Memories of aged 80 and Older African-Americans in Chesterfield County and their Struggles and Successes Experienced*. The collection of oral histories began in 2005. In 2008 the project was officially named *FourScore and More* under the leadership of the former AAHC Chair, the late Brenda Friend Briggs. Their words speak fervently to us as they describe the life experiences of African-Americans who were born or lived in Chesterfield County from the first 30 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Their stories reflect many common themes of young people growing up in a mostly rural and segregated environment which include their early education, their families and community life, their military service and their chosen fields of work. This was our first Oral History public exhibit and plans are underway to present the *2012 FourScore and More Part II*. The oral histories compiled by the AAHC are presented here and subsequent issues of *The Messenger*.

### **Almedius Blanche Berry**

Almedius Blanche Berry was born in Chesterfield County to Richard C. Berry Jr. and Maude Patterson Berry. The Berrys had five children and Almedius was their only daughter. She attended elementary school at Port Walthall, and later at D. Webster Davis, which was on the campus of Virginia State College (now Virginia State University). Almedius's mother was a teacher at the school, and together they traveled to campus in their Model T Ford. Inspired by her mother, she went to college to become a teacher. She obtained her B.

S. Degree in Library Science from California State University, and her Masters Degree from Virginia State and Syracuse University in New York. Ms. Berry was employed as a Librarian in Hartford, Connecticut and at Southside Jr. High School in Dinwiddie County. She has generously served for many years as a member of Bethesda Baptist Church in Colonial Heights. Her callings have included serving as church clerk, as a member of the Missionary Society, preparing Sunday school and funeral bulletins, as well as teaching Vacation Bible School and writing other church reading material. Having no children of her own did not stop her from reaching out to her community, which became her passion. She devoted her time to many activities and associations including: 4-H Club, Home Demonstrations Club, The Order of the Eastern Star and many other organizations in her community. She was a Life Golden Member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., which she joined in 1949. She was also the founder of Alease Cooley Memorial Tent #718 of the United Order of Tents. Almedius's many memberships and honors for her continued service and devotion to people everywhere include: being Past Worthy Matron of Electa Chapter #7 OES, Past Loyal Lady Ruler of Petersburg Assembly #144 Order of Golden Circle, Past Most Ancient Matron of Jeshua Court #4 Heroines of Jericho, Past Most Ancient Grand Matron of Gilgal Grand Court Heroines of Jericho, and Past Most Ancient Grand Matron of General Grand Conference of Grand Courts of United States and Bahamas, Inc.

### **Howard Harrison Boisseau Sr.**

**Born March 12, 1923**

At age 87, Howard Harrison Boisseau Sr., is the only surviving patriarch of the Boisseau/Watkins family, and the eldest of the four remaining offspring (all octogenarians) born to the late Hazel Watkins Boisseau and King Solomon Boisseau, both Chesterfield natives. Howard was delivered by the "neighborhood mid-wife" in a modest home by the railroad

**Born June 25th, 1920**



tracks on Thurston Road in Chesterfield County. He was the fourth of nine children. Howard attended Drewry's Bluff Elementary School, a one-room school located deep in the woods off Hopkins Road and Kingsland Elementary School. He often speaks of learning to read and write and especially of learning arithmetic. Because of his poverty ridden circumstances, Howard walked to school without shoes on his feet, and sometimes did not have sufficient clothing to keep him warm. Due to the early demise of his parents, Howard only completed the sixth grade. He left school to provide for his siblings and became a father figure to them all. Howard fondly remembers the encouragement and strong biblical convictions of his parents. Throughout his life he maintained his faith in Jesus Christ, and has been a lifelong member (over 70 years) of the First Baptist Church Centralia. He was employed at the Allied Chemical Corporation (now Honeywell Inc.), retiring after 31 years of service. On December 23, 1949, Howard married his childhood sweetheart, Mary Elizabeth Anderson, whom he met when she was seven years old. They were married for 58 years, until her demise on August 22, 2007. They became the parents of four sons: Howard Harrison Jr., Howell Bertram, Frankie Lydell, and Antonio Leerone, and one daughter who died at birth. Howard is known as "Papa" by his eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Howard still lives at home and enjoys gardening and reading. He is considered a Bible scholar by family and friends, and still has a sharp mind for scripture and current events.



### **Bernice Carter Branch**

**Born December 15, 1908**

Bernice was one of seven children born to Willie Washington Carter, Sr. and Ada Brooks Carter, of Chesterfield County. Their other children were Elvira, Dorothy, Emma, Joseph, Willie, Jr., and Andrew who all grew up in the Mount Nebo neighborhood and attended school in Chesterfield County. On December 14, 1930, just one day before her 22nd birthday, Bernice married Charles Bernard Branch, Sr. and they became the parents of two children: Charles Bernard Branch, Jr. and Mary Lorraine Branch Randolph. Bernard, Sr. passed away but Bernice would become a doting grandmother to Clifton Randolph, Sr. and Kimberly Branch and eventually great-grandmother to 7: Clifton, Jr., Heinrich, Ruth, Darnell, Demetrick, Daysia and Dayman. Bernice served as a secretary of the 4-H Club for the Chesterfield County Extension Office during the period of the Chesterfield County Colored Fair. The 4-H has proven to be a vital learning stage and activity for many of the African-American youth who depended on Mrs. Branch and others like her. Bernice joined the First Baptist Church of Midlothian at an early age and served in many capacities including: Sunday School Teacher, member of the Senior Choir, Member of the Deaconess Board, and Secretary of The Willing Workers. She is currently the oldest living member of the First Baptist Church of Midlothian. Until reaching her 90s, Mrs. Branch enjoyed caring for her yard and was an avid gardener whose love of flowers was clearly evident. Today Mrs. Branch resides at Lucy Corr Nursing facility and maintains a pleasant attitude and bright smile. She loves her family very much, is a respected matriarch, and recently celebrated her 102nd birthday.



### **Rosa Lee Caldwell Branch**

**Born May 10, 1920**

"I was born in Columbia, South Carolina and brought to Chesterfield County at age 3 by the Rev. Joseph Brown to be adopted by Walter and Priscilla Irene Caldwell. I grew up on Warwick Road, which was then a part of Chesterfield County. Our new two-room schoolhouse

was on the grounds of our church, the First Union Baptist Church where Rev. Brown was our Pastor. This was at Midlothian Turnpike and Warwick Road, and the school was on 'The Lane,' later to be called Starview, near Cloverleaf Mall. Life was very good until 1930 when my father died and mother had to begin working as a laundress to support us. She took a domestic job in Pittsburgh where I attended a non-segregated school, until we returned a year later to Chesterfield and I re-entered Warwick Road School. Next I attended Hickory Hill High School, where I graduated as Salutatorian, second in my class, and earned a partial scholarship to Virginia State College. Sadly the tuition was still too costly, so I became a maid for the family of state Senator Lloyd C. Bird. I saved to attend Van de Vyver Business College, which led to my employment with Virginia Mutual Life Insurance Company. On Christmas Day in 1942, I married Kermit Lowell Branch, prior to his deployment to the South Pacific during WWII. Kermit passed away in 1990 after 49 years of marriage during which time we had three children. While raising our family, I volunteered in many organizations including; PTA, Red Cross, Girl Scouts and church. When our children started school I returned to the workforce. I retired in 1983 from Bellwood Defense General Supply Center. I continued volunteering for numerous organizations and retired as a Brownie Troop Leader after more than 40 years of service. I feel fortunate to have lived a full and rich life enjoying a wide variety of experiences."



**Clarence Alonzo Lee Sr.**

**Born on January 2, 1930**

Clarence was born to the late Thomas Junius Lee and Lucille Branch Lee, and is one of six children; Clinton, Robert Edward, Lucille Louise, and Thomas Emerson. He grew up in Chesterfield County and attended Chesterfield County Schools.



The first five years of school he walked and after the consolidation of Dry Bridge School with Midlothian he rode the school bus. Clarence served in the U.S. Army in 1948. On August 28, 1955, he married Gloria Harris, and they are the proud parents of five children; Lauranette Lorraine, Clarence Alonzo Jr., Jacqueline Jeanette, Renae Claudette, and Quenton Radcliffe Lee. Clarence is a

deacon at Brown Grove Baptist Church and regularly visits the sick and shut in. Clarence became the first Black licensed electrician in Chesterfield County in 1965, and owner/operator of Midlothian Electric Company. He provided electrical services to the residents of Midlothian. His first major job was wiring the bathhouses at Pocahontas State Park. He was recognized for his service by the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors, on Feb. 10, 2010. His children used to say that their father has no hobbies; "he works all of the time and likes it." Clarence is now retired and his son, Quenton is the owner/operator of the business.

**Richard Cox**

**Born February 6, 1921**

Mr. Cox has been a resident of Chesterfield all of his 90 years of life. He is the youngest and the last surviving of 9 children born to Henry and Lillie Heath Cox. Richard's father worked many years in the coalmines of West Virginia before returning to Chesterfield and working in the sawmills. The family lived in the Winterpock area and fed the family with a productive vegetable garden, pigs, and chickens. Fresh pork was cured in a backyard smokehouse and extra eggs sold at local stores. Richard attended the two-room Winterpock School, the first on Beaver Bridge Road and a half-mile from the old Brooks Store. He walked to school, collected wood for heat, brought in drinking water and helped raise money for the classroom chalk. His education ended at grade 7, because the only high school for blacks (Hickory Hill) was located 25 miles away with

no busing for black students in Chesterfield County. Most men worked in farming or logging in those days and before WWII; few local blacks owned cars. This meant a horse and wagon provided their means of transportation, though at age 19 he learned to drive a Model A Ford. In 1943, he entered WWII in the 847th Army Air Corps Engineering Aviation Battalion as a Tech Sergeant. He landed at Normandy on the Coast of France and went on to Germany. As an Engineer he rebuilt runways bombed by the German forces. He was discharged in 1946 and became employed at McGuire Veterans Hospitals until his retirement in 1979. In 1947 he married Elsie Haskins of Winterpock. They have been married for 63 years and have both faithfully served on the Diaconate Board of Tabernacle Baptist Church. They have one daughter, Lillie, married to Leslie Branch, who has given them a grandson, Leahri.



**Fundraising**

Peter Lipowicz

I am pleased to thank our 90 donors who have collectively given over \$5500 in this quarter. The 30/30 campaign was a big success thanks to you. Our total year to date is over \$13,000. And remember, there are many ways to contribute to the Society. Your valuable volunteer time is one. Also, when you buy a book or anything else from the gift shop, that helps us out, too.

**Donations of \$500 or more** Peter and Rachel Lipowicz

**Donations of \$100 - \$499** Tomahawk Ruritan Club, Howlett's Tavern, Robert & Therese Wagenknecht, Ray Robertson, Lee Sherrill, Jr., Thomas Sokol, Doug & Linda Blake, Annie Mann, Robert (Peppy) Jones, George & Judy Cranford, Russ & Lynn Waymack, T. R. Fulghum, Dorothy & Charles Parker, Rachel Holmes, Terry Roach, Dan Downs, Ken Shiflett, Dave & Amy Goobic, and James & Marilyn Brandt

**Donations up to \$99** Goldie Taylor, Theodora Cogbill, Mt. Sinai Baptist Church, Hazel Cole, Guy & Philippa Smith, Lynn Fuss, Old Stage, Inc, Nancy Frantel, John Gallacher, Vanessa & Jesse Crews, Robert & Betsy Zehner, James & Kim Holland, R.C. & Helen LaPrade, Thomas & Kathryn McKee, Dr. & Mrs. Wright Pond, Sr., Michael & Patricia Rollston, Joyce Lee Smith, Anne Brandon, Linwood & Shirley Hudson, E.E. & Harriet Puckett, Mike & DeeDee Thomas, Liess & Sep van der Linden, Christopher & Dee Anne Knaggs, Ruth Stover, Terry & Nancy Glass, J.B. Cook, Jr., James Kinzie, Virginia McDaniel, C.B. & Margaret Morris, Betty & R.S. Barnes, Louise King, James & June Rooks, Dabney & Stuart Short, Ruth & Thomas Boyd, Ernest & Charlotte Carr, Lorraine Moody, Judy Worthington, William Jones, Dr. & Mrs. T. Donald Marsh, Katherin Floyd, Marie Butler, Virginia Justis, Bruce & Kathleen Baker, Philip Wallace, Sr, Ann Rest, Doris Hancock, Ellis & Pattie Grady, Lois Williams, Arline McGuire, Herbert Harrison, Elizabeth Matthews, Gwendolyn Davis, Mr. & Mrs. Wm. Poindexter, Page Steele, Hazel Cole, Jim & Marcia Alberston, Randy Rodachy, Tabernacle Baptist Church, Harold Himes, Lois & Larry Buchanan, Jennie & Robert Howe, Roy & Jeanette Hamilton, Linda & Kenneth Powers, Mr. & Mrs. Ian Stoddart, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Foster, Linda Bierz, Virginia Chapman, Mildred Crostic, Peter & Pamela Wyman, Ann Shelton, and Shirley Longest

**Membership Report**

Rachel Lipowicz

Our membership stands at 606 members. This quarter the Society extends a warm welcome to the following new members. Ms. Michelle Burley; Ms. Yvonne H. Carter; The Coleman Family (Virgil, Mercedes & Quintin); Mr. Vernon Creekmore; Mr. & Mrs. James Maurer (Anita); Mr. Michael J. Petrigala; Mr. & Mrs. Grady D. Rogers (Nancy); The Skirbunt Family (Peter, Rebecca & Christine); Ms. Julie White. And thank you to all of our Business Members: Colonial Honda, Shoosmith Bros., Martins Grocery Stores, Ms. Sandra R. Claytor CPA, Express Auto Center, Howlett's Tavern, Old Stage, and Patient First.

## Decennial Measuring of the Nunnally Oak Tree

On Thursday, October 20, 2011 the decennial (every decade) measuring ceremony of the historic Nunnally Oak enlivened the Courthouse Green. Amidst breezy fall weather, around 70 people observed County Extension Office Director Mike Likins, Judges Herbert C. Gill Jr and Ernest P. Gates, gardening expert Richard Nunnally and Court Clerk Judy Worthington as the official measurement was taken. This measurement will be added to the official Chesterfield County Court Record by Ms. Worthington. CHSV President Tra Wagenknecht opened the program, followed by Rusty Lescault who told the story of the tree. County treasurer Richard Cordle sang America the Beautiful to close the program.



The tree, planted in 1814 by young apprentice to the Clerk of Court, Lawson Nunnally, is our oldest Courthouse Green landmark. In 1991, the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, Maurice Sullivan, along with attorney James Gordon, Jr., decreed that the tree be henceforth referred to as the Nunnally Oak. The tree is measured at the height of 5 feet from the ground. In 1916 it measured 11' 11". Court records show its circumference had grown to 14' 1" when measured in 1940. Fifteen feet three inches was the result in 1958 and 16' 4.5" in 1981. By 1991 the tree had reached 16' 9" and by 2001, 17' 2". This year's result was 17' 7". Director Likins offered this assessment of the future of the splendid Nunnally Oak, "The Nunnally Oak is a stately resident of our county complex. As it approaches the beginning of its 3rd century, it is not without problems from natural processes and human interactions. While the potential exists for the tree to be here in 2414, realistically the tree will fall short unless all efforts to favor the tree come first." CHSV appreciates the involvement of our distinguished members and guests in marking this special event, as well as the sponsorship of Bartlett's Tree Experts.

### Text of Russ Lescault's speech

We're here today to celebrate and contemplate a historical artifact. When one mentions the word artifact, you normally think of old musty journals, rusty farm tools, or pottery shards. But today, I'm using the word to describe a grand, living, organism...the 200-year old Nunnally Oak tree.

Why is it called the Nunnally Oak? Tradition has it that a young citizen by that last name planted this white oak as a sapling in 1814. Lawson Nunnally, the son of a local Baptist preacher, was born in Chesterfield County in 1803 on a farm that was adjacent to the courthouse. At the tender age of 9 or 10 years old, Lawson began working for the Clerk of the Court, possibly as an apprentice. When the tree was planted in 1814, Lawson would have been 11 or 12 years old. One has to ask, "What was happening at the time and why did Lawson plant this tree?"

In 1814, the County and the Country was in turmoil. A severe recession gripped the economy and the county had experienced spring floods followed by a summer drought. And the nation was in the middle of a two year war with Great Britain, with enemy

soldiers marching through Virginia. The war really hit home to the citizens of Virginia when in late August the invading British troops burned and pillaged our nation's capitol and parts of northern Virginia. Adding insult to injury a tornado struck the DC area while the city was burning. Reading this type of news that was mostly likely posted at the courthouse, times must have seemed grim to all our county citizens and some may have wondered if the end of days were upon them. Knowing how news traveled in those days, by men on horseback or by carriage, most of the news was probably days old, which most likely made everyone on edge wondering when the British were coming to burn their homes and crops. Perhaps Lawson Nunnally planted the tree as a distraction from contemplating about the war and destruction?

However, I want to believe that Lawson was like most young people, full of hope and enthusiasm for the future. Historical events later in 1814 give some support to this theory. It was in this year that a famous song was written, a song that expresses anticipation, determination and patriotism. This song, written by Francis Scott Key, would later become our national anthem....I want to believe that Lawson planted this white oak to express his pride in the resolve of the soldiers as they withstood the British bombardment of Fort McHenry. I think his pride was the same as Mr. Key's when he wrote the Star Spangle Banner, both wanted to express their joy in being an American. At least this is what I want to believe. But, let's leave speculation and go back to history. What happened to Lawson Nunnally and his tree after 1814?

Lawson became a deputy clerk of the Court of Chesterfield County, a position he held until for 21 years under the stewardship of Parke Poindexter, Clerk of Chesterfield County Circuit Court. When Lawson was 31 years old he married Marion Burfoot on October 24, 1834. Shortly after their marriage Lawson had changed his profession, from legal clerk to banker. In 1837 Lawson had become the assistant cashier of the Bank of Virginia and he worked his way up the ranks. Then in 1843, probably one of Lawson's proudest moments, Marion gave birth to a girl and they named their daughter Mary. Later, Lawson's banking career reached a pinnacle when he became the President of the Commonwealth Bank.

Unfortunately fate intervened and overshadowed Lawson's professional accomplishments. In 1852 Lawson became a widower when his wife Marion, 36 years old, died of consumption. Lawson was left to raise their young daughter, Mary. But even this joy was taken away from him. Just five years after death of his wife, Mary, his 14 year-old daughter died.

Lawson never remarried. Over the next few decades he lived in series of upscale hotels in Richmond and experienced many more tragedies. Between 1861 and 1865 he saw his city and state ravaged by war, famine and fire. After the confederate soldiers set fire to Richmond in 1865 the American hotel, his residence at the time, burned to the ground. Lawson survived living another eleven years until dying at the age of 73 in 1876. He is buried in the Shockoe Hill Cemetery in downtown Richmond next to his wife and daughter. Newspaper accounts written about him at the time of his death, describe him as a "...highly esteemed citizen, as pure and honorable man as ever lived." Seemingly based on his status and his reputation in the community at the time of his death it can be said that Lawson endured time and misfortune, a trait that is also evident in his tree.

Not only has this great tree survived, but it has grown. This great white oak was first measured in 1916 by the Honorable Judge Robert Southall, shortly before the building of this 'historic 1971 courthouse' you see before you today. At the time it was first officially measured, the tree was already almost 100 years old and measured 11' 11". When the tree was last measured in 2001, it has grown over 5 feet in circumference.

In 1814 when this white oak was planted by Lawson Nunnally, none of the historic structures seen today on the courthouse green existed. This fine structure, behind Nunnally Oak, the old Clerk's office, was not built until fourteen years later, in 1828. Even the rugged aged jail did not exist; the tree was already over 75 years old when it was constructed in 1892. However as the tree has grown

and endured, so has Chesterfield County. The County has changed from a small rural area to one of the largest communities in Virginia.

Indeed, history has marched on as this tree has endured. During the 200 years of this tree our county and its citizens has have also endure much; nine wars, depressions, natural disasters and man-made tragedies. However during these times of trouble this tree 200 year-old tree has been there for us. Political debate and discourse has passed through its branches, the broad limbs has given citizens, lawyers, judges and community leaders comfort under its shaded on warm days. In times of war, the trunk that we are measuring today has been festooned with patriotic banners and yellow ribbons.

Over eight newspaper articles, numerous court decrees, one state research projects and one book have mentioned and honored this enduring, living artifact...our Nunnally Oak. One can only say that this majestic tree has endured and grown... just as our County, State and Nation has endured and prospered. Hopefully more measurements will be done in the future as we both, county and tree, prosper in the coming decades.

### **African-Americans from Chesterfield County In U.S. Service During the War Between the States**

D. Michael Thomas, CHS Veterans Data Base Committee Chesterfield County provided about 2,000 men for service to the Confederacy from 1861-1865. No records of black residents from the county serving in the United States Army have been found despite extensive research efforts. Union navy records, however, are a treasure trove of information. Over 2,800 African-Americans from Virginia are identified as having served in the United States navy during the war. Ten of these men listed Chesterfield County as their place of birth and their records, while limited, provide valuable snapshot images of these sailors. A review of the records of the ships they served aboard adds more detail allowing us to glimpse some of their wartime service.

**Edward Bland**, a 24 year old farmer, enlisted on the James River July 4, 1862. Records describe his rating as "Contraband" on the vessel *Morse*. His last record of service is from October 1863.

**Charles Brown**, a 22 year old whose occupation is listed as "None", enlisted in Newburyport, Massachusetts October 22, 1863, and acquired a rating of "Landsman". No vessel service is stated.

**James R. Gardner**, a 26 year old whose occupation was "Sailor", enlisted in New York as an "Ordinary Seaman" July 30, 1863 and served on the vessel *Bainbridge*. The only muster report for him is dated August 18, 1863. Gardner was lost at sea three days later when his vessel capsized during a storm of Cape Hatteras and all but one of her crew perished.

**Joseph Good**, a 40 year old whose occupation is shown as "None", enlisted on the James River May 17, 1864. He acquired the rating of "Landsman" and served at least through June 1865 aboard the vessel *Stepping Stones*.

**James Kenny**, a 31 year old farmer enlisted on the James River July 4, 1862 with a rating of "Contraband". His service extended at least through October 1863 aboard the *Morse*.

**Washington Robinson**, a 20 year old whose occupation is shown as "None" enlisted on the James River June 9, 1862 and achieved a rating of "3<sup>rd</sup> Class Boy". His records show service through January 1865 and that he first served aboard the *Galena* and later on the *Shenandoah*.

**Archer Taylor**, a 36 year old Blacksmith/ Laborer enlisted August 24, 1864 in Norfolk with a rating of "Landsman". His service extended through September 1865 as a crewman aboard the *Osceola* and, later, the *William Badger*.

**Robert Thomas**, a 24 year old field hand enlisted on the James River July 4, 1862 with a rating of "Contraband". His service extended through October 1863 aboard the vessel *Morse*.

**Charles Walker**, a 21 year old Laborer enlisted on the James River July 4, 1862 with a rating of "Contraband". His service extended through June 20, 1865 aboard the *Morse* until October 1863 and, later, the *Stepping Stones*.

**William Walker**, a 24 year old Laborer, enlisted on the James River July 4, 1862 with a rating of "Contraband". Service aboard the *Morse* is confirmed through October 1863.

Bland, Kenny, Thomas and the two Walker's enlisted together on the same day and served on the vessel *Morse* for over a year. This vessel was a wooden side wheel ferryboat converted into a shallow draft gunboat. As part of the Union James River Flotilla, the *Morse* saw regular combat action along the James during their time aboard including participation in the capture of Confederate Fort Powhatan 14 July 1863. All but Charles Walker were, apparently, mustered out of service in October 1863.

**Bainbridge** was an armed brig, a sailing ship, utilized as part of the Union blockading fleet in the Gulf of Mexico. She sailed from New York on 18 August 1863 and was lost at sea on 21 August during an intense storm off Cape Hatteras taking all her crew but one with her. James Gardner's naval career was all of three days.

**Stepping Stones** was a wooden ferryboat converted to a lightly armed gunboat used frequently as a dispatch boat. In May 1864, she was assigned as part of the torpedo sweeping and patrol force on the James River. In November 1864, she captured two Confederate blockade runners in Mobjack Bay and in March 1865 was in an expedition which attacked Confederate guerrilla installations along the Potomac. Joseph Good and Charles Walker were aboard during this period.

**Galena** was an experimental ironclad gunboat, heavily armed but lightly armored, best known for the pounding it took at Drewry's Bluff in May 1862. Washington Robinson came aboard her a few weeks later and was a crewman through April 1863. From May through July 1862, she was active in providing naval gunfire support against Confederate forces threatening McClellan's army below Richmond on the Peninsula. Afterward, she became a part of the fleet in and around Hampton Roads until being sent to Philadelphia for major repairs in May 1863.

**Shenandoah** was a heavily armed wooden screw sloop. It appears Washington Robinson was transferred to her in September 1863 when she was in Philadelphia for upkeep. *Shenandoah* was a true man-of-war meant for the high seas. She searched for Confederate commerce raiders and blockade runners and used her guns effectively at Fort Fisher in December 1864 and again in January 1865 when the fort was captured. All in all, Washington Robinson saw considerable action during his enlistment.

**Osceola** was a wooden, side wheel, double-ended gunboat arriving in Hampton Roads in May 1864. The vessel's main activities were to escort and provide protection for Union transports transiting the James River between City Point and Hampton Roads in support of Grant's army around Richmond and Petersburg. Archer Taylor was aboard her when she participated in both the December 1864 and January 1865 attacks on Fort Fisher.

*William Badger* was a wooden-hulled whaling ship towed to Hampton Roads from Maine for use as a stationary supply ship in support of the Union navy. Archer Taylor was assigned to her for a short spell in March 1865 then again from June through September 1865. No information regarding personal circumstances of these men prior to enlistment is known and many questions are raised but unanswered by the limited information available. Some of these are: Were the two Walker's related? Were Bland, Kenney, Thomas and the two Walker's from a single plantation? Were they seeking their freedom or were they forcibly impressed by the Union navy? Where did they go following their discharge? Brown and Gardner each enlisted in a northern city, but how did they get there from Chesterfield? Sadly, all these individual stories seem to have been lost over the years.

Sources: Civil War Soldiers and Sailor System, <http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/>, Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships <http://www.Hazegray.org/danfs/>.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Names of others in Household/Sr. Couple level: spouse: \_\_\_\_\_  
 children: \_\_\_\_\_

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 N R level \_\_\_\_\_ yr \_\_\_\_\_ AIM u/dt RB Nlet xf ch# \_\_\_\_\_ inv# \_\_\_\_\_

# 2012 Winter Lecture Series

*presented by the Chesterfield Historical Society of Virginia*

All lectures take place Fridays at 7 p.m. at the Lucy Corr Village Community Hall, 6800 Lucy Corr Blvd., Chesterfield.  
 Admission is free for Historical Society members and \$5 for non-members. Reservations are recommended.  
 Call 804-796-7003 to reserve a seat.

January 13

**"I HAVE NOT YET BEGUN  
TO FIGHT"**  
 Capt. John Paul Jones,  
 Continental Navy, portrayed by  
 William Young, author and  
 historic impersonator



January 27

**"THE STORY OF THE CONFEDERATE  
STATES PATENT OFFICE AND  
ITS INVENTORS"**  
 Jack Knight, author and  
 registered U.S. patent agent

February 10

**"LOWER APPOMATTOX RIVER,  
CHESTERFIELD'S  
SOUTHERN BORDER"**  
 Ben Uzel, president, Colonial  
 Heights Historical Society



February 24

**"THE 1862 BATTLE OF  
DREWRY'S BLUFF"**  
 Sam Craghead, public  
 relations specialist,  
 Museum of the  
 Confederacy

March 9

**"THE CAPT. JOHN SMITH  
CHESAPEAKE NATIONAL  
HISTORIC TRAIL"**  
 Cindy Chance,  
 National Park Service,  
 Chesapeake Bay Office



March 23

**"WOMEN AND CHILDREN,  
SURVIVAL AT JAMESTOWNE"**  
 Connie Lapallo, author  
 and historian

**Out on a limb.....**  
 Angie Wilderman

As the year concludes, we begin thinking about New Year's Day and resolutions. Over the years, I've come to the conclusion that resolutions are not in my best interest. I set them and then do many other things instead. My hope is to do more genealogy in 2012 but I doubt that I will be able to accomplish much more than I did this past year. I do know there are many opportunities for research. For one, are you aware that the 1940 census will become available on April 2? The census will not be indexed for awhile so you will need to know where the family was living in order to find the information you need. If you are online, here is a link for more information: <http://www.1940census.net/>. Federal census records available will now include 1790 through 1940. The 1890 census was severely damaged in a fire in 1921 and as a result almost entirely lost. It didn't go up in flames but drowned. In putting out the fire, it became water logged and instead of getting it dried out quickly, the punch cards molded. Yes, punch cards, this was the first system to use an electrical tabulation system. But, there were probably other extenuating circumstances why the records were not salvaged. For more information, go to <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1996/spring/1890-census-1.html>. Also, if you have Bible records and old photographs in your possession, please consider bringing them to the library at Castlewood so that we can photocopy them and add them to the Family History and Photograph Collections. The Genealogy Committee wishes you a very Merry Christmas and Happy 2012. We look forward to seeing you at the various events during the year.



Current Occupant or:

### CHS Events Calendar

#### January

- 7<sup>th</sup>, Sat, 8-10pm Spirited History Tour of *Castlewood*. \$20; Register online with PayPal.  
13<sup>th</sup>, Fri, 7pm CHSV Winter Lecture: "John Paul Jones" by interpreter William Young.  
22<sup>nd</sup>, Sun, 1pm CHSV Members Quarterly Lunch Meeting (*Salisbury Country Club*)  
27<sup>th</sup>, Fri, 7pm CHSV Winter Lecture: "Confederate Patents & Inventors" by Jack Knight.  
28<sup>th</sup>, Sat, 7-9pm Spirited History Investigation Technique Workshop 101 (*Castlewood*), \$10; Register online with PayPal.

#### February (Black History Month)

- 1<sup>st</sup>, Wed, 1pm Coretta Scott King Tea (*Magnolia Grange*) \$25. Prepaid reservations required: (804)796-1479  
2<sup>nd</sup>, Thurs, 10am-4pm **NEW!** Launch of CHSV Heirloom Seed Exchange (*Castlewood*) Membership information: (804)768-0616.  
4<sup>th</sup>, Sat, 10am-noon Butler's Offensive – Civil War 150<sup>th</sup> Event (*Point of Rocks Park*); \$8, Register online with PayPal.  
4th, Sat, 11am NEW Exhibit Opens for Black History Month: "Fourscore & More – Oral Histories of African-American Elders in Chesterfield County" (Part II) (*Museum*). (804)768-7311.  
4<sup>th</sup>, Sat, 8-10pm Spirited History Tour of *Magnolia Grange*. \$20; Register online with PayPal.  
10<sup>th</sup>, Fri, 7pm CHSV Winter Lecture: "Lower Appomattox River, Chesterfield's Southern Border" by Ben Uzel.  
18<sup>th</sup>, Sat, 7-9pm Spirited History EVP Technique Workshop 102 (*Magnolia Grange*), \$10; Register online with PayPal.  
21st, Tue, 1pm **NEW!** CHSV Heirloom Seed Exchange Seminar: "How to get your kids to eat more veggies with less hassle," (*Castlewood*). \$20 Fee. Register online with PayPal.  
25<sup>th</sup>, Sat, 10am **NEW!** CHSV Heirloom Seed Exchange Seminar: "How to get your kids to eat more veggies with less hassle."  
28<sup>th</sup>, Tue, 1pm **NEW!** Heirloom Seed Exchange Seminar: "How to grow food from seeds" (*Castlewood*) \$25. Reg. online with PayPal.  
22<sup>nd</sup>, Wed, 1pm "Remembering Washington – A Birthday Tea" (*Magnolia Grange*). Speaker: G. Ed Henderson. \$25. Prepaid reservation required: (804)796-1479.  
24<sup>th</sup>, Fri, 7pm CHSV Winter Lecture: "1862 Battle of Drewry's Bluff" by Sam Craighead, Museum of the Confederacy.

#### March

- 3<sup>rd</sup>, Sat, 10am-2pm Howlett Line Van Tour – Civil War 150<sup>th</sup> Event (*Henricus*), \$15; Register online with PayPal.  
3<sup>rd</sup>, Sat, 10am Heirloom Seed Exchange Seminar: "How to grow food from seeds," (*Castlewood*). \$25 Fee. Reg. online with PayPal.  
3<sup>rd</sup>, Sat, 8-10pm Spirited History Tour of *1917 Courthouse Green*, \$20; Register online with PayPal.  
9<sup>th</sup>, Fri, 7pm CHSV Winter Lecture: "Capt. John Smith Chesapeake Historic Trail" by Cindy Chance.  
17<sup>th</sup>, Sat, 11-4pm "Falling Creek Ironworks Day." CHSV Information Table. Free. (*Falling Creek Park*).  
23<sup>rd</sup>, Fri, 7pm CHSV Winter Lecture: "Women & Children in Early Jamestowne" by author Connie Lapallo.  
24<sup>th</sup>, Sat, 9am-1pm CHSV/Chester Lions "Antiques Evaluation" Fundraiser (*Thomas High School Commons*). \$10/Item or 3 Items for \$25.  
24<sup>th</sup>, Sat, 10am-2pm 1864 Bermuda Hundred Campaign Van Tour – Civil War 150<sup>th</sup> Event (*Henricus*), \$15; Register online with PayPal.  
24<sup>th</sup>, Sat, 7-9pm Spirited History Paranormal Investigation Workshop (*1892 Old Jail*), \$10; Register online with PayPal.  
31<sup>st</sup>, Sat, 10am-noon Butler's Offensive – Civil War 150<sup>th</sup> Event (*Point of Rocks Park*), \$8; Register online with PayPal.

#### April

- 7<sup>th</sup>, Sat, noon-3pm "Confederate History & Heritage Day." Free. (*1917 Courthouse Green*)  
14<sup>th</sup>, Sat, 10am-2pm 1864 Bermuda Hundred Campaign Van Tour – Civil War 150<sup>th</sup> Event (*Henricus*), \$15; Register online with PayPal.