



# **CAROLINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

*January 2016*

*Bowling Green, Virginia*

*Vol. 36, Issue 1*

**The Society will meet at 3:00 p.m., Sunday, January 24, 2016, at the Caroline County Community Services Center, in the meeting room of the Caroline Library, Inc., Main Branch, located at 17202 Richmond Turnpike, Milford, Virginia 22514**

For this membership meeting members are asked to bring an item(s) of historical nature to the meeting for "Show and Tell." The item or items can be anything you may think is of interest related to Caroline County or local history. If you have such things as old photos, documents, farm tools, books, small furniture piece, or other unusual items you would like to share, please bring them. If you have an "old" friend bring them and maybe they will have a history tale to relate to us. This is always a fun and education part of the meeting. Please participate.

## **Message from the President**

Well, the Holiday Season is over and I sincerely hope everyone enjoyed time with their families. It is now time to start the New Year and motivate ourselves to make 2016 a better year for our personal lives and the Caroline Historical Society. I would like to encourage everyone to become more involved in your community and especially our organization. Both need your continuous support to improve and survive.

With 2016 well on its way, I would like to request help from all members in providing new ideas or suggestions on how we can become a better and more active organization in preserving and promoting the history of Caroline County. There are always new ways to make history fun, interesting, and educational.

Our goals this year will include increasing membership, our collections, refreshing displays, working with other historical organizations or societies, supporting the Caroline Library, Inc., and working closer with the County Board of Supervisors and staff. I am sure there are many other avenues to explore where we can expand and generate interest in our county's remarkable history. Support from the membership, citizens, businesses, and our county government will assist in our on-going mission to preserve our historical resources.

The Caroline Historical Society is conducting a fund-raising event by selling raffle tickets to win a limited edition signed and numbered Civil War print entitled "Early Snow" by the late Joe Umble of Caroline County, Virginia. Mr. Umble passed away at the early age of 45 in December 1998 and was one of the top five Civil War artists in the country. He was known for his accuracy to historical detail and dedication to preserving history through his paintings. Joe was a history buff and a self-taught artist. In his early career, he studied under the nationally known Caroline County artist, Sidney E. King.

This print is a signed and numbered Publisher Proof Edition which means there are only 25 signed and numbered prints designated as Publisher Proofs (PP). The print is marked "PP" with the number of the print above the /25. The print is signed (original signature) by the artist, Joe Umble. The print measures 24¾" x 16½" and is unframed. This is a rare opportunity to own an example of artwork from one of America's famous and well known Civil War artists, who called Caroline County, Virginia, his home.

Tickets are now on sale for \$5.00 each and sales will continue until the drawing is held at the Caroline Historical Society's meeting on January 24, 2016. Tickets will be available at the meeting prior to the drawing. If you are interested in obtaining tickets before the meeting, please contact Wayne Brooks at (804) 633-5217.

I appreciate your participation and look forward to working with you throughout 2016 to make this an enjoyable and productive year.

### **Research on Caroline County Men Killed in Vietnam**

An article in the August 16, 2015, edition of the *Fredericksburg Free-Lance Star* asked for assistance in locating information about area young who were killed while serving in Vietnam. This information was needed for a project being done by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) to collect images for a virtual Wall of Faces to be used at the Vietnam Memorial. They had no information except the name, branch of service, and date of death for five young men from Caroline County. Using the Caroline Progress files in the Collins Room at the Caroline Library, Kathy Burchell and Wayne Brooks were able to locate the pictures and obituaries of Clarence M. Gatewood, Thomas M. Gouldin, Sherman Gregory, Walter Smith, and Joseph G. Taylor and sent the information to Annie Delp, volunteer with VVMF.

Bowling Green resident Barbara Allen also sent information to Mrs. Delp. The *Caroline Progress* ran a story on her efforts in the September 3, 2015, paper. Follow-up stories about the project ran in the September 27 and September 30 editions of the *Free-Lance Star*.

### **2016 Membership Dues**

Please send a check for your annual dues for 2016 to the Caroline Historical Society using the enclosed self-addressed envelope. Dues are \$15 a person, \$20 for a family, and \$200 for life membership. Remember to add your return address to the envelope.

### **Virginia Rosenwald School Conference**

Dale Brittle, historian of the Caroline Historical Society, will make a presentation about the research she is conducting on Rosenwald schools in Caroline County. She will be attending the Virginia Rosenwald School Conference on Friday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, at John Tyler Community College's Chester campus. The admission is free and members of CHS are invited to attend. Information and registration forms may be obtained by contacting Dr. Alyce Miller at [amiller@jtcc.edu](mailto:amiller@jtcc.edu) or 804-897-4179.

## **Doctor William L. West**

We are sad to report the passing of one of our distinguished longtime residents and a life member of the Caroline Historical Society. Doctor William L. West, Ph.D., of Ivy Hill Farm in Woodford, passed away on September 23, 2015. Among his many accomplishments, Dr. West had served as chairman emeritus of the Department of Pharmacology at Howard University in Washington, D.C. He is survived by his wife Edythe, a daughter, Edythe Princess West, and a son, William Lionel West II. Professor West was a devoted, faithful, and loyal member of the Milford Presbyterian Church in Caroline County.

### **Report from the CHS Collection Committee**

In 2010 the collection of items amassed by the Caroline Historical Society since its inception in 1968 was brought out of storage and delivered to the Courthouse Annex. This building, located between the historic courthouse and the old jail, was the designated location of the Caroline Museum. The building was later chosen for the location of the Sidney King murals and renamed the Sidney E. King Arts Center, which is now governed by the Bowling Green Arts Commission. The CHS collection has remained in place and the numerous boxes unpacked, the contents carefully sorted, documented, and cataloged by a committee consisting of Kathy Burchell, Pat Morris, Carolyn Roth, and Mandy Young. Through the past five years the committee has processed additional items donated to the Society and supplied objects for display in the meeting room in the building. Categories of our holdings are Objects, Archives (paper documents), Photographs, and Library, with some collections containing different types of items.

In 2015, we added 15 books to the collection, including “Spending the Night on Main Street” by Tim O’Gorman. This book is organized by communities in Virginia and includes a number of postcards featuring old Caroline County motels. We also added three books on Caroline County court records and wills by Kim Campbell. Five collections added in the past year contained donations pertaining to “Puddin” Wright, the Gouldman family, Elizabeth Pitts, the Paling/Blanton families, and an Acors military collection. Among the 18 items donated to the archives is a CD of letters to and from residents of the area which became the A. P. Hill military installation, donated by Dale Brittle. Some impressive copies of original Caroline County documents dating to 1802–1804 came to us courtesy of the Virginia Historical Society, involving the families of George Washington, John Hoomes, Joseph Dejarnett, and Robert Baylor. We received five donations of objects, including a cast-iron shoe last with forms for both child and adult shoes donated by Bill Thornton.

In addition to the computer records of the contents of our collection, we have an Everything Book which lists the items organized in the above categories. It is available for members perusal when the committee is at work in the building on Fridays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. In the past year, despite closing during the filming of the Loving movie and the holidays, we clocked 427 hours of volunteer time. We welcome your interest in the Society’s efforts to preserve and honor the history of Caroline County.

## Caroline County Country Stores

In the 1700s, there were about fifty grist mills operated from mill pond water and water wheels in Caroline County. People needed their corn ground into corn meal, a daily staple for many years. These grist mills were a commercial hub in each community as the people transported their corn over roads to the mill. They did not usually have to travel farther than six miles in Caroline County to reach a grist mill. The sites near the mill usually also served as a site for a country store as the main road, early one lane roads or paths, were established as routes to the mill.

My four grandparents operated country stores in the 1800s and 1900s at Collins Mill Pond (Ideal Post Office) and at Balty. I had four uncles operate country stores for years at Kidds Fork, Reedy Mill, Milford, and Ladysmith. My grandfather, W. J. Collins, began to operate the store and grist mill at Ideal in 1875. He sold dry goods as there was no refrigeration. He sold wash tubs, pots, pans, horse collars, clothes, shoes, food products, etc. Canned meat was sold in the 1800s. The railroads came to Caroline in the 1830s. He ordered goods from Wingo, Ellett and Crunpton, Goldberg & Nixon, Strause Brothers, H. F. Phillips & Stein in Richmond, and others which were sent by rail to Penola. He traveled nine miles to Penola by teams pulling a wagon to pick up the goods he ordered. Hogs were killed and cured with salt. The country stores sold cured hams, shoulders, ham hocks, or sides of bacon that could be sliced. Salt fish from a barrel could also be purchased before electricity arrived.

The arrival of electrical service in the 1930s made it possible to have meat boxes with glass windows to display the chilled meat in the country store for the customer. The store clerk could take the meat from the box and weigh and wrap the meat. Two national meatpackers, Swift and Co. and Kingham Meat Packers came on the scene in the 1930s to sell fresh meat to country stores. When we lived in Richmond, my father worked as a meat salesman for Swift and Co. with the national office in Chicago. He traveled in a red Swift sedan to the country stores in the 1930s and 1940s. He would leave home on Monday and travel through Caroline to Fredericksburg, the northern neck, south Virginia, etc., and return home Thursday night. Remember there was a multitude of country stores in Virginia at this time. The trucks would go out the next week to deliver the orders. Stores would order a side of beef and it would be cut to size at the country store. My father was an accomplished butcher and he cut meat for my uncles at their stores on Friday night. He used these talents at home when we killed hogs, beef, and deer.

Some communities had more than one country store at the crossroads. Most stores were located at crossroads so customers could come from several directions. Sparta had three stores when I went to Sparta grade school in 1946. One Sparta store was operated for over 100 years (1869 until 1976) by grandfather, Dandridge Pitts, son, Samuel Edward Pitts, and grandson, Francis Dandridge Pitts. The five Caroline train stations also attracted more than one store. Penola had three country stores. Milford had seven country stores within a half mile of the train station in the 1940s. The "Mattaponi Trail" road communities going south to the King and Queen County line had six country stores: DeJarnetts, Wrights Fork, Kidds Fork, Shumanville, Bagby, and Gether.

Many of these country stores also operated post offices to hand out the mail to the local citizens. There were no lock boxes for personal delivery. The post office added some additional income for the storekeeper and drew customers to the store. After the post offices began to sell money orders and the Sears and Roebuck Catalogs were received, some people began to order and receive products by mail.

The country store and post office was a social meeting place. Remember that many people traveled by walking or by teams of mules or horses and did not travel far to a store or a church. It was a tradition for the men in the 1940s before TV to go to the local country store after supper to hear the news or set around the wood stove and play card games such as set back. The same tales were frequently repeated. Friday night saw increased activity for shopping on pay day and to see people you had not seen in a while who had come back from the city to visit their family for the weekend. We also gathered to hear the fights on radio—Joe Lewis, Max Smelling, Billy Conn, etc.

The traveling tent show that set up in the country store yard was another entertainment event in the summer before TV. They came by truck with a tent, benches, and a stage and showed old black and white cowboy movies about 7 p.m. each night for a week, and then moved to another store. Rudy Pitts, age 92, remembered when Dr. Mac brought the show tent and had a live skit and magic show before the movie at his father's store at Alps. This brought entertainment and customers to the store. I attended at Balty and Shumansville.

Credit was extended at the country stores. A hand written ledger book was maintained to show purchases and date and amount of purchase. Each customer had a page in the ledger. Entries were made such as "one pound of nails," "two pounds of sugar," "five pounds of flour," "one twist of chewing tobacco," etc. Bills were settled after cash was obtained infrequently when farmers sold the annual crops of tobacco, cucumbers, tomatoes, or chickens and pigs. No credit cards! The old ledgers show some debts were never settled.

There were large wooden vats used to brine pickles at Penola, Milford, and Port Royal before the pickles were sent to Mt. Olive to be placed in pickle jars. Many of the Caroline Country stores set up sheds near the stores to serve as a collection point for cucumbers grown in the area to raise additional revenue for the store owners. The farmers used teams and wagons or trucks to bring the cucumbers to the collection points to be sent through a sorting machine to sort the cucumbers by size. The smallest of the four sizes brought the higher price per bushel. The cucumbers were then sent on to Penola, Milford, and Port Royal and placed in the large vats. I raised cucumbers in the 1940s.

There were one hundred post offices in Caroline County over the years and many more country store buildings. The Safeway store in Bowling Green offered a larger variety and better prices. The rural route delivery of mail in the 1960s to road-side boxes eliminated the need for the post offices. Most citizens had automobiles by the 1950s. These factors led to the closing of the country stores and many of the buildings have been demolished and a few remain, standing empty. Only a few of the country store buildings used before 1950 are still being operated as stores today. Can you name them?—*Bernard Collins*.

## Caroline Historical Society Fund Raiser



*"EARLY SNOW" by local artist Joe Umble*

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This is a rare opportunity to own an example of artwork from one of America's most well known Civil War artist who called Caroline County, Virginia, his home.

Tickets are now on sale for \$5.00 each and sales will continue until the drawing for the winner is held at the Caroline Historical Society's meeting on January 24, 2016. Tickets will be available from Society officers.