

# THE CAROLINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT COLLINS

### Cucumbers a Cash Crop

During the extreme heat in June, I began to think back to the hot periods from 1946 until 1952. I was eleven years old in 1946 when we moved from Richmond to Ideal at Collins Pond, the same year that the REC installed the electrical lines by our home at Ideal. My father was an automobile salesman at Blatt Chevrolet. A gentleman living in a house on our place was farming with a team of horses. We decided to raise a cash crop of cucumbers so we had about an acre and a half of cucumbers and I picked the cucumbers with the help of my younger brother and sister.

In the 1800's and early 1900's, there were few cash crops as many of the crops were grown for use in the home and on the farm. Hay was raised for the team and milk cow. Corn stalks were fed to the team and cows. The corn was taken to the grist mill to grind into corn meal which was an important part of the daily diet before the days of sliced bread. The other portion of the corn grains was used to feed the team, cows, hogs and chickens. The milk was used for the children and to make butter with a hand churn for use at the table. The eggs and frying chickens were used by the family. The hogs were slaughtered and salted down for use by the family. The fire wood was grown on the place and used to heat the home and to cook. The vegetable garden required work through the summer for fresh vegetables, vegetables to can and for Irish and sweet potatoes that were stored in the root cellar for use through the winter. Occasionally we sold some young pigs or live frying chickens and my mother had butter and eggs to trade at the country store.

Cucumbers were usually a fast cash crop as they were planted in April or May and picked and sold in June. Cucumbers were picked three times a week to pick them when they were small. This was not an easy job to bend over constantly in the hot sun, spread the leaves which were rough like sand paper, and to pick the cucumbers which had stickers which would sometimes stick in your hand. The honey bees on the cucumber blooms would liven you up at least once a week. The buckets of cucumbers were placed in burlap bags that had to be totted to the wagon pulled by the team. Picking after a rain storm with wet vines and walking through the mud also added to the challenge.

We took our cucumbers to H.E. Covington at the Kidds Fork store. He had a sorting machine and the cucumbers were placed on the belt roller through the shifting slats and the smaller cucumbers shifted in the first basket. The next basket received the next size etc to sort the cucumbers into four grades. The top grade small cucumbers sold for \$4.00 a bushel and the fourth grade large cucumbers sold for 50 cents a bushel. Many country stores (P.T. Schools at Shumansville, Francis Pitts and Ray Parker at Sparta, etc.) bought the cucumbers from the farmers. All the cucumbers were used to make pickles and were then taken to the large pickle vats at Milford, Penola, Port

Royal, etc. Some remember driving by these vats in August and smelling the strong distinctive pickle brine.

The cucumber vines usually played out just in time for the 4th of July holiday, thank goodness, but this did not end our summer adventure as our next cash crop of tomatoes was ready for picking. We hauled the tomatoes to Taylor's Tomato Cannery near Burruss Corner. Next, there were two acres of tobacco which had to be suckered weekly by breaking the sucker from each leaf- about eight leaves per plant. The tobacco was cut and hung in the barn starting in August or September.

Tobacco was not a quick cash crop as you started the tobacco plant bed preparation in February and did not get the cash until the sale at the tobacco warehouse in November or December.

I do not remember if anyone had really beat it in my head that an education was very important, but I do remember it was great to get back in school in September even though the school was not air conditioned. Most youngsters in the rural part of Caroline county were working on the farm and walking to school or to meet the school bus. I do not remember one child in the Sparta school or in my neighborhood being obese. I did not know the word obese back then.

Thinking back, we had it pretty good as my brother Allen, sister Ellen and I would get in our bathing suits when we came out of the field for lunch and cool off in the mill pond, then eat watermelon in the shade of the tree. After coming out of the field at the end of the day, we would get in our bathing suits again and grab a cake of soap and head to the pond. My brother and I felt like we had air conditioning as we got to move from a bedroom in the rear of the house that had a wood stove used in the winter to a bedroom at the front of the house facing the mill pond. A breeze usually came down the pond into our window. After a hard day's work, the cool pond, the breeze off the water, the sound of the crickets and bull frogs on the pond, and a goods nights sleep, we would get up and go again. The cash from the cash crops did come in handy later for tuition and room and board when the three of us went to college.

Bernard Collins/ June 2013

## **CHS Historian Answers Queries**

During the last nine months, Dale Brittle, historian for the historical society has received twenty-five inquiries from persons searching for information about ancestors. These come from around the country. Sometimes they are in the form of telephone requests, sometimes "snail-mail" requests and many times they are e-mail inquiries. Persons want to learn about people and places in Caroline's past.

Recently the curator with the Museum of the Confederacy inquired about a lock of John Wilkes Booth's hair; another about Captain Cornelius T. Smith's Civil War carbine. A local resident believes there are remains of slave quarters on her property near Ruther Glen. A person was researching Thomas Riddle, a relative who fought in the French and Indian War; several inquired about families displaced from homes in the A.P. Hill Army Reservation. A

woman from Indiana wanted documentation to confirm her ancestor fought in the American Revolution; another from California inquired about Spring Grove Plantation. And the list goes on.

To help folks with their quests, the historian sends three resource documents. These include a Caroline County produced document entitled "Cultural & Historic Resources" which is an ideal overview of Caroline history. It can be found on the county's website.

Bernard Collins, CHS President, has written a four page article entitled "Caroline History Books", which details Caroline history written by local and state authors both past and present. It was previously printed in the CHS newsletter.

If a person is interested in genealogical research a third article is sent entitled "Genealogy Search for Caroline Residents." Herbert Collins has been a gracious recipient of many calls made by researchers referred to him by the CHS historian.

Often, the historian searches for names and places given by the researcher and if found provides the name of the resource used and page number. All inquirers are encouraged to visit the genealogy section of the Caroline Library in Bowling Green and to contact the Central Rappahannock Heritage Center. Many of the books may be purchased from the library.

Kathy Burchell and Herbert Collins have assisted the historian on many occasions. Bernard Collins has offered insight into the county's geography and past historical events. Caroline County offers great history lessons for those who are willing to search into its past.

Dale Brittle, Historian  
October 2013

### **Shiloh Baptist Church**

Shiloh Baptist Church is located on Lot #59 in Port Royal. It was first erected in 1867. Prior to that the slaves of the Port Royal area worshiped in the churches of their masters. For Baptists, this meant Enon Baptist Church located in nearby Essex County.

On May 24, 1860 Dr. Charles Urguhart and his wife Louisa for \$1.00 deeded Lot 59 to trustees from Enon for the construction of a meetinghouse in Port Royal. Philip Lightfoot gave the materials, and servants were given time to work on their new building. The first pastor was the Rev. Tolson Johnson who was well respected because he could read the Bible and write his own sermons. The membership grew but the frame structure burned in 1869 and was rebuilt in 1871. In 1888 Pastor Tolson died and the Rev. J.H. A. Cyrus was chosen to lead the fellowship. He was a highly regarded leader in local, state and nation Baptist circles.

In 1912 the building was struck by lightning and destroyed. The sanctuary was rebuilt in 1915, has been remodeled recently, and continues its ministry today.

## Club 18

In the 1950s, several Union High teachers and business owners would meet once or twice a month to play pinochle. The group eventually evolved into a social organization named Club 18.



Club 18 at a dance - April 1956

The main members of the organization were:

- J. Shelby and Lavinia Guss—Teachers
- Lloyd and Pauline Boxley—Teachers
- Paul and Ethel Lowe—Teachers
- McKee and Mary Banks—Teachers
- Walter and Fraulein Lowe—Teachers and Business Owners
- Edward and Celestine Ragland—Teachers
- Joseph and Lucille Johnson—Farm Agent
- Joseph and Mary Adams—Business Owner and Funeral Director

Club 18 held formal dances that were attended by members of the community. The dances were held in the Union High School auditorium or the USO and featured food and a live band from Ashland, Virginia. The club continued to meet through the late 1960's/early 1970's.

Marion Woodfork Simmons



### **Caroline Historical Society Opens Museum**

The Sydney King Art Center and Caroline Historical Society Museum opened to the public on September 28, 2013. In remarks delivered by Supervisor Jeff Sili:

“The Sidney E. King Art Center is a county facility with the displays arranged and designed by a committee made up of the three groups who have a vested interest in the project, the Town along with a committee that it appoints called the Bowling Green Arts Commission, the County, and the Caroline Historical Society. Along the way, I had several conversations with Historical Society President, Bernard Collins before signing off on the plan. The Caroline Historical Society is the oldest, ongoing preservation organization in our county and its work and longevity is one that I deeply respect. In February, this plan was then presented to the Caroline Board of Supervisors and there passed unanimously.”

The Caroline Historical Society appreciated these remarks given by Mr. Sili. Bernard Collins, Caroline Historical Society President, and Dale Brittle, Historian worked for nine months assembling exhibits which offer themes referencing Caroline history. Each exhibit offers a look into aspects of life in the county. The town of Bowling Green is shown in photos and documentation with a comprehensive book describing town history; historic county schools are described using mementos collected and loaned by residents; photos, histories and personal items tell of three professional baseball players from Caroline; a forth exhibit includes archival memorabilia from old post offices and train stations; books selected from the society's archives are displayed and farm implements used prior to electrification in Caroline are exhibited. One special exhibit shows in pictures the life and times at Camp A.P. Hill during the early 1940's. A.P. Hill provided these photographs from their Library of Congress files. Each exhibit is accompanied with a three-ring binder of articles, documents, and photographs for clarification of the themes presented. Included in the museum area is one of Sidney King's historic Caroline paintings, The Stonewall Jackson Shrine.

The Caroline Historical Society Board encourages all persons to visit the CHS Museum and Sidney King Center where several of King's Fredericksburg battlefield paintings are displayed. It is open Wednesday through Saturday from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M. Volunteers are available to answer questions.

## **CAROLINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING**

**At 3 pm on OCTOBER 27<sup>TH</sup>**

**The Bowling Green Library**

**Mr. Herbert Collins speaks on "The Evolution of Museums"**

### **OTHER IMPORTANT DATES:**

**October 19 Bowling Green Harvest Festival-Visit CHS Museum & King Art Center**

**October 22 Free Concert of Renaissance Music at St. Peter's Port Royal 7pm**

**October 26 Port Royal Charter Day Activities 11-5pm Music, free games for children, museum and Portrait Gallery Open, vendors, replica of John Smith's ship used on the Rappahannock**