



CAROLINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

July 2021

P.O. Box 324, Bowling Green, Virginia 22427

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WE ARE BACK!

The Caroline Historical Society, Inc., will meet at 3 p.m. on Sunday, July 25, 2021, at the Rock Stop Farm, 22335 Hicks Landing Road at Rappahannock Academy, Caroline County, Virginia (Off Route 17)

From the President

I am pleased to say, the Caroline Historical Society, Inc. (CHS) is back in business after over a year of being closed due to the COVID pandemic. Our time off has given CHS members an opportunity to catch up on cataloging donations and preparing new exhibits. Special thanks go out to members Kathy Burchell and Trish Taylor for the many hours spent working on cataloging the recent donations and entering them in our computer inventory system. In addition, new exhibits are in place and others are “works in progress.” I would especially like to recognize several CHS members and volunteers for their hard work in completing the new exhibits: Kathy McVay, Dale Brittle, Vernessa Ware, Kathryn Burruss, and Jacob Martin. I must compliment our member, Amanda Young, for her dedication in compiling a huge 3-ring binder entitled “Homes of Caroline” containing hundreds of photographs of older homes around Caroline County. In the final stages, it is a fantastic record of houses in the county. Our floor and wall areas are limited for displaying collections, so we try to utilize space the best way possible. CHS has 13 glass display cases containing artifacts, documents, photos, and other items of local history. The new exhibits include two great displays of items pertaining to the history of Caroline County schools. Our walls are lined with framed pictures, paintings, maps, and other items of the county’s past. Although limited in space, we are thankful to be in the current building. Without this building, CHS would not be able to carry out its goal of preserving local history and presenting it in a manner whereby others can gain knowledge of our county’s past.



Have you seen our new sign? If not, please see the attached picture. Looks great. It replaces the older wooden white sign that stood close to the sidewalk on Main Street. Through a mutual agreement between the Caroline Historical Society, Inc., Sidney E. King Foundation, and the Caroline Board of Supervisors, the new sign design was agreed upon and the cost for making the sign and installing was shared by the three parties. The sign was pricey, but everyone will benefit from it. Located in the same area as the old sign.



“New” Caroline Historical Society, Inc. sign

CHS is appreciative of the everyone's support over the years and special mention goes out to the Caroline County Board of Supervisors who have worked with our organization from our beginning in 1968. CHS and the Board have enjoyed a cooperative relationship over the years, and we are profoundly grateful for their kindness, understanding, and appreciation for preserving history.

R. Wayne Brooks, President

CHS July Membership Meeting

The July 25th meeting of the Caroline Historical Society, Inc. will be held at Rock Stop Farm. The owners, Philip and Kathryn Fitzhugh, have extended an invitation for us to visit their home at 22335 Hicks Landing Road at Rappahannock Academy. The tour will begin at 3 p.m.

The history of the property dates to 1722, when Richard Buckner gained title to 4,500 acres along the Rappahannock River in the Rappahannock Academy area. The original builders of the home are unknown, but it is thought to have been built around 1791. The earliest Caroline records show the property was owned by Champe Brokenburg Thornton. Although he never lived there, he moved his family there during the Civil War for safekeeping



Rock Stop Farm owned by Philip and Kathryn Fitzhugh

after the commander of the Yankee gunboats threatened to shell the town of Port Royal. In 1866, he conveyed the property to his son, Champe Brokenburg Thornton, Jr. He sold the property to the Motley family who resided at Rock Stop for many years. In 1877, it was bought at auction by David and Virginia Powers. The Powers family sold it to the Sale family who then conveyed it to the Thomas Hugh Motley family in 1888. To settle the estate of Thomas Hugh Motley, Rock Stop was put up for auction. Before World War II the property was sold to Helen Hull Jacobs, the tennis champion and later in charge of the physical education program in the Waves stationed in Dahlgren. In the 1950s Mr. and Mr. John Dennis owned Rock Stop. The property was bought in 1959 by U.S. Army Col. Philip St. G. Cocke IV and his wife, Emma Amtzenius Cocke. Mrs. Cocke retained the property after her husband's death and lived there until she died in 2005. In 2013 a couple looking for a venue for organic farming found Rock Stop Farm and the rest is history. The couple fell in love with the house and began a very thorough restoration of the entire house. What you will see on July 25th is a couple's devotion to the restoration of an important home in Caroline County. According to Kathryn Fitzhugh, "We are history buffs."

The afternoon will begin with a tour of the home by the owners, Philip and Kathryn Fitzhugh. After the tour, we hope to have special guests with "Stories of Rock Stop" that they will share. We

will conclude our visit with snacks either inside the house or sit under the trees in the yard. Everyone please be aware there are steps to get in the house and the house is three levels. Also, the owners have a cat who resides inside. Everyone is asked to bring a chair, and if you like bring your favorite cookies to share, drinks will be provided. Please consider “ride sharing,” because of limited parking area. Looking forward to seeing everyone at 3 p.m. on July 25th.

Kathy McVay, Vice President

Introducing Women in History Month 2021

This is the third installment of our local women in history for 2021. March is designated as National Women in History month. For the sixth year, the Caroline Historical Society honors outstanding Caroline women who have become successful individuals in their professional careers and/or made contributions to improve the community. Over the years, the public has been asked to recommend names of women they believe worthy of consideration. Members of the Society then research the individuals and write articles for publication in the *CHS Newsletter*, the CHS Web page, and the CHS Facebook page.

Dale Brittle, Secretary

GLORIA ANN BOLECEK

In the early part of the 20th century, Louis Bolecek immigrated to the United States from Czechoslovakia. He settled in Pennsylvania where he met and married Mary Lobachevski also from Slovakia. Due to health concerns, his doctor advised him to move to the country. He and his cousin moved to the South River with their families, but later Louis decided to purchase a farm of his own in 1919, he and his wife and three children bought Hunter’s Hill Farm on Route 2 north of Bowling Green. Eventually Louis and Mary had six children living on the old Caroline County Fox Hunting Plantation as it once was called. Over the years, the girls married and moved away. Bill remained to help his parents, and after serving in the Army during World War II returned and married a local girl, Ann Michaliga. According to Gloria, the family tore down “the old rickety house and built a new one.” This home and land remained a Bolecek homestead until the house was taken down in 1985 when Gloria built her own home on the site.



Gloria, her sister Barbara, and brother Bill grew up on this 150-acre farm that produced grain, corn, soybeans, and hay. In earlier years, tobacco was a main crop along with beef cattle. The children helped on the farm with their special chores. Gloria helped with the gardening. She canned fruit and vegetable in season and at 15 years old, operated a tractor and other farm equipment and helped harvest hay during its growing seasons. The Bolecek grandparents continued to live with the family until the elderly grandparents moved back to Pennsylvania in the early 1950s to be closer to their eldest daughter.

Gloria remembered when her niece, Emily, visited. On one warm evening they laid outside and watched the heavens. In the clear sky, shooting stars appeared and she recalls her niece saying, “Aunt Gloria you have a million stars over your yard.”

Gloria Bolecek

A million stars, acres of farmland with barnyard animals, hiking, camping, and exploring, Gloria loves the outdoors. She carried this interest throughout her life experiences. Gloria attended Lee Maury Elementary and Caroline High School. She completed her education at Mary Washington College and James Madison University. Earning two college degrees in Biology she became a biology teacher and worked in public education in the Caroline School System for 39 years. Field trips were part of the students' educational experiences in Gloria's biology classes. Students interested in environmental studies participated in the Chesapeake Bay Foundations spring and fall canoe and boat trips on the Rappahannock River. According to Gloria, "Hands on experiences allowed students to explore the river and its estuaries." Several days a year, trips were taken. Gloria recalled, "On one trip the river was choppy. We were drenched. There was so much wind that mud banks appeared along the river's edge. We stopped for lunch at Hick's Landing and landed in the mud several feet from shore. Paddling did not help. We waded ashore. We were mud covered."



Gloria Bolecek, Alaskan Adventure

In 1971, Gloria began her teaching career at "old" Caroline High School. She taught there for six years, then took time off to get her master's degree. When she returned to Caroline County, she taught at Caroline Middle School for five years and then taught at Caroline High School. This was a period of transition in the Caroline schools as it was throughout Virginia. By 1969 schools were integrated, school names changed, and staff, teachers, and students were reassigned.

During these years, Gloria became a volunteer in various community service organizations. She taught GED classes for 45 years. For over 30 years she actively worked with the Red Cross (with the Caroline Chapter and then with the Rappahannock Area Chapter) earning their distinguished Clara Barton Award in 2020 for meritorious leadership. Her interests in the Red Cross varied from Disaster Services and Health and Safety to teaching First Aid and CPR classes. Gloria currently serves on the board of directors of the Rappahannock Chapter of the Red Cross and is working with their blood program.



Gloria Bolecek, rappelling

Gloria served as treasurer of C.E.R.V.E. (Caroline Emergency Relief through Volunteer Effort), a county organization that assists persons referred by the Department of Social Services. She continues her work with the Caroline Literacy Council, an organization that assists persons to develop reading and writing skills, and provides tutoring, and career education.

Volunteer service continues in her church. She attends St. Mary of the Annunciation Catholic Church in Ladysmith. There Gloria works in the Food Pantry which supports Enrichment Ministry of the church.

After retiring, Gloria entertained retired teachers at her home each month with barbecues and crab suppers. Bushels were brought to Mr. Bolecek's home. Picnic tables were set, others brought food for feast. Her father told stories of the old times living on Hunter's Hill and his farming experiences. These gatherings lasted for several years. Teachers appreciated her efforts and the time they could spend together.

Gloria's service to her county and to her community was and is ongoing. Thank you, Gloria, for all your efforts. The Caroline Historical Society recognizes Gloria Ann Bolecek as a "Woman in History" in 2021.

Dale Brittle, Secretary March 2021

References:

Conversation with Gloria Bolecek

Resume: Gloria Bolecek

Heritage of Caroline County, Virginia 1727-1912; Caroline County Heritage Book Committee, Inc.

FLASHBACKS

Blue and Gray Dining Room and Cottages – Ladysmith



Can anyone guess the year of this photo postcard?

World War II Years – *The Caroline Progress* reports Caroline School pupils raised \$2,548.98 to purchase "Jeeps" for the U.S. Army – schools participating were C. T. Smith, Lee-Maury, Caroline, Sparta, E. Pendleton, and Guinea.

Donations

CHS welcomes donations such as documents, photos, and other artifacts from Caroline County's past. If individuals or families have such items but desire to retain originals for their family heritage, CHS would bear the cost of copying items such as photos for our collection. CHS is especially interested in gathering vintage images of local veterans, schools, houses, documents, etc., especially from the 1800s and early 1900s or other items from Caroline County's past. Too many times I have seen members of families throw away or sell items they did not care about but those items had some sort of history connection worth saving. We try to save history, not forget it. CHS is a registered nonprofit organization and donations of money or items can be tax deductible.

CHS has established a separate account for the restoration of the "Old Jail." Anyone interested in donating to this fund, please mark your donation as "Old Jail."

Loss of CHS Member

Our deepest sympathy goes out to the family of Ottie J. Moore. Mr. Moore, former Sheriff of Caroline County. Prior to being elected Sheriff, he was a Virginia State Trooper and served his country as a member of the U.S. Marine Corps. He will be greatly missed. Former Sheriff Moore was our guest speaker at the January 2020 membership meeting, recalling his many years as sheriff in Caroline County.

Former Sheriff O. J. Moore



NOTICE to CHS Members:

The cost of printing our newsletters has recently increased and we are in the process of trying to find a more economic source to do the printing. Normally we print 125 copies to mail out to members. Before we decide on the new or more economic printing source, we would like to verify with the membership as to who wants to receive their newsletters by regular mail or by e-mail. Some members like to receive it by regular mail and by e-mail. We just need to know. Please contact me by e-mail at wbrooks@bealenet.com or Kathy Burchell at kburchell@gmail.com confirming method to receive the newsletter. As a part of this survey, the membership roster is being reviewed to determine past due accounts of those members who have not paid in several years. In some cases, members have moved, sadly some have passed away, and others may have just forgotten. It is important to CHS to have an accurate list for our records and mailing list.

CHS Membership Dues Reminder for 2020 and 2021

If you have not paid your 2020 dues or your upcoming 2021 dues, please forward payment to:

Caroline Historical Society	Individual membership – \$15.00 per year
P.O. Box 324	Family membership – \$20.00 per year
Bowling Green, VA 22427-0324	Life membership – \$200 for life
	Student Membership - FREE

General Contact Information

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