



# **CAROLINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

April 2022

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

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**The Caroline Historical Society, Inc., will meet at 3 p.m. on Sunday, April 24, 2022, at the Caroline Community Services Center, 17202 Richmond Turnpike, Milford, Virginia 22514**

## **From the President**

We are back on track! I apologize for not being able to have our meeting in January, but some things are just beyond our control. Appears the situation is better now, thank goodness. Another busy year has started, our 54<sup>th</sup> year, and we continue our goal to collect and preserve our local history. With the recent generous donation of two large glass display cases, additional items of local history will be on display soon. In addition, current exhibits are being changed with new and interesting historical artifacts. Plans are being made for a "Spring Open House" to show off our new exhibits, to include, World War II USO Clubs in Caroline, farming tools & implements, local school memorabilia, and more. CHS continues to work closely with the staff of the Caroline School System on student projects directly related to their local history curriculum. If anyone would like to become more involved with the CHS organization, come spend a few hours in the museum and arts center or contact me by phone at (804) 513-9069 or by e-mail [wbrooks@bealenet.com](mailto:wbrooks@bealenet.com)

## **Program for April 24, 2022, Annual Membership Meeting**

If this write up looks and sounds familiar, it is. Since we were unable to meet in January, the agenda planned at that meeting will be used for the April membership meeting. The April 24<sup>th</sup> meeting will also include our Annual Membership Meeting at which time the CHS Annual Award will be presented to the person(s) or organization making significant contributions to the preservation of our local history. The meeting's program will consist of two parts, the first part being a presentation by Mandy Young, a faithful member of our Collections Committee. Ms. Young will discuss her progress on her ongoing project of gathering past and present photographs of homes in Caroline County. Over the last couple of years, Mandy has put together three large notebooks full of photographs of old homes no longer standing, and those still standing. Her sources of photos have come from individuals, CHS files, Library of Virginia, WPA photos and other sources. Many of these photos are still "unidentified." Ms. Young needs your help in finding out where these homes were located, who lived in the house, and history (age) of the structure. As a part of her presentation, CHS is asking members, friends, and guests to bring pictures of older homes in Caroline and allow CHS to scan or copy them as a part of this ongoing project of collecting and preserving our county's past. It is so important for our organization, and we as individuals, to make every effort to reach out to others and ask they share family heirlooms, artifacts, photographs, and other items related to Caroline County history. The CHS mission is to preserve our local history for the benefit and education of our future generations. May future generations carry forth the same principles and ideals as CHS.

The second part of the meeting will be another one of our fun "show and tell" meetings. The "show and tell" events in the past have always produced a lighter side of history for those who attend and especially the participants. So, bring an item and let's hear a good story to go with it. Please try to attend and bring a friend.

## **Caroline Women in History Month, March 2022**

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 careers. Over the years, members and the public have recommended 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.

The newsletter is sent to members four times a year. One honoree will be highlighted in each publication. The organization encourages the public to check out the CHS Web page and Facebook pages. An honoree will be spotlighted each week during the month of March.

CHS is proud to announce the first honoree for Women in History Month 2022

### **Audrey Borkey Torrance**

An informed conversationalist and community activist, Audrey Borkey Torrance served her county and country well. Audrey, the daughter of Cecil and Clarice Borkey of Bowling Green, attended Lee-Maury High School, graduated in 1940 and immediately found an office position following commencement. The United States was gearing up to enter the “Big” war, and Audrey was employed in the Land Acquisition Office for properties in the soon-to-be Camp A. P. Hill. She remained an office clerk there for 5 years, until the small office, which was located where the old Kidwell’s grocery store used to be on Main Street in Bowling Green, closed in 1945.



*Audrey Borkey Torrance 1940s*

During the war years, Audrey volunteered as a “Plane Spotter.” The spotting tower was located in Bowling Green behind Billy Grey’s store. In the late afternoons and evenings, she and another volunteer, climbed the steps of the tower and using binoculars viewed and recorded each plane that flew over Bowling Green. Audrey wasn’t the only Borkey to serve during wartime. Her brother, Cecil, served in the U.S. Navy. He was born in Richlands, VA. Cecil was stationed at the American embassy in Turkey during the war. Audrey “lived” to drive Cecil’s Packard in “overdrive” while he was away. The United Service Organization (USO) was a big part of the life for the men who served in the armed services and trained at Camp A. P. Hill, now Fort A. P. Hill, during World War II. Caroline County was fortunate to have two USO buildings. The largest and most active was on Butler Street in Bowling Green. The building still stands today and has been used as town offices since the end of World War II. As a USO facility, the building housed a library, shower facilities, relaxation area, snack bar, and dance floor.

On Wednesday and Saturday nights “The Jess Pine Band” of Fredericksburg entertained the troops and their guests. School buses picked up girls from Ladysmith, Milford, and Bowling Green. Mothers also drove their young daughters to the dances which began at 8 p.m. and ended by 11 p.m. Mothers were hosts at the dances and most guests were high school students.

Audrey remembers, “We had good times.” Songs could be suggested. She had a twinkle in her eye when she said, “We had to fight for the good dancers. A lieutenant played the piano. He was wonderful. He came from Connecticut, I think. I remember the band playing, ‘The Paul Jones,’ a dance done in a circle. When the music stopped and you were not opposite a partner, you found yourself disqualified and had to sit down.” When the guests left at 11 o’clock many, who lived in Bowling Green, chose to walk home. “We were a bunch of girls having an enjoyable time,” she mused. “Five of the girls served as ‘Donut Dollies.’ I remember Theo Boland, Nancy Hanson, Julia Lumpkin, and Margaret White, and I were the five persons who served as hosts. Audrey also served on the USO Steering Committee. The committee organized weekly dances, arranged for special events such as birthday parties, and arranged accommodations for visiting families. The USO director lived in an apartment upstairs in the Borkey home on Maury Avenue which is now owned by Lynn and Mike Lenahan.



*USO Dance During World War II in Bowling Green, Virginia*

For over forty years, Audrey was employed with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). She was the original girl who opened the office in Bowling Green which was housed in her mother’s kitchen on the corner of Lafayette Avenue. The office was later moved to the basement of the Old Hotel on Main Street and then moved again to the top of the town’s drug store, and their final was to the new offices located at Farmer’s Store. Audrey remembers working for J. R. Ford Contracting out of Lynchburg who constructed Route 301 when it became a dual road.



*Audrey Borkey Torrance – 2<sup>nd</sup> in “Miss Highway Department” 1952*

According to Joyce Goforth, a good friend and bridge partner of Audrey's, "she and I are the only two remaining club members left in our Bridge Club. Nancy Hanson and Anne Garland Green met their husbands at the USO dances. I remember Audrey worked the voting polls for years on end." Audrey recalls working with one of the poll book operators when the earthquake struck in May 2014. A nerve-wracking experience! Joyce also mentioned Audrey donated an enormous amount of blood during the Red Cross drives. The house on Maury Avenue, in which the Lenahan family live, belonged to Audrey's family (Borkey). She knows the ins and outs of all the original town's people."

Audrey placed second in the Fredericksburg "Miss Highway Department" Contest in 1952. The contest was sponsored by the Employees Benefit Association. Contestants came from fourteen



counties. Audrey was selected "Miss Fredericksburg District". A banquet was given to honor all of the contestants. During her time with VDOT, she married Gordon Torrance and they had one son who lives in Fredericksburg. Gordon and Audrey met on a blind date and spent the day on a picnic with friends across the river. Gordon's family lived in Concord, Virginia, outside of Lynchburg. They often visited Lynchburg and were there in 1955 when the fire devastated the town of Bowling Green. Gordon was the one man who helped with the cleanup after the fire. Gordon was a contractor and performed work with his bulldozer and other equipment.

***Gordon and Audrey Borkey Torrance, 1952***

Audrey loves to cook and bake, especially cakes. and continues to stay in good physical condition by working out the last nineteen years in her basement three days a week with friends Kathryn Burruss and Barbara Lanford. She was one of the original "Curves" girls in Bowling Green.

Loving attention has been paid to her needlepoint chair covers. Several living room and dining chairs are decoratively covered with floral designs, many set in black backgrounds. Stunning workmanship. Her needles are kept close by so work may begin when she has a bit of time to resume her passion. Her 99<sup>th</sup> birthday is coming up this year.

We pray she continues to enjoy a long and prosperous life. I certainly enjoyed my conversation with Audrey in January and believe Audrey Borkey Torrance is truly worthy of being named one of this year's "CHS Women in History."

***Audrey Borkey Torrance  
with one of her needlepoint chairs***



***Dale Brittle, Secretary, Caroline Historical Society, March 2022***

*References: Joyce Goforth, Bowling Green, Virginia,  
Audrey B. Torrance, Bowling Green, Virginia*



## Caroline County Trial Justice Court

The Trial Justice Court in Caroline was established on February 11, 1929. The Trial Justice Court records for Caroline County for the years 1929, 1930, 1931, and 1932 are handwritten records in a binder stored at the Caroline Historical Society. These records cover an important period in the history of our country and county. There are suits recorded to collect debts and to obtain judgements, probably spirited by the depression of the times including the stock market crash of 1929.



*Locals having a taste of the “Good Stuff”*

This was also the time of “Prohibition” when the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcohol beverages were illegal from 1920 until 1933. There were search warrants issued to search for “ardent spirits.” These spirits were not generated in a graveyard or a church, but from activities that fired up around sundown by the clear running streams in the Caroline County woods. The record shows where the searches were made, the people caught driving under the influence of the “ardent spirits.” Other infractions such as assault and battery, fishing without a license, hunting out of season, etc. are also recorded.



*Local Caroline boys with a fresh jar*

“Prohibition” was not one of the most popular laws established. If a young man was caught experimenting with a distillery, he may have been given the option to join the armed services and leave the county to avoid a trial. My uncle George enlisted for a tour in the Navy as a young man during this period. He missed being away from home, so my grandmother paid the fee to have him released early from the armed services and come home and operate the water powered gristmill, two other options that are not available today.

*Moonshine Still in front of the Old Jail 1920s  
Caroline County, Virginia*



**Written by Bernard Collins, past president**  
**Article from his book: “Caroline County, History, Facts and More”, printed 2008**

## **Bits of Caroline History**

The first official Caroline County Museum was in Bowling Green in the little white frame building behind the clerk's office on the Courthouse Square. It was established in 1957 as part of the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Jamestown Settlement of 1607. Mrs. Margaret Coghill Borkey was the director of the museum and it was open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on week days and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sundays. The exhibits contained many items of interest pertaining to Caroline County history. The building was among the oldest on the courthouse square property. It served as the county's treasurer's office, the court room of the county judge, school board office, and a health clinic. Unfortunately, the historic little building was demolished as part of the courthouse expansion years ago.

**WANTED: Items on Local History.** The Caroline Historical Society, Inc. (CHS) is seeking items of local history to preserve, promote, and display for our visitors to appreciate. Anyone desiring to donate, loan, or allow CHS to copy, please contact R. Wayne Brooks, president, by e-mail at [wbrooks@bealenet.com](mailto:wbrooks@bealenet.com) or by phone at (804) 513-9069 or Kathy McVay, vice president, e-mail at [kmcvay1257@gmail.com](mailto:kmcvay1257@gmail.com) or by phone at (804) 366-1848.

CHS is a 501(c)(3), historical preservation organization and donations are tax deductible.

## **New Life Members:**

Ranny and Champe Corbin, Caroline County, Virginia

## **Donations:**

Green Top Sporting Goods – Two large glass display cases

## **Reminder on Payment of Annual Membership Dues:**

If you have not paid your annual “**family**” or “**individual**” membership dues for **2021** or **2022** or **prior years**, please forward payment to:

Caroline Historical Society, Inc.  
P.O. Box 324  
Bowling Green, VA 22427-0324

Individual membership – \$15.00 per year  
Family membership – \$20.00 per year  
Life Membership – \$200 onetime fee

There are a number of members who are several years behind on membership dues, individual letters will be going out within the next 30 days as a personal reminder of past due payments. If any member is unsure about their status, please contact me at the e-mail address or phone number listed below. All membership dues are to be paid in January of each year.

## **General Contact Information**

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