

# Harrisonburg—Rockingham



## HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Shenandoah Valley Folk Art & Heritage Center*

Volume 25, No. 3

Summer 2003

This newsletter is published quarterly by the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society, Dayton, Virginia.

John Sellers & Seymour Paul *Editors*

### F. Flavia Converse Collection Open For Research

When researchers come to the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society this summer to search for their family roots, they will have a new and important genealogical collection to consult. After many hours of work by HRHS Archivist Tracy Harter and volunteer Faye Witters, the F. [Fannie] Flavia Converse Collection now is available for use by genealogists.

While the name will be unfamiliar to most people, Flavia Converse spent more than 50 years doing genealogical research for individuals around the United States who were seeking information on their ancestors in the Harrisonburg-Rockingham County area. The correspondence she generated between 1917 and 1964 lay undiscovered and unused in old file cabinets and boxes in the Paul Mill at Ottobine until Seymour Paul donated it to HRHS in 2000. After Harter cleaned out the mice nests, dead bugs and dirt, she and Witters arranged the collection by the primary family name sought, then by correspondent name.

The F. Flavia Converse Collection is valuable for a number of reasons. Converse was a professional genealogist whose active career spanned more than a half century. As such, the documentation of her career in this collection is remarkable. Her diligent record keeping and her tenacity when seeking information for patrons have left researchers details that may not be easily found elsewhere.

Her clients realized the value of her research as well. A patron in 1956 wrote: "Shall I just go on and say that I have a feeling I have found an honest researcher?" Another patron, U.S. Senator Francis C. Rosenberger, applauded Miss Converse for her "careful and conscientious and excellent work."

Miss Converse was born in Harrisonburg on May 17, 1881. The daughter of Henry A. Converse and Margaret Baer Converse, she graduated from Fairfax Hall in Winchester and from Shenandoah Valley Business College. Never marrying, she devoted herself to her church, career and family. She was a long-time member of the Harrisonburg [First] Presbyterian Church. In addition to her genealogical work, she worked as a public stenographer and was a member of the Business and Professional Woman's Club.



**Flavia Converse**  
1901, as a graduate from Fairfax  
Hall, in Winchester

*(Continued on page 5)*



President: Shelvie Carr  
Vice President: Pat Turner Ritchie  
Secretary: Dale MacAllister  
Treasurer: Seymour Paul  
Administrator: John Sellers

Telephone: 540-879-2616

### New Members

Joyce Brown  
Springfield, Va.

Roberta Mitchell  
Grottoes, Va.

Marlin Diehl  
Earlysville, Va.

Ethelyn Morrison  
Fripp Island, NC.

Leta C. Fitzhugh  
Harrisonburg, Va.

Mr. & Mrs. William  
Mowery  
Winston-Salem, NC.

Paul & Patricia Fogle  
Quincy, Pa.

Helen Prickett Pope  
Orlando, FL.

Todd M. Harrison  
Elkton, Va.

Rose Rhodes  
Dublin, Ga.

Jim Hinton  
Mooresville, NC

Chris & Jennifer Runion  
Bridgewater, Va.

Vickie Iton  
East Orange, NJ.

Kathryn A. Schade  
Keyser, WV.

Clay & Marybeth Kelley  
Vero Beach, FL.

Mary K. Strickler  
Waynesboro, Va.

Gordon Koerner  
Shipman, Va.

Sharon Tyree

Charles & Mary McDon-  
ald  
Linville, Va.

Waynesboro, Va.

William J. Memmer  
Lakewood, Oh.

Connie Metheny  
Millboro, Va.

### Calendar of Events

**June 19 –October 17:** Exhibit. *Shenandoah College and Conservatory: The Dayton Years.* An exploration and celebration of the Shenandoah College and Conservatory while it was located in Dayton, Virginia.

**Fall:** Opening of Cromer-Trombo House.

**September 18:** Lecture. 7 PM HRHS. Auditorium. Speaker: Dr. Michael Galgano. *Oral History as a Community Builder. Past, Present, and Future in Rockingham County.*

**October 4:** Dayton Autumn Celebration. The annual "Dayton Days" street celebration.

**October 16:** Lecture. 7 PM HRHS Auditorium. Speaker: Nancy Sorrells. *Cattle Drives and Milk Co-ops: A Bovine History of Rockingham County.*

**October 31:** Exhibit. *Vignettes of the Past.* Early 20th century postcards and broadsides.

**November 8:** A Children's Program, *What is Folk Art?* Ten AM until 12 noon at the HRHS museum.

**November 20:** Lecture. Dr. Clive Hallman will be the speaker. *The Established Church in the Upper Valley, 1745-1776.* 7 PM HRHS auditorium.

**November 22:** A Children's Program. Ten AM until 12 noon. *Lewis and Clark the Shenandoah Valley Connection.*

#### Hours of Operation

Monday - Saturday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
(Office is closed Saturday)

Office / Library (540) 879-2616 Museum: (540) 879-2681

Internet site: <http://www.heritagecenter.com>

Email: [heritag1@shentel.net](mailto:heritag1@shentel.net)

## Acquisitions

The Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society appreciates the following acquisitions received since the winter newsletter was issued:

### LIBRARY ACQUISITIONS

- Joan Shaver-Hill donated to the library a copy of her book *The Shaver Family of the Virginias*.
- Floyd and Kathryn Mason donated to the library a copy
- Pat Turner Ritchie donated to the library two large notebooks entitled *Rockingham County, Virginia Post Offices. Applications, maps, and other documents copied from National Archives microfilm*.
- June Hulvey donated to the library (originally in Archives accessions files) genealogy research papers relating to Goods Mill families, the Joseph Good family, and other related families; various funeral booklets for Rockingham County citizens.
- Larry Bowers donated eight copies of *Shenandoah Valley Cooking* published by the Folklore Society for resale in the bookstore.
- Sandra Pope donated copies of her two latest books *Peter and Catherine Haefner Pope of Pendleton County Virginia/West Virginia* and *George and Hannah Howes Cowger of Pendleton County Virginia/West Virginia* to the library.
- John B. Vance donated to the library *William Clayton Vance of Rockingham County, Va.. 1860 - 1946. His Descendants and Ancestors* compiled by John B. Vance.
- Raymond Daugherty donated to the library his latest book *The CCC and Me*.
- Patricia A. Fogle donated to the library her latest book *Descendants of John and Mary (Miller) Cullers of Shenandoah County, Virginia*.
- Earl and Janet Downs donated to the library their latest book *Mills of Rockingham County Vol IV* and they also donated to the library a copy of *Dry Rivers Stories* by Elizabeth Thomas Payne.
- Wayne Angleberger donated to the library copies of the *Curio*, a publication from JMU and a copy of *The Shenandoah Valley. A Pictorial History* by Ron Steffey.
- Beverly Biller donated to the library a copy of the Biller Cemetery Records.
- Linda J. Keefer donated to the library a copy of *Hammer and Allied Families of Rockingham County, Virginia* by Linda J. Keefer.
- Van L. Slack donated to the library a copy of this book *Lincoln the Mason* by Van L. Slack, PM, Sparta Lodge #99, Sparta, Tennessee.

### ARCHIVAL ACQUISITIONS

- Eunice McAvery donated John Wayland papers along with materials.

## Shenandoah College and Conservatory — The Dayton Years

This exhibit focuses on the founding of the Shenandoah College and Conservatory in the late nineteenth century until the move to Winchester in 1960. Subjects include: Academics, Student Life, Faculty, Athletics, May Day, and Alumni.

Come explore the fascinating history of the Shenandoah College and Conservatory. Discover what it was like to be a student, see artifacts from the classroom and professors. Learn about the experiences of students, professors, and staff.

This exhibit will be open to the public until October 16, 2003.

## Book Reviews

These books are now available and can be purchased in the bookstore at HRHS. If you are purchasing your book by mail, please include \$4.00 for shipping and handling for the first book and \$1.00 for each additional book (unless otherwise indicated). Virginia residents add 4.5% sales tax. Make checks payable to HRHS and mail your check to the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society, P.O. 716, Dayton, Va. 22812. We have added several new books to our bookstore since the last newsletter, including *A History of the Town of Dayton Virginia*. Also, are a number of other books recently published that we offer. Read the review of all these books to see if you may be interested in purchasing any of them.

**A History of the Town of Dayton Virginia** by Carrie Sites and Effie Hess. The Historical Society was fortunate to obtain the copy rights of this interesting and informative book of Dayton, Virginia. This book has been out of print for many years and now is available to the public. We had a limit number printed so get your order in before they are gone. This is a small paperback book which was edited and compiled by Carrie Sites and Effie Hess under the auspices of The Dayton Women's Club. Research for material started in 1959 and continued until the book was ready to publish in 1962. The book gives the reader historical information from the early beginnings of Dayton up to the time the book was published. The information is factual and interesting which can serve as a valuable resource. Copyright 1962, pp 85, soft cover, photographs, \$10.00.

**The CCC and Me** by Raymond Daugherty. Mr. Daugherty relates his own personal experiences with the Civilian Conservation Corps. This paperback book gives the reader background information on the Great Depression and details the goals and accomplishments of the CCC. Specifically, the book accounts for the personal involvement of the author with those in company 1524 and Camp Hardy as they built Lost River State Park located in West Virginia. Included in the book is the roster of Co. 1524 CCC, Camp Hardy SP-2, Lost River State Park. Copyright 2003, pp 83, softcopy, \$10.00.

**Dry River Stories** by Elizabeth Thomas Payne. Elizabeth Thomas Payne and her three brothers and three sisters grew up in Dry River near Montezuma, Rockingham County, Virginia, in the 1920's and 1930's. About 1985 she began writing stories of her childhood and sending them to family and friends each Christmas. Each story is a slice of life before electricity, TV, central heat, and supermarkets. Preparing Sunday lunch meant picking out the chicken from the henhouse, killing, plucking, and cooking. Soap for laundry day took months to prepare because the thrifty homemaker had to save pork rinds and make her own lye soap. Entertainment was sneaking a summer swim in the millpond. Refrigeration was possible only of the river froze in the wintertime and the ice could be restocked. This is a very interesting book giving the reader a glimpse of how life was in the early 20th century. The book contains 85 photographs of rural Rockingham County taken by Elizabeth's father Homer F. Thomas, a famous Traveling Photographer. Soft cover, \$20.00.

## A Sunday Evening in Historic Port Republic

Forty individuals braved the threat of rain to experience and evening walking tour of the historic village of Port Republic on June 15. The event was hosted by the Society of Port Republic Preservationists and was the last of the HRHS Spring Program Series. Dr. Clive Hallman spoke briefly on the origins of the village in the 18th Century.

Anita Cummings then led the group on a walking tour of the town and pointed out sites of historical significance during the 19th Century. Following a visit to the museum in the Kemper House, Steve Zapton and other preservationists provided refreshments to those on the tour.



The Benjamin Franklin Kemper House, ca. 1830,  
location of the Port Republic Museum.

*(Converse—continued from page 1)*

Her love of history led her to take part in a meeting on April 1, 1944, to re-establish a permanent organization of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society. She then served as the Society's recording secretary for the next four years. She and her sister Virginia shared a home at 50 Paul Street in Harrisonburg with their brother, Dr. Henry Converse Jr., and his family. Dr. Converse was registrar and head of the mathematics department at James Madison University [formerly Madison College], 1919-1939, and continued as professor until retiring in 1945. Converse Hall, on the campus of the University, was named in his honor. Upon her sister's death in 1964, Flavia Converse moved to Sunnyside Presbyterian Home and died there on November 30, 1967.

In addition to its genealogical value to modern-day researchers, the Converse collection will prove valuable to future generations of researchers. A correspondent who wrote in 1945 for information about his or her family might well be the individual sought by a researcher in 2045. Imagine the thrill that a researcher will have viewing a handwritten document from his or her 1945 "ancestor," as well as the correspondence relating to that ancestor's queries!

As the genealogical "collection" of one individual's lifetime work, the Converse Collection also documents a very elusive vocation: -- that of the professional genealogist. The collection as a body of work may provide historians rare insight into the intellectual acuity and organizational skill of a female professional genealogist before the computer age.

Since the Converse Collection is part of the HRHS archives, and not physically located in the genealogical research library, researchers who want to use the materials will have to follow rules and regulations similar to those found in other research institutions such as the Library of Virginia and the Handley Library. In the library, researchers can consult a printed finding aid to find the family names they are researching. Harter also has created a computer database for the collection that will be available for use in the library later this year.

Once a researcher has identified the materials he or she wants to see, a volunteer will retrieve them from the archives and serve them in the genealogical research library. Although researchers will be required to follow certain guidelines while using the materials, they will be allowed to make photocopies of items in the collection.

### **Converse Collection Is First of Many Archival Collections Available to Researchers in the Near Future**

The F. Flavia Converse Collection will be the first of many archival collections that will soon be available to researchers visiting the Shenandoah Valley Folk Art and Heritage Center in Dayton.

In 2000, HRHS hired professional archivists Dale and Tracy Harter to process and make available to researchers the society's archival holdings. So far, the Harters have identified and begun processing 80 archival collections containing materials relating to genealogy, the Civil War, World War II, women's history, business history and African-American history.

Although the massive Converse Collection has taken up most of their working time so far, now that it is completed, the Harters soon will finish processing on many of these other collections and make them available to researchers. Whenever a new collection is ready for use, an article describing the collection will appear in the newsletter.

## Rockingham Post Offices And Postmasters From 1792-1932

(This is the fifth installment of the list of Rockingham postoffices and postmasters from 1792 to 1932, as compiled by the author from microfilm of the National Archives and Records Service in Washington.)

by John W. Wayland

### Article V

**HARRISONBURGH:** established June 12, 1792, as Harrisonburg or Rockingham Court House; from 1818 to December 1893 the name appears in the postoffice records as Harrisonburgh; since December 1893 as Harrisonburg.

Postmasters and dates appointed: James Curry, June 12, 1792; Henry J. Gambill, November 25, 1794; Samuel Chandler, January 20, 1797; Philip Cobbs, August 16, 1799; John B. Grymes, rendered his first account July 1, 1803; Jacob Wyant, rendered his first account January 1, 1804. For much of the foregoing the writer is under obligation to Mr. G. Frederick Switzer, a former Harrisonburg postmaster.

Henry Tutwiler, October 12, 1809, who was re-appointed from time to time and continued in office, certainly most of the time, until his death on January 18, 1841. It has been asserted that he was superseded on October 7, 1825, by Harrison Rutherford, but was appointed postmaster again on July 17, 1833. This does not seem consistent with a recent statement from the Postoffice Department in Washington to the effect that Tutwiler, following an appointment on June 11, 1818, was still serving in 1832. He was succeeded as postmaster on January 29, 1841, by his son, Samuel F. Tutwiler, who served until December 15, of the same year.

Succeeding him were the following their dates of appointment indicated:

Joseph H. Shue, December 15, 1841; Robert H. Smith, June 23, 1855; Samuel R. Sterling, April 13, 1861; Edward J. Sullivan, July 14, 1865; reappointed March 20, 1867, December 22, 1870, January 11, 1875, and December 19, 1878; James Sullivan, February 27, 1879; re-appointed February 27, 1883; William Henry Ritenour, May 21, 1885; James Sullivan, May 28, 1889 and May 14, 1890.

Giles Devier, December 20, 1893; Abram P. Funkhouser, February 18, 1898; re-appointed March 24, 1902; Charles M. Keezel, February 20, 1906; re-appointed February 21, 1910; Wilmer L. Dechert, January 13, 1911; Frank L. Sublett, January 12, 1915; Charles A. Hammer, February 8, 1924 (acting from November 20, 1923); G. Frederick Switzer, May 13, 1936 (acting from April 8, 1936); Nathaniel H. Keezell, October 1, 1944; A. Biedler Heltzel, June 18, 1948 (acting from August 30, 1947).

**HATVILLE (?)**: Paul N. P. Rupert (?), December 7, 1832 (?).

**HINTON**: late Karicofe; Samuel J. Dundore, July 10, 1885; David B. Showalter, December 13, 1886; Lewis E. Whitmore, December 15, 1896; J. D. Lineweaver, June 24, 1897; Luther O. Moubray, February 21, 1910; Nora B. Strickler, June 30, 1914.

**HOLLARD**: David R. Showalter, June 21, 1897; Robert F. Nair, February 17, 1900. To Fort Hoover, January 17, 1901.

**HOLMAN**: Andrew J. Fansler, December 30, 1901; John Miller, March 10, 1902.

**HOOVER**: David E. Hoover, November 26, 1890; Jackson A. Shoemaker, June 14, 1893; David E. Hoover, June 25, 1897; Abraham D. Brenemen, February 12, 1904; Polly A. Dove, April 11, 1905; Luther A. Kirkpatrick, October 23, 1906. Discontinued October 10, 1910.

**HUPP**: William A. Salyards, March 20, 1888; John D. Mills, November 22, 1889. Post to Timberville, October 21, 1902.

*(Continued on page 7)*

## Fall Lecture Series Announced

Oral history, cattle drives, and colonial churches will be among the topics discussed in the Fall Lecture Series to be presented at the Heritage Center in Dayton this coming fall. All presentations are on Thursday evenings and begin at 7:00 pm.

On September 18 Dr. Michael Galgano, Head of the History Department at JMU, will make a presentation entitled "Oral History as a Community Builder: Past, Present, and Future in Rockingham County." This program will underscore the importance of oral traditions and suggest ways that those interested in local history can preserve these unique sources of information.

A presentation entitled "Cattle Drives and Milk Co-ops: A Bovine History of Rockingham County" will be presented on October 16 by Nancy Sorrells. Ms. Sorrells, a historian and publisher, has been engaged for the past several years in an extensive study of the role of cattle raising in Valley life and agriculture. This program will provide valuable information about early life in the area and will be of special interest to those who have interest in the history of life on farms in the county.

Dr. Clive Hallman will make a presentation on November 20 entitled "The Established Church in the Upper Valley, 1745-1776." Dr. Hallman will provide information about the Anglican Church and the relationship between it and the "dissenting" groups who settled in the colonial Valley. The role of the established church in the area is often difficult to understand and this discussion will be useful for those interested in the colonial history of the area and those seeking to do genealogical research about early settlers.

Members of the Society are invited to attend and to bring a friend. All programs are open to the public.

*(Rockingham Postoffices continued from page 6)*

INGLEWOOD: Christopher M. Shipp, April 23, 1873; Moved to Elkton, July 24, 1885. Re-established April 16, 1888; Thomas C. Layman, April 16, 1888. Discontinued; post to Mill Bank, August 20, 1888.

ISLAND FORD: Samuel Morgan, April 29, 1893. Islandford, May 16, 1894: Thurston A. Graves, May 16, 1894; Calvin J. Kite, October 23, 1906; William T. Raines, January 10, 1923; Edgar T. Wyant, October 29, 1925.

KARICOFÉ: John W. Rhodes, February 8, 1884; Timothy E. Rhodes, February 28, 1884. Name changed to Hinton, July 10, 1885.

KEEZLETOWN: Anthony Huffman, November 27, 1832 (?); Geo. Hasler (?), February 21, 1850; William D. Bowman (?), June 9, 1852; John M. Huffman, January 29, or June 29, 1857; William P. Nichols, September 20, 1859; Richard Clatterbuck, November 4, 1865; Miss (or Mrs.) Margaret Armentrout, April 11, 1867; John Huddleston, January 5, 1875; Calvin J. Longacre, March 25, 1878; Belle C. C. V. Hannah, September 26, 1878; Noah Burkholder, June 21, 1881; Peachy (or Harley) A. Bertram, January 26, 1883; Andrew D. Bertram, October 24, 1895; James S. Templeman, September 23, 1902, Lora L. White, April 3, 1908; Andrew D. Bertram, March 5, 1914.

KISE: Emma J. Miller, April 16, 1894. Discontinued; to Harrisonburg, August 10, 1896.

(To Be Continued)

## **Journey Into The Past**

### **A Walking Tour of Downtown Harrisonburg**

On Wednesday, July 23 at 6:30— 8:30 pm, local historian, Bob Sullivan, will lead a free historical and anecdotal tour of downtown Harrisonburg. Please wear comfortable shoes and bring an umbrella in case of rain. Meet in the Tower Lobby of Massanutten Regional Library, Main Library, 174 S. Main Street. Tour departs at 6:30 pm and concludes at Kline's Dairy Bar.

Sponsored by the Friends of Massanutten Regional Library.

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