

Newsletter

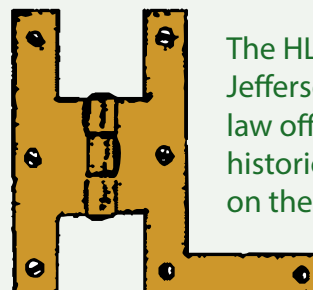


Preserving
Falling Spring
Presbyterian
Church
Cemetery

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The HLF office is now at 15 South Jefferson Street, previously the law office of Mac Crawford. It is a historic building with exposed logs on the front of the structure.

Please come for a visit.



From the President's Desk

Dear Friends of HLF,

As summer is in full swing in Rockbridge County, we have an opportunity to reflect on the outstanding work that Historic Lexington Foundation has accomplished this year, particularly as we emerge from the global pandemic. HLF hosted events such as our Annual Meeting at Timber Ridge, as well as three May Preservation Month activities. These are detailed in this Newsletter. In addition, HLF continues to focus on preservation efforts in the community and in our cemeteries with some recent work approved for the Rockbridge County cemetery at Falling Spring Presbyterian Church. Finally, HLF has been an advocate and involved in the Spotswood Drive project as well as the review of the proposed Washington and Lee Master Plan.

HLF representatives spoke at City Council meetings expressing concern about the size and scope of development on Spotswood Drive. To be clear, we recognize that our city has capital needs. But we likewise believe that we can increase the tax base while developing the property in a way that enhances the community while respecting the nature of Lexington. We advocated for a local Spotswood Collaborative to be awarded the development opportunity. While we were unsuccessful, we will continue to monitor the development and make our voice heard as this work progresses.

Additionally, HLF has advocated at the Planning Commission regarding the proposed Washington and Lee Master Plan. We appreciate all the good that W&L does in our community, but we found that some of the proposals risked forever altering the character and feel of that part of downtown Lexington. We were successful, along with other citizens, in working with the Planning Commission to compromise on some height restrictions and to postpone the addition of the Lee Avenue parking garage. Again, we will continue to monitor and engage as appropriate in this process in the months and years to come.

HLF Executive Director Don Hasfurther and I had the opportunity to meet with Lexington Mayor Frank Friedman and City Manager Jim Halasz to discuss these and other issues in July. We appreciate their outreach and willingness to keep lines of communication open as the city addresses these and other issues.

As I hope you can see, the Foundation's work is varied and ongoing. This volume of work would not be possible without our dedicated volunteer leaders on the board and even past presidents and past board members who rallied to support these and other efforts. I thank them as well as Don Hasfurther and Rose Kinard for keeping the day-to-day operations running smoothly. Our members and donors continue to play a crucial role. Without all of us working together, we would be unable to do what needs doing. We remain committed to preserving the historic and truly special fabric of our community. We appreciate your continuing support and look forward to our continuing work.

Best wishes for your summer.

Larry Stanton Wiese
President

*Cover image: The graves of John Grigsby and his wife, Elizabeth Grigsby, at Falling Spring Presbyterian Church Cemetery.
(Photo by Don Hasfurther)*

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HLF Assists the Preservation of Historic Falling Spring Presbyterian Church Cemetery

This summer Historic Lexington Foundation is once again collaborating with Hamric Memorials on historic cemetery preservation. Previously the two worked together on gravestone repair and resetting at Lexington's two cemeteries. Now they are collaborating on the cemetery at Falling Spring Presbyterian Church.

HLF board member Skip Ravenhorst referred to the cemetery at Falling Spring Presbyterian Church as perhaps the most important cemetery in the county. It is the resting site of four Revolutionary War soldiers, two from the War of 1812, and over thirty Confederate soldiers, a number of whom were killed during the war in places like Spotsylvania, Stanardsville, Malvern Hill, and Appomattox. One of those soldiers was killed at the age of seventeen. Three other soldiers were killed at the age of eighteen. Another soldier, John Pogue Moore, was tragically killed at Appomattox the day of Lee's surrender.

The oldest and perhaps most important grave is that of "Soldier John" Grigsby. Grigsby fought in the American colonial army under Lawrence Washington against the Spanish in the 1741

battle to take Cartagena, Colombia. He was one of the colonial soldiers not killed in the failed effort to take the city and secure the harbor. One of his sons, Reuben Grigsby, is buried nearby together with his wife, Verlinda Porter Grigsby. He was a veteran of the War of 1812.

Other notable persons buried in the cemetery include Irish-born physician James Watson and William Weaver, the owner of nearby Buffalo Forge. As noted in the next article in this newsletter, Weaver employed slave labor to operate his farm and forge and is the principal character in Charles Dew's book *The Bond of Iron: Master and Slave at Buffalo Forge*.

The cemetery is well maintained by the church, but like any cemetery of that age has many restoration issues. Many gravestones are broken or on the ground. Others are leaning and in danger of falling. In addition to needing resetting, a number need to be re-pinned to their base. Among the family names on stones needing repair are Grigsby, Pogue, Clark, McCluer, Laird, and Paxton.



HLF board member Mary Newman and Shawn Hamric of Hamric Memorials survey cemetery stones in need of repair.



One of several stones off its base and on the ground.



This tombstone of Reuben Grigsby's son reads: Jaquelin A. Grigsby, Born May 24, 1818, Died Sept. 28, 1865.



Preserving the Legacy of Those Enslaved in Antebellum Rockbridge County

For Preservation Month 2022, Historic Lexington Foundation pursued an ongoing effort to understand and interpret slavery in Rockbridge County. The effort began in 2019 with a project uniting HLF, members of the Brownsburg community, Virginia Humanities, and the organization “Saving Slave Places.” This initiative documented slave houses in the Brownsburg area. The Preservation Month events attempted to put a human face on this brick-and-mortar effort.

The month’s events concluded on May 28 with a presentation by Charles Dew, Ephraim Williams Professor Emeritus, at Williams

College. The presentation revolved around Dew’s research in writing the acclaimed book **Bond of Iron: Master and Slave at Buffalo Forge**. The event took place at Falling Spring Presbyterian Church and was followed by a tour of the slave houses at Buffalo Forge.

The masters at Buffalo Forge were William Weaver and his nephew Daniel Brady, both from Pennsylvania. The enslaved included Sam Williams, Henry Towles, Tooler, Harry Hunt Jr., Henry Matthews, and Garland Thompson, who worked the iron-making facilities at Buffalo Forge. While it did not make the institution of slavery any less evil, Dew noted that the workers at the forge were paid if they surpassed their work quota. Sam Williams even had a bank savings account in Lexington.

The records dealing with the slaves at Buffalo Forge are unique in their completeness and provided Dew with a treasure trove of source materials. In his book and his presentation, he described the working and living conditions for the enslaved artisans and their families, as well as the complex interaction between white and black that constituted the inner core of the master-slave relationship.



Audience begins to fill Falling Spring Presbyterian Church in anticipation of presentation by Charles Dew. (Photo by Anne Herring)



*Charles Dew discusses his research leading to the writing of **Bond of Iron**.*



The grave of William Weaver, the “Master of Buffalo Forge,” behind that of his neighbor Reuben Grigsby.



The slave house at the McChesney Farm was open to visitors during the Still Standing event.



Cinder Stanton, former Shannon Senior Historian at Monticello, gave a public talk during May Preservation Month.

The Preservation Month's events began May 7 with a tour of five slave houses in the Brownsburg area. The event, entitled **Still Standing: Brownsburg Slave Houses**, provided participants the ability to visit five sites with extant slave houses. Docents were onsite to speak about the owners and the occupants of the houses and provide tours. As with Charles Dew's presentation, participants included a number of the descendants of enslaved people, including Dr. David Green, a UVA professor whose ancestor was enslaved at the McChesney Farm, one of the tour sites.

The tour was sponsored by HLF and the Brownsburg Museum. Many other individuals were involved in developing a driving tour brochure and brochures detailing information on each site. Many organizations, including Virginia Humanities and the Virginia Association of Museums, helped publicize the tour. Bruce Macdonald presented the owners of the five sites with a framed drawing of their slave dwelling.

The third event was a presentation on May 14 at the First Baptist Church in Lexington by Cinder Stanton entitled **From Little North Mountain to Lexington: The Enslaved Families of Monticello and Beyond**. A former Shannon Senior Historian at Monticello, Stanton's remarks drew on her research and the result of a thirty-year oral history project to shed light on life in the cabins and workshops of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. The oral history project she directed revealed the remarkable strength of family bonds in the face of the realities of slavery.

Stanton told of Lexingtonian John Jordan's brick work at Monticello. While there, Jordan convinced a reluctant Jefferson to sell one of his slaves, Brown Colbert, to Jordan for use in his building efforts in Lexington. Stanton also told of Betty Brown, who was one of twelve children of Elizabeth (Betty) Hemings, a sister of Sally Hemings. Members of the Hemings family also found their way to the Lexington area where some of their descendants still live today.



Bruce Macdonald presents Verdant Acres owners, Mary and John Pederson, with a pastel drawing of their slave house.



*Don Hasfurther (right) reads from a copy of **The Diary of Henry Boswell Jones of Brownsburg** in Jones' Whitehall slave house during the May 7 tour. (Photo by Jennifer Law Young)*



HLF Will Place New Highway Marker for Early Settlement of Timber Grove

At the initiative of former HLF board president Reed Belden, HLF has placed an order with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources for a highway marker recognizing the settlement of Timber Grove, north of Timber Ridge. All that is left of the site is a cemetery. The initiative was announced at the organization's annual meeting in April. On that occasion, Belden was awarded an HLF Founders' Award for his support of HLF.

Timber Grove is believed to be the first European American settlement in what is now Rockbridge County. The community, composed mainly of Scots-Irish immigrants, had been formed by the late 1730s. Presbyterian minister John Craig, who traveled extensively in the backcountry, baptized several residents in 1741 and had a meeting house constructed in 1748. The site of the settlement is located two miles northeast of Timber Ridge.

In 1755–56, community members built the stone Timber Ridge Presbyterian Church there. John Mackey, traditionally regarded as the area's first European settler, is buried in the church's cemetery. His gravestone is significant because of its age and craftsmanship. It reads "HERE LYES THE INTARD BODY OF JOHN MCKY WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1773 OF HIS AGE AFTER LIVING A CHRISTIAN LIFE, A LOVING HUSBAND A TENDER PARENT & FAITHFUL FRIEND."

The Timber Grove marker will be placed next to an existing highway marker for Timber Ridge. The marker will reference

Timber Grove as the first settlement in what would become Rockbridge County. Other markers at Timber Ridge mark the birthplace of Sam Houston and the site of Liberty Hall Academy before the academy was moved immediately west of what is today Washington and Lee University's main campus.



HLF President Larry Wiese and Vice President Elizabeth Boetsch present Reed Belden with an HLF Founders' Award during HLF's annual meeting at Timber Ridge on April 2, 2022.



The gravestone of John Mackey at Timber Ridge Presbyterian Church Cemetery.



The current Timber Ridge Church highway marker stands in front of the church.

Thanks To Our Contributors

We extend our sincere gratitude to all who sustain the work of HLF. We recognize these donors whose gifts were received from August 2021–July 2022.

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We strive for accuracy in our acknowledgments. Please share corrections with us.

Of Note



Suzanne Rice, David Green, Margaret Samdahl, and Don Hasfurther at the Whitehall slave house during the May 7th tour.



Monument in Falling Spring Cemetery to John Poague Moore, killed at Appomattox, the 9th of April 1865, the day of Lee's surrender.



Les Shepherd of the Falling Spring Presbyterian Church's cemetery committee examines stones marked for repair.



The most recent HLF historic marker on the Henry White House on Lee Avenue.



Rockbridge Historical Society's Campbell House, a 2022 recipient of an HLF facade grant.