

# THE GUARDIAN

Volume IV, Issue 1  
April 2006

Newsletter of the Jefferson County Historical Society  
*Jefferson County History For All*

Visit us on the Web at [JeffCtyWVHistSoc.org](http://JeffCtyWVHistSoc.org)

## For Sale: Happy Retreat By Walter Washington



Happy Retreat, the home of Charles Washington, has been offered for sale to the City of Charles Town by its owners, Mr. and Mrs. William Gavin. The asking price for the house and 12 surrounding acres is \$2.5 million. Charles Town Mayor Peggy Smith chaired a public meeting on January 30 which heard enthusiastic support for the purchase.

Since January, a group of interested citizens of varied backgrounds, brought together by Mayor Smith, has been meeting regularly under her leadership. Because the City is not in a position to take on the ownership of the house itself, a plan was adapted to approach acquisition of Happy Retreat by dividing the property into two sections. The house, outbuildings and surrounding yard consisting of roughly 3 acres will be purchased and maintained by a private non-profit, 501(c)(3) corporation called Friends of Happy Retreat. The City will pursue purchasing the remaining 9 acres as a City park. The neighboring developer, Arca-

dia, has offered to donate an adjoining 23 acres to the City, which could be incorporated into the park as well. This donated land, which runs along Evitts Run behind Happy Retreat, includes what are believed to be the graves of Charles Washington and his wife, Mildred. The Friends of Happy Retreat has filed for incorporation with the West Virginia Secretary of State as a non-profit corporation and the process is underway to obtain tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service.

The history of Happy Retreat is documented in an article written by Charlotte Judd Fairbairn in Volume XIII (December, 1947) of the Society's Magazine, from which the following brief history is taken. Charles Washington inherited the land on which Happy Retreat is built from his half-brother Lawrence, who died in 1752. Charles and his wife Mildred moved to Happy Retreat from their home in Fredericksburg, Virginia in 1780. Prior to his death in 1799, Charles deeded the property to his son, Samuel. Samuel sold it to Thomas Hammond in 1800.

The house itself consists of three sections, two wings thought to have been built by Charles Washington and the later center section built by Judge Issac A. Douglass, who purchased the property from Thomas Hammond's heirs in 1837. There are also several outbuildings, including a free standing stone and brick kitchen. According to the Fairbairn article, the date 1768 is

inscribed on the cornerstone of the kitchen.

One of the first tasks confronting the Friends of Happy Retreat has been to authenticate the history of the building. To that end, Matthew Webster, the Director of Architectural Renovation at Kenmore, in Fredericksburg, has been engaged to conduct a limited historic structure survey and to provide advice on restoration and possible uses of the house. Kenmore was the home of Charles Washington's sister Betty and her husband Fielding Lewis. Webster (a Jefferson County native) has overseen the extensive restoration of Kenmore over the past several years. He will present his report on Happy Retreat in May.

The Board of Directors of the Society voted to contribute \$500 to help underwrite the contract with Webster. The Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission has pledged a matching amount. The result of his work will be reported in a future issue of the Guardian, along with updates on the success of the effort to preserve Happy Retreat.

Board members Walter Washington (725-8832) and Curt Mason (724-7008) are working with the City and with the Friends of Happy Retreat. If you have questions about this effort or would like to become involved, please contact one of them. Anyone with experience in similar undertakings is encouraged to come forward.

## From the President

The presentation by the National Park Service Rangers at our spring meeting was moving and informative. Kim Biggs presented a history of the Niagara Movement which led to the formation of the NAACP and the modern Civil Rights Movement in the United States. What happened in Harpers Ferry in August 1906 has had a profound impact on the freedom and democracy for peoples all over the world. The National Park Service will be celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of that first meeting this coming August. Check out the Visitors Center or the Web Site for more information. The membership also elected a new Board Member, Ms. Susannah Buckles Flanagan to the Board of

Directors. She joins Bob O'Connor and Curt Mason as our newest board members. We are still seeking a replacement for George Marshall as treasurer who will be "retiring" on the first of July. We all owe George a great debt of gratitude for the excellent job he has done handling the day to day financial affairs, as well as providing oversight of the strategic investment of our funds for the maximum benefit to the society. THANKS GEORGE!!!

While I am at it, I want to thank Doug Perks for the spring program and his contributions to the museum and education committees of the Society. I also want to thank Carmen Creamer for the two excellent magazine editions she has got-

ten out "on time and under budget" and for Walter Washington's leadership in working with the Landmarks Commission (which he chairs) and the County Commission and the city of Charles Town to establish working committees that can move forward with the Project to preserve both the Jail and the founder of Charles Town's home, "Happy Retreat."

There is a lot going on and it does not proceed without volunteer help. Betty Lowe and Johnna Armstrong have agreed to help Hugh Voress with a genealogy committee, but we are still looking for a volunteer to head up that effort. Think about it and call me to talk.

### Coming Event:

**Eastern Panhandle Art.** Dr. John Cuthbert, Curator of the West Virginia and Regional History Collection, Morgantown, WV will present two heavily illustrated slide presentations on Early Art and Artists of the Eastern Panhandle of WV at the

Charles Town Library Auditorium at 200 East Washington Street in Charles Town, WV. Landscape painting history will be shown and discussed Friday, April 21, 2006, at 7 pm while the Portrait and Genre painting lecture will be made on Saturday, April 22, at 10AM. A reception will be held following

Saturday's lecture at the Fire Hall Gallery & Charles Town Visitors Center 108 North George Street. This is a continuation of the presentation given at the November 5, 2005 membership meeting. The lectures and reception are free and open to the public.

## Jefferson County Historical Society

*Jefferson County History For All*

Please join us in perpetuating Jefferson County's monumental heritage

**Would you or someone you know like to join the  
Jefferson County Historical Society?**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Annual Membership (\$15)

\_\_\_\_\_ Life Membership (\$150)

*Annual dues can be sent after Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> each fiscal year to:*

**Membership Secretary  
Jefferson County Historical Society  
P. O. Box 485,  
Charles Town, WV 25414**

**The Museum Corner**  
By Susan Collins, Curator

**THE RICHMOND GRAYS' SILVER**

The letter is written on ruled notepaper, the writing clear and elegant, brown-tinged with age. It reads as follows:

Richmond  
December 22<sup>nd</sup>/59

Dear Madam

*Recollecting with the liveliest gratitude the graceful and cordial hospitality extended to us beneath your roof, during our recent sojourn in Charlestown, we beg you to accept the accompanying plate, as expressing our appreciation of kindness so generously bestowed. As Soldiers, it was a pleasing duty assigned us, to march to the protection of your beautiful town against threatened violence, and be assured should danger ever again menace your household, we should consider the obligation doubly sacred to guard it from the possibility of outrage.*

*We have returned from Charlestown bringing with us memories of at least one charming and cultivated family which shall not soon be effaced and we venture to hope that as often as you may use a piece of the service we now send you, it may be with a kindly remembrance of the "Grays". With a "Merry Christmas" and our kindest regards to all within your family circle, we remain Madam very Truly and gratefully yours*

*Louis Bossieux  
EW Branch  
I Ballentine  
Jas. W. Pegram  
Ed. M. Alfriend*



This "sojourn" took place during the imprisonment and subsequent trial of John Brown, following his notorious raid on Harpers Ferry in October, 1859. Virginia Governor Henry Wise ordered militia groups from surrounding areas to converge upon Charles Town, providing protection for the inhabitants.

The Keyes family of Charles Town willingly opened their home to five officers of the Richmond Grays. When Mrs. Keyes opened her gift from the "Grays" she found a superb silver water pitcher and two coin silver goblets (above) made by the Meriden Company of Connecticut. The pitcher stands almost twelve inches high and is insulated inside.

[JeffCtyWVMuseum.org](http://JeffCtyWVMuseum.org)

**President Bill Drennen**  
(304) 876-1236 Cell: 304-238-5011  
email: [president@jeffctywvhistosoc.org](mailto:president@jeffctywvhistosoc.org)

**Vice-President James G. Gibson**  
(304) 267-6059  
email: [vicepresident@jeffctywvhistosoc.org](mailto:vicepresident@jeffctywvhistosoc.org)

**Treasurer George Marshall**  
(304) 876-3654  
email: [treasurer@jeffctywvhistosoc.org](mailto:treasurer@jeffctywvhistosoc.org)

**Journal Editor Carmen Creamer**  
(304) 725-7770 Cell: 304-886-9202  
email: [journaleditor@jeffctywvhistosoc.org](mailto:journaleditor@jeffctywvhistosoc.org)

**Membership Secretary Hugh Voress**  
(304) 725-6095  
email: [membershipsecretary@jeffctywvhistosoc.org](mailto:membershipsecretary@jeffctywvhistosoc.org)

**Corresponding Secretary Betsy Wells**  
(304) 725-6598  
email: [correspondingsecretary@jeffctywvhistosoc.org](mailto:correspondingsecretary@jeffctywvhistosoc.org)

**Recording Secretary Mary Alice Lemen**  
email: [recordingsecretary@jeffctywvhistosoc.org](mailto:recordingsecretary@jeffctywvhistosoc.org)

**OFFICERS and BOARD MEMBERS**

**John Van Tol**  
(304) 876-2374  
email: [boardmember1@jeffctywvhistosoc.org](mailto:boardmember1@jeffctywvhistosoc.org)

**Doug Perks**  
(304) 876-2616  
email: [boardmember2@jeffctywvhistosoc.org](mailto:boardmember2@jeffctywvhistosoc.org)

**James Taylor**  
(304) 725-7242  
email: [boardmember3@jeffctywvhistosoc.org](mailto:boardmember3@jeffctywvhistosoc.org)

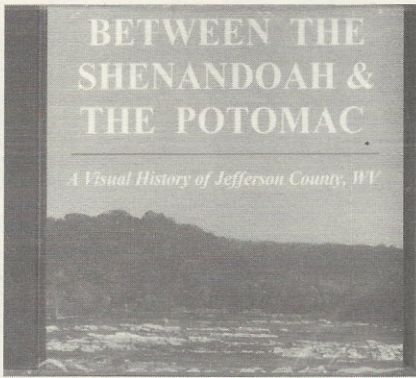
**Walter Washington**  
(304) 725-8322  
email: [boardmember4@jeffctywvhistosoc.org](mailto:boardmember4@jeffctywvhistosoc.org)

**Curt Mason**  
(304) 724-7008  
email: [boardmember5@jeffctywvhistosoc.org](mailto:boardmember5@jeffctywvhistosoc.org)

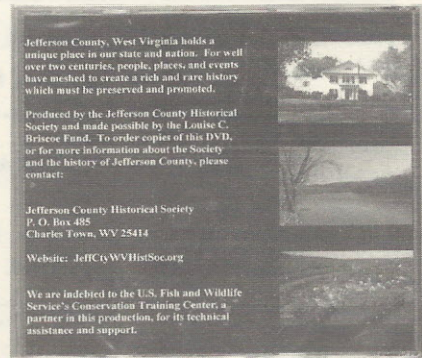
**James L Glymph**  
(304) 725-3220  
email: [boardmember6@jeffctywvhistosoc.org](mailto:boardmember6@jeffctywvhistosoc.org)

**Bob O'Connor**  
(304) 725-611  
email: [boardmember7@jeffctywvhistosoc.org](mailto:boardmember7@jeffctywvhistosoc.org)

**Susannah Flanagan**  
(304) 725-5998 Cell: 703-609-4266  
email: [boardmember8@jeffctywvhistosoc.org](mailto:boardmember8@jeffctywvhistosoc.org)



The Society produced the VHS videotape, "**Between the Shenandoah and the Potomac**," a number of years ago. It is a visual history of Jefferson County. The same production is now available in DVD. It can be purchased at area locations for \$9.95. See below for mail ordering instructions.



One copy of **The Magazine of the Jefferson County Historical Society** is mailed to each person holding a **PAID** membership. *Unfortunately, those members who are delinquent in their dues will not receive a copy of this publication. Please make sure that your dues have been paid and that the society has your current 911 address.* Until the publication of next year's magazine, members may purchase additional copies for \$6 each; order these from The Society, Box 485, Charles Town, WV 25414. Original volumes or facsimile reproductions are available to all persons at \$7 per magazine.

**Other publications:**

**The Washington Homes of Jefferson County.** \$10 mailed.

Michael D. Thompson, **Calendar and Index to Recorded Plats in Jefferson County, West Virginia (Virginia) Courthouse, 1801-1901.** \$25 mailed.

**Between the Shenandoah and Potomac: Historic Homes of Jefferson County, West Virginia.** \$49.95 plus shipping and handling  
**Burials in Jefferson County, West Virginia, 1978-97.** \$18 mailed.

The videotape, **Between the Shenandoah and Potomac**, is also available for \$25 mailed.

The DVD, **Between the Shenandoah and Potomac**, is also available for \$14 mailed.

**THE GUARDIAN**  
**Jefferson County Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 485**  
**Charles Town, WV 25414**

**Non-Profit Org.**  
**U.S. POSTAGE**  
**PAID**  
**Charles Town, WV**  
**Permit No. 10**