



# THE GUARDIAN

Newsletter of the Jefferson County WV Historical Society    Volume V Issue 2    April 2007

## JCHS Spring Meeting a Full House For Election and Lecture

On April 7th, the Society held its 2007 spring membership meeting in the meeting room at the Old Charles Town Library. Outgoing President Bill Drennen welcomed Society members and guests, who filled all the chairs in the room.

A slate of new officers and board members was approved by those present, as follows: President-Carmen Creamer; Vice-President-Jim Gibson; Treasurer-Barbara Gibson; Secretary-Doug Perks; Editor-Jim Glymph; Corresponding Secretary, Betsy Wells; Curator Hugh Voress and Board Members Bill Drennen, Walter Washington, Curt Mason, and Evelyn Taylor.

Following the election, Mr. John Allen, Chairman of the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission presented the results of an Historic Resources Survey that the Landmarks Commission has been conducting for the last three years. Mr. Allen summarized the number and types of structures found to exist in the county, including houses, barns, schools, churches, mills and other historic resources. He also showed a map of all the historic resources identified during the survey and demonstrated the accompanying database, where information about each resource is stored. Funding for the survey was obtained from the Jefferson County Commission, the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office, and the Jefferson County Historical Society. A summary of Mr. Allen's presentation will be published in the July issue of the Guardian.

## JCHS Picnic to be held August 1 At Happy Retreat

Mr. and Mrs. William Gavin, owners of Happy Retreat, have graciously volunteered to host the 2007 summer picnic. Located in Charles Town, this historic estate was established by Charles Washington, the founder of Charles Town, in the

late 1700's. An expansive rear lawn and several large shade trees will provide an ideal setting for Society members to relax and visit with friends and acquaintances and enjoy the fine food that is a hallmark of this event. The picnic will be held as usual on the first Wednesday in August.

## Friends of Happy Retreat Completes Concept Plan; Initiates Capital Campaign



Friends of Happy Retreat has completed a concept plan describing preserving and operating Happy Retreat after its purchase by the organization. True to the goal of the corporation and the present owners to preserve and utilize Happy Retreat for the public good, the plan describes two major program efforts which will support the long-term sustainability of the project. The George Washington Institute of Living Ethics will be established to address America's modern-day ethical challenges through education, research, and outreach that focuses on rediscovering the wisdom and character of George Washington and other Founding Fathers. An extensive suite of Arts and Humanities programs based on collaboration with local educational institutions and other non-profit groups will be conducted in art, music, and history and related humanities. These Arts and Humanities programs will not only address local and regional needs for such historically-oriented cultural activities, but also support the ethics programs through adherence to the Jeffersonian

precept that "*Laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind.*"

The results of a recently completed planning study indicated strong community support for the efforts of FOHR to acquire and use the house for the public good. A capital campaign to raise the \$2.5M purchase price is just now getting underway and expressions of support are being actively solicited from the community and public sources.

**From the Presidents' Desks: *Transitions***

*[editor's note: This issue sees the departure of former President Bill Drennen and the arrival of incoming President Carmen Creamer. Bill received a resounding round of applause at the Spring meeting for his leadership and initiative in revitalizing the Society during his four-year term. Bill's accomplishments include the establishment of this newsletter, the expansion and redesign of a comprehensive web site to promote the history of Jefferson County and the sale of Society publications, and creative partnerships with other local groups to celebrate the history of the county. We wish Bill well in his "retirement" and thank him for his many contributions to the Society.]*



**A Fond Farewell from outgoing President, Bill Drennen.**

Nancy Coyle was my introduction to the Historical Society. Her presentation of Lon Savage, author of *Thunder in the Mountains*, made me think that The Jefferson County Historical Society was a pretty special organization. Newly arrived from Charleston and State government, as Commissioner of Culture and History, I had honored Lon's twin brother Lee Savage with a lifetime achievement award for his work in the arts. My involvement in The Governor's (and First Lady's) *Arts and Letters Series* provided frequent exposure to world class talents like Lon. I was enthralled to see a small West Virginia county organization put on such a nice affair. First being elected to the board, and then to the presidency, I thought about ways to advance the organization.

What was the organization doing and what did it want to be doing? That seemed a reasonable question to be asking of the board that had just elected me. Well, we have a picnic every year at one of the historic homes in Jefferson County and we have two annual meetings at which speakers are asked to make presentations of interest to the membership. We publish a Journal every year with articles written about the history of the county, which is a very fine publication with wide distribution to the academic community around the country. Wonderful! I would not want to change any of that, so how could I help make the Jefferson County Historical Society more than that.

My first impression was that the Society did not seem to be active in the life of the community. We did not lend our voice to the historic preservation movement or support issues of historic interest except quietly behind the scenes. I felt there was an opportunity for me to help develop more interest and communication with our membership, to discover what the members wanted from the Society, and to increase the number of members, taking advantage of the huge influx of citizens moving into our communities. I also felt it was important to find ways to get the various communities working together on issues of interest across the traditional lines of the towns and districts within Jefferson County; to publish more articles of local interest; and to make the application of our financial legacy more effective in ways that would benefit the historic resources of the county. Finally, I sought ways to have us interact with other organizations to develop synergy and energy in many fields of the Humanities, and to invest our funds in ways that would provide for the future growth that we all were anticipating

To that end, we held a strategic planning retreat during which the board of directors developed vision and mission statements and a set of long-range goals. We established this quarterly newsletter to inform the membership and the community about our efforts. We developed a web site that makes information about the county available more quickly and more frequently to our members and non-

members alike. We partnered with West Virginia University, the West Virginia Humanities Council, and the Arts and Humanities Alliance in presenting programs and publishing (and selling) historical materials.

I do not take personal credit for these accomplishments, but note that the board and the membership, in particular Carmen Creamer, Curt Mason, Jim Glymph, Walter Washington, Betsy Wells, Doug Perks, George Marshall, Jim Taylor, and the tireless Hugh Voress have all made the four years of my presidency a wonderful, and fulfilling experience. Thank you all for putting up with me and helping me learn a bit of the history and the historical society in this most wonderful of places to live.

Sincerely, Bill Drennen

### **Greetings from incoming President, Carmen Creamer.**

Dear Members of the Jefferson County Historical Society. I appreciate the confidence you have shown in me by electing me President of the Society. My goal is simple – to increase membership and thereby increase awareness in the richness and diversity of our past. I hope to reach out to the new residents of the county, acquaint them with our Society and have them join our effort. New members will help ensure the growth and survival of the Society, and will aid in our mission of educating and preserving our county's rich history.

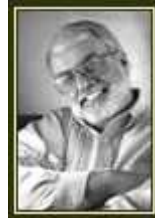
This year the Magazine of the Jefferson County Historical Society will re-visit the topic of the Washington family in Jefferson County. While we have explored this topic many times in the past, we hope to include new information on the family and acquaint new residents in the county with the family's significance to our history. This seems particularly appropriate in the year that the Jefferson County School Board has decided to name the new high school simply "Washington High School." If any of you have anything appropriate for the Magazine, please contact our new editor, Jim Glymph, through our web site.

Finally, I ask any of you who have concerns about or ideas for the Society to contact me through our web site or by telephone – my number

is given in the back of the current Magazine and on the web site.

Thank you. Carmen W. Creamer

### **Local Author to Hold Book Signing At South Jefferson Public Library**



Society member and historic novelist Bob O'Connor will host a book signing of his new book, *"The Virginian Who Might Have Saved Lincoln."* Described in the January 2007 edition of this newsletter, the novel revolves around the life and times of Ward Hill Lamon, a Summit Point, native who served as President Lincoln's law partner and bodyguard. The signing will be held June 3rd at 2pm at the South Jefferson Public Library, 49 Church Street, in Summit Point, WV. For additional information, please take a moment to visit Bob's web site: [www.boboconnorbooks.com](http://www.boboconnorbooks.com).

### **The Museum Corner by Sue Collins George Washington's Letter**

In November of 2006, the Museum received five magnificent gifts from a descendent of Charles Washington, George Mason and Colonel Burgess Ball. These gifts are: a letter written by George Washington (described below), the first printing of Washington's will, printed in Alexandria in 1800, a pamphlet containing Washington's maternal ancestry dated 1885, and two oil paintings by James R. Lambdin. One portrait is of Washington, after Gilbert Stuart's painting and the other of George Mason, after John Hesselius.

In an area rich with Washington family associations, it is strange that America's first President is a shadowy figure. We know of his land holdings; the homes of his brothers; the church where he worshipped and the healing springs where, for brief periods, he shed the cares of public life. Washington had a great affection for this region: its great beauty and the richness of the land. However, for some of us Washington is "seen through a glass, darkly".

That impression has now changed. Thanks to the generosity of Mrs. Cornelia Haden Brewer, the Museum now has a letter written in the final months of his life by Washington to his cousin in "Leesburgh", Colonel Burgess Ball.

The circumstances are sad. Charles Washington had died, not unexpectedly, following a long illness. Washington's first cousin, Colonel Burgess Ball had written to Mount Vernon from his home in Leesburg(h) to break the news. Since Ball's letter arrived on September 19, we can assume that Charles Washington's death occurred shortly before that date. Until now, the date of Charles' death was uncertain, usually given as somewhere between May and September, 1799.

Washington's handwriting is firm, but deletions and corrections suggest an agitation of mind. "I was the first and am now the last of my fathers (sic) children by the second marriage who remain. When I shall be called upon to follow them is known only to the Giver of Life." Although written to a well-loved relative, Washington's letter is couched in the formal style of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a time when self-control was of paramount importance and the mark of a gentleman. Despite this, his grief is evident: the death of his youngest brother could only bring a chill to the heart. Winter lay ahead, when death came indiscriminately to young and old alike, and indeed, the winter of 1799 and 1800 would see both the writer of this letter and its recipient in their graves.

Washington's death on December 14<sup>th</sup> was followed by that of Burgess Ball at the age of 51, on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1800. Appalling weather conditions had prevented Colonel Ball from traveling fifty miles across the mountains, through mud and snow to Washington's funeral.

**PLEASE HELP US REACH YOU!**

In an ongoing effort to improve communications to and between all members, **Please E-mail us with your e-mail address, indicating whether we can share it with other members.** Use a subject line "My Email Address." Send to [info@jeffersonhistoricalwv.org](mailto:info@jeffersonhistoricalwv.org)

**JCHS and AHA Partner in Local  
Art, History, and Music in May**

The Jefferson County Historical Society will be co-sponsoring two events in May with the Arts and Humanities Alliance of Jefferson County (AHA). Both events focus on the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers and their impact on life in Jefferson County, in both the past and present.

The first event, the Two Rivers Art and Humanities Show, features the talents of visual and performing artists and is a unique opportunity to see and appreciate how artists interpret the rivers through their art, words, and music. The exhibit includes paintings, drawings, woven objects, pottery, sculpture, premier a musical composition, and poetry. The senses will be touched, and perhaps, even provoked

The Two Rivers Show will be installed mainly at the Fire Hall Gallery in the Charles Town Visitors Center, across from the Court House on George Street in Charles Town. The show opens on May 6 and closes on July 27. A kick off meet-the-artists reception is scheduled for Saturday, May 12 at the Fire Hall Gallery from 4-6 PM.

On Sunday, May 20, at 2:00 PM, Melinda Day of the National Park Service will present a lecture on the rivers at the Harpers Ferry Train Station's new public room. Come and learn more about the Shenandoah and Potomac, while enjoying the new renovation of the historic train station. Other events of the day include a poetry reading by Tracy Seffers and the premier of "Potomac in Flight" by Cam Miller, played by the "Shepherd Three" faculty wind trio from Shepherd University with Anne Munro, flute, Gregory P. Shook, oboe, and Richard Polonchak, bassoon..

For additional information, please contact the curator at [gilnarrogarcia@comcast.net](mailto:gilnarrogarcia@comcast.net). Hope to see you there!

Participating artists: Michael Austin, Anne Bowers, Melinda Day, Gil Narro Garcie, Cam Miller, Joanna Morrison, Ann Munro, Pam and Ren Parziale, Richard Polonchak, Katie Inez Queen, Tracey Seffers ,Greg Shook, James Shumate, Diana Sutenfield, Leia Wood.



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