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P.O. Box 716  
Montross, VA 22520

# The Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Society

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Steve Walker & Kathryn Shepherd, Editors

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## NNVHS Buys Building in Downtown Montross

The board of directors of The Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Society (NNVHS) on Feb. 24 approved the \$125,000 purchase of a 1930's bungalow, at 15482 Kings Highway in downtown Montross, for use as its headquarters and research library. The board obtained estimates for renovations of \$40,000 to make the facility handicap-accessible and functional as a library and workspace. The Montross Town Council approved the special use permit that night. The purchase closed on March 27.

The purchase is the culmination of three years of effort to establish an office and workspace for the Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Society. In 2006 and 2007, NNVHS and the Westmoreland County Museum explored the viability of a fundraising partnership to expand the museum to include library and office space for the Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Society. Both groups abandoned the joint effort in 2007 and each organization pursued its own capital campaign.

The Virginia General Assembly approved the second of two grants to NNVHS in 2007. This matching grant had an April 2009 deadline. The board of directors appointed a building committee and a capital campaign chair to spearhead the drive to obtain a building. The Jessie Ball duPont Fund granted funds to conduct a successful capital campaign.

The 2007-2008 fundraising was successful and the state matching funds were received and deposited in Northern Neck State Bank and Peoples Community Bank. By the end of the year \$210,000 was on deposit for the acquisition.

In 2008, the Westmoreland County Museum confirmed that the original idea for expansion of that facility has been deferred.



Photo by Bill Elliott

The potential purchase of 15482 Kings Highway was first brought before the board of directors on Jan. 14, 2009. The board authorized further exploration. On Jan. 30, NNVHS made a purchase offer subject to board approval and other standard contingencies such as an inspection and permit approval. On Feb. 4 members of the board toured the property. Contractor's estimates were obtained. Those estimates and plans were reviewed at the Feb. 24 meeting and formed the basis of the board's vote to approve the purchase at \$125,000 with estimated renovations of \$40,000.

The Society will begin the renovations on the building. We look forward to establishing a volunteer base to assist visitors in historical and genealogical research. Be part of the story...

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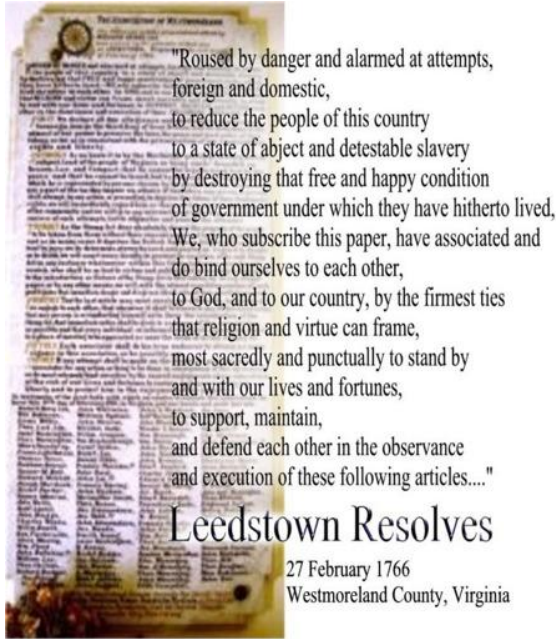
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# February 27, 1766 – A Day We Celebrate

*By the Rev. Charles R. Sydnor, Jr.*

The Society's 3<sup>rd</sup> annual commemoration of the Leedstown Resolutions was held on February 27<sup>th</sup> at the King Conservation Center at Menokin. One of the goals of this event is to highlight the stories of the lesser-known signers. We are pleased to republish the address presented at last year's celebration by Charles Sydnor on his ancestor and Leedstown Signer, William Sydnor.



Sydnor Thompson, Jr., author of *The Sydnor Family Saga*, makes the claim that all American Sydnors are descended from Fortunatus Sydnor and his wife, Joanna Lawson. The exact date of his arrival from England is unknown, but Fortunatus witnessed a deed in Lancaster County on December 5, 1666. He was likely the Fortunatus who received a bequest from a kinsman, Francis Sydnor of Gray's Inn, London, in 1656. This would indicate he emigrated about 1660. I am a descendant of Fortunatus through his son Anthony, born in Lancaster County in c. 1662.

The William Sydnor we remember as a signer of the Leedstown Resolutions was a grandson of Fortunatus. He signed along with his father-in-law, Moore FauntLeRoy. A comparison of William Sydnor's signature on the Resolutions to his signature in the records of Christ Church Parish leaves no doubt they are the same.

William was born c. 1734 in Lancaster County on Deep Creek Plantation where his parents, William and Catherine Taylor Sydnor, had lived. The present-day Belle Isle State Park on the Rappahannock River is bordered by Mulberry Creek and Deep Creek. While the exact location of Deep Creek Plantation is unknown today, the land was inherited by Catherine from her first husband, John Taylor. It is described as a branch of Deep Creek that "runneth up to Deep Bottom." Janie Eppes of present-day "Bewdley" thinks that might mean that Deep Creek Plantation was between "Bewdley" and the "Belle Isle" mansion. The original "Bewdley"

house site was lost to erosion so the topography has changed. William Sydnor purchased land from James Ball so it would seem that Deep Creek Plantation was adjacent to "Bewdley."

On October 12, 1763, William Sydnor married Ellen FauntLeRoy, daughter of Moore and Ann Heale FauntLeRoy of The Cliffs in Richmond County. William and Ellen Sydnor and their eight children lived the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century at Deep Creek Plantation. Back then the rivers were the roads. Deep Creek was a place of much commerce – as evidenced by William's work as Tobacco Inspector at the warehouse. William prospered as he added considerable land to his inheritance at Deep Creek. He purchased "Cyrus" from Robert Mitchell and inherited "Forrest" from his father-in-law. In 1760 he and his mother conveyed 111 acres in the Kilmarnock area to Elmo Doggett. Known as "Pivemo Poplar," it had been the home of his grandfather. They also conveyed two slaves to his step-sister, Elizabeth Taylor Sydnor.

From 1778 to 1785, William Sydnor was a member of the vestry at Christ Church Parish – comprised of Christ Church and St. Mary's, Whitechapel and was Warden in 1781. He also served on the Lancaster Committee of Safety during the Revolutionary War.

Four of William and Ellen's six sons died in an epidemic that swept Lancaster County in the 1790's. It has been suggested they were victims of a disease caused by wheat, but that theory has not been substantiated.

William purchased 588 acres in Frederick County, Virginia from John Hite, Jr. on October 2, 1784 for 1,000 pounds. He devised the land to his remaining sons, William Fortunatus Sydnor and Samuel Griffin Sydnor. This is property on which "Carter Hall" was later built in 1833.

William died in Lancaster County in June of 1794. While there is no extant burial location, it seems likely he was buried at St. Mary's, Whitechapel. Frank Kaiser, the present historian, told me William's grave is not now evident. Frank recalled that the road by the church was widened in the 1930's. Handles of caskets and buttons were dug up so it seems obvious that unknown graves were disturbed.

While William's final resting place may have been obliterated, we remember him on this February 27<sup>th</sup> as one of those courageous 115 patriots who signed the Leedstown Resolutions whose commitment sparked our movement to independence.

*Learn more about the Sydnors and FauntLeRois at [www.NNVHS.org](http://www.NNVHS.org)*

## *Society Members Bill & Helen King Honor Morgan Jones's Kiln with Marker*

Unless you were thinking of a potter's wheel, you would not normally associate pottery with revolution. But, Society members Bill and Helen King undertook a lengthy but successful project to honor rebellious potter Morgan Jones of Glebe Harbor with an official Virginia historic marker.

At a time when Britain controlled the means of production, 17<sup>th</sup>-Century potter Jones (and partner Denis White) briefly produced pottery at a site in Glebe Harbor. Evidence of the kiln was discovered in 1973 – the earliest yet discovered in the state - and shards of their pottery have been found in the Tidewater and other areas of Virginia.

NNVHS Board of Trustees member Bill King and his wife Helen led the lengthy, expensive process to obtain a marker. But, suddenly it happened. As Helen King tells it, "When we returned home from Thanksgiving with family, the Virginia Department of Transportation representative called to announce that the marker had been delivered, and asked when did we want the unveiling. When I asked when he thought it should be, he replied, "Tomorrow."

The Kings put out the word. The morning of November 26, 2008 was bitterly cold, but politicians, Society members, Department of Historic Resources representatives, and assorted bystanders watched at the intersection of Rte 202



*Excavation at Morgan Jones Kiln Site, 1973. Photo by William Kelso.*

and Mt. Holly Road in Westmoreland County, as Morgan Jones's Kiln was commemorated with warm applause and appreciation.

You can still honor Morgan Jones's art and life. Small contributions have helped defray some of the \$1350.00 cost for the marker, but funds are still needed. If you would like to make a donation, please mail your check payable to NNVHS Monument Fund to NNVHS, P.O. Box 716, Montross, VA 22520.



### **Best-Selling Author to Address Spring Meeting - May 6**

James L. Swanson will be the featured speaker when we meet at Stratford Hall's Council House on Wednesday, May 6, 2009. He will discuss his recent New-York-Times best-selling book, *Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer*. Our program will begin at 11 a.m. and will include presentations by Lynn Norris of the Kinsale Museum and Weston Conley of the Morattico Museum, two of the Northern Neck's most interesting places to visit. We will break at noon for Stratford's Plantation Buffet – Baked Ham, Fried Chicken, Shrimp Pasta, Vegetables, Dessert & Beverage. Mr. Swanson will speak at 1:00 p.m. We are thrilled and honored to have this nationally-renowned author. Let's have a big turnout as we welcome him to the Northern Neck! Reservation deadline is May 1. Cost is \$19 each.



### **History of Horse Racing in Virginia - June 4**

Virginia C. Johnson & Barbara Crookshanks will discuss their new book *Virginia Horse Racing: Triumphs of the Turf* (History Books Press, 2008). The story begins with the arrival of six mares and a stallion at Jamestown in 1611, and runs through the opening of Colonial Downs in New Kent County. Co-sponsored by NNVHS and the Westmoreland County Museum as part of the continuing Jessie Ball DuPont Books & Authors Series. This special event will be held at 6:30 p.m. at the Westmoreland County Museum, on Courthouse Square in Montross.



### **History & Architecture of the Colonial Church - June 11 & 18**

The Society and Cople Episcopal Parish are hosting this educational event at Ameslee Hall on the grounds of Yeocomico Church at Tucker Hill. The two-session course will be taught by Robert Teagle, Education Director & Curator of Historic Christ Church. It will be held at 10 a.m. – noon on Thursdays, June 11 & 18. It is free and open to the public, but we do request registration in advance.



### **Historic Properties Tax Credits Seminar - June 14**

Northern Neck of Virginia Historical Society, Menokin Foundation, and Northern Neck Chapter of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities are sponsoring a seminar on tax credits for historic properties, on Sunday, June 14, 2 – 5 p.m., at Menokin's King Conservation Center. We have an extraordinary line-up of experts on this subject. Admission is \$20.00 per person for this special event.

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Virginia  
Historical Society  
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## RESERVATION FORM FOR UPCOMING EVENTS

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

### Spring Meeting at Stratford Hall Council House on May 6 , 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is check payable to NNVHS for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ luncheon reservation(s) @ \$19.00 each

### Preservation Tax Credit Seminar at Menokin's King Conservation Center on June 14, 2 – 5 p.m.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is check payable to NNVHS for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ registration(s) @ \$20.00 each

### History of the Colonial Church at Yeocomico Church on June 11 and June 18, 10 a.m. – noon

*Note: This program is free and open to the public but please register in advance with this form.*

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Clip and return by mail to NNVHS, P. O. Box 716, Montross, VA 22520