



NEWS AND NOTES

from

The Fauquier Historical Society

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WARRENTON, VIRGINIA

Winter 1981

Reminiscences

By John K. Gott

By popular request, the talk given by Mr. Gott on September 28, 1980 at the dedication of the memorial plaque is presented.

I am glad to be once again among those from whom I have been the recipient of nothing but kindness and consideration.

I am glad to be with you on this occasion when we are met together to do honor to those illustrious Fauquier Countians and fellow historians, Joseph A. Jeffries, Charles E. Jeffries, Louise Evans and William N. Hodgkin, by showing that, if we cannot rival those who have gone before, we can cherish the example they have given us, that we are grateful for the rich heritage they have bequeathed to us and that our hearts still pay tribute and homage to their contributions, which we dare not hope to emulate.

Local history does not need a defense to this audience as an important field of knowledge.

The four local historians we honor today have made our community a better and exciting place to live; they have given us pleasure and satisfaction and a richer life.

Local history for these caretakers was much like greatness; some of us are born to it; some of us achieve it by working for it and some of us find it in the basement in dusty, unlabelled boxes. But the greatest pleasure comes from the sharing of it and passing along the tales, to the end that the greatest real pleasure, as J.H. Plumb, a noted writer of the

"Saturday Review," states. . . is its immediacy.

It brings one face-to-face with ordinary men and women who once walked the streets that we walk, and are now dead and almost forgotten. The bundles of letters which are so frequently the core of an article in a journal of local history have a poignancy that is rarely matched. They express hopes and fears, affection, love, want, despair; in them our common humanity is bared.

Written without a thought of posterity, they reveal human character as sharply as any novel.

The writer might have added that there is no more convincing demonstration of the relevance of the past, for local history brings with it a special dimension of reality. Here the individual is not lost to sight.

Local history can help to preserve or rebuild a sense of identity. One need not be a lifelong resident of a town to feel that he belongs there and is a part of its ongoing story.

The streets belong to him who knows whence their names came, what they looked like fifty years or a hundred years ago, and who walked their pavements. The past may seem to some like a shadow world but they will find that at times it has a deeper grip than the bustling, ever-transient present. The sense of continuity is bound up with the past—with the view of life as a stream in which each individual plays his part and affects not only the visible world around him but the future.

Such a view can free man from the sense of isolation, from the haunting questions, "Who am I? Where did I come from? What am I a part of?"

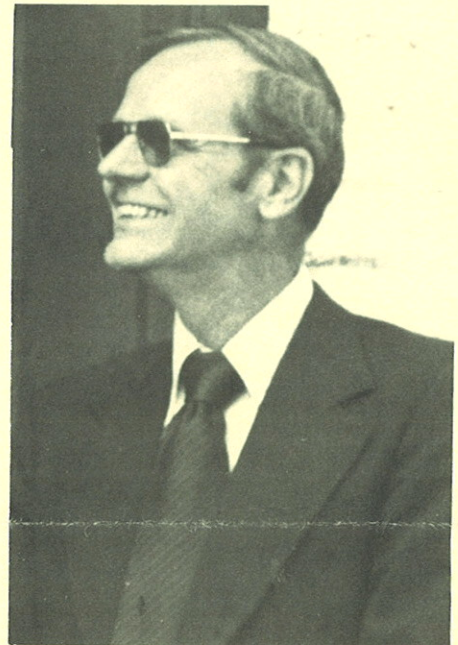


Photo by David Lyne

Historian John K. Gott

Young people, confronted with the fastest rate of change the world has known, find it ever more difficult to communicate with the older generation. Margaret Mead has said, ". . . young people have been confronted with the changes, but at the same time they have no sense of history and no one has been able to explain to them what has happened." I hope my generation won't be the last to have stories told them—over and over again—until they become a part of their lives. But, I'm afraid, television and McDonald's are taking the place of the family gathering around the fire on a cold winter night or the dining room table at suppertime—or the stone step on Main Street.

Today there are vital reasons for understanding and perpetuating the ties that hold our increasingly

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Reminiscences

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disparate and complex world together—the common heritage of traditions, customs, and values that cements individuals into groups and binds groups into communities and nations.

The story of these people we honor today is one of ability, personal ambition, dedication and uncommon service to the people they knew and loved in Fauquier County. Joseph A. Jeffries, the only one with whom I was not personally acquainted, seemed very much alive when I read the articles and sketches he so thoughtfully wrote down and preserved for us.

It was my good fortune and rare privilege, indeed, that my first steps were encouraged by Mr. Charlie and Dr. Bill, those faithful chroniclers of Fauquier County, who shared with me their knowledge of the land and people. And to Miss Louise, I owe the enthusiasm and the constant urging.

If I may paint, or attempt to paint, a picture for you—one which I recall so often it's almost like it happened yesterday. This actually happened; how I wish it could have been photographed to have been preserved.

Excepting myself, I'm sure there has never been a more distinguished meeting of Fauquier County historians: When I walked upon the scene, one bright Saturday morning (during those days the Clerk's Office was opened a half-day on Saturday and gave an eight-four worker as myself a chance to delve into some ancient book) there was gathered around Mr. Charlie's stone step: Jack Keith and Harry O'Brien standing, with Dr. Biggy, Dr. Bill and Mr. Charlie seated.

I was greeted as the "Free-Stater" and introduced to Jack Keith (which introduction has blossomed into a friendship to be rivaled only by a brother). As the conversation developed on the Free State, Mr. Charlie's wit was unsurpassed and his eyes twinkled as he wove some tale and chuckled.

Shortly, the group was approached by Miss Ida and Miss Louise Evans. Immediately, every hat was removed and Mr. Charlie and Dr. Bill were immediately on their feet. Miss Ida hurried on to open the library, but Miss Louise remained awhile to chat; she was writing an Old Timer article for the Fauquier Democrat and needed a fact from Mr. Charlie, which caused another short discussion, but having received what she wanted she too went on.

Mr. Tom Bartenstein, seeing the congregation from his office window, remembered that he had a letter, requesting some historical or genealogical information, addressed to the Fauquier Historical Society (long before the current Society had been re-organized). He joined the group and presented the letter. Mr. Charlie looked at it, passed it to Dr. Bill and it was their opinion that it would take some research to answer it and Mr. Charlie was not certain it could be done, since the Fauquier Historical Society "was in heaven." Shortly, the group dispersed and I walked to the Clerk's Office with Mr. Tom. . .

We are in their debt—those four who watched the county and collected and wrote. We recognize their ability and their gift. Since they have gone, we have been learning and we have much more to ask. There are new discoveries to share—each with a whole new set of questions. How I wish I could find them on the doorstep!

Volunteers

Needed

The Fauquier Historical Society is sponsoring a Celebration of April in Paris, to be held at Paris on Saturday, April 25, 1981. Please call Jennings Flathers at 347-7386 if you would like to help.

History Course

Offered

James Madison University is offering a course on Virginia history at Fauquier Technical Center commencing January 26 at 7:00 p.m. Three graduate credit hours can be earned if desired.

Instructor will be Mr. Bob Jacobs. For further information call Mrs. Doris Standridge at the School Board Office, 347-8667.

Can You Help?

News and Notes will contain in each issue a list of as many persons as possible who are conducting genealogical or historical research on persons or places related to Fauquier County. To be included in this column write The Fauquier Historical Society, P.O. Box 675, Warrenton, VA. 22186.

FIELDS. Mrs. Marlen G. Whippen, 334 Cambo Lane, Birmingham, AL. 35226 seeks any data on the following: Daniel Fields, son of Lewis and, possibly, Mary, b. November 10, 1787. He moved to Kentucky. Lewis Fields, father of Daniel. Moved to Kentucky. Daniel Fields of Hamilton Parish, Fauquier Co. Will proved March 24, 1783 names a son Lewis.

GARRETT. Mrs. Joyce Taute, 200 Calle Del Sol, Roswell, NM. 88201 seeks information on Patrick Garrett, b. about 1776. Married to Tracy (surname unknown) about 1802. Had a daughter Margaret, b. 1813. Also wants information on Catherine SUDDUTH, b. February 14, 1814 in Fauquier Co.

GRIGSBY. Mrs. Nina L. Bowen of 553 Tenth St., Wood River, IL. 62095 is seeking any information on the Grigsbys in Fauquier Co.

PARKER. Marjorie Parker Devore, 816 W. Woodlawn, Clinton, IL 61727 needs to prove ancestor George M. Parker, b. 1798 in Virginia (not sure where) was the son of Thomas and Alice Marshall Parker. She was the daughter of George Marshall of Fauquier Co.

THOMPSON. Mrs. June Barry, 5503 Helmsdale Lane, Alexandria, VA. 22310 is seeking information on William/Willis Thompson who married Minney Christy in Fauquier Co. in 1822. Children are Richard A. who married Letty Hinson in 1861, Nancy who married Thomas Payne in 1839 and Martha who married Noah Kendall in 1841.

John Marshall Park Dedicated

An enthusiastic crowd of hard-working volunteers and public officials gathered November 16 for a special ceremony dedicating a new patio and shelter at the John Marshall Birthplace Park near Midland, one of two parks operated by the county's Parks and Recreation Department.

Development of the park, which also is designated as a bird sanctuary, goes back to 1903 when the Phi Delta Phi fraternity of George Washington University placed a small monument at the birthplace of the fourth Chief Justice of the United States, who was born in 1755.

The eight-foot-high obelisk there now, said to have been built of native stone from a chimney of the Marshall home, was erected in 1928.

But a bizarre turn of events led to the eventual creation of a public park there.

Prior to the mid-1930s when the Virginia Department of Highways and Transportation (then the Department of Highways) assumed control of secondary roads throughout the state, Fauquier County owned a 40-foot right-of-way from Rt. 649 to the monument site, a narrow strip of land a half-mile long.

However, when the state acquired secondary road rights-of-way, it also gained—unwittingly, says Parks and Recreation director Merle Valotto—the 40-foot easement to the John Marshall Birthplace Park.

“During the Bicentennial, the highway department looked at all its holdings to see if it had any historical property,” Valotto said. “Lo and behold, the department discovered the John Marshall right-of-way. The easement subsequently was given back to the county.”

With public access suddenly open to the historic site, local civic organizations quickly went to work to make the birthplace a showplace.

The county Kiwanis Club members “broke a path, with a bushhog and a bulldozer, (along the right-of-way) to the monument,” Valotto said, and

employed club member Melvin Helmick to build a parking lot at the park entrance.

“Mr. Helmick built the parking lot at cost,” Valotto said. “The only thing the Kiwanians had to pay for was materials, but still they spent several hundred dollars.”

Local Boy Scouts, working on Eagle Scout projects, cleared a picnic area and built a total of five bridges along the path from the parking lot to the monument.

The John Marshall and Remington garden clubs donated funds for picnic tables to the Parks and Recreation Department, plus spreading junipers, flowers and bulbs.

“The garden clubs gave the shrubs, several hundred dollars worth, and we provided most of the labor,” Valotto said. “A lot of the bulbs planted throughout the park will bloom for the first time this spring.”

Also assisting in creation of the park were a group of students and two industries.

Special education teacher Sue Ballantine took her Southeastern Elementary School students to the park area to pick up trash and to build a split-rail fence along the parking lot edge.

Southern Railway donated used railroad ties for the parking area. Interarms, which owns the parking lot and picnic areas, agreed to lease that land to the county for \$1 a year for 20 years.

R.L. Rider also donated use of a construction company truck to haul old light poles from Benner Field in Warrenton to the park. The poles were used by the Boy Scouts to build the foot bridges. Former Parks and Recreation Board member Russell Teel of Marshall for several years bushhogged and maintained the park area, a service that now costs \$150 per mowing.

But the grandest gift of all came from Irene Pilcher Perrow who donated funds for construction of the recently-dedicated patio and shelter at the monument site. The donation was made in memory of her father who owned and farmed the land there for more than 50

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Reader's Corner

An history of Methodism in Warrenton has been published by the Warrenton United Methodist Church.

The writing of this book, a long and arduous task, pursued over a period of four years has been as "interesting, pleasant and rewarding as a true story," says author Jennings H. Flathers.

The major purpose of the book is the collection and preservation of the history of the Warrenton United Methodist Church, a unit of Methodism in the United States. In a detailed account, the author covers the history of one church which began with the introduction of Methodism in the United States without the knowledge of John Wesley.

In Northern Virginia, the group had its beginnings in Leesburg, and by 1766 was strong enough to begin building a church, which was completed in 1770. In 1781 the first Methodist Church in Fauquier County was organized at Rectortown.

The author covers the history of the Methodist Church in Warrenton from 1818 to the present, giving a detailed account of the personnel and finances of the church. The names and dates of tenure of the 75 ministers who have served the congregation are listed. A warm picture of the life and music within the church is painted through this accounting.

Jennings H. Flathers is a descendent of Edward Flathers who lived in Fauquier and Prince William Counties prior to the American Revolution and who, like many others, went west to get free land and to establish a home for his family.

Mr. Flathers was born in the Texas Panhandle of pioneer parents. He grew to manhood during the Great Depression and the prolonged drought which caused the Dust Bowl of the Great Plains. A teacher of speech, drama and English, he was a member of the faculty of West Texas State University. He served in World War II for four years and later was a part of the 8th Air Force in Europe. Now retired, he lives in Gainesville and is active in the Fauquier Historical Society.

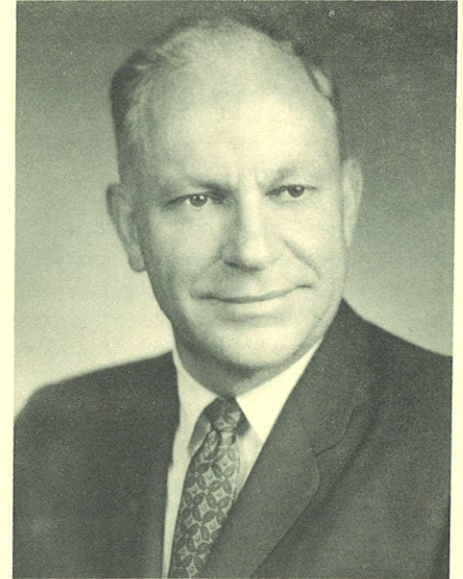
"A History of Methodism in Warrenton," 250p, may be purchased by writing the Warrenton United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 439, Warrenton, VA. 22186. The price is \$14.50 plus postage.

— Isabelle Palmer

Dinner Meeting

A Dinner with slide show will be held at Airlie for members and guests on March 5, 1981. Cash Bar at 6:30. Dinner at 7:30.

Mr. Bob Jacobs of Fauquier High School History Department will present a narrated slide show on Fauquier County.



Jennings H. Flathers

John Marshall Park

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years. Mrs. Perrow was born and reared there.

Work on the John Marshall Birthplace Park is almost complete, but Parks director Valotto would like to see a few more things done. "We still have one picnic area to clear," he said. "We'd like to have some picnic tables at the monument site and to have the path cleared more of briars and brambles."

Thanks to the tireless, unselfish efforts of many volunteers, John Marshall's birthplace is marked for future generations.

— David Lyne

The Fauquier Historical Society

P. O. Box 675, Warrenton, VA 22186

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