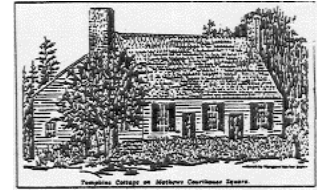


# Mathews County Historical Society Newsletter Summer 2014



P.O. Box 855, Mathews, VA 23109-0855  
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~vamchs/index.html>



## 2014 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Officers

President.....Josephine Thorpe  
 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President..... Frank Lansinger  
 Secretary..... Josephine Thorpe  
 Treasurer..... Stuart Allen

### *Class of 2015*

Frank Lansinger  
 Judith Jay  
 Mary Frances Hunley  
 Stephen Whiteway

### *Class of 2016*

Stuart Allen  
 Reed Lawson  
 Forrest Morgan, Jr  
 Josephine Thorpe

### *Class of 2017*

Dee Bane  
 Clement Dickey  
 Lisa McCann  
 Sandy Worhol

### Standing Committees

Bldgs & Grnds.....Jack Caldwell  
 Education/Archeology...Forrest Morgan  
 Exhibits.....  
 Historic Bldg & Sites...TBA  
 Market Days.....  
 Membership.....Judy Jay  
 Programs.....ForresMorgan  
 Publicity.....Mary Hunley  
 Nominating.....  
 Publications.....Dee Bane

### Ad Hoc Committees

Editorial.....Steve Wilson  
 Fort Nonsense.....Frank Lansinger  
 .....Steve Whiteway  
 Joint Archival.....Reed Lawson  
 Thomas James Store....Graham Hood  
 Ornaments.....Becky Morgan  
 Social.....Judy Busby, Sue Jennette

### Positions

Archivist.....Reed Lawson  
 Cottage Shop Mngr..... Vacant  
 Curator/Registrar.....Lori Jackson Black  
 Docent Coordinator.....  
 Newsletter.....Barbara Van Over  
 Registered Agent.....Patricia Dickey, Esq.

## Upcoming Events

2nd Thursday—Monthly Board Meeting, 4:00  
 Sat., June 21—Summer Solstice Party, 5-7pm,  
 directions below

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Josie Thorpe*

### 2014 The Year of Discovering History in Mathews County

WOW!!! What a spring the Historical Society has had!! In our last newsletter we told you of our upcoming lectures and events. They have all come to pass and ALL were well received. The lecture series tends to draw over 100 people from near and far. At Suzanne Hood's program in April on "Mythical Beasts, Lotus Blossoms and Bamboo: Examining the evidence for Chinese porcelain in Virginia", participants were asked to bring ceramic pieces they found on their property and they would be identified. Everyone who brought objects was pleased and most were amazed as to what they had found.

On May 10 the grand opening of Ft. Nonsense was held (see photo), 150 – 300 people attended throughout the day. The weather was perfect and all the activities were well attended. Jack White and Tom Karow were co-chairman of this grand event and the Society greatly appreciates their involvement. Rev. Dede Parris, Beulah United Methodist Church, led us in the invocation; Vice Chairman, BOS O.J. Cole received the colors and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance and Tom Karow introduced our keynote speaker, J. Michael Moore, historian and curator at Lee Hall Manson. After the closing remarks, Thane Harpole, Fairfield Foundation, youngest son signaled the artillery and the cannons and rifles roared in unison; a great crowd pleaser.

Throughout the day many events took place; the Tredegar Brass Band played period music; the Virginia Homespun Dance Ensemble showed us ‘new’ dance steps; other groups, Sons of Confederate Veterans, United Daughters of the Confederacy, 12<sup>th</sup> & 56<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry groups displayed military camps of the day, Gen. Isaac Wistar (portrayed by Patrick O’Neil) had his small camp and living history displays were set up along the paved walkways on the self-guided tour of the fort. It was a wonderful event and the Society thanks all that were involved, the County and their staff included.

On Wednesday, May 21, at Kingston Parish, Dr. Randy Turner lectured on Chief Powhatan’s village at Werowocomoco (1607), and then led us on a tour of the village on Saturday, May 31st. It was very informative and we had the pleasure of having the landowner walk along with us telling of special happenings along with their discoveries. This was a rare opportunity and the Society thanks Forrest Morgan, our program chairman, who arranged this special event.

Please find our announcement of the **Summer Solstice Party on Saturday, June 21**. Plan on attending as we will be sharing some very exciting news that involves the Society and you will want to be on the ‘first-to-know’ list.

The Society thanks Becky Barnhardt who has secured a new domain name and in the coming weeks she will be imputing articles and information along with Board Member Lisa McCann. The new website will offer full site searches, links to social media, high-quality slideshows, site analytics and much more. The site will showcase the MCHS projects, calendar and events and all of our many projects. We are also on FaceBook; stop by and “like” us.

Remember the Mathews County Visitors Center is selling ALL our books and items. They are open 7 days a week, where Tompkins Cottage was only opened Fridays and Saturdays. Stop by the Visitors Center, they have many new items for sale plus all of our historical books.

On the front of this newsletter is the listing of our Board of Directors and our Committees. When you see one of the members thank them for all the work they do to make our Society as involved and fun as it is. You too can become more involved. Indicate on the membership form your interests and we will ‘show you the way’. As always, thank you for supporting the Society and your interest and **Stay Tuned**, more to follow.

---

## THOMAS JAMES STORE

*Graham Hood*

### MCHS Ornament Series

#### 2013 Tompkins Cottage Ornament \$25.00

*Becky Morgan*

Museum and headquarters of the Mathews County Historical Society, this quaint little building is believed to be one of the oldest frame structures in the Courthouse area. The earliest known owner of this c. 1816 building was

Christopher Tompkins, a prominent local planter, merchant, sea captain and ship owner/builder. The Cottage was used in his mercantile business for the sale of dry goods, hardware and groceries. Tompkins was also the

father of Confederate Captain Sally Tompkins, the first woman to be commissioned an officer in an American military organization. Ornaments may be bought at Tompkins Cottage,

the Mathews Visitors Center or the Treasurer's Office. Orders may also be phoned in to Becky Morgan (804-725-5227) or checks made out to MCHS and mailed to:

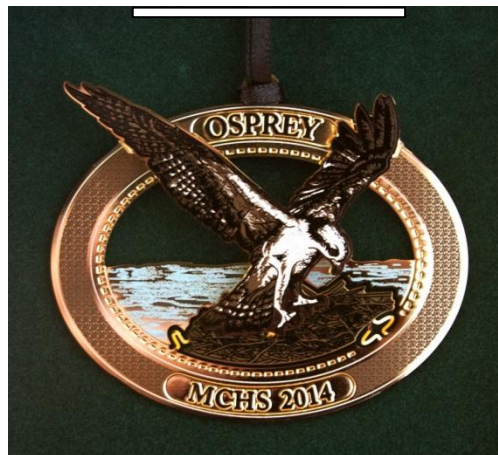
Becky Morgan at  
P.O. Box 129  
New Point, VA 23125

\*For mailing service, include postage of \$1.50 for 1, \$2.00 for 2, and \$3.00 for 3-5.



Tomkins Cottage

### ***Introducing the New 2014 OSPREY Ornament***



---

**Reminder: Membership dues for MCHS are ANNUAL and due in January**

## LECTURE SERIES

Forrest Morgan

### Recent lectures:

Suzanne Hood, Curator of Ceramics and Glass, Colonial Williamsburg spoke on the ceramics of Mathews and Colonial and focused on Chinese export porcelain which constitutes one of the largest groups of artifacts recovered from archaeological sites in Tidewater Virginia. She discussed how it played an influential role in the lives of eighteenth-century Virginians. A panel of experts then evaluated ceramic artifacts brought in by the audience.

Randy Turner, a former senior Staff member of the Virginia Department of Historic Sources, and an expert on Powhatan and the Algonquin Indians did a presentation in mid May.

Randy spoke about his journey in searching for Powhatan at Werowocomoco, Chief Powhatan's home village at the time of the arrival of the English settlers at Jamestown . The talk covered Werowocomoco in history, what we have learned about the site from a decade of archaeological investigations, and recent discoveries there, including one that ties one structure, potentially Powhatan 's lodge, directly to being aligned with the summer solstice.

On May 31st Randy lead a tour of the Werowocomoco site on the York River in Gloucester for 50 plus members and guests of the Historical Society. Being on the actual site and having a masterful story teller like Randy made the history come alive. The Society is considering additional tours of a similar nature later in the year to equally important historical sites with knowledgeable and gifted leaders.

### Historic Surveys:

The Mathews County Architectural Survey, sponsored by the Historical Society and the County is just being completed. It covers 230 Sites and gives of a comprehensive inventory of important structures, a large portion of which had not been previously identified. For the first time this will give us an understanding of the Architectural richness of Mathews. One of the most surprising findings of the Survey is the significant number of structures that are potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historical Places.

The Survey deliverables include a 151 page analysis of the Architectural History of Mathews, as well as the 230 detailed summaries of the covered properties. A presentation of the results will be made by the Survey contractors, the Fairfield Foundation, to the community at a public meeting sponsored by the Society, in mid-July.

A similar Archaeological Survey of Mathews County is just getting under way and is planned to be completed by the end of the year.

It is expected to yield significant findings about the history of the County not previously known.

---

### Summer Solstice at Roney Leitner's

Directions: Take 198 to Hallieford Rd (626). Turn onto Hallieford Rd and continue to the Post Office. Turn right, then left on Johnson Point Rd (666). It is a white house on the left side of the road #429. Bring a covered dish and your lawn chair. Fried chicken, beer, wine, and water will be provided.

### FORT NONSENSE

Frank Lansinger

## **FORT NONSENSE**

### **MATHEWS COUNTY HISTORICAL PARK**

It has taken 152 years between the creation of Fort Nonsense and the establishment of The Mathews County Historical Park as it is today. Originally designed by Lt. William Clarke an 1859 graduate of VMI, the Fort is styled after Napoleonic fortifications built throughout France in the eighteenth century.

Construction of the Fort (or earth works) was achieved using between 50 and 100 both slaves and free men. The Fort site and Construction began in December 1861 and was completed in March 1862. The Fort was intended to deter Union Troops from an expected attack on Richmond from the East (Chesapeake Bay). The Fort was to be manned by the 61<sup>st</sup> Virginia Militia. Although never manned, it served as a deterrent to the Union Army led by Union General McClellan's drive to Richmond forcing him to instead advance from Gloucester. The property was part of a large parcel obtained by West Point Paper Company for timber and remained undisturbed, except for timber removal, for over 150 years.

The Mathews County Historical Society learned of the Fort and prevailed upon West Point Paper Company to donate the site to MCHS for preservation in 1972. Thus began the restoration. Mathews County sought and successfully received a Virginia Travel Enhancement Grant to fund the project. Then the county, in partnership with the

Historical Society, contracted with a design engineering firm to research and formally design the restoration of the fort to its original state. A local firm provided the execution of the design as well as pathways for viewing the Fort. None of this activity has diminished the original design. The fort exhibits the original design of one of less than six Confederate forts remaining in the South.

The Historical Society has joined Historical Civil War Trails who reproduced the signage located throughout the Fort to provide interpretive documentations to maintain a self-directed tour as well as benches for resting along the path. At the end of the raised deck pathway over-looking the highway is mounted a replica of the 1824 Parrott rifle (canon) that was proposed to be used to fortify the Fort. The gun was donated by a Gwynn Island family for preservation.

The pavilion near the entrance is for use of the visitors. In visiting the Fort, guests are asked to not stray from the pathway since the earthen mounds are very fragile. Also poison ivy is in abundance off the side of the path.

The officers and board encourage you and your family and friends to visit our newest park this is an opportunity to learn and experience history in Mathews County.



Seated: Frank Lansinger, VP MCHS; Rev. Dede Parrish, Beulah UMC; J. Michael Moore, Registrar & Curator of Lee Hall; Josophine Thorpe, Pres., MGHS; Standing: O. J. Cole, Vice Chr. Mathews Bd Of Supervisors



Tom Karow, Vice Chr. Fairfield Foundation and our own Josie

**Tompkins Cottage** has opened the 2014 season with a bang! We have already had many visitors to the cottage. This includes 2 different private tours, one being a group of visitors hosted by Jackie Anderson Zahn who took a bus from Williamsburg to Mathews and the other a pair of sisters visiting their ancestral home of Mathews to do some genealogical research. The biggest change in the cottage this year is the elimination of the sale of books and ornaments. This was a challenge for our volunteer docents so the board decided that all sales would be conducted through the Mathews County Visitors Center. My chore this year as the new curator is to do an inventory of artifacts, and other items at the cottage. One discovery so far is damage to items in storage from what appear to be carpet beetles and moths. These items have been tagged for possible repair. I have put in a request for new archival materials to repack and store these items. I am enjoying working at the cottage and have had fun getting to know all the docents.

Lori Jackson Black

---

**Here is an update on the Tompkins Cottage roof replacement:**

**The contract has been awarded and work is scheduled to begin in June. It should take about 8 to 10 days.**

**The Contractor has been instructed to work with MCHS so as not to impede normal operations.**

***Jack Crawford***

## 2014 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

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

I am interested in the following membership:

- Individual - \$20.00 per year
- Couple - \$25.00 per year
- Student (under 18 & in school) – FREE

General Contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Contribution to the Mathews Archives  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Contribution to the Lighthouse Preservation Fund  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Contribution to the Fort Nonsense Development Fund  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Contributions

Please check the area(s) in which you would like to volunteer your services:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archives/Research   | <input type="checkbox"/> Old Buildings/Sites  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buildings & Grounds | <input type="checkbox"/> Oral History   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cottage Shop        | <input type="checkbox"/> Photography  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curatorial          | <input type="checkbox"/> Programs   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Docent/Guide        | <input type="checkbox"/> Publications   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education           | <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exhibits            | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Historic Homes and Properties of Mathews<br/>County, Virginia</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fort Nonsense       | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Events  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising         | <input type="checkbox"/> Thomas James Store   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Genealogy           | <input type="checkbox"/> Court Green  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Market Days         | <input type="checkbox"/> Contribution to Thomas James Store                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership          | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter          |   |

Please make out your check to the *Mathews County Historical Society* and submit it with this application to:

Treasurer,  
Mathews County Historical Society  
P.O. Box 855  
Mathews, VA 23109-0855



Mathews County Historical Society, Inc.  
P. O. Box 855  
Mathews, VA 23109