

Greene County Historical Society Newsletter



Fall 2006



Nathanael Greene
Major General of the Constitutional Army
Born 5/27/1742--Died 6/19/1786

Historical Queries

The Greene County Historical Society is seeking information concerning the "Old Jail" building in Stanardsville. If you have any information concerning its construction or any old photographs please send them along to the GCHS address or contact Newsletter editor, Bill Steo at WSteo@GreeneHistory.org.

Request

The GCHS is in great need of a working computer which runs Windows XP and has at least 256 MB of RAM memory and CD/DVD read/write capability. This computer will be used by our Secretary and staff for such tasks as genealogical file making, photograph scanning and recording, letter writing, and other necessary office tasks. We only need the working computer "tower" section as we have monitors, keyboards, mice and printer/scanners.

Also, needed is a working "desk top" type copy machine.

Anyone willing to donate any of the above items should call President Jackie Pamenter at JPamenter@GreeneHistory.org or Newsletter Editor Bill Steo at WSteo@GreeneHistory.org.

A message from the GCHS President

Greetings to all. I am thrilled to report that, despite very hot summer weather, particularly in August, the temperature and humidity in the Old Jail have been maintained at a very comfortable level for those of us working there – and much more importantly, for the delicate artifacts that we are safeguarding – by the new heating, air conditioning and humidity control system that we installed in the spring. This is tangible progress towards our goal of opening the Museum again to the public on a regular basis.

I reported in May that we were looking into the availability of grants to help us with the renovations to the Old Jail. We decided to ask the NiSource Charitable Foundation (NiSource is the parent company of Columbia Gas) for help, and submitted to them a request for \$19,000. This money is for carpentry work for shelving, duct enclosures and ceiling tile work, lighting, renovation to the bathroom, an improved security system, replacement flooring and a doorway to the upper floor. Most charitable foundations look for evidence of community support, and we believe our request was much strengthened by the ongoing support of the Greene County Administration, a grant from the Stanardsville Area Revitalization project, and many individual donations, including very generous amounts from Eugene Powell and Ann Shelton. We hope NiSource will be generous too, but doubt they will give us the full amount we need. So don't forget - Joann Powell's matching challenge is still on the table – eight more donations of \$1,000 will get Joann to write a \$1,000 check too. NiSource tells us that our request will be decided upon in November, and I hope to have good news the next time I write to you.

We are also grateful that we are going to receive assistance of a different sort from closer to home. In mid-September, Edward Gaynor, who is Associate Director, Special Collections for the University of Virginia Library, spent several hours at the Museum, along with his colleague Ellen Welch. He later sent us a proposal describing how they could help us to better care for our collections of artifacts and documents. They will assess the Society's collections for housing and preservation needs, and review existing cataloging and description procedures, producing a written report that will describe current conditions and contain recommendations for action by our volunteers. All this for mileage reimbursement and the promise of lunch! We are fortunate indeed to have resources of such caliber so close, and willing to help us carry on and extend the prior work that's been done to provide the best possible environment for the items under our care.

We enjoyed having many people come to the Museum to see our progress for themselves after the Stanardsville July 4th parade, and we enjoyed meeting people and talking about the Society at the Battle of Stanardsville at the end of September. I look forward to seeing many of you at our fall program, to be held on November 19th at the Court House, and talking with you about our progress and our plans.

Jackie Pamenter

Ode to a Good Man

Luther Hill was a good man. Born into an impoverished black family, in Greene County Virginia during the early 1900's. He was never afforded the opportunity for formal schooling, and grew to maturity in the Great Depression. In spite of all obstacles, Luther became a self-made good man through hard work, learning by doing, living responsibly and always a friend and helper to everyone he met.

Luther married "Lonie" (Selonie Williams) at an early age and moved to the cabin on the Shelton farm, (Meadowbrook Farm), on South River in 1929. He worked for my father Harry K Shelton who was a demanding taskmaster.

In those days a sharecropper was provided: a living space (Luther's Cabin); land to clear for a garden, pasture for a milk cow and an opportunity to raise hogs and chickens for food. Crops were raised on a 1/3 basis with one share to the sharecropper and 2/3 share to the landowner. Farm equipment, horses and mules to power it were provided by the landowner.

Luther selected a "new-ground" for his garden, where the trees grew tall indicating rich soil. He cleared the trees and dug out the stumps with rudimentary tools. There he grew a bountiful supply of vegetables that Lonie "put up" (i.e., canned or dried) for the winter. He always kept a Guernsey cow that provided milk/cream for cooking and for table use. Since there was no refrigeration in the cabin milk was stored in the spring box, a wooden box buried below the water level of the discharge ditch from the spring located approximately 100 yards along the path from the cabin.

Luther's cabin originally consisted of two rooms and a loft. Later two rooms were added to the back. Lonie kept the cabin spotless; the whitewashed walls literally sparkled when you entered and the interior was lighted with coal-oil (kerosene) lamps. She could bake the most delectable sweet potato pie. I always visited just before the yearly all-day church meeting, when Lonie was cooking and she always shared a sweet potato pie with me.

Luther raised his own hogs which he butchered and processed on the farm, usually in conjunction with processing meat for my father. Butchering day was a real treat for me as a youngster. I observed construction of a pit type fireplace, under the scalding pan. This was used to heat the water so that the carcass could be placed in boiling water in order to 'slip the hair' before further processing. Every edible piece of the hog was processed. Hams and bacon were cured in salt, for months. Other meat was ground and seasoned for sausage. Sausage was either canned or stuffed in hand-made cloth sacks and dipped in boiling fat (lard) to seal when cooled. These sacks would then be hung in the meat house before use. Luther continued to produce the best sausage that I can remember until the 1990's when he was encouraged to discontinue. His words to me, "Them federals come by my place and said I don't have no license and if I sells any more hog meat they's going to put me in jail."

Luther could do most any mechanical job after just one demonstration of the task. He excelled in tree cutting, carpentry, harness repair, making parts for broken farm equipment in the blacksmith shop. This mastery of the above demonstrated Luther's determination to learn through performance those skills needed to survive.

“Ode” continued:

During World War II Luther and I were the main workforce on Meadow Brook Farm. My first paying job was plowing corn for Luther with a mule pulling a three blade cultivator at 75 cents per day. I have often said that I learned more from Luther than I ever learned from any educator encountered in 20 years of formal education. A lot of philosophy is contained in saying his oft' repeated words, "I isn't educated but I am a hard worker and I never went to bed hungry or cold".

After WW II, I went to school at VPI at the same time my brother, T.M. Shelton, came back to the farm with a vision to modernize the operation. That resulted in mechanization of the farm and introduction of large scale poultry production. By the time I graduated in 1951 Luther and Lonie had move to a cabin on the Buddy Eddins farm on Middle River (Conway), shortly afterwards Lonie died.

Luther continued to be active in his self help and community affairs. He participated in the formation of the Greene County Volunteer Fire Department in Stanardsville. He was helpful on all fundraisers and would immediately respond to any emergency call. One of my last memories of Luther was when I visited him before he died, as we sat in his dimly lit sitting room, (Lonie's whitewashed walls had become a dark gray due to exposure to years of smoke escaping from the wood stove). As we talked about old times, I recall seeing his Volunteer Fireman's white shirt and shiny badge, hanging on the wall in a prominent place. He was right proud of that shirt and badge and it was a fitting symbol of his life long dedication to service to his community.

Luther died May 30, 2000. I was out of the country at the time and missed his funeral. My brother T.M. indicated that both Luther and Lonie were buried in the Mount Coran Church Cemetery, (See picture of metal grave marker), located near the intersection of Routes 667 (Teel Mtn. Rd.) and 638 (Middle River Road). T.M. indicated that he would start a movement to raise money for an appropriate marker for Luther's grave. Apparently there were others interested and I agreed to help. Unfortunately T.M. died before this project began.

I am interested in establishing an appropriate permanent marker for this Good Man, Luther Hill- and his wife Lonie. Anyone that knew Luther and desires to contribute to this cause should please, contact me through JPamenter@GreeneHistory.org.

Henry R Shelton,
Charlottesville VA

September 2006

Country sayings

“He sure was put out about the meetin’.”
“I’ll carry him on over there this afternoon.”
“He lives a “fur” piece from his kin folks.”
“That sure looks like slim pickin’s.”
“Blood is thicker than water.”

“Go fetch the Doctor.”
“He’s feelin’ kinda puny.”
“It sure smarts where I got kicked.”
“I aim to buy some land.”
“A new broom sweeps clean.”

A little quote --- a lot of wisdom

“We all know the worth of water when the well is dry”. ---- Benjamin Franklin

Events

Lt. Jim Bond of the Albemarle County Police Department will be a guest speaker on Sunday November 19th, 2006 at the Stanardsville Court House in Stanardsville, 4:00 PM. His presentation topic is World War I. This program is open to all GCHS members and non-members.

Greene County Historical Society Magazine

The Greene County Historical Society Magazine is published when enough material is gathered from the membership, the Board or other sources. If you have a story, article, pictures, or any other piece of historical information please contact Magazine Editor Eugene Powell at EPowell@GreeneHistory.org.

Newsletter Notes

by J. Pamerter

We often get inquiries by email from people who are researching their ancestors. In fact, when the Museum was open regularly (which we hope it will be again in the not too distant future), we had Guest Book entries for people from as far away as Colorado, Texas, Ontario, Idaho, Missouri, and many other places, as well as many Virginians, all doing genealogy research.

But this week we had an inquiry of a quite different sort. Patti, from the County Administrator's Office, called to ask whether we could give a visitor from Pennsylvania any information about a plane crash in 1955. The inquirer was John Kunz, who on November 11th, 1955 was Lieutenant John Kunz, of the U.S. Navy. This is the story, as it appeared in the Greene County Record on November 17th, 1955.

“A Navy F-2H-2 Banshee jet fighter plane crashed in woods about 4 miles southwest of Stanardsville at 4p.m. Thursday [November 11th] but the pilot bailed out and escaped with minor bruises. Lt. (j.g.) John B. Kunz 24, said he was making a routine flight with another jet aircraft from Oceana Naval Air Station, near Norfolk, to Columbus, Ohio, when his ship went out of control, going into a spin and forcing him to bail out. Lt. Kunz, attached to Squadron VA-76 at Oceana is from Alexandria, PA. he estimated his altitude at 31,000 feet when the trouble developed and at 5,000 to 10,000 feet when he bailed out. State Trooper A.C. Crowder found Lt. Kunz walking on State Route 624, also called Ridge Rd., about half a mile from where his plane crashed, on the property of John Monger, and took him to the home of Sheriff W.D. Deane of Greene County. Lt. Kunz said this was his first jump and that he landed in a field near the road, receiving minor bruises. He stayed at Sheriff Deane's home that night until Naval authorities arrived Friday. Two Navy trucks came for the wreckage on Saturday. The Albemarle unit of the Civil Air Patrol, based at Milton Airport, was alerted on this crash, but did not have to conduct an air search.”

Carroll Deane, son of Sheriff W.D. “Hooks” Deane, recalled the incident. He hopes that an old family album may contain a photograph of the crashed plane – if such evidence comes to light, we will certainly print a copy in the next Newsletter. Meanwhile, those of you who also remember this incident, or who have any photos to share, are invited to contact the Society, at PO Box 185, Stanardsville VA 22973, by phone at 434-985-1409, or by email to JPamerter@GreeneHistory.org.

Assistance Needed

Richard Early and Bill Steo have digitally photographed a scrap book of information compiled by Richard's Aunt Lucille. The book is presently in the possession of Richard's cousin, John N. Fray. The 557-page book, which includes hundreds of obituaries as well as local interest stories, has been recorded to CD and needs to be indexed. Anyone who could help with this project and who has a functioning computer should contact Jackie Pamerter at JPamerter@GreeneHistory.org. Work may be completed in your home.