

*Shenandoah County Historical Society*  
*P.O. Box 506 Edinburg, VA 22824*

<http://www.shenandoahcountyhistoricalsociety.org>



*Spring 2009*

**Annual Meeting**

**May 12, 2009**

**YOU ARE INVITED...**

to our annual meeting and dinner on Tuesday, May 12, 2009 to be held at St. Paul's UCC Church, 106 S. High St. Edinburg. We'll meet at 6:00 PM for social hour with dinner to be served at 6:30. After enjoying the company of fellow Society members and guests, and a delicious meal, we'll move into the beautiful church sanctuary for a presentation by Jean Martin, "Fifty Years of Local Fraktur (1784-1834)". The evening will include a brief business meeting and election of directors. .

Dinner reservations must be received by Wednesday, May 6. Cost is \$22.00 per person. A SCHS Response Form is enclosed. Please join us!

**Report of the Nominating Committee**

This year's Nominating Committee is Robert Frye and Janet Wagniere; and an effort is being made to find two members from areas where we are not currently represented.

Present Board Members, whose terms expire, and who have expressed willingness to serve again are: Barbara Adamson, Nancye Bowman, Connie Broy, Diane Ferguson and Jeanne Walton.

We are pleased that Meg Trott has agreed to join the Board. She is well-known throughout the county. She is a retired history and geography teacher who lives, with her husband, in a historic house in the Fort Valley. As Secretary of the Shenandoah Preservation League and President of the Fort Valley Museum, she is deeply involved and well acquainted with the need for historic research and preservation in the beautiful Shenandoah County.

The other Board position remains open but a candidate will be announced at the Annual Meeting.

**Annual Meeting Program**

Jean Martin's presentation will feature the art of fraktur, the recording of births and baptisms on highly decorated certificates announcing the birth, baptism date, parents, sponsors or

witnesses, minister presiding and the location. Many of these beautiful documents were written in both English and German here in Shenandoah County. Jean will discuss local fraktur from an early 1784 example, drawn by the elusive “Stony Creek Artist” for Wilhelm Huber, to 1834, when printed forms had become commonly available. With the use of these printed forms, only someone with a good hand was needed and fraktur artistry disappeared.

Jean has been the archivist and genealogist for the Shenandoah County Library since 2001. During her career she has served as the director of two museums and as a curator, consultant, author and lecturer in various areas of early American history and historic preservation. Jean is also involved in a number of local historic preservation organizations.



### Suggested Reading

*Shenandoah Valley Folklife*

By Scott Hamilton Suter  
(Jackson, MS, University Press of Mississippi, 1999  
ISBN 1-57806-189-X)

*Folk and Decorative Art of the Shenandoah Valley*  
By the Shenandoah Valley Folklore Society  
(Bridgewater, VA, Shenandoah Valley Folklore Society, 1993  
ISBN 0-9636406-0-7)

### Barbara Adamson’s Moment in History

An article in the Shenandoah Herald April 27, 1928 tells us about a local amateur taxidermist, Asa Sheetz, and his mounted wildlife specimen collection which became very well known in the region. Here’s the story:

“Mr. Noah R. Sheetz left Woodstock Wednesday for Charlestown WV where he will exhibit the splendid display of mounted wild animals collected during almost a lifetime of study by his father, the late Asa A. Sheetz, who was a great student of nature and with rare skill succeeded in capturing and mounting in life-like posture various animals, birds and reptiles of Virginia and parts of WV. After the death of his father Mr. Sheetz purchased the specially made auto truck (and with) the specimens.... expects to spend the summer displaying this interesting and educational collection of wildlife in various sections of VA and PA

and possibly further north. Beside the specimens of wildlife there will be on display also two life-like dogs, a pointer and a German police dog and a two-headed calf. Mr. Sheetz is accompanied by his brother Mr. Harry Sheetz.”

Historian John Wayland, in his book, “A History of Shenandoah County, VA.”, writes about Asa Sheetz, declaring that the collection is the best in the state and quoting from Mr. Sheetz as to how it came about. Mr. Sheetz was quoted as saying that “in 1921 while hunting in Bath County, I was successful in bagging a very fine deer...This head was mounted by myself, the first piece of taxidermy work I ever finished. After mounting the deer head, of which I was rather proud, I placed it in the Corner Drugstore window. Pretty soon someone wanted to know whether I could mount a pet cat that had just died. This I did. Next I mounted an opossum, placed it in a window.... Then I wanted more, and gradually, mounted a specimen as I could secure one...in 1922, being then superintendent of our local fair grounds at Woodstock, in order to add a little variety to the exhibits, I placed my small collection in a four-foot square case which I built in the exhibition hall for this purpose...Interest spread to the managers of other fairs, whose representatives offered to compensate me for showing the collection at their fairs as an educational exhibit...Our collection has grown to its present proportions gradually and now

includes practically all of Virginia’s wild fur and game animals and upland game birds, from quail to wild turkey. Of animals, we have them from little red squirrels to bears; fur bearers, from civet cat to otter; hawks and owls, of the latter, we have six different species. This business has grown far beyond our fondest hopes and is still growing by leaps and bounds. My son and myself are busy all of the time, and work piling up. But as nature is our life study, we love the work, which we find intensely interesting. Our present collection includes about 80 specimens –animals, birds, fishes, snakes, etc. and is valued at several thousand dollars, though not for sale.”

Mr. Sheetz’s grandson, Jack Sheetz, reports that the last remaining piece of the collection that he knows of was the two-headed calf, displayed for many years at Endless Caverns. Mr. Sheetz’s son, Jake Sheetz, who was a well-known furniture maker, also learned the skill of taxidermy. A specimen mounted by him, a loon, is on display at the Woodstock Museum.

### **Editor’s Corner**

#### **Demographics of SCHS**

Members might find the following demographics of SCHS membership of interest.

Edinburg—35

Out of state—34

Woodstock—32  
 Virginia, not local—26  
 Fort Valley—9  
 New Market—9  
 Strasburg—9  
 Tom's Brook—5  
 Winchester—4  
 Mauertown—3  
 Basye—2  
 Broadway—2  
 Middletown—1  
 Stephens City--1



T-25 St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church,  
 New Market, Va.

*My dear Aunt Nettie; - I am now  
 planning to accept your invita-  
 tion to visit very during the  
 commencing, but if it will  
 suit you, I will do that later  
 when it is to be, as with me please  
 I am so anxious for it to come. I  
 heard I could not come because I  
 could not find a girl, but I have  
 one now - and so relieved. Now  
 you and Aunt Sam are real well, and  
 you and Aunt Sam are real well, and  
 you and Aunt Sam are real well, and  
 you and Aunt Sam are real well.*

### Summers-Koontz Monument Restoration

**Correction:** The Summers-Koontz monument is on the **west** side of Route 11, midway between Mt. Jackson and New Market.

The rededication ceremony will be on Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup>. The time will be announced at the annual meeting.

### Pat Shelton's Post Cards

Society Secretary Pat Shelton collects old post cards of Shenandoah County and has made them available for inclusion in the newsletter. Some will be for the purpose of identification; others will be for amusement and nostalgia only.

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in New Market:

### Preserving History While Living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Another Plea to Sign Up to Receive this Newsletter Electronically

If you would like to receive your quarterly newsletter by e-mail, which would save SCHS money, please send me your e-mail address at [pmurphy1@shentel.net](mailto:pmurphy1@shentel.net).

### Shenandoah County Historical Society: An Invitation

The Shenandoah County Historical Society was founded in 1985 by a group of citizens interested in preserving and sharing our County's heritage. Now, more than ever, we need you! Our activities include:

- Quarterly meetings
- Newsletter
- Genealogical research services

- Morrison Studio Photographic Collection project
- Involvement in local historic preservation issues
- Collecting and sharing information about local history, family histories, etc.
- Publication and sales of local history books
- Community outreach (County Fair booth, Heritage Day, other public events)

We welcome participation on our Committees. On the reverse side of this form you will find a brief description of our Committee activities. We encourage you to volunteer – without your support we can't accomplish our goals. Please fill out and return the form below if you would like to volunteer, renew your membership or join SCHS if you aren't already a member. Below is a brief description of some of our Committees and their activities:

**History** – involved in the collection, preservation and research of local historical material and artifacts. Serves as a depository and reference center for these materials.

**Preservation** – identifies, surveys and catalogs sites, landmarks, structures and other physical objects that are worthy of preservation. There is considerable overlap and cooperation between this Committee and the History Committee.

**Program & Hospitality** – works to provide programs and meetings that are

interesting and entertaining and that encourage the public to learn about local history through lectures and exhibits. Plans our annual May dinner meeting. Provides refreshments for meetings.

**Public Relations** – publicizes SCHS activities. Promotes the use of historical materials collected by the Society.

**Genealogical** – promotes genealogical study and research. Upon request conducts family research (fee for service).

**Finance** – sponsors book sales and other special fund raising projects.

**Nominating & Membership** – not standing Committees, these provide assistance to the Board when needed.

### **Upcoming Events of Interest**

Sunday, May 17, 2009 – Tour of Fort Colvin in Frederick County – sponsored by the Association for the Preservation of VA Antiquities/Northern Shenandoah Valley Branch. Tour at 2:00 PM. Call Mary Turner at (540)665-9692 for information. This is a very interesting site but parking is difficult so be sure to call Mary. To use MapQuest for directions type in 107 Stonebrook Rd. Winchester 22602.

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Check applicable items:

- I wish to help with SCHS projects or serve on a Committee \_\_\_\_\_
- I have old documents, family histories, books, photos, etc. to share
- I want to donate to further SCHS work
- Genealogical research/\$20 per hour, plus postage and copying.
- I want to join or renew membership in SCHS. Dues enclosed.  
Single - \$10. Family - \$15. Lifetime (individual) - \$200.  
Lifetime (family) - \$300.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_