

# The Time Keeper

Essex County Museum & Historical Society Newsletter

May 2016

## World War I Centennial Exhibit to Open in May

As the centennial of the United States' entry into World War I on April 6, 1917, approaches, a new exhibition in the Essex Gallery will explore how this first great global conflict affected the county. When Congress declared war on Germany, about 160 Essex men joined more than 2 million U.S. soldiers under the command of Major General John J. Pershing to fight on the battlefields of France, together with the forces of our allies, Britain, France and Russia. During the course of the war, five Essex men were killed in battle; several more died while in the service. Two Essex soldiers received the Distinguished Service Cross. On the home front, Essex women, both black and white, formed fifteen Red Cross branch chapters to provide clothing and supplies for their loved ones fighting overseas. Germany formally surrendered on November, 11, 1918.

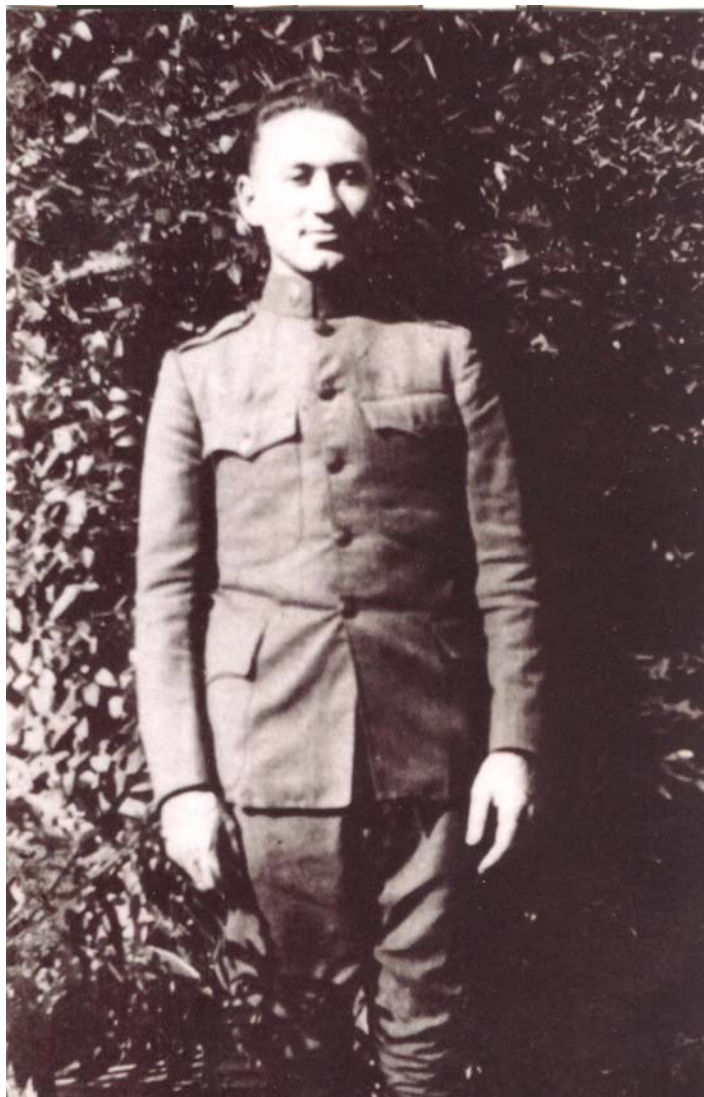
The exhibition will feature the 1918 Tappahannock wedding of Robert Haile Sisson whose World War I uniform recently was donated to the museum. Robert Haile Sisson of Essex enlisted in World War I. In 1918 he married Mary Louise Southworth, the daughter of Harrison Southworth of Tappahannock at the Southworth family home. Southworth served in the Virginia Legislature and was Clerk of the Court of Essex county.

Other artifacts on display will include period photographs, documents, weapons, and a gas mask and helmet. The exhibition will open in May, 2016.

*David Jett,*  
*Curator@ECMHS.org*

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*Robert Haile Sisson (1894-1986)*  
*Photo courtesy of Mrs. Hunter R. Greenlaw*

The Essex County Museum and Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the generous gift of Mrs. Hunter R. Greenlaw of Fredericksburg who donated her father, Robert Haile Sisson's, World War I uniform.

## Docents are Who We Are! Join Us and Help Make a Difference

Our docent group is the heart of the museums operation. Without this dedicated group of volunteers it would not be possible for us to fulfill our mission to be open to the public. But to continue to maintain our regular hours and hopefully expand them, we need your help. Just two and one half hours of your time each month will make an amazing difference. That's all it takes to work one regular shift. If you are not able to do that, consider volunteering for a fifth day occurring just a few times a year.

Docents are the "face" of the museum, greeting our visitors and helping them have a pleasant and informative visit. If you've lived here a long time, we need your expertise. If you are new to the community, it is a great way to learn more about the local history and make new friends.

For more information or to schedule training, contact Penny Geiger, Doccents@ECMHS.org.

The docents thank Rober LaFollette for his volunteer maintenance of the Museum's lawn and plants.



*A group of ECMHS docents on the steps at Oakalona during last year's Annual Membership Meeting*

## Multi-Media News

The original Orientation Slide Show that now is a major feature shown in the Museum Theater was produced a number of years ago using the voices of local narrators. Not surprisingly, some of the information in these narratives has changed since that time. The Multi-Media Committee now has completed an update to these narratives to bring them up to date, and adapted the show to run on a BluRay/DVD player rather than a computer for simplicity of operation. In addition, technical changes were made to improve the flow of the slide show by adding fades between slides. The Committee also has adapted the multimedia River Slide Show to play on a BluRay/DVD player, again to simplify operation.



The Committee continues to document Museum and Museum-sponsored events. Most recently the Committee took photographs to document the Take Tea event held at St. Margaret's dining hall, a repeat event sponsored by the Museum that was again this year well attended by both previous and new attendees. These photographs have been added to the Museum's web site. Whether or not you attended this event, the Multi-Media Committee hopes you will take a look at these photographs. You very likely will find there a photograph of yourself or your friends.

The Multi-Media Committee has reached out to David Jett, Museum Curator, to discuss a possible multi-media presentation to support the Museum's new exhibits.

Finally, tragic losses from the Tornado in February in Essex County produced history, too, as the face of the County was changed forever. The Committee is considering writing a short article to discuss the loss of historic St. John Baptist church on Desha Road.

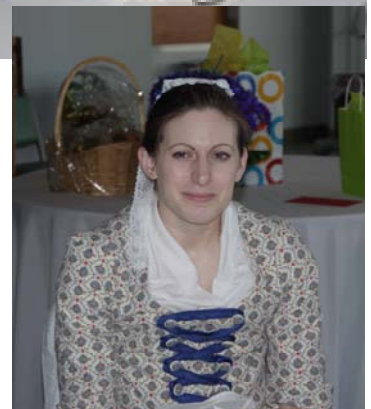
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Publications@ecmhs.org

**Howard Reisinger,  
Multimedia @ECMHS.org**



# Tea Time

Our popular afternoon tea event was held on March 12 in St. Margaret's Dining Hall. Fifty-nine guests, including 29 first time attendees, enjoyed an elegant tea, prepared and presented by costumed hostesses and hosts plus entertainment and door prizes. Rappahannock Colonial Heritage Society from Fredericksburg once again provided the food and entertainment which included historic vignettes, songs and colonial dancing.



## Rappahannock River Gift Shop

Shoppers at the gift shop discover a unique offering of gifts at reasonable prices. Shoppers are surprised by the variety of Salisbury pewter items with the popular blue crab theme; your own personal crab knife, crab pins, napkin holders, salt and pepper shakers and the handsome five inch crab perfect for display.

History books written for those doing research and others sharing stories of living in Essex and the Northern Neck are our most popular items. We also have an assortment of Whitley nuts, hand carved walking sticks, local honey and many more interesting gift ideas.

Pictured at right are the beautiful baskets designed and crafted solely for the gift shop by Sam Winters. The Nantucket style serving tray (pictured) makes a very special gift for any occasion. There are a variety of baskets all with a "purpose". Utility baskets, mail pouches, garlic baskets, bread baskets, totes and the dainty reasonably priced "jewel gift basket", perfect for a special small gift.



*A beautiful basket is the perfect gift for any occasion. Our exclusive collection designed and made by Sam Winter has something for everyone.*



*Priscilla Vaughan,  
GiftShop@ECMHS.org*

## ECMHS Education Programs Continue to Enrich Our Community

Our education programs continue to provide a versatile range of opportunities for students and adults alike. This year started off in January with our History on the Go participation at Lancaster Middle School along with six other local museums. In February, Anita Harrower and I presented a talk on Black History to the residents of Carrington House, Tappahannock. Three segments were the theme: Slavery in Essex County, Rappahannock Industrial Academy, and Mark-Haven Beach. Both activities accounted for 246 students and adults.

On March 12, St. Margaret's Dining Hall was the setting for our 5th Afternoon Tea event. Fifty-nine attendees joined in this pleasant event where they enjoyed fine food and entertainment both provided by The Rappahannock Colonial Heritage Society from Fredericksburg. There were 29 new attendees coming from the Richmond and Ashland area. Door prizes were provided. We made a profit of \$1475.00!

On April 6 we conducted an after school Historic Walking Tour for 50 sixth and seventh grade Tappahannock Middle School students. April 9 we participated in the Mary Ball Museum and Library's annual Lancaster Court Day, partnering with Christ Church to provide games for the children.

The Northern Neck Museums educational event for private schools scheduled for May 6 at Belle Isle State Park was unfortunately postponed due to inclement weather. Four local

schools were to have participated: Aylett Country Day School, Chesapeake Academy, Tappahannock Junior Academy, and Ware Academy. Eleven museums were scheduled to present a variety of hands-on activities to 108 students plus teachers. The event will be rescheduled for a date in the fall.



*Education Director, Joan Moore,  
Introduces the ECMHS Tea Event*

May 13, 6-8 representatives from The Spotsylvania Tourism Council reserved The Historic Walking Tour. If possible the tour will include going inside the Court House. They will also visit the Art Gallery.

I also attended a meeting of TREE, (Three Rivers Environmental Educators). The purpose of TREE is to partner with organizations to deliver high quality environmental education, coordinate stewardship opportunities, and network professionally. Their region encompasses all the Northern Neck and Essex. Focus is on 6th and 9th grade students. Partners go

into the schools and also participate in large one day events. This is an excellent opportunity to expand our subject matter with the help of very knowledgeable people whose main objective is the environment. The Friends of the Rappahannock and Menokin are strong partners in this organization.

*Joan Moore,  
Education@EssexMuseum.org*

## President's Message

I seem to remember it was Spring 2006. Though I had grown up in Tappahannock and always considered this place my home, I had only recently started working here following a career in national defense. I wanted to get more involved in community activities, so I decided that I could give a few hours a month to serve as a docent here at the Essex County Museum. How wonderful it was to be in the museum each month, perusing the shelves, exhibits, and displays, bringing back memories that had been dormant for over 30 years.

I share this with you, hoping that if you read this, you too will be stirred to increase your involvement with us here at the Essex County Museum. I have begun to realize that what makes our museum so good is the good people who join us and serve as members, docents, project leaders, officers, and directors. And for those who might not yet be a part of the museum, what better time to become a member than during this 20th anniversary year? (Yes, it was in 1996 that several dedicated founders came together to bring the Essex County Museum to life!)

Welcome to our annual membership meeting as we celebrate our first 20 years and look forward to our next 20 years.

**Tommy Blackwell,**  
*President@ECMHS.org*

## Finance Report

A portion of the museum's roof required replacement last fall which cost \$22,544. Although reserve funds had been set aside in recent years to pay the cost, we established a 2016 priority to rebuild the reserves to ensure future funds are available to properly maintain the museum which is an historic building in Tappahannock.

Financially, Essex County Museum & Historical Society remains strong. Last year's income was up 3% over 2014. Donations from individuals were also up 3%. After expenses, net income was \$5,419 which was down from 2014 by 35%.

The value of ECMHS total assets at the end of 2015 was \$507,163 which was down \$11,463 due primarily to the roof replacement payment. Total liabilities, which include the mortgage on the building and reserves, were reduced during 2015 by \$15,138. Therefore, the ECMHS net worth, which is the difference between the total assets and total liabilities increased \$3,675.

As a charitable non-profit organization, the ECMHS financial statements are public information and available upon email request to [Treasurer@ECMHS.org](mailto:Treasurer@ECMHS.org).

**Ron Geiger,**  
*Finance@ECMHS.org*

## Memberships

Membership dues provide funds to support our primary efforts to collect, preserve and present the significant and colorful history of Essex County for its citizens and visitors. Membership dues cover 13% of our budget.

### Life Members

Mr. & Mrs. William F. Andrews  
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**1692 Society Memberships (\$100)**

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 Ms. Martha Coates  
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Ms. Della S. Watkins  
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**Tappahannock Society Memberships (\$150)**

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 Mr. David Leary  
 Mr. & Mrs. Donald Moore  
 Lt. Gen. & Mrs. Carl A. Strock  
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Dr. Allison B. Robeson  
 Mr. & Mrs. Billy H. Sawyer  
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**Essex Circle Memberships(\$500+)**

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 Mr. & Mrs. Gordon Fletcher  
 Mr. & Mrs. Ronald R. Geiger  
 Dr. & Mrs. Richard G. Lewis  
 Mr. & Mrs. O. Bryan Taliaferro  
 Mr. & Mrs. Joseph L. Ware

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## 2015 Annual Fund Contributors

Our Annual Fund Campaign provides greatly needed funds to acquire important artifacts, create museum exhibits, and improve our facilities which are above and beyond the support from membership dues. The 2015 Annual Fund contributions covered 16% of our budget.

**Friends (\$25-\$49)**

Ms. Caroline B. Amos  
 Ms. Carolyn M. Anderton  
 Ms. Susan Boettcher Bock  
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 Mrs. Bette Jo Cobb  
 Mrs. Jean U. Edwards  
 Mrs. Mary Louise S. Greenlaw  
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 Mr. & Mrs. William A. Croxton  
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 Mr. & Mrs. Emerson Hughes  
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 Mr. David Leary  
 Mr. & Mrs. Shepherd Lewis  
 Mr. & Mrs. John C. Magruder  
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 Ms. Lila W. Palmer  
 Rappahannock Electric Cooperative  
 Dr. & Mrs. William Ryan  
 Mr. & Mrs. Roger Sethmann  
 Mr. Guilford D. Ware  
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**Museum Founders***Gold Level (\$500-\$999)*

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 Mr. & Mrs. William W. Cooke  
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 Wiley H. & James C. Wheat Jr. Foundation

### Highlights of our First 20 years



The Annual Members Meeting is a time for food and friendship.



Right: Actors leave the museum for the Leedstown Reenactment.

Below: Anita and Gordon Harrower present Lillian McGuire with the Historian Award at the 2010 Members Meeting.



Above: Bill Croxton discusses the "Save the Cannon" initiative. Anne Jackson, Barbara Sethmann, Gordon Harrower and Anita Harrower pose with the newly restored cannon.



The eagle continues to delight visitors



Above: Education Director Joan Moore introduces members of the Rappahannock Colonial Heritage Society at the 2014 Tea Event



Teachers learn the mysteries of the river and children get a history lesson in the Essex Gallery.

All photos through the newsletter, unless otherwise indicated, are courtesy of Howard Reisinger, Multi-Media Chairman

### Museum Docents

Sally Acree	Elizabeth Ellis	Bill Jester	Barbara Sethmann	Lois Vaughan
Tommy Blackwell	Hilda Fletcher	Lorraine Jester	Lewis Shephard	Priscilla Vaughan
Emily Brazell	Barbara Frazier	Joe Johnston	Diane Sisson	Helen Ware
Betty Jo Butler	John Frazier	Linda Lumpkin	Cora Sue Spruill	JoAnn Ware
Bill Croxton	Penny Geiger, <i>Docent Coordinator</i>	Suzi Maggard	Rick Stott	Kia Ware
Carole Croxton	Ron Geiger	Joan Moore	Carl Strock	Fred Woodard
Sarah Croxton	Peyton Guest	Howard Reisinger	Sandy Tate	C. Norman Wood
Jessica Davis	Patricia Haile	Barry Robertson	Cacky Taylor	
Luther Derby	Anita Harrower	Patti Rowley	Pam Underhill	
Keren Ellis	Gordon Harrower	Jane Schreiber	Van VanArsdale	

### Board of Directors 2016

Tommy Blackwell, <i>President</i>	Lloyd Huckstep	Carl Strock, <i>First Vice President</i>
David Broad, <i>Web Master</i>	Anne Jackson, <i>Research</i>	Brian Taliaferro
Stanley Clarke	Madeline Lawson	Priscilla Vaughan, <i>Gift Shop Manager</i>
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Patricia Haile	Barbara Sethmann, <i>Secretary/Publications</i>	

*(Titles are Officers and Project Chair positions)*

### Museum Staff

<i>Curator/Collections Management</i>	David Jett
<i>Administrative Assistant</i>	Milly Cavin

visit [www.ecmhs.org](http://www.ecmhs.org) for the latest news and calendar of events

## People Care About Our Community!

 \$100,000 raised for Tornado Relief Fund

 \$30,000 raised for community organizations

◆ Angel Tree ◆ Art Guild ◆ Essex Homeless ◆ Essex Library ◆ Essex Museum ◆ Farmers Market ◆ Food Bank  
◆ Free Clinic ◆ Main Street ◆ Operation Inasmuch ◆ RCC Scholarships ◆ Riverside Hospital ◆ Haven ◆ High School  
Math, Physics, Drama ◆ Jacobs Ladder ◆ Little League ◆ River Stars ◆ Scouts (Boys & Girls) ◆ Youth Association



The 52 members of the Tappahannock Rotary Club paid for this ad.

