Amy Kiracofe, our longtime and number one Dayton ambassador, has retired after many wonderful years of service. A thank you celebration for Amy will be announced when the weather is warmer!
From the Executive Director

Happy New Year! I have always loved the fresh start that comes with the change of the calendar. Clean pages glow with optimism and anticipate new opportunities. In planning for the upcoming year, we look back upon the decisions and activities and goals of the previous twelve months. What worked well? What can we improve? What should we change? As I review 2018, I realize reflection was a priority and restructuring was a theme.

Hiring a Marketing Manager was a significant restructure. Increasing from 2.5 to 3.5 staff members is a big jump! We also set a new featured exhibition structure to open two guest-curated shows each year. The Inventors & Innovators patent exhibition, created by inaugural Guest Curator Kevin Borg, opened in November to terrific reviews and has brought in many new visitors. We look forward to unveiling local photography in April!

Significant reflection took place in the fall as Trustees and staff participated in a series of Strategic Planning meetings. Through discussions and exercises and focus group conversations, the Board created new Vision and Mission statements:

Vision – Our communities find inspiration and connection in the rich histories of Harrisonburg and Rockingham.

Mission – We keep and tell the stories of the area and its people and their influences on our lives and shared future. We fulfill our mission by: Preserving, Sharing, Innovating, and Partnering.

This period of reflection will continue as we move toward new branding. A variety of names and websites identify this organization, including Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society, The Heritage Museum, heritagecenter.com, valleyheritagemuseum.org, and heritagemuseumstore.com. People outside of our immediate area may not be aware of the confusion that this assortment creates.

The time has come to create one distinct brand that projects the scope of activities that the organization supports to share the vibrant history of our community. I look forward to reporting on the branding process soon. In the meantime, we are here to help you enjoy and research the stories found in your backyard and your family trees.

From the Marketing Manager

This is an exciting time for our organization. As we’ve hinted, big things are on the horizon. Over the next couple of months, a rebranding process will occur. Change is always difficult, but in this case it’s necessary. As a member, you know how much of an asset the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society is for local history lovers. We want everyone in the city and the county to know that. Too many people from our community have never visited our galleries, library, or book and gift shop. Too many people from our community have never even heard of us. Time for that to change!

The bigger our membership is, the more we can provide. More local members means a larger and more extensive genealogical database. It means more events and regular programs. It means more artifacts for the collections. And most importantly, it means our community will have a home for history lovers for generations to come. In 2019, I’m asking you to help spread the word and get more people involved in celebrating and saving the history of Harrisonburg and Rockingham.

One of the first things I noticed when I began working at this wonderful organization over six months ago was the number of different names that people used to refer to it. Very soon we will have one name, one website, and a marketing strategy to reach every member of the community.

The new website and online store has been one of my top priorities. I want to make it user friendly, accessible, and modern. In the end, I expect a website far superior to those of almost all regional historical societies. News and announcements will come shortly. Please follow us on Facebook and join our email list to make sure you’re kept up to date.

Should you have any comments, questions, or concerns, please send me an email at marketing@heritagecenter.com.
Recent Events

28 Nov. 2018
*Inventors & Innovators* Grand Opening

11 Dec. 2018
Volunteer luncheon

17 Jan. 2019
Chamber of Commerce nonprofit showcase

Upcoming Events

21 Feb. 2019
Third Thursday Talk:
“American Women at War”
Amelia Underwood. 7pm.

21 Mar. 2019
Third Thursday Talk:
“Chesapeake Western: Harrisonburg’s Railroad”
Jeffrey Smoker. 7pm.

23 Mar. 2019
*Inventors & Innovators* closes to prepare for the April exhibition opening.

18 Apr. 2019
Allen Litten Photography Exhibit Grand Opening and Gallery Talk. Curated by Daniel Robinson. 6:30pm.

27 Apr. 2019
Dayton Redbud Festival.

16 May 2019
Third Thursday Talk to be announced. Stay tuned!

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After an extended period out-of-print, the first volume of *Mills of Rockingham County* is back in stock. If you’re one of the many who have been asking for this title, stop by or give us a call! Thanks to Earl and Janet Downs for bringing the book back to life.
From the Collection

The original James Madison University mascot, Duke I. (Archive #0455)

Nurses outside Rockingham Memorial Hospital. (Archive #0017)

A card game in Dayton. April, 1902. (Archive #1163)
Beginning with its entrance into the domestic market, the sewing machine was designed for family use. It occupied space within the realm of domesticity, with women being its primary users. Isaac Singer's firm, the Singer Company, pushed heavily for the adoption of Elias Howe's invention by American homes beginning in the 1850s: first to the upper-class and luxury market, and later down-market to the masses as a tool and “assistant” all households could use to streamline their work. It is within this intrinsically and commercially domestic (and therefore, feminine) context that James E. A. Gibbs, a local of Rockbridge County, Virginia, patented numerous improvements upon the sewing machine with his partner Charles H. Willcox from 1881-1890.

Gibbs' sewing machine patent undoubtedly had its place with Virginia's households, but little is written about the sewing machine's place within the Mennonite community in the larger Shenandoah Valley. Given the community’s stringently-held beliefs about the use of technology, and the connection of technology with morality, how did the sewing machine fit into Mennonite society and domesticity? Within the traditionally-patriarchal social structure of the Mennonites, how was the sewing machine viewed by men and women of both Evangelical and Old Order groups? Furthermore, what was the woman's role in the use of the machine? From these questions, conclusions about the values of the Mennonite community in the Shenandoah Valley can be drawn. Attitudes towards using the sewing machine reveal the nuances of Mennonite beliefs regarding the use of this domestic technology — in turn, the availability of the technology to Mennonite women reveals community beliefs about work, and how women were able to participate in it.

Though the sewing machine’s reputation is one that typically inspires thoughts of efficiency and streamlining the sewing process, its initial integration into the home was difficult. Mechanical sewing introduced mechanical and technical problems that women had to diagnose and resolve. In order to promote the technology in its newfound domestic market, manufacturers emphasized usefulness and productivity rather than luxury.

Gibbs’ improvements upon the sewing machine increased its usefulness. The popularity of the Willcox & Gibbs machines revolved around their ease of use. The patent on the rotating hook for forming a chain stitch (US17427A) was “one of the most important sewing machine patents” and remains present in many modern single-thread chain stitch machines. Even the sewing machine’s capability to create “fancy work,” formerly done primarily by wealthy women who had the luxury of time and leisure, as well as the machine’s ornate decoration, served the practical purpose of appealing to female buyers and users. The new machine, though couched in rhetoric that boasted its usefulness and technological advancement, was still quite difficult to learn and maintain. Treadle operation was a form of physical labor, and “practice….and [patience] was necessary” for women to use the sewing machine to its fullest extent. Perhaps it was adopted by the Mennonite community due to the extent of labor required to operate the sewing machine, in addition to the general consensus that the sewing machine was considered a tool for utility and not solely a luxury item.

Even the most conservative Mennonite communities, which discouraged the usage of certain technologies, would have also considered the sewing machine to be a tool of utility. Most new technologies were carefully reviewed before they were accepted into the community, and even then, their usage was constantly brought up for debate. Certain technologies, such as the radio or the piano, were rejected entirely for extended periods of time due to their promotion of anti-Mennonite values. The radio was a line of communication to the outside world, presenting temptation and sinful practices to the Mennonite community. The piano presented the opportunity for selfishness and promoted leisure and luxury.

Women “rarely wrote about their experiences using sewing machines” and Mennonite women were no exception — there are very few records of Virginia Mennonites using or owning a sewing machine of any sort from the 19th to 20th century. Throughout the three volumes of the Minutes of the Virginia Mennonite Conference (1860-1980), the sewing machine does not appear in any context. This cannot be attributed to a lack of specificity: the minutes are meticulously recorded, with topics ranging from appropriate Sunday attire to doctrinal debates of faith. Women’s issues also feature frequently in the conference minutes, as Mennonite men and women alike ask questions about
fashion, jewelry, marriage practices, and women-specific organizations such as the Women’s Missionary and Service Commission/Auxiliary and sewing circles. Technology plays a significant role in the conference as well. The adoption of the car, the refrigerator, the radio, and even the piano are all addressed in turn. Despite this, the sewing machine plays no visible role in official community matters. Sewing itself is mentioned in these meetings as a women’s responsibility in maintaining the household and as a form of service, but it is never specified if these women were sewing by machine or by hand.

Though the minimal amount of evidence towards the presence of a sewing machine in the community of the Shenandoah Valley Mennonites seems to imply the lack of its use, the opposite seems to be true. Rather than the Virginia Mennonite community eschewing the sewing machine completely, it seems as if the sewing machine had been neatly adopted into the community without any problems. While it may be easier to assume that the technology-avoidant community would have simply ignored the development of the sewing machine, it seems to be the complete opposite. Whereas the invention of the radio and the piano warranted hours of discussion and debate over the course of the century, the sewing machine quietly found itself a natural place within the community. While local evidence only hinted at the presence of a sewing machine, national Mennonite publications were explicit about its presence and acceptability.

The sewing machine, as a tool, seems to have been consistently considered to be an acceptable technology in Mennonite society. Neither men nor women raise objections to its presence, suggesting unity between the sexes regarding the role of the sewing machine within the feminine sphere of domesticity. While the radio and piano were objects of leisure and worldliness, the sewing machine had this established background of utility. While the radio promoted messages of sin and temptation, and the piano was a symbol of status and leisure time, the sewing machine was a tool that required practice, patience, physical exertion, and was useful to maintaining a proper home. Unlike the radio and the piano, the sewing machine seems not to have been considered a technology that would lead the Mennonite community astray. It cemented its status as an approved technology when it was actively introduced as a productive tool to be given for missions work—a multitude of Mennonite churches are mentioned in the Gospel Herald to have bought or fixed sewing machines for mission trips to India, Africa, and even rural areas in West Virginia.

The key distinction lies in the American consumer society’s perception of the usefulness of these technologies. Rather than going against community values, the sewing machine reinforced Mennonite values of hard work and the role of women in the home and community. It was a functional piece of equipment that, according to advertisers, was to be found in every American home; not a luxury item only a few had the opportunity to own. Even as the Mennonites adopted electricity into the home and sewing machines lost the treadle, sewing machines kept their status as useful tools of productivity. Adoption of electricity was near-ubiquitous among Mennonites in the Shenandoah Valley, barring a small sub-group of Old Order Mennonites who went without. Technology, provided that it was useful and productive, was adopted in order to meet community needs. The sewing machine (and with it, electricity) served as the tool with which Mennonite women were expected to clothe their family and maintain their households.

Part two of this article will appear in the Spring 2019 Quarterly Newsletter. Elana Hin is a history student at James Madison University and wrote this article for Dr. Kevin Borg, the curator of Inventors & Innovators of Harrisonburg and Rockingham.
Shenandoah Valley folk artist Judy Paige was born in Harrisonburg, Virginia, on May 31st, 1946, to parents Joe and Betty Jo Meyerhoeffer. Judy Paige started drawing at an early age and took private lessons from Mrs. Olivia D. Graham of Bridgewater in the late 1950s and later from Mrs. Margaret R. Purdy of Dayton. She painted her early art in oils, acrylics, and pastels, and at Turner Ashby High School studied art under Mrs. Dorothy Lee Baugher.

A few years after graduating from high school she moved to Pittsburgh to attend the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. After graduating in Commercial Art she moved to Richmond, Virginia, and then back to Dayton. It was around this time that Paige decided to pursue a different line of art: drawing scenes on wooden benches, stools, and shelves, and painting with watercolors.

Her first local show was the Harrisonburg Junior Women’s Club on Court Square. Judy Paige opened a shop in her home in Dayton and in the late 1980s built a new home, “Willow Ridge” near Mt. Crawford. She started showing her art at shows throughout Virginia, including in the Virginia Beach Boardwalk Show, the Neptune Festival in Norfolk, Art in the Park in Richmond, the Waynesboro Fall Festival, Roanoke, Belle Grove, and Waterford, among many others. She was also well-known for hand-painted duck and goose eggs and for the custom stenciling she did in a number of local homes. Judy Paige continued her art until her illness prevented her from doing so. She passed away at her home on October 6th, 2011.

Jody Meyerhoeffer is Judy’s brother and the owner of the Triangle Emporium in downtown Dayton, VA.
Acquisitions

Archives

- Susan Basker donated a New Testament ‘Heart Shield’ Bible. The Bible has a metal plate attached to it designed to protect soldiers from bullets. It was used by her father Carr P. Coffman during WWII.
- Ray Chapman donated a copy of the 1938 Broadway High School yearbook that belonged to his uncle Frederick L. Whetzel.
- Eleanor Heishman donated two mid-nineteenth century account books dated between 1869-1875 from a store in Edom owned by her great grandfather Benjamin W. McKeever and his brother William McKeever.
- Penny Imeson donated *Mammy's Chillun and Other Poems* (1920) by U.G. Wilson, brother of Lucy Simms. The book will be part of the Simms-Wilson Archive HRHS-3.
- Philip Stone donated *Shirley and Lathan Mims: A Centennial Tribute*. Mr. Mims was an editor and general manager of the local newspaper, *The Daily News-Record*. The document is a biography of the couple and their lives.
- Paula Thompson donated eight issues of *Curio Magazine*.
- Rachel Good donated two photos relating to WHSV radio.

Artifacts

- Bill Henry donated a 100-year-old sleigh, once owned by O.B. and Wilkie Rhodes of Broadway. See picture at right.
- Mensel and Linda Dean donated a deacon’s bench and baby cradle.
- Gerald and Susan Taylor donated an antique rocking chair.
- Paula Thompson donated a collection of Presidential Campaign buttons.

Library

- William Burnette donated some obituaries.
- Kate Rayner donated her research about the Phillips family of Rockingham County: “Connecting the Phillips of Rockingham Virginia to the Phillips of Licking and Knox Counties Ohio.”

Other

- Al Saufley, Jane Smootz, and Joyce Miller donated books for the used book sale.
Something to Remember When Doing Genealogy Research
by Margaret Hotchner

We receive quite a number of calls from people looking for ancestors who lived in "Rockingham County." But on many occasions, the year they mention is prior to the county's formation. An explanation ensues to let the caller know that Rockingham County formed from Augusta County in 1778 and any information prior to 1778 would have to be found in Augusta County, or another county depending on the year their ancestor lived. The diagram below shows how Augusta County, Virginia, was formed and the names and dates of other counties which formed from it.

You can see from the Jed Hotchkiss map below, that Augusta County extended as far north as Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and as far west as the Mississippi River. Some boundaries were contentious at the time of their formation.

While doing research, no matter what location, it’s important to be aware of land boundaries and to keep in mind the events that were happening locally, statewide, and nationally. One book that provides U.S. timelines, land grants, emigration, events, epidemics, and more is The Genealogist’s U.S. Pocket Reference: Quick Facts & Timelines of American History to Help Understand Your Ancestors by Nancy Hendrickson.

If you want to know more about Virginia boundary changes, the HRHS bookstore stocks the Atlas of Virginia County Boundary Changes 1634-1895 by Michael Doran for $27.95 plus shipping. There is also information on FamilySearch.org at: https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Virginia_County_Creation_Dates_and_Parent_Counties.

The outlandish claims of Augusta County, Virginia.
Courtesy of the Library of Congress.
A Warm Welcome To Our New Members

Trisha Blosser, Harrisonburg, VA
Sandra E. Bricker, Canandaigua, NY
Donald Eddins, Columbia, MD
Linda A. Eddins, Laurel, MD
Diane Felts, Crew, VA
Calvin Rimel, Broomfield, CO
Doris Rosenberg, Rockingham, VA
Sadie Hartzler Library, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, VA
Lisa W. Sumption, Rockingham, VA

Reminders & Notes

• The Genealogy Surnames List is updated and available on our website.
• Is it time to renew your membership? Check your mailing label!
• While all garden clubs do great work, we want to extend a special thank you to the Greenvale Garden Club for continuing to plant, clean up, and water our flower beds by the flagpole.

Wish List

• A part-time, occasional researcher to help with general queries submitted to HRHS by phone or otherwise. Can work from home.
• A new wireless remote controller for slide presentations would be very helpful. Especially if it includes a laser pointer. In fact, technology gifts of almost any kind are much-appreciated.
• Someone to index *Rockingham County: Its Past and Present Illustrated* in preparation for its re-publication. Fifty pages of great history.
• We’re still hoping for funds toward the library edition of Ancestry.com.

How to Give

If you’re interested in giving more to the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society, there are many ways to do so:

*Membership gifts:* Give the gift of history! Give your favorite history buff an HRHS membership. You can find sign-up forms on ValleyHeritageMuseum.org.

*Artifact donations:* The HRHS Collections grow through donations. If you are ready to pass along objects, photographs, and papers, please consider donating to the Museum.

*Recurring donations:* Financial donations are always appreciated. Even more so if they are recurring! The donation form on the website allows for you to select a monthly giving option.

*Planned giving:* In addition to being one of the simplest ways to distribute your estate, your will can be a creative vehicle through which you can make a legacy gift to the Historical Society.
“Virginia is for Lovers” celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2019!

The slogan has been so successful because it means different things to different people. For us, it means Virginia is for history lovers.

Come celebrate the anniversary by taking a picture next to the LOVEworks sign outside The Heritage Museum.