

Mathews County Historical Society, Inc.

Spring 2023 Newsletter

P.O. Box 855 | Mathews, VA 23109-0855

mathewscounthistoricalociety.org | info@mathewscounthistoricalociety.org



CONNECTING PEOPLE TO THE PAST

Fifth in the Historic Home Series Released

The fifth book in the series *Historic Homes and Properties of Mathews County, Virginia Pre-Civil War* was launched Saturday, April 1 at 11:00 in the morning at the Tompkins Cottage Museum.

This volume includes ten historic properties: *Bar Neck (James Thomas House), George P. Owens House, Goshen, Green Plains, Hesse, Holly Point Farm (Spirit Hall), John Forrest House, John Haynes Jarvis House, Keeble House, and Providence (Hopemont)*.

This newest book, as well as all publications of the historical society, is available at Tompkins Cottage Museum during open hours, at MCVIC and online at Amazon.com.



Home owners and guests gathered on the lawn of the cottage.



Trish Reed, MCHS secretary, served up refreshments.



Reed Lawson, president, welcomed homeowners, guests, MCHS board of directors and members to thank the homeowners for their graciousness.



Historic home owners Nancy LeLand, Jim McKinnon, and Warner Williams were presented with copies of HHPV.

President's Message

Reed Lawson

Welcome Spring! 2023 is in full swing.

We began the society calendar year with the annual meeting and dinner in early February in-person - a rather nice change from the previous two years. The officers and newest member of the Class of 2025 – Tim Morgan were elected. Welcome, Tim, and thank you for your willingness to add your time and talents to the board. My thanks to **all** the board for your hard work and collegiality for extremely low pay! Later in the month was a presentation by noted research historian and lifetime member Martha McCartney who spoke on James Lafayette, American Revolutionary Spy. This program was co-sponsored by the library and quite well-received.

Tompkins Cottage Museum and James Store Museum opened on April 1st. Thanks to Curator Becky Barnhardt for her untiring efforts to interpret the Cottage in the small-house-museum style. Over the winter, county building and maintenance staff repaired the plaster walls and repainted those areas. Next is repainting the interior trim – a cream color. A huge thank you to the docents who make it possible to exhibit the Cottage to the public, as our lease requires. Thank you, Terri Hyman, for coordinating that effort. Please consider joining the team; training is always available.

On opening day, Book 5 of *Historic Homes and Properties of Mathews County Pre-Civil War* was launched with a reception held to thank the homeowners. This is the last in the series – fifty homes all told in the complete set! And, thank you, Liz Bateman, for overcoming the challenges of dealing with Amazon and for getting Book 5 added to our publications available on the site.

Exciting events are around the corner. Thomas James Store design work has been approved; the project is nearing the out-for-bid phase. Thanks to project manager Marsha Carlton for staying on top of this task which seems to move glacially. Martha McCartney has written a grant request to enhance the interpretation of the signage in the store following the work. Also, she and Tim Morgan will be investigating ways to work with the county to lift the Cottage above the flood zone.

On the upcoming events list are the county highway cleanup on April 22nd and May Faire on May 6th. That day, Fairfield Foundation will be conducting a dig at the Cottage. Unfortunately, with the construction work around the Thomas James Store and Sibley's, Music on Maple Ave. has been cancelled out of concern for safety. Using another location would have lost the intimacy and distinctiveness of this fundraiser.

On June 17th, the society will gather for its annual Summer Solstice party – at the home of Keith Lowe. Thanks so much, Keith, for hosting us all to the historic Fitchett's Wharf area, and I trust everyone can attend – and bring friends!

As always, my thanks to the membership for your continued validation of society efforts to tell Mathews County's unique story.

MCHS BOARD

President: Reed Lawson
Vice President: Martha McCartney
Secretary: Trish Reed
Treasurer: Hunt Thompson

Class of 2023

Amy Baker
Marsha Carlton
Reed Lawson
Trish Reed

Class of 2024

Mike Miskovsky
Ray Stubblebine
Hunt Thompson

Class of 2025

Liz Bateman
Terri Hyman
Martha McCartney
Tim Morgan

Standing Committees

Building & Grounds: Marsha Carlton
Education: Martha McCartney, Mike Miskovsky
Market Days: Becky Barnhardt
Membership: Hunt Thompson
Programs: Marsha Carlton
Publications: Liz Bateman, Trish Reed
Publicity: Becky Barnhardt, Martha McCartney
Nominating: Trish Reed, Hunt Thompson

Ad Hoc Committees

Editorial Board: Martha McCartney
Finance: Hunt Thompson, Marsha Carlton, Tim Morgan
Highway Cleanup: Bobbi Hatton
Special Events: Ray Stubblebine
Social: TBD

Positions

Archivist: Reed Lawson
Curator, Tompkins Cottage: Becky Barnhardt
Curator, James Store: TBD
Docent Coordinator: Terri Hyman
Newsletter: Becky Barnhardt
Newsletter Distribution: Terri Hyman
Registered Agent: Hunt Thompson
Webmaster, FaceBook Admin: Becky Barnhardt

Historical Society Board

The Mathews County Historical Society recently held its annual meeting and dinner at Kingston Parish House. The membership approved the 2023 proposed budget and minor bylaws changes as well as elected officers for the year and directors for the Class of 2025. Heading the society are, seated from left, secretary Trish Reed, vice president Martha McCartney, president Reed Lawson, treasurer Hunt Thompson; standing, Amy Baker, Ray Stubblebine, Terri Hyman, Mike Miskovsky, Liz Bateman and Marsha Carlton. Absent when the picture was taken was Tim Morgan. Morgan, McCartney, Bateman and Hyman are the 2025 directors.



In Memoriam

The society has been saddened to hear of the passing of several of its longtime and esteemed members.

Robert H. Warren died February 1, 2023, in Madison, Wisc., where he and Sandy had returned to be closer to family. His service will be June 3, 2023 at 11 a.m. at Christ Church on Williams Wharf Road. A burial will follow in the cemetery with a reception afterward at Kingston Parish House on Main Street in Mathews Court House.

Mary Wade Hudgins Smith died February 26, 2023, at home in Mathews. A graveside service was held March 1st at St. Paul Cemetery in Susan.

Robert W. McCreary died March 23, 2023 at Williamsburg Landing in Williamsburg where he and Susan had recently moved. His memorial service was held April 3rd at Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church in Gloucester with burial the next day in Newport News.

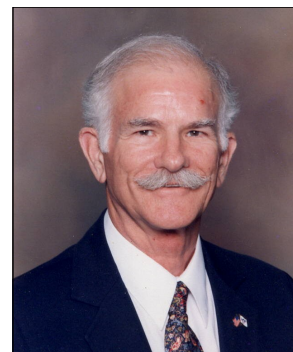
Our heartfelt condolences to all the families. *Pax vobiscum.*



Robert Hoskins Warren



Mary Wade Smith



Robert W. McCreary

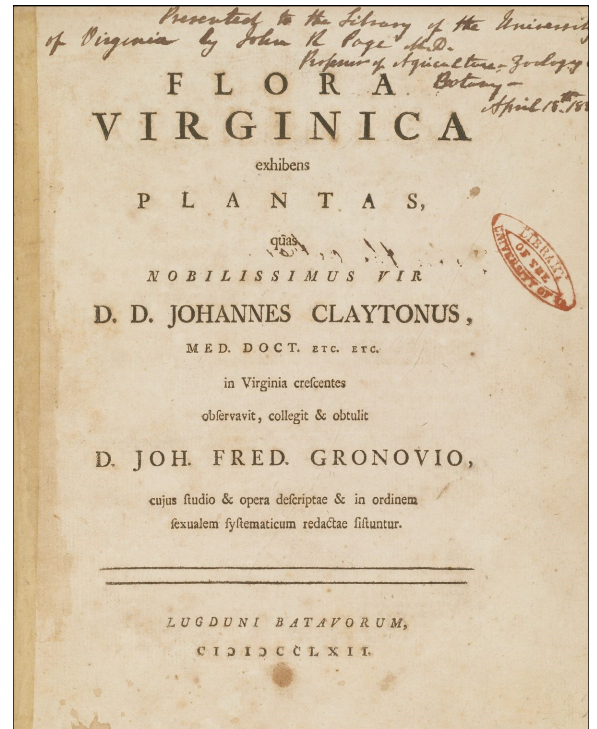
John Clayton

Mathews County's Own "Exalted Genius"

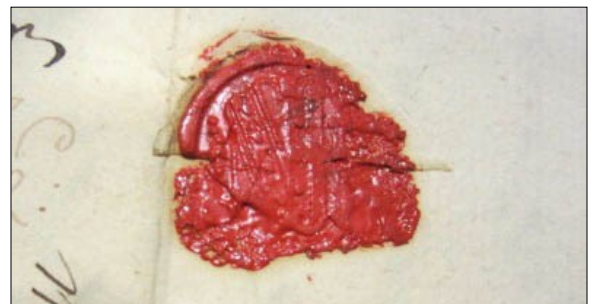
The renowned botanist, John Clayton, was one of Mathews County's most fascinating citizens. He shouldn't be confused with his kinsman, the Rev. John Clayton, who also was a gifted naturalist. "Our" John Clayton came to Virginia in 1715 at the age of 22. He was chosen as Gloucester County's assistant clerk of court and within five years' time, succeeded him in office.

John married a Gloucester County woman, Betty Whiting of Elmington plantation, whose father, Henry, was former member of the Governor's Council. In time, John and Betty Clayton established a home known as Windsor in the westernmost part of what later became Mathews County. Windsor was located at the head of Wadinger Creek, about a mile from the Piankatank River, and it adjoined some land owned by Betty's family. The Claytons' two-story home was perched on a rise of land set back from what we know as Burke's Pond Road, the route John would have taken when riding to the clerk's office in Gloucester Courthouse. Insurance policies purchased by John and Betty Clayton's grandson and heir, Jasper S. Clayton, in 1802 and 1806 reveal that Windsor was a two-story dwelling that had an English basement and a pair of one-story wings.

During the late 20th century, avocational archaeologists, who believed that the site of the Claytons' home was threatened with destruction, unearthed its remains. Among the numerous artifacts they recovered was an octagonal cuff link bearing **I** (often the way a **J** was written) that was superimposed upon a **C**, the initials of John Clayton and his son, Jasper. The design is almost identical to a well-preserved red wax seal that John Clayton affixed to a letter he sent to England in 1773. The Claytons' home was finely furnished, for it contained an abundance of mahogany furniture, then considered a luxury item. John and Betty Clayton owned a large number of pewter plates and dishes that they probably used for every day dining, but they likely used their Queensware china and blue and white porcelain teacups and saucers when entertaining.



Flora Virginica by Johannes Fredericus and John Clayton.



John Clayton's seal.



One of Clayton's specimens of the flowering dogwood, *Cornus florida*. Charles E Jarvis (2016). *Clayton Herbarium* [Data set]. Natural History Museum.

John Clayton apparently could be fractious and disagreeable. In 1754 he sued one of his neighbors for allowing his corn field to intrude upon his land and on another occasion, he aired a petty dispute in the *Virginia Gazette*. A contemporary, Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, described John as a learned man and “good companion,” but added that he was “a desperate drinker” and “as vain of it as you please.”

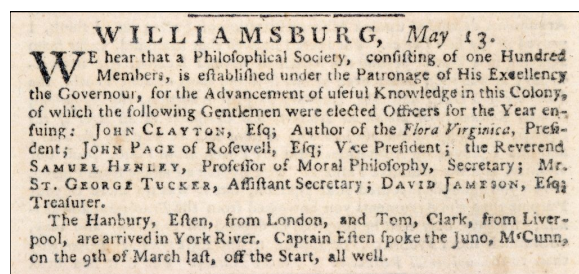
The letters John Clayton exchanged with London merchant John Norton during the 1760s and 70s suggest that his sartorial needs were simple but dignified. On one occasion he ordered an amber-headed walking cane and a wig that was “grizzle” (gray) and “fashionable.” He also requested a pair of spectacles and upon discovering that his vision was still blurry, sent a testy letter to his merchant, declaring that the eyeglasses were “suitable to a much younger man.” John regularly ordered magazines and books, Biblical literature, and writing materials. He seems to have been fond of Madeira wine and Weston’s Snuff. The orders John placed on behalf of his wife, Betty, suggest that she relished fine footwear, for her husband ordered ten or more pairs of elegant size-5 pumps each year. She also required elegant fabrics from which her dresses could be made.

John Clayton’s keen interest in botany grew over the years. He traveled around eastern Virginia, collecting and then drying plant materials that he preserved in his herbarium. He also maintained a garden with native plants and cultivars that he obtained from contacts in Europe. John began compiling his “Catalogue of Plants, Fruits and Trees Native to Virginia,” which was given the name *Flora Virginica* when it was published. He farmed with slave labor and was very interested in ways to improve agricultural productivity. The large quantities of tobacco produced at Windsor were shipped overseas from the East River warehouse, then located at Williams Wharf. When John Clayton died in 1773, he was in his late 70s and had served as Gloucester County’s clerk of court for a remarkable 53 years!

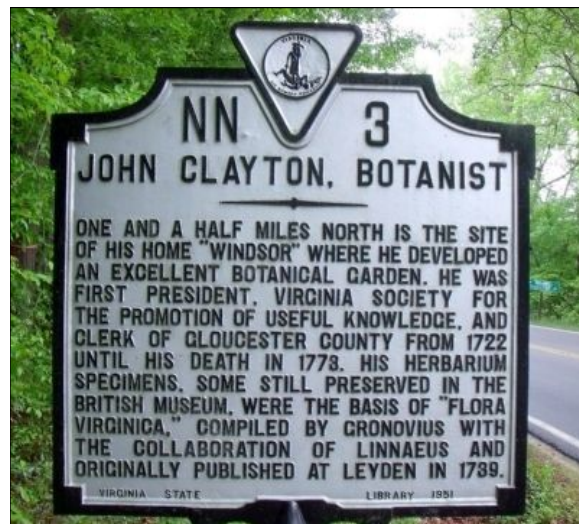
Excerpted from McCartney, Martha, *Mathews County, Virginia: Lost Landscapes and Untold Stories*, Mathews County Historical Society.



“The Botanic Macaroni.” 1772. Matthew Darly. Minneapolis Institute of Art.



Virginia Gazette. Purdie and Dixon: May 13, 1773, pg. 2, col. 3.



Marker near North in Mathews County on Windsor Road (Virginia Route 3).

MCHS Snapshots

On January 21st, the society held a “Belated Winter Solstice Social” at the home of Cindy and Jack Kloke on Queens Creek in Hallieford.

MCHS provided the beverages and members brought an hors d’oeuvre to share.

Sincere thanks to all who came to party!

Photos courtesy of Ray Stubblebine.



Thank you Cindy and Jack Kloke for your hospitality and generosity!



Tim Baker has an animated conversation with Lori Black, Dee Bane, and Dennis Baker.



Longtime MCHS members, Keith Lowe and Reed Lawson, catchup on Society news.



Good company and a variety of scrumptious party snacks made for an enjoyable event.



Hunt Thompson enjoys a cookie and conversation with Terri Hyman.

May Faire 2023

Saturday, May 6th | 9:30 am-4 pm
On & around Mathews Courthouse

*"Celebrating Teachers, Schools and Community:
Over a Hundred Years of Public Education
in Mathews County"*

A DAY FULL OF FUN, FOOD,
VENDORS & ENTERTAINMENT!



Mathews Historical Museum
www.mathewsvamuseum.org

Celebrate summer at the
**SUMMER
SOLSTICE
PARTY**

June 17th @ 5 pm
Home of Keith Lowe
1873 Fitchetts Wharf Rd.

Main dish and beverages provided by MCHS. Bring a friend, a savory or sweet dish, and a lawn chair too!

RSVP BY JUNE 5th, TRISH AT 703-801-7682

Mathews County Historical Society Membership Application

A friendly reminder - Our membership dues are renewable January 1st of each year!

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Email _____ Date _____

I am interested in the following membership:

- _____ Individual, \$35 per year
- _____ Couple/Family, \$50 per year
- _____ Active Duty Military, \$15 per year
- _____ Student (under 18), FREE
- _____ Lifetime Membership, \$500

I would like to make an additional gift to the preservation, collection & interpretation of Mathews County history:

- _____ Researcher of MCHS, under \$100
- _____ Friend of MCHS, \$100
- _____ Benefactor of MCHS, \$250
- _____ Historian of MCHS, \$1000

To benefit:

- _____ Mathews Archives Fund
- _____ New Point Comfort Lighthouse Preservation Fund
- _____ Thomas James Store Fund
- _____ Publications Fund
- _____ General Fund
- _____ Tompkins Cottage Preservation Fund

\$ _____ TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED


Thank you for your interest and support of the Mathews County Historical Society. Please make your check payable to MCHS and submit along with this application to:

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



VIRGINIA
ASSOCIATION
of MUSEUMS

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



Have you paid your
Yearly **Dues** yet?
Not sure? Call Hunt
@ 804-384-6430.

2023 Mathews County Museum Calendar

Gwynn's Island Museum

Fridays, Saturdays & Sundays, April – October
1 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Mathews Historical Museum

Saturdays, Markets on Main and for Special Events

Mathews Maritime Museum

Fridays & Saturdays, May – November
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Thomas James Store

Saturdays, April – October
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Tompkins Cottage Museum

Saturdays, April – October
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Holiday Open House

Saturday, November 18th &
Saturday, December 9th
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

2023 Mathews County Events Calendar

May Faire

Saturday, May 6th
9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Gwynn's Island Festival

Saturday, June 24th
9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Mathews Market Days

Friday & Saturday, September 8th & 9th
9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Thanksgiving Market

Saturday, November 18th
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Christmas Farmers Market

Saturday, December 9th
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Mathews Christmas Parade

Saturday, December 9th
1 p.m.