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A Magazine for the Chesapeake Bay and River Country

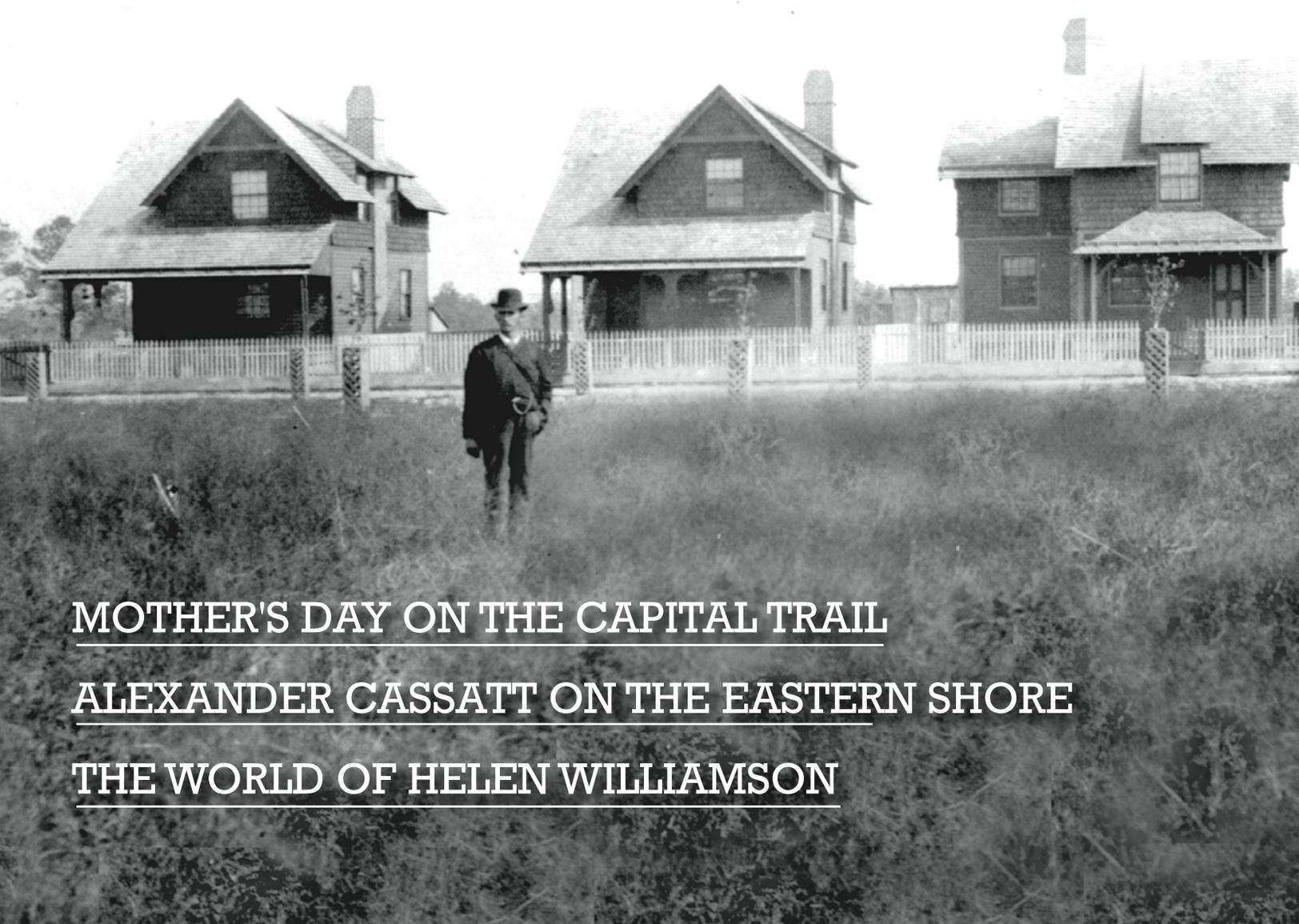


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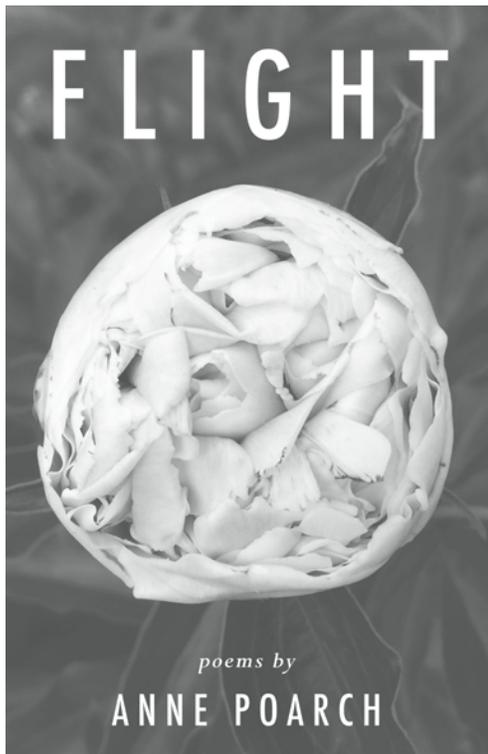
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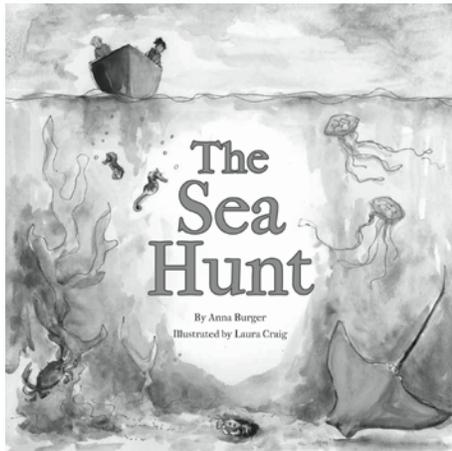
WRITTEN BY ANNE POARCH
ILLUSTRATIONS BY SANDER GIBSON

Flight: of butterflies and robins and other winged dreams is a very personal collection of forty-eight poems. This thoughtful work chronicles the voice of a maturing young woman as she reawakens her heart and soul to the beauty of God's natural world. She uncovers love, grief, self-awareness, and a happiness for which she is utterly unprepared. Bridging an out-of-doors childhood and the death of her father at age eleven, to a motherhood in which she longs to share all of nature with her young sons, Anne's words will surprise you and inspire you.

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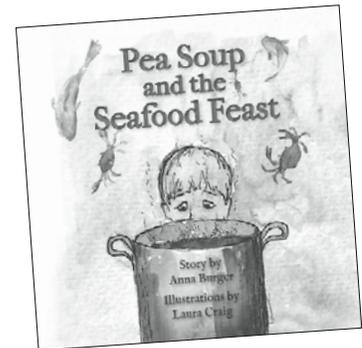
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PLEASANT LIVING

A Magazine for the Chesapeake Bay and River Country



SINCE 1989

Volume 31, Number 2

LATE SPRING 2017

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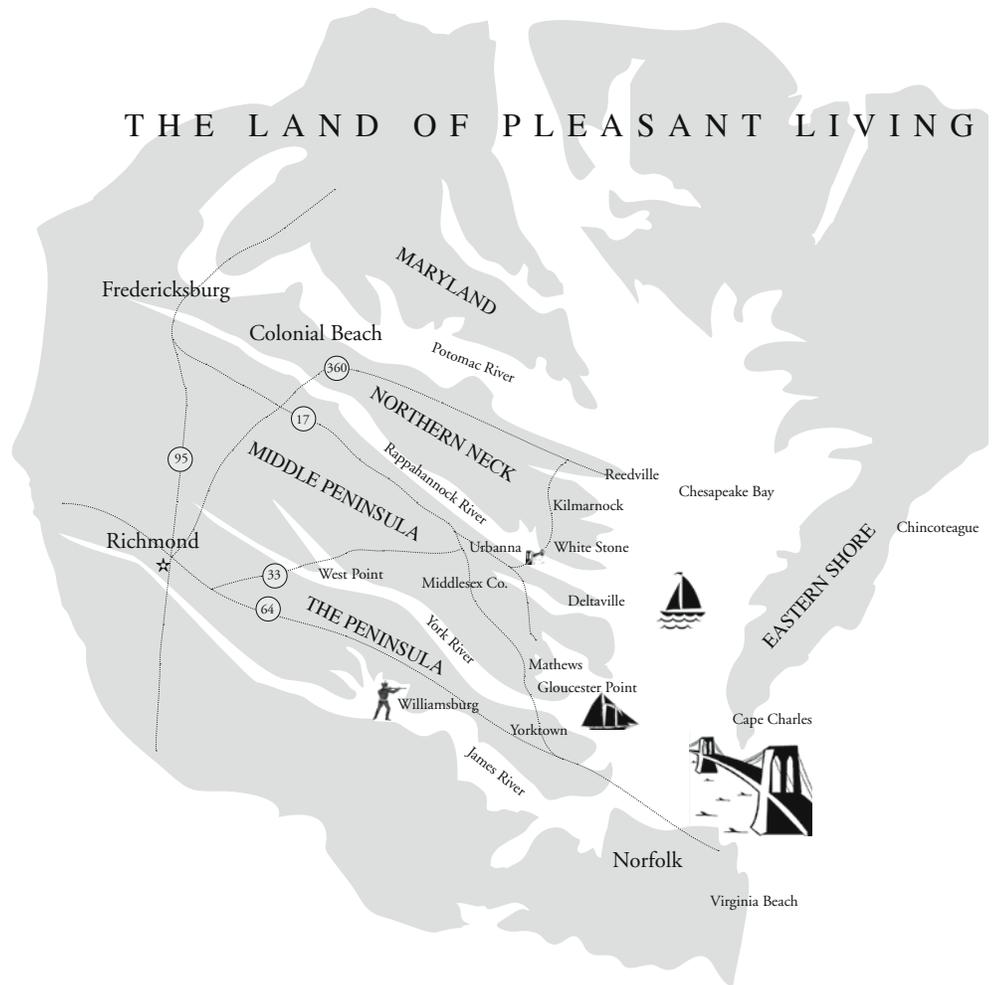
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*Photo courtesy of the Cape Charles
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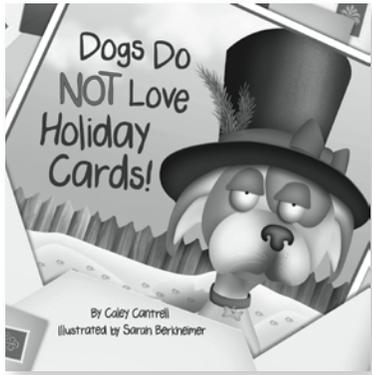
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Dogs Do NOT Love Holiday Cards!

By Caley Cantrell

Illustrated by Sarah Berkheimer

Dogs Do NOT Love Holiday Cards! reunites readers with the family from *You're Bringing Me a Baby?!* for a humorous take on holiday card photo ops, from the dog's-eye view.

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WILDLIFE'S GREATEST CONNECTION

A MOTHER AND HER YOUNG

By KEN CONGER

Throughout his life, award-winning wildlife photographer Ken Conger has visited dozens of national parks and wildlife refuges, documenting the candid behaviors of wildlife in their natural habitats. Over the course of his long career in wildlife protection and conservation, he's witnessed thousands of interactions between animals of all species—but no type of interaction has been as memorable as that which occurs between mothers and their offspring. Now, he invites you to share in the experience of these fascinating moments from behind his camera lens.

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Adult Recess

Ever since I discovered my true calling, I've been a workaholic and have never learned to take regular vacations. As a high school and college English teacher, I worked late into the night reading and writing long comments on reams of student papers and preparing for the next day. During summer breaks, I rarely took vacations, even when I could.

For the past twenty-seven years, I've published this magazine, run a book publishing firm and a consulting business, and for many of those years, sixteen hours has been a standard workday. I've become more skilled at shutting down when the clock strikes five, but I still find it challenging to take a day off, much less a week or two or three like smart people. When there's the chance for an extended break, I often think—how can I be away for a week? There's far too much to do.

I know there are other people out there like me. Maybe you're one of us. We're those people who'll regret missing precious time with family and friends when we're facing our final hours. We won't be wishing we'd spent more time at the office.

The Europeans—and lots of Americans, too—cherish their holidays, taking three weeks or a month vacation every year, heading to the river or mountains or to their easy chair for time away from deadlines, a demanding boss, or a long commute. If you're one of those people who can leave the workplace, close the door behind you and forget about your inbox, I praise and admire you. You're likely to live a much longer and healthier life spending more time with the people you love. What else is more important?

Although it's a gradual evolution, I'm beginning to improve my vacationing behavior. I bought a new pair of hiking boots last time we were in NYC, the kind you need in the Adirondacks, and I'm finding myself paying more attention to the links my wife sends me about cruises and special air fares. For years, I refused to use the four-letter word R-E-T-I-R-E, and now I'm even looking seriously at a shorter workweek without cringing.

Over the years, I've written a lot in this column about what I learned from my father. He always taught me through his noble deeds that a strong work ethic earns respect (and money, if you're lucky). There's no one I respect more than you, Dad, but let's face it, when you're seventy, work can go too far. We always need to put it in its proper place and find a healthy work-life balance. When I gaze into my crystal ball, I see long highways and landscapes stretching out before me.

Here's wishing all our readers many long and inspiring vacations to come. *pl*



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Nancy Egloff has been a historian at the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation since 1985. She earned her B.A. in American History from Gettysburg College and her M.A. in Colonial American History from the College of William and Mary.

Nuala Galbari studied fine arts disciplines through the Royal Society of Arts, London, and art design through the Minnesota School of Business. She is a contributing editor for Airways magazine and author of the Woods of Wicomico, a book for young readers. She lives in Hayes, Virginia.

Dan Gill owned and operated Something Different in Urbanna. In addition to being a master of barbecue and many other culinary arts, he was a writer and food historian. Dan contributed his column to PL for ten years until his death in October 2014.

Thea Marshall is a professional writer, broadcaster, actor, and producer. She wrote and broadcasted original commentaries on and about the people, places, history, culture and current issues relating to the Northern Neck for National Public Radio's Richmond/Northern Neck stations. She is the author of *Neck Tales*, published in 2009.

Brooke Matherly is a writer and comic. She was born in Virginia and raised in North Carolina, but considers the world to be her true home. She is an avid traveler and lives for the thrill of a good hike. Brooke is currently an intern with BrandyLane Publishers, Inc. in Richmond.

Patricia Parsons is a member of the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs, as well as several writers' circles, and is the author of *Portrait of a Town: Cape Charles, 1940-1960*, recently published by PL Books. She and her husband, George, live in Richmond, Virginia, where they raised their five children.

Anne Poarch is author of FLIGHT, a collection of poems just published by Belle Isle Books. Anne lives in Richmond.

Stephen Southall graduated from the University of Virginia with a Ph.D. in psychology and has taught at Lynchburg College since 1974. He is past-president of the American Boxwood Society. When not teaching or working with his English boxwood, he and his wife Diane enjoy traveling in their fifth wheel RV with their black lab, River.

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Mother's Day on Virginia's Capital Trail



Story and Photos by Anne Poarch

{This reflection originally appeared May 12, 2016, in the Basket and Bike Online Journal}

The ginkgo trees were shining like spun gold, leaves spinning in the filtered light of a crisp November morning, cascading to earth like flaxen hair or so many drops of honey. My mother bid me stop the car, and bathed in the beauty of the golden trees, we reflected and commented on the striking scene. Strange you might think, here on May 12, for my first post as founder of Basket & Bike, a small business offering handcrafted bicycle excursions, to be written under the fading leaves of a November day. Six months ago, as days were shortening, the Virginia soil was preparing for her winter's sleep, preparing rest for the bright green and happy growing

things that we are watching pop all over the Commonwealth right now. Really Anne, the fall? Shouldn't we talk about the beauty of spring? Well, like the steady rhythm of two bicycle wheels on an endless flat road, at Basket & Bike we like the natural order of life, a slower pace, the progression of nature as she unfolds then turns to rest, only to unfold again.

I don't recall where we had been or where we were going the day we stopped under the canopy of ginkgo trees, but I do recall that timeless moment and stepping out of the car to find a leaf for my mother. A leaf that, unbeknownst to me, she would press and tape into the back pages of her bible, along with the following notation: "Ginko leaf from tree in Richmond, VA • 2015 - Street has Ginko trees on both sides.

A beautiful sight! Very old.”

This would be my mom’s last trip to Richmond. My beautiful mother, Peggy Sander Gibson, endowed with the grace, patience and civility of her time, died this past May 2 at the age of ninety-two. I would find the ginkgo leaf in her bible, while reading to her in her Georgia home this past April.

I led a Mother’s Day Bicycle Excursion along the Virginia Capital Trail this past Sunday. Not an easy task considering the loss of my mother, but made beautiful by the kindness of fellow adventurers, the glorious softness that accompanied the spring day, and the knowledge that she would want me doing exactly this, a reminder of our first mother-daughter trip to Shirley Plantation in 1992 when I was new to Richmond. The group rode comfortable white and navy Priority Bicycles following our Signature Ride, “The River Where America Began”. Our excursion began by Upper Shirley Vineyard in the unfiltered light of a May Sunday, pedaling past grape vines that are helping turn Charles City County into something of a wine and food destination. After our fourteen-mile ride, we would return to the vineyard for lunch and wine, taking in the wonderful food and impressive views of the James River, along with so many other Virginians, coming here for Mother’s Day from Richmond, Williamsburg, Hopewell, Chesterfield, Chester and Petersburg. In a lovely gesture, Upper Shirley welcomed each mother with a long-stemmed tulip.

As our group wheeled along the dedicated bike path, we made little stops to speak about the James River and her land, her shores. We talked about the people, the plants, and the animals that have lived in this part of Virginia for thousands of years. Land that still hums to the cycle of the seasons, the



waxing and waning of the moon, even if her people have turned away and lost their connection to nature’s watch. Heading east we stopped in front of VCU Rice Rivers Center, a leading authority on river research focused on expanding environmental knowledge and preserving the health of our natural resources. It was here that one of the mothers, a healing touch practitioner, led us in some basic chi poses to open us to the energy of the day, opening us to the freedom that comes from riding

a bicycle in the open air.

Our group paused in the cemetery of historic Westover Episcopal Church, reflecting on Virginia’s past mothers. These shores have been home to so many mothers. From Mother Earth and her animal mothers, busy bunnies or birds building nests and keeping babies safe, to native mothers, forming hand-built bowls out of that ground to give to daughters in time-honored rituals. African mothers teaching daughters to blend spices, or to just blend in, so

I do not know whether my mom found a deeper symbol in the ginkgo leaf she chose to bind in her bible.



their secret reading lessons would go unnoticed; to English mothers, recording thoughts, keeping poise and decorum in public, while aiding a rebel cause behind closed doors. Strong-willed women, all Virginia women, all essential parts of the land where America began. I thought of my childhood and could see the tender hands of my own mom, gently nursing knees scraped from bicycle falls and teaching my small hands how to properly form biscuit dough with a fork and roll it out using her own mother's rolling pin.

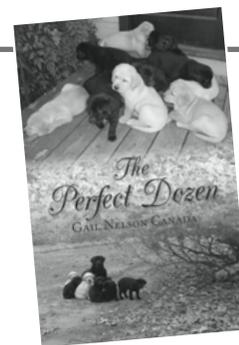
It was in the spirit of this reflection that we biked past the emerald fields of Evelynton plantation to a sweet little nursery, Root 5 Family Farms. We strolled through the greenhouse showcasing flowers and herbs for the garden, peeking at local jams and honey and ceramics by Fleet Creations. Artist Lesa Fleet crafts ceramic sculptures of leaves from Virginia plants like nasturtium, maple—and could it be—the ginkgo? Staring up at me from the table, a chartreuse ginkgo leaf, showcasing the verdant green of spring. Full circle, or halfway there, could this leaf signal for me the return of life. Though I will miss her physical presence and the touch of her hands so terribly, I feel my mother now pervading the very air around me, living in Virginia with me, in each new day.

Our leisurely pace allowed members of the group to hunt for the

perfect remembrance to nestle into bike baskets for the return ride to Upper Shirley Vineyard along the trail. The ginkgo leaf rode home with me, in my basket, connecting a then to a now, and beyond.

I do not know whether my mom found a deeper symbol in the ginkgo leaf she chose to bind in her bible. A bit of research uncovered that the ginkgo biloba tree, or Maidenhair tree, is considered a living fossil and may be the oldest tree on our planet. It has been known to live for 2,000 years, and in the East, it is considered a symbol of longevity, hope, friendship, resilience and peace. Perhaps other mothers have pressed ginkgo leaves into their family bibles, into service as a medicinal cure, or onto the sides of an earthenware bowl for decoration. In 1815, Goethe wrote a poem titled "Gingko Biloba" and sent it to his friend, Marianne von Willemer, wondering if the divided leaf was one creature becoming two, or two deciding they should become one. Perhaps it's the undeniable connection of a mother to her daughter, that once one body, eventually facing the realities of separation and so needing the lessons of hope, friendship and resilience. Maybe it is a reminder that spring does not exist without the fall and ensuing rest of winter. That life is lived, and if one is lucky, long-lived, until it lives and breathes again in other forms. Whatever the message, I'll be looking to take a ride under those yellow ginkgo trees this fall, remembering my mother

and letting bicycle wheels hum a steady rhythm under falling gold fans, to stop and practice chi in the filtered light of fall. *pl*

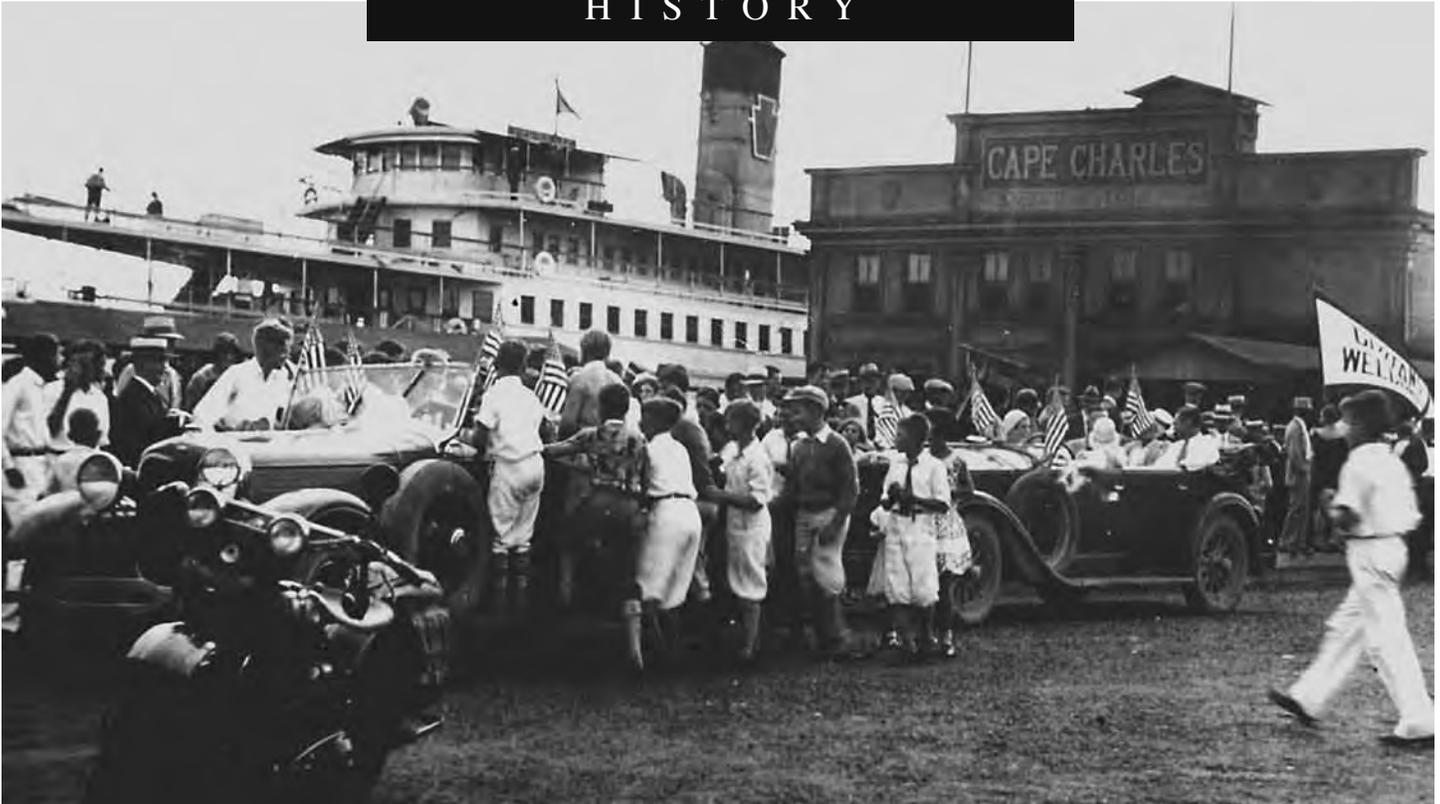


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In 1997, Gail Canada encountered an abandoned black Lab puppy running along the country road near her house. She took him in and named him Jake, having no idea of the journey she'd begun. Eight years later, she and her husband Randy would bring home a yellow Lab puppy named Hannah, and Hannah and Jake would become the parents to a litter of twelve tiny Labradors: six yellow, six black; six male, six female. A perfect dozen.

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Alexander Cassatt on Virginia's Eastern Shore

How the Railroad came to Charles City

By Patricia Parsons

Photos courtesy of the Cape Charles Historical Society

One of the most admired works at the Virginia Museum of Fine Art in Richmond is “Child Picking a Fruit” by famed American artist, Mary Cassatt. In the painting, a young woman in a pink dress stands under an apple tree with a naked baby in her arms. As she bends a branch downward, the child reaches for an apple. The figures, with their warm flesh tones, emerge from the soft green background of the canvass like a Madonna and child in pink and green.

One Sunday afternoon, while

my husband and I were admiring the painting, a young volunteer at the museum informed us that there was another work by Miss Cassatt in the nearby James W. and Frances Gibson McGlothlin collection. We quickly moved on into the McGlothlin room, and there it was—a small green and white canvas called “Lydia Seated on a Porch Crocheting”. Lydia was Mary Cassatt’s sister who suffered from Bright’s disease and whose health had just taken a turn for the worst. Along with their wealthy parents, she had moved from Pennsylvania to Paris in

1877 in support of Mary’s career as an artist (and also because they could maintain a better social and cultural life in France with less expense). Over the years, Lydia served as a model for many of Mary’s paintings. Unlike “Child Picking a Fruit”, painted in 1893, the oil and tempura picture of Lydia seated on a bench overlooking a springtime garden is loosely painted in the impressionist style to which Mary had been introduced by her close friend, Edgar Degas. In it, the white-clad figure of Lydia, her face turned from the viewer, struck me as almost

spectral. The painting is dated 1882.

In June of 1882, the same spring in which “Lydia Seated on a Porch Crocheting” was painted, Mary Cassatt’s older brother, Alexander, stepped off a train in Pocomoke, Maryland, and a new Virginia town was about to be born.

Two years before, Alexander Cassatt had been present when multimillionaire coal magnet and land speculator, William L. Scott, visited the Pennsylvania Railroad’s headquarters in Philadelphia. Scott had come to petition the railroad’s officials to adopt a plan he developed. He argued that this plan would facilitate commerce along the eastern seaboard of the United States by linking the port of Norfolk to the large northern cities of New York, Philadelphia and

Boston. Mr. Scott proposed a rail line running down the Delmarva (Delaware Maryland and Virginia) Peninsula, a sparsely populated farming area isolated from the North American continent by the vast Chesapeake Bay. From the country’s beginnings, the Virginia and Maryland sections of the peninsula have been referred to as the Eastern Shore. The southern end of the peninsula contained two Virginia counties that had no rail service, which meant that a rail complex would have to be built from the ground up.

The railroad officials rejected the concept as too speculative, but forty-two year old engineer, Alexander Cassatt, then vice president of the railroad’s traffic department, was intrigued by the logistical challenge the project presented. The two men met

privately and came to the conclusion that, with Mr. Cassatt’s engineering genius and Mr. Scott’s money, they were well situated to build the railroad on their own.

Mr. Cassatt resigned from the Pennsylvania Railroad, citing a need for more leisure time, but, upon resigning, he immediately directed his energies into the building of a New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk rail connection. He and Mr. Scott formed a company of investors. They activated an abandoned 1834 charter that had been granted by the state of Virginia to permit rail line construction on the Eastern Shore, and began to purchase rights of way for land upon which to lay the tracks.

And so, on June 6, 1882, Alexander Cassatt began his sixty-five mile journey





Main Street, Cape Charles, Virginia

south on horseback. He guided his horse through the pine scented woods and wound along country trails as he passed mile after mile of potatoes, corn, tomatoes, and picked-over strawberry fields in his search for the best place to erect a railroad terminal and install a port on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Alexander chose a desolate spot sixty-five miles south of the Maryland state line, called Mud Creek. Mud Creek was an inlet that held no water at low tide and was surrounded by only cornfields and marsh. Located a few miles north of where the Chesapeake Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean, the site faced thirty-six miles of open water and gave easy access to the deep waters of the Chesapeake Bay.

In December of 1882, while Alexander Cassatt was solving the

engineering challenges that lay ahead, the sad news reached him that his sister, Lydia, had died in Paris. Alexander was close to his family. He visited them in Paris almost yearly. The death of his affectionate sister, two years his senior, must have been devastating.

In the spring of 1883, William Scott bought 2,107 acres of land that included Mud Creek from the estate of Virginia's Governor Littleton W. Tazewell from which he deeded 53.3 acres to the railroad for a port and rail terminus. He began to oversee the plotting of a town next to the railroad yards. He called it "Cape Charles City".

In the meantime, Alexander Cassatt set the route for the railroad tracks by drawing a straight line down

the center of the peninsula. He designed tugs that were stronger than usual and barges that were wider so the vessels could withstand the rough waters of the Cape Charles-to-Norfolk crossing.

Once the work of laying the tracks got started, it went quickly. Because the flat terrain of the Eastern Shore required little grading and railroad ties were made from the pine trees that grew near the tracks, the workers were able to lay a mile of track a day.

Using their own private funds, the two men completed laying the railroad track in October of 1884, and on November 17, passenger ferry service between Cape Charles and Norfolk began. Ten houses, called Cassatt Row, were immediately built for railroad employees, and within two years Cape Charles had become a boom town, with,

among other businesses, a post office, doctor's office, a newspaper office, a tavern and a school. (Eight of the ten houses on Cassatt Row are still in use in Cape Charles, along with Victorian-style homes that fill the seven block grid laid out by Mr. Scott.) The railroad that Scott and Cassatt established soon became incorporated into the far-flung Pennsylvania Railroad network.

In December of 1884, Alexander took a much-needed break when he and his family visited his parents and Mary in Paris. During the visit, Mary painted his portrait showing him seated with a newspaper and his young son perched on the armrest of the chair, an arm around his father's neck. This well-regarded oil painting, "Cassatt and Son," now hangs in the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

In 1899, Alexander Cassatt returned to the Pennsylvania Railroad as its seventh president. During a visit to Mary in 1901, Alexander spent three days in the Gare d'Orsay in downtown Paris. A beautiful Beaux Arts-style railroad station, it had opened in 1900. The visit inspired his building the beautiful pink travertine Pennsylvania Station in Manhattan, which, like the rail line on the Eastern Shore, involved solving a difficult water impediment: How to bring the Pennsylvania Railroad traffic into Manhattan from New Jersey by crossing the East River and the Hudson. In 1904, Mary Cassatt received the Cross of the Legion of Honor from the French government.

The town of Cape Charles was born of the "Gilded Age," and it thrived as a transportation hub for seventy years. In its heyday, the harbor handled thirty ferry crossings a day and around 2,500,000 tons of freight a year. On the railroad line, "the Berry Express" commanded a preferential right-of-way over other freight lines, as it carried fresh fruit,

picked the afternoon before, to be enjoyed the next morning at breakfast in New York and Philadelphia.

Cape Charles and the Pennsylvania Railroad on the Eastern Shore played a vital role during WWII by moving troops and military equipment around the clock to the Norfolk Navy Base and carrying soldiers and sailors north on furlough.

After the war, the town became a backwater when the railroad failed. Its lack of progress kept the old town intact, and today, repurposed as a charming family-style tourist destination. It is listed on the National Park Service's Register of Historic Places.

I find it interesting that of the labors of the Cassatt siblings, no trace of Alexander's monumental works of steel, like the Pennsylvania Station and

Cape Charles transportation hub, have survived, but Mary's bits of canvas and paint are reverently displayed and enjoyed in museums around the world.
pl

Photo, page 8: Shore residents meet the Pennsylvania Railroad's ferry, SS Virginia Lee, in 1930 as then Governor John Pollard, accompanied by 400 businessmen, disembark in Cape Charles to reassure the population that the Depression was near an end.



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For the Love of Nonsense

The World of Helen Williamson

By Brooke Matherly

As I talked with author Helen Williamson, I began to feel the world of magic, whimsy, and imagination shimmering all around me. Helen creates new realms for children where donkeys can breathe underwater, pelicans might live in a van, or they could have a charming interaction with a newly befriended dinosaur. She dismisses the question of ‘why’ by simply saying, “I think everyone needs a little magic in their lives. There’s an awful lot of seriousness for children today, and I think a little imagination is good for them.”

Helen grew up steeped in Northern Ireland’s imaginative, storytelling traditions. There, she says that the history of telling tales leads to a rich heritage of creation and a healthy

level of mysticism. Knowledge of the fantastic is commonplace. For instance, she says that everyone knows “Fairies live in hollow trees and particularly at the bottom of a garden,” and, “Fairy trees are hawthorn trees, and if you cut them down you get in trouble with the fairies. That’s just the law of the land.”

Helen illustrates the real ramifications of dismissing these well-known legends. In her hometown, a religious group decided to cut down a ring of trees to build a new church. Most people in the town were against the idea. Of course, set-apart tree rings were the dwelling places of fairies. But the church went up anyway—only to collapse two years later.

“I mean, what do you expect?” Helen says with a shrug. This blurry line between stark reality and fantastical

stories is one she loves to walk. She grew up telling herself stories to fall asleep, and she always felt that those last fuzzy moments of consciousness were the feeling of being carried off to fairyland. Her father told her stories of his own invention about the journeys of Johnny McGlory, who lent his name to the central character in one of her own books, *Tales from Balladhoon*. Once she became a mother, she began to invent her own stories to entertain her family.

Helen credits all of her tales—and her desire to tell them—to her children and grandchildren. Her role as a mother and grandmother gives her, “someone to tell stories to,” she says. She hadn’t truly considered writing down her years’ worth of oral stories until her family began to beg her to. Now, with

her books in hand, she's able to visit schools and read to her grandchildren's classrooms, which inspires a special kind of joy in her heart.

Helen especially loves the raw creativity of working with children. "A lot of children have seen leprechauns and fairies. Some have seen fairies riding butterflies. Some have seen them ten feet tall." She always encourages kids to create their own tales and tell their own stories. During each reading she makes sure to ask the group questions such as "How would a leprechaun get from Ireland to America?" and delights in the tumult of creativity, energy, and invention that follows. She hopes her writing propels their imaginations, "It encourages them to write. And to listen. And to think out of the box."

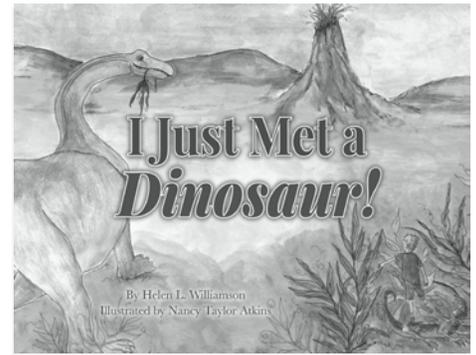
Of the four books Helen has written, three have been poetry books for children, *Higgly-Piggly Thoughts*, *Pineapple Dreams and Other Nonsense*, and *I Just Met a Dinosaur*. In my mind, poems are complicated things with layers upon layers of difficult-to-dissect meanings. Bemused, Helen disagrees: "Rhyming words are just fun," she says with a wide smile, "I would love children to discover the magic, the sounds, and the music of words. And I like to encourage them to use their own imaginations." Helen's poems are full of made-up rhymes and "nonsense," a descriptor she flaunts with a sense of relish and pride. The words are music, and that comes before—and often in place of—meaning. Helen's poems bounce and slide, pop and titter when read aloud. As I read them in her kitchen over a fresh cup of tea, the meanings didn't matter because no meaning could compare to the delight of the words rolling off my tongue.

But, words are not the only morsel of magic in Helen's work: her books are also beautifully and fancifully illustrated by her friend, Nancy Taylor. Helen's love for Nancy and her drawings abounds as she proudly shows me picture after picture. I mentioned I spent some time traveling around in a van, and Helen leapt up to show me an illustration of a pelican perched atop a VW bus covered

in feathers and scales. She impresses upon me that the illustrations are vital to the poems. "The little ones look very, very carefully at illustrations when they are reading, or being read to." She considers herself lucky to have Nancy because, "I think very visually, which I think Nancy interprets so well." She says once she's written something she likes, she'll simply send the poem off to Nancy, and she's always delighted with what she receives back.

Helen is especially nervous and excited about her upcoming book, *Adventures in Dingle Wood*, which will feature the many daring adventures of two little mice, Arabella and Jasper. This daring duo have underwater adventures with the aid of magic pepper to help a fairy to thaw her frozen wings, and travel to the isle of dreams on the back of the black bird, Cornelius, along with many other thrilling quests. These characters and tales are particularly dear to her because she's been telling them to her family for decades. "When they were littler, they [her grandchildren] used to all pile into our bed when we went to visit, and say, 'Granny! Tell me a story!' So, I had to make them up on the spot." Now, she's very excited to let other children experience their magic and can't wait to see what adventures her readers will make up for themselves.

As I ready myself to leave Helen's kitchen four cups of tea, two cookies, two slices of bread, a bowl of soup, and several introductions to family and friends later, I'm sad that I have to leave her world of possibility and enchantment. I thank her for her stories, and she thanks me for my company before asking if I think I've got all I need. Thinking back over the past three-and-a-half hours, I say I can certainly write something. Helen smiles and in her particularly mischievous way, says, "Well, you can always make something up!" *pl*



I Just Met A Dinosaur!

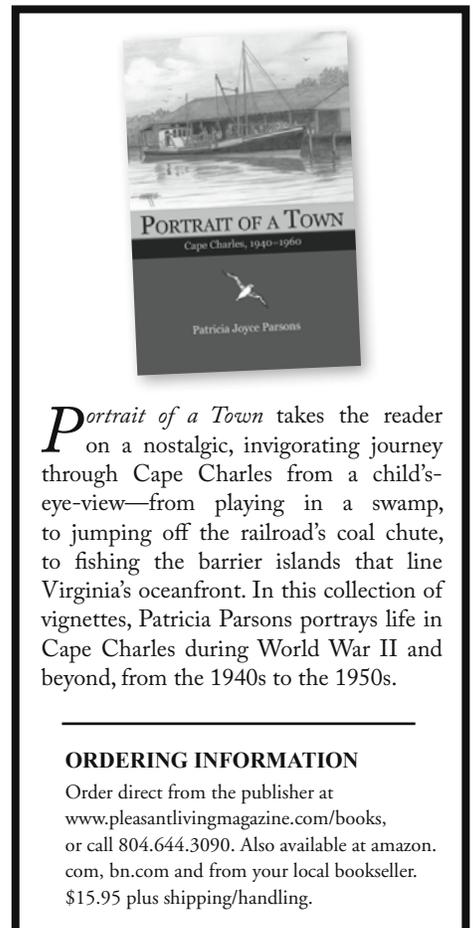
By Helen L. Williamson

Illustrated by Nancy Taylor Atkins

If you met a dinosaur, what would you do?
Play hide-and-seek or go to the zoo?
Who knows if their skin was pink, purple, or blue?
Or if they squawked, roared, or moored?
Did they polish their nails and feathers and scales,
And sharpen their teeth with the ends of their tails?

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Typical size stem plucked from a plant 3 to 4 ft. tall

Dr. Boxwood Tells All

Five Principles of Care and Maintenance

Story and Photos Stephen Southall

In 1981, Alan Alda and Carol Burnett starred in a movie *The Four Seasons*, which portrayed three couples during their annual vacations together and contrasted the changes that each of the couples experienced over the “seasons” of their life. With the mild winter that we have had this year, I have been reminded of the vast differences in the seasons that we all experience. Not just the winters, but each of the four seasons will be different in its own characteristic form from one year to the next. So, the question arises, how do you prepare for an upcoming season, not knowing how it will exhibit itself during

this particular year? Being both a retired psychologist and a horticulturalist, I’ve come to the conclusion that, whether we are dealing with a marriage or a boxwood plant, there are certain principles, which, if adhered to on a regular basis, will lead to a much higher probability of success than if these principles are ignored. Since I am writing as Dr. Boxwood and not Dr. Southall, psychologist, I’ll stick to the principles and practices specific to boxwood.

**Principle one:
Prepare ahead of time**

The appropriate time to prepare for a season is ahead of the season. In spring,

we should be preparing for summer, and in summer we should prepare for fall and winter. We are here in April, and it is not time to prepare for spring planting. More appropriately, we should be preparing for fall planting by taking out shrubs to be replaced, doing a soil test, amending the soil based on those tests, planning our design, and sourcing the plants. Late spring planting doesn’t adequately allow boxwood time for root development needed for the heat of July and August. Fall planting allows a full nine months for roots to develop and provide adequate moisture to the plant the following summer. Planting can even take place in



Plucking corrects plants with uneven branches

January or February with a warm season like we've experienced.

Principle two:

Cultivate a healthy environment

My parents always urged me to associate with people with high standards and values, as one's environment affects one's own behavior. The same is true with boxwood, except a boxwood is stuck in only one environment, and it's up to us to provide a totally healthy one. A healthy environment begins with a pH analysis (ideal for boxwood: 6.5 – 7.2) and the addition of lime if the analysis calls for it. Ideal pH will allow boxwood to properly absorb nutrients, avoid the typical "winter burn" so often seen, and maintain a year round deep, dark, green color. Healthy soil is facilitated by mulch because of the addition of organic matter. All kinds of organisms live in the mulch and carry organic matter up and down throughout the soil, aerating it and providing the ideal soil for healthy root development.

Good drainage is critical for boxwood. They do not like wet feet and will develop a root fungus during the intense heat of summer if too much water is allowed to stand around the roots.

Above ground, the inside of the plant should be kept open and clean. Just as we cut our hair and trim our fingernails to maintain attractiveness, boxwood need to be trimmed for both good health and attractiveness. The proper way to trim boxwood is to pluck them, never shear them with hedge trimmers. Plucking, the selective removal of "random" stems, creates spaces for both light and air to penetrate the plant. Light fosters growth of new leaves within the plant and air keeps the plant dry, which discourages the growth of diseases. Any debris within the plant

can usually be dislodged with a strong jet spray from a garden hose nozzle.

Plucking can also be used to shape a plant that has become misshapen in some manner. If it has a "bulge" on one side or is too tall and skinny, plucking those areas will decrease the imbalance very quickly.

Principle three:

Insulate from extremes

Whether the extremes are temperature—very hot/very cold or water—too much/too little, steps can be taken to moderate the negative effects of these factors. Mulch is probably the key factor in these. In the heat of July and August, mulch will insulate the roots and soil from the sun and preserve moisture in the soil. During the winter, mulch will provide the same insulation

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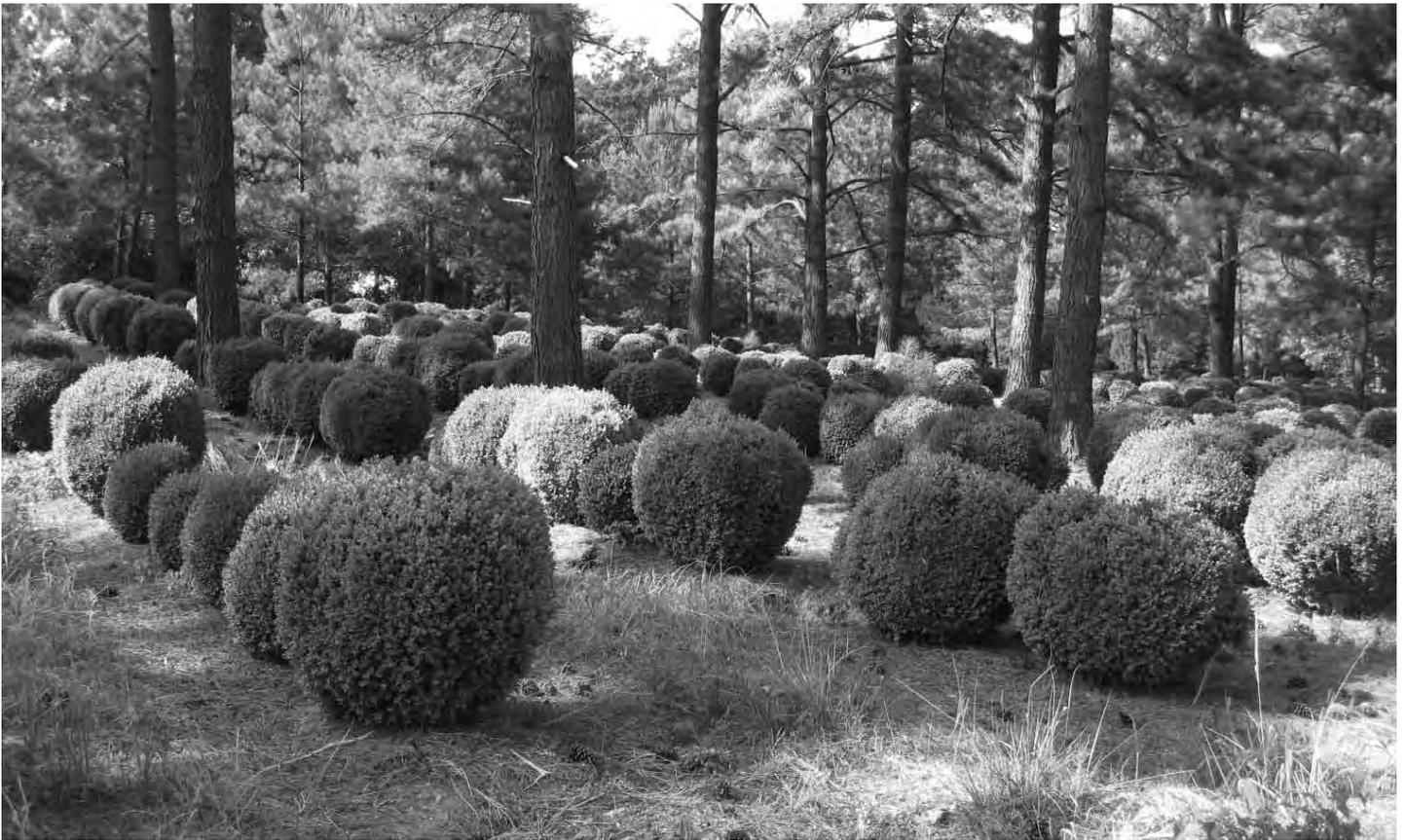


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Pine straw provides an excellent naturally occurring mulch

from extreme wind and cold and allow the heat from beneath the plant to rise up into the root zone, protecting it from freezing. Actually, from the same perspective, snow is a great insulator from the wind and cold and is very beneficial to maintaining a homeostatic soil environment.

**Principle four:
Feed a healthy diet**

Only a soil analysis can speak to the fertilizer content needed for boxwood. Often potassium is low, and potassium is important for good leaf color. Additionally, put a slow release fertilizer on boxwood, similar to that used on lawns to allow the boxwood to be fed over a period of 3-5 months. With the less expensive 10-10-10 fertilizers, the nitrogen is released immediately and will be totally leached out of the soil within

a month. It is also perfectly acceptable to feed boxwood in the fall, after the first frost, in order to promote good root growth during the late fall through early spring.

**Principle five:
Consult with an expert when
questions arise**

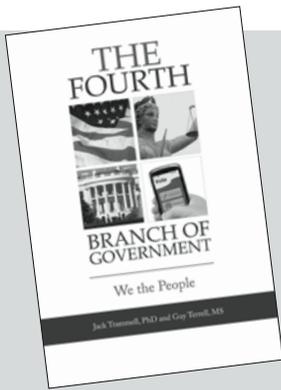
In Virginia, we are truly blessed by the Virginia Tech Extension Agency. They provide experts at various levels of training from both the extension agents themselves to volunteer master gardeners. Additionally, I have found the Internet to be a very good source of information concerning many questions one might have. One caveat though is to be conscious of the source of the information. Certainly, the extension service websites from various states are reputable. Local garden centers may be

helpful, but many times I have found that the information on boxwood is incorrect. I have a web page noted below that contains a lot of resource information on growing and maintaining boxwood. It's always good to check the validity of information by comparing one source to others.

Questions and Correspondence

For more detailed information on various boxwood topics, visit www.englishboxwoods.com. Please feel free to contact me with questions about your individual boxwood needs.

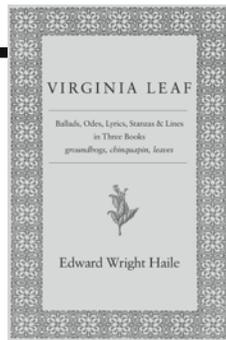
Stephen Southall, aka Dr. Boxwood
English Boxwoods of Virginia
3912 Faculty Dr.
Lynchburg, VA 24501
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With the explosion of social media and the Internet, practically everyone in America has instant access to the news and a greater ability to follow what is happening anywhere. As a result, we are a culture and a nation that is bombarded with information. However, we are coping poorly with that assault and using an outdated framework for our governance...

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VIRGINIA LEAF

By Edward Wright Haile

The poet's foreword says he began all this on one fine day. It must have been finer than morning in an adjacent state by the looks of the result. What a sweep! What a breadth! What a memory! Who's left out here? Nobody I know. Virginia is 475 miles long but averages half that, which means here we have about one page per mile of her right across. He cautions that a reading voice with the proper pronunciation of "Hanover" and "Henrico" is advisable.

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MOTHER

Editor's Note:

Readers Write is a place where our readers can share their personal stories, poems, essays, and letters in response to special topics that we announce each issue (see below). Our thanks (and congratulations!) to those who have bravely shared their writing with us in this and other issues. Keep in mind that we may edit your submission, but we will make every effort to maintain your voice and content. *Thanks for contributing.*

To My Hero

If I'm looking for a sentimental experience, I don't generally go to Chuck E. Cheese's to see their life-size puppets provide musical entertainment. On this particular visit, however, the six-foot bear with her cheerleader outfit, pom-poms, and ponytails left me discreetly dabbing at my eyes. When this mechanical lead vocalist introduced her next selection as a tribute to all the mothers out there, all the unsung heroes of the world, I smiled and continued eating my pizza. However, when I tuned the bruin back in, she was singing, "You'll never know that you're my hero..." As I listened to the song, I realized that no, my mother never will realize that she's my hero.

A mom can be a hero to a young child, an innocent child who still sees Mommy and Daddy through rose-colored glasses. Mommy can be the hero for fixing up boo-boos and making them all better, for taking the time to read and laugh with her little one, for knowing just how to fix a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, or for being warm and cuddly and soft.

But as a child reaches adolescence, those glasses often become muddied and "Mohterrrr!" is anything but "cool" and "heroic."

When son or daughter reaches young adulthood, dear old Mom may once again become a pretty neat person; but it's not until the daughter reaches a major milestone in her own life that Mom's nobility and heroism can once again reach superhuman proportions.

This major milestone is motherhood, when mother and daughter have something wondrous and challenging in common, when daughter-become-mother now understands those feelings her mother had, now smiles knowingly as she remembers the "curses" her mother often uttered in moments of frustration: "Just wait till you're a mother!" or, "I hope your children treat you just like that—then you'll understand!"

Daughter can now appreciate those nights when mother sat up waiting for her to come home and why mother was both tearful and angry when daughter finally arrived. The daughter can now begin to understand the fears her mother had, the worries, the hopes, and the dreams. She can now see that many of her mother's "faults" were really just maternal attempts to protect her offspring. She can relate to the pain and pride and joy that are part of the motherhood turf.

Never in the course of the shared lifetime is the potential greater for a rich mother-daughter relationship. And that's where my tears came from, for I never had the chance to share motherhood with my own mother. She died less than a year before my first pregnancy.

I imagined often during those early days of motherhood what it would have been like to have her close by. I longed to share my precious children with her, to show them off, to hear her bragging over their accomplishments and oohing and aahing over everything they did. I wanted to watch her laughing with them and teaching them her wonderful sense

NEVER IN THE COURSE OF THE SHARED LIFETIME IS THE POTENTIAL GREATER FOR A RICH MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP.

of humor. In the challenge of caring for twin infants, I even imagined how my mother would mother me.

My children are grown now, and my relationship with them has morphed into something new. The pain of grief has diminished after twenty-five years, yet there's still much about my mother that I admire and miss. I still regret that she never got to know my children, or they, her.

Mother, I hope you knew you were a hero.

Annie Tobey, Richmond
(excerpted and updated from her book, *For Any Young Mother Who Lives in a Shoe*, published by Judson Press, 1991)

Everything I Am, I Owe to My Mother

With Mothers Day coming up, it's a little odd that I'm thinking about a very important founding father. George Washington, the first president and nationally recognized Dad of America, who once said, "Everything I am, I owe to my mother." It's a great quote, and the reason I know it is because of my mother.

Mary Washington (George's mom) and mine go way back, you see. My mother, Anne, went to Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, Virginia, back in the day when it was a small all-girls school. She studied education and political science, and today—a few years, a marriage, and five kids later—she's a several-times-over awarded and much beloved high-school government teacher. She spends her days grading tests, and teaching

kids about bicameral legislatures, checks and balances, and the mystery and majesty of the electoral college. Whenever we'd come home from school, I'd always find my mom in the same place: sitting on the floor of our living room, with a hot dog (with no bun, just wrapped in a slice of bread, pig in a blanket-style) in one hand and an issue of *Newsweek* in the other. After that, she'd get us a grilled cheese, then throw us in the car and run us to appointments and practices and lord knows where. When the day was over, she'd go to sleep for about five minutes, then get up and do it all over again.

After a few years, my siblings and I got licenses, and my mom didn't have to drive us around so much any more, and she finally got to finish her *Newsweek*. But when I was looking at colleges, it was my mom who drove me to every new campus, and every new city. One weekend, she had to get up extra early so we could drive the two-and-a-half hours to Fredericksburg. She gave me a tour of her old school, pointing out the window of her freshman dorm room, and explaining to me how she only got drunk once in her entire four years there (right, Mom).

A few months later, I started my first day at my mom's alma mater, which had since become the very co-ed University of Mary Washington. "Everything I am, I owe to my mother," was almost the unofficial motto of our school, and four years later, after my mom had raced back to where I was standing with a few thousand of my classmates in matching robes, clutching a camera in one hand and an umbrella in the other, she and I posed for a picture. I

still have that photo, and whenever I look at it, it's easy for me to understand what George meant.

Stone Ferrell, Richmond

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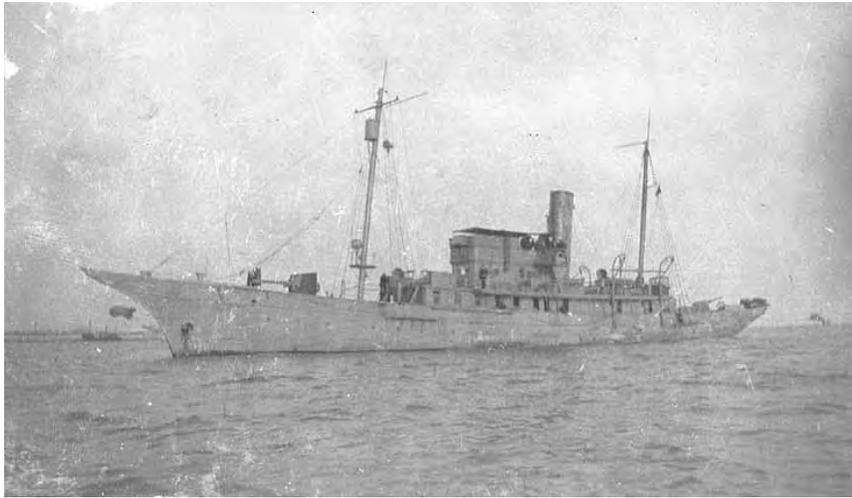


Photo # NH 98030 USS Remlik during World War I

The USS *Remlik* and the Medal of Honor

By Dan Gill

This story appeared in the September/October 2007 issue. Dan Gill, renaissance farmer and owner of Something Different in Urbanna, wrote his column for PL for ten years, contributing his homespun, knowledgeable commentary on food, history and life. He passed away in October 2014.

Around 1909 a large yacht named *Remlik* sailed up the Rappahannock River and moored at West Urbanna Wharf at the mouth of Robinson Creek. She was probably the largest and finest private yacht ever to visit this neck of the bushes. Built in England in 1903 as the *Candace*, she was 200-feet long, 23-feet wide, and powered by steam. No one could then imagine that within ten years the United States would be fighting in a world war and that the luxurious *Remlik* would become a warship and a participant in a remarkable act of heroism. The owner, Willis Sharpe Kilmer, and his father, Jonas, had come down from New York to hunt birds and waterfowl. They took special notice of the wooded peninsula across the creek from their mooring and paid a local waterman fifty cents to row them across so that they could explore. Willis Sharpe allowed as how it would be an ideal location for (another) mansion, game preserve and training facility for his extensive stable of

racehorses, and set about buying the old LaGrange Plantation.

Shortly after purchasing the 1,000-acre farm and timberlands, he changed the name to Remlik Hall (if you haven't already guessed, Remlik is Kilmer spelled backward). He also had the name of the post office changed from Streets to Remlik. He built a sprawling 52-room Tudor mansion on the point, complete with a lighted goldfish pond, carriage house, kennels for hunting dogs, stables for pleasure horses, and other amenities. He had a 50-foot flagpole erected near the mansion with a large cannon beside it. When his yacht would round Towles Point and come into view, a sentry would fire the cannon, ostensibly as a welcome, but also to warn all of the workers that "Old Swampy" was coming. The rest of the land was turned into a premier training facility for his racehorses. He built a one-and-one-eighth mile outdoor track, the finest in the South at that time. Thoroughbreds need to be exercised every day, but not run on frozen ground, so Kilmer built a quarter-mile indoor track and lined it with fire barrels to keep it thawed in the winter.

Willis Sharpe had made a large fortune selling a patent medicine called Kilmer's Swamp Root. Developed by his uncle, Dr. S. Andral Kilmer, Swamp Root is a vile

herbal concoction, then touted as a kidney liver and bladder “cure,” and still sold at some drug stores, such as Marshall’s in Urbanna. It is an effective diuretic containing alcohol “for the purpose of preserving the ingredients of vegetable sources from fermentation.” It became even more popular during prohibition. Willis Sharpe, a Cornell graduate, was an ingenious advertising pioneer who soon made Swamp Root a household word. He and Jonas turned the small manufacturing plant in Binghamton, New York, into an empire with facilities all over the world, and then bought out Dr. Kilmer. The popular consensus held that Dr. Kilmer was only paid a pittance and was swindled out of his company. When asked what Swamp Root was good for, Willis Sharpe said “about a million a year.”

Dr. Kilmer, whose distinctive visage still adorns Swamp Root packaging, concocted several other successful preparations, including Consumption Oil, Ocean Weed for heart ailments and various cure-alls. He also founded a popular cancer sanitarium near Binghamton. His regimen of mineral waters, herbal treatments and diet reputedly reversed some cancers. Dr. Kilmer, embittered because his holistic approach was ridiculed by the medical establishment, took his secrets with him to the family mausoleum.

Willis Sharpe Kilmer was the quintessential flapper-era tycoon, as epitomized by James Cagney in early “talkies,” complete with fedora and spats. He tried to hobnob with the Vanderbilts and Carnegies, but they never had much truck with him. Though he lived lavishly and competed in all of the “gentlemen’s games,” he was Nouveau riche, and lacked the culture and background to handle his wealth with grace. He had the most opulent private railway car he could find and the biggest yacht, both named Remlik. He owned at least five horse farms and manor houses scattered from Florida to New York. In addition to Remlik Hall, he owned Court Manor near New Market in the Valley of Virginia, which was used as a breeding facility. At one time, he owned more than 400 racehorses, including Sun Beau and Exterminator or “Old Bones,” one of the finest and best loved horses ever to run in America. Exterminator won the 1918 Kentucky Derby, went on to win fifty races out of 100 starts, and held the record for earnings for four consecutive years. He was such a strong runner that he was required to carry as much as 140 pounds of extra weight in handicap races. He had heart, savvy, and an almost-human intelligence; if an unruly horse acted up at the starting gate, Exterminator just leaned on him until he settled down. Many thought that he could beat Man-



Photo # NH #2198 John MacKenzie secures a depth charge, Dec. 1917

O-War, but Kilmer was never able to arrange a match race. Man-O-War was a stallion and had much more to lose than Exterminator, who was so ugly as a colt that he was gelded. Exterminator retired to Remlik Hall until Kilmer’s death in 1940. Sun Beau held the world’s record for earnings for many years until he was finally surpassed by Sea Biscuit in 1939.

There are lots of Kilmer stories still told by the “old heads” of Middlesex County, including this author—none of them complimentary. The late Milford Bray of Remlik worked for Kilmer as a stable boy and later became our farm foreman until he was just too old to do anything. One day Milford had cleaned the stalls and was standing outside, keeping the pitchfork from falling over (think Highway department when you picture this). Kilmer was making his rounds followed by his chauffeur-driven LaSalle, which had a “granny gear” so that Kilmer could walk ahead without being run over. Willis Sharpe spied Milford leaning on the pitchfork and fired him on the spot (of course, he hired him back the next day). As a result, Milford was known as “Pitchfork” until he died. Milford told me many stories while he was milking cows:

“Kilmer had a sixteen cylinder Cadillac and two twelves. Jack, his chauffeur, would take him to Richmond in the sixteen and put him on the train. Then he would beat the train to Tampa, Florida and pick Kilmer up at the station.” There were *no* paved roads from Richmond to Florida in the mid-thirties! In his defense, Kilmer did provide many jobs and brought much-needed money to the area during the Depression.

There is a fine line between living in high style and flaunting wealth; Kilmer crossed it. By his own admission, he was known as the most despised man in the country (not counting William Randolph Hearst, of course). He was autocratic, arrogant, overbearing and ruthless. He routinely fired workers for minor infractions, then often hired them back the next day. On the horse

racing circuit he was accused of cruelly asking too much of Exterminator. When the daily newspaper, *The Binghamton Evening Herald*, ran a story that was not complimentary, Kilmer reportedly stormed into the editor’s office and demanded a retraction. The editor told him that the story was based on public documents and he would not retract. Kilmer threatened to start his own newspaper and put the *Herald* out of business. Later, he built the tallest building in the whole region, hired the best editors and staff and soon fulfilled his threat.

His second wife, “Lady Jane,” the inspiration for a popular flapper era song, “the million dollar baby from the Five and

Ten Cent Store,” did not like coming to their Virginia estate. It was too far removed from any semblance of society or culture and she did not care to endure Mr. Kilmer’s notoriously decadent lifestyle. Remlik Hall was a working farm with double-fenced paddocks and gates across the roads. Her chauffeur had to stop to open and close each gate on the way to the mansion. She reportedly said that she hoped that “when Willis Sharpe died and went to Hell, he had to open as many gates to get there,” After his death, a reporter remarked that he wished he had known Willis Sharpe. One of Kilmer’s aunts overheard and sternly said, “No you don’t, he was *not* a nice person.”

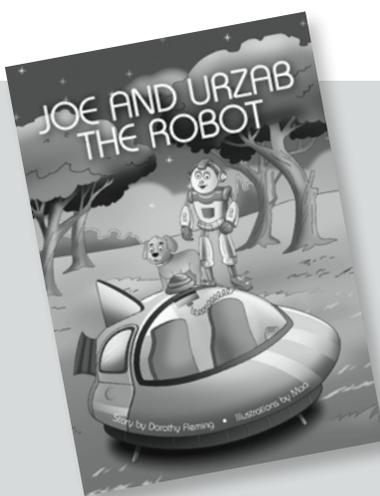
Back to our story about the USS *Remlik* and the Medal of Honor: When the United States entered World War I, German U-Boats were playing havoc with shipping. There were not enough destroyers to deal with the submarine problem, so the Navy instituted a program to buy private yachts and convert them to “Special Patrol” boats. The *Remlik* was bought in June of 1917 and commissioned the USS *Remlik* (SP 157) in July. She was armed with Sperry depth charges, two 3-inch guns and two machine guns, then sent to Brest, France to patrol the Bay of Biscay and to escort convoys.

On the 17th of December 1918 she was escorting a convoy bound for Brest and fighting a fierce winter gale. The Bay of Biscay is notoriously rough anyway, and she soon lost sight of the convoy. Her lookouts then spotted an enemy submarine, but the decks were awash and the seas were so high that she couldn’t train her guns on it. She could only make about three knots in the heavy seas and therefore could not use her depth charges and then clear the resulting explosion. She played cat-and-mouse with the sub for several hours. In the process of maneuvering, she was broached by a large wave

that carried the depth charge cradle overboard. Chief Boatswain’s Mate John Mackenzie was on the bridge and watched in growing alarm as water drained from the scuppers, revealing the depth charge cavorting on the after deck. He could see that the safety pin was gone, and he knew that the next wave could easily wash the triggering float overboard and detonate the 300-pound charge of TNT. Though the decks were awash, he was able to make his way aft to secure the rolling canister. It almost crushed him several times, but he was finally able to hook his legs on the gun carriage, re-insert the pin, stand the canister on its end and sit on it until the *Remlik* could be brought into the seas. Other crew members then made their way back and lashed the wayward charge to the taffrail. Mackenzie was credited with saving his ship and crew and received the first Medal of Honor

ever presented to a Navy reservist. After the war, the *Remlik* was decommissioned in Norfolk and sold, presumably for scrap. Mackenzie returned to Holyoke, Massachusetts, and opened a restaurant.

Meanwhile, back on Remlik Hall.... The mansion burned under suspicious circumstances in 1939. After Kilmer died in 1940, Lady Jane sold the Virginia holdings as fast as she could. The “Estate,” or point end of the property, has now been developed as Kilmer’s Point, Remlik Hall and Cedar Pointe subdivisions. My father, and then I, raised turkeys on the farm portion from the mid ‘40s to the mid ‘70s. I still own most of the farm, and now raise cattle, mostly. We lost the back third of the indoor track during Hurricane Hazel in 1954, and the outdoor track is now “Racetrack Road,” the main entrance to our farm. *pl*



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Jamestown Photo--Building James Fort, Julien Binford, 20th century, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation

Jamestown Legacies Endure, Shape Our Lives Today

By Nancy Egloff

Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation Historian

The founding of Jamestown, America's first permanent English colony, in Virginia in 1607 – 13 years before the Pilgrims founded Plymouth in Massachusetts – sparked a series of cultural encounters that helped shape the nation and the world. The government, language, customs, beliefs and aspirations of these early Virginians are all part of the United States' heritage today.

The colony was sponsored by the Virginia Company of London, a group of investors who hoped to profit from the venture. Chartered in 1606 by King James I, the company also supported English national goals of counterbalancing the expansion of other European nations abroad, seeking a northwest passage to the Orient, and converting the Virginia Indians to the Anglican religion.

Anglican religion.

The Jamestown colonists began construction of a palisade soon after choosing a settlement site in May 1607. The building of James Fort is the subject of this 20th-century painting by Julien Binford. Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation collection.

The Susan Constant, Godspeed and Discovery, carrying 105 passengers, one of whom died during the voyage, departed from England in December 1606 and reached the Virginia coast in late April 1607. The expedition was led by Captain Christopher Newport.

On May 13, after two weeks of inland waterway exploration, the ships arrived at a site on the James River selected for its deep water anchorage and a good defensive position. The passengers came ashore the next day, and work began on the settlement. Initially, the colony was

governed by a council of seven, with one member serving as president.

Serious problems soon emerged in the small English outpost, which was located in the midst of a chiefdom of about 14,000 Algonquian-speaking Indians ruled by the powerful leader Powhatan. Relations with the Powhatan Indians were tenuous, although trading opportunities were established. An unfamiliar climate, as well as a brackish water supply and lack of food, conditions possibly aggravated by a prolonged drought, led to disease and death. Many of the original colonists were upper-class Englishmen, and the colony lacked sufficient laborers and skilled farmers.

The first two English women arrived at Jamestown in 1608, and more came in subsequent years. Men outnumbered women, however, for most of the 17th century.

Captain John Smith became the colony's leader in September 1608 – the fourth in a succession of council presidents – and established a “no work, no food” policy. Early on, Smith had been instrumental in trading with the Powhatan Indians for food. However, in the fall of 1609 he was injured by burning gunpowder and left for England. Smith never returned to Virginia, but promoted the colonization of North America until his death in 1631 and published numerous accounts of the Virginia colony, providing invaluable material for historians.

Smith's departure was followed by the “starving time,” a period of warfare between the colonists and Indians and

the deaths of many English men and women from starvation and disease. Just when the colonists decided to abandon Jamestown in Spring 1610, settlers with supplies arrived from England by way of Bermuda, eager to find wealth in Virginia. This group of new settlers arrived under the second charter issued by King James I. This charter provided for stronger leadership under a governor who served with a group of advisors, and the introduction of a period of military law that carried harsh punishments for those who did not obey.

In order to make a profit for the Virginia Company, settlers tried a number of small industries, including glassmaking, wood production, and pitch and tar and potash manufacture. However, until the introduction of tobacco as a cash crop about 1613 by colonist John Rolfe, who later married Powhatan's daughter Pocahontas, none of the colonists' efforts to establish profitable enterprises were successful. Tobacco cultivation required large amounts of land and labor and stimulated the rapid growth of the Virginia colony. Settlers moved onto the lands occupied by the Powhatan Indians, and increased numbers of indentured servants came to Virginia.

The first documented Africans in Virginia arrived in 1619. They were from the kingdom of Ndongo in Angola, west central Africa, and had been captured during war with the Portuguese. While these first Africans may have been treated as servants, the customary practice of owning Africans as slaves for life

appeared by mid-century. The number of African slaves increased significantly in the second half of the 17th century, replacing English indentured servants as the primary source of labor.

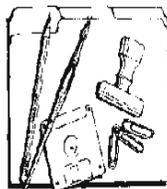
The first representative government in British America began at Jamestown in 1619 with the convening of a general assembly, at the request of settlers who wanted input in the laws governing them. After a series of events including a 1622 war with the Powhatan Indians and misconduct among some of the Virginia Company leaders in England, the Virginia Company was dissolved by the king in 1624, and Virginia became a royal colony. Jamestown continued as the center of Virginia's political and social life until 1699 when the seat of government moved to Williamsburg. Although Jamestown ceased to exist as a town by the mid 1700s, its legacies are embodied in today's United States.



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Strat-by-the-Ford

By Thea Marshall

My favorite old family of the Northern Neck and Virginia history, are the Lees, and Richard Henry and Francis Lightfoot Lee are my favorite offspring of that prolific family. (They were the only two brothers to have signed the Declaration of Independence, but it was their personalities that have put them in my “favorites” column.)

The story of their birthplace, Stratford Hall Plantation in Westmoreland County, reflects for me the acquisitiveness and perhaps even a sense of entitlement that runs through the stories of the men who became great landowners.

There were lots of Lees born at Stratford, all with terrific stories to tell, but it was Thomas Lee who might be credited with starting it all, at least on the banks of the Potomac.

He was a founder of the Ohio Company, and an acting governor of Virginia. Like most prominent men of the 18th century, he was a land lover, land speculator, and providentially for him, a land agent. For a while he had his eyes on property owned by the Pope family, particularly the land overlooking the Potomac, with its great bluffs offering spectacular views of the river. It is said that he let it be known that “he wanted those cliffs (sic),” and evidently, what Thomas wanted, Thomas got. And he got it rather dramatically.

According to Miriam Haynie’s *The Stronghold*, one day in 1716, someone representing the Pope family called on Thomas Lee and handed him, not a calling card, but a handful of earth and a twig. With these ancient symbols of land, 1450 acres was transferred from the Popes to Thomas Lee. Of course, later on, there were papers to be signed and some payment made. A year later, he bought more land for what he and we now call Stratford Hall Plantation. Why Stratford? Probably because his grandfather, Richard Lee the immigrant, once owned an estate in England called Strat-by-the-Ford.

Lee borrowed more than just the name from his forbears: he built his new home much like the manor houses of England, this one like an “H” shaped fortress, with two-inch thick walls, strong enough to hold enemies at bay. The magnificent manor house was built with thousands and thousands of bricks, all made on the property. By some accounts, it took about five years to build and by the time he was done, about 1738, there on the bluffs of the Potomac River was, in addition to the magnificent manor house, a wharf, grist mill, stables, and quarters for the slaves and indentured servants. There were other English-inspired additions, like the ha ha wall. No, I didn’t know what that was, so of course, I “googled” it, and came up with “the quirky breed of walls built in the 17th and 18th Century on country estates of the landed gentry..., constructed so as to be invisible from the house, ensuring a clear view across the estate with their walls of sunken stone.” In Lee’s case, it ensured a clear view of the cliffs he loved.

Today, you can get a clear view of the entire estate. It’s all still there, a National Historic Landmark managed as a working farm by the Robert E. Lee Memorial Association. After costumed interpreters lead you through the house, you can stroll through the lovingly restored gardens, walk the trails to the bluffs of the Potomac River, even watch the miller at work at the restored gristmill. If the season is right, you can have lunch or dinner in the charming log cabin dining room of the Stratford Hall Plantation, one of those “must sees,” right here on the Northern Neck. *pl*

Thea Marshall is the author of *Neck Tales: Stories from Virginia’s Northern Neck*, published in 2009. *Neck Tales* is available from amazon, bn.com, from brandylanepublishers.com, and from fine booksellers. \$16, plus shipping



A Gentleman of Substance

By Nuala C. Galbari

We met in 2006, several months after I had relocated from Minnesota to Virginia. At the time, I was organizing animals, wildlife, and a new home, and I had just begun writing for an aviation periodical; during a visit to Yorktown, I picked up a copy of *Pleasant Living* magazine. And then, I met Robert Pruett.

My first impression about PL was its eclecticism—it had seasoned and thoughtful writers and photographers, and each one presented a unique voice that celebrated life in Virginia from a deeper perspective. I liked the crisp black and white production, and it had a timelessness I felt could not be found elsewhere. I contacted the editor-in-chief, and thus began a new journey.

Meeting Robert created a wonderful domino effect in many directions; work, associations, friendships, and social

life expanded in numerous ways, bringing me into contact with local artisans, actors, musicians, re-enactors, historians, museum curators, aviation and ships' crews, NASA engineers, and a full spectrum of outstanding artists, educators and talent from the Peninsulas to the west of the state.

Moreover, Robert was instrumental in leading me along another path—one that deepened my love of local literature, poetry and the environment, and led to my penning a children's story, which Robert and his staff took under their wings.

Throughout the publishing process, we had numerous meetings with the creative group. Publishing any volume is fraught with difficulties, concerns, disagreements, and working into the wee hours, in this case, for over one year, yet

Robert made the entire process seamless, and we often met over tea—at the Jefferson Hotel or in BrandyLane's Richmond offices, sometimes stealing away to have afternoon tea at the Carrot Tree, Yorktown.

We shared more than afternoon teas, meeting for dinners and on one memorable occasion, for the weekend during the occasion of the Royal wedding.

Late on a Friday night, following an exhausting week, Robert and his beautiful fiancé (now his wife) Tanya, arrived at our home in Gloucester, graciously giving of their time to spend the weekend over Royal wedding festivities. Robert was somewhat overtired, and following a late dinner, he and his wife slipped upstairs in the hope of catching a few winks before our wedding coverage breakfast which began at 03:30 hours the next morning. Robert didn't quite make it through the wedding, which

we enjoyed on the large screen. We still love him, even if he did doze off during the proceedings, sending his Royal Doulton coffee cup and saucer flying onto the nearby Indian rug.

As a publisher, Robert is exceptionally generous, always taking time to listen and consider the opinions and suggestions of his authors and illustrators, while contributing his own expertise. He is thoughtful, kind-hearted and calming when schedules and publishing hiccups occur; when you slip off the tracks, he gently guides you back with patience and humor.

The recent years have presented challenges and also great joys in Robert's life. Despite an unprecedented workload, he has managed multiple publishing enterprises, numerous authors and illustrators, *Pleasant living* magazine, the marketing of hundreds of titles, home renovations, hospital stays, travel abroad (once to my native Ireland) and many other areas. Yet, he insists he doesn't do enough. I here recall the old adage, 'If you want something done, ask a busy person'. Robert is never too busy to help—even on his most hectic days.

Together with Tanya, his high-energy, intellectual, multi-talented and stunning wife, they make a dynamic duo and definitely a force of great strength.

Robert provides all his authors the opportunity to share their unique words and vision. He has always looked for the heart and the special voice in his writers, but more than that, he gives them wings by sharing, supporting and celebrating that vision.

We, as writers, are all the richer for having met Robert. His legacy is one that will continue to benefit many generations of readers and all those with whom he comes into contact in his personal and professional life.

During the seven years since I penned the children's book, I have met thousands of children in the school system, worked with outstanding musicians, composers, and school heads of department, talked with many third and fourth-graders during book signings at Barnes & Noble and numerous other events, and had the opportunity to bring the story of the animals, their habitats and the environment to many young readers. One tiny volume is a time capsule for the future, and none of this would have been possible without Robert Pruett.

Many of the teachers sent written dedications, following a musical performance of the story; I would like to share one dedication:

"It is wonderful to bring our natural environment of the Lower Chesapeake Bay to the forefront in a book and play that the children will remember into adulthood. It has been a pleasure to be part of this project and to help promote an interest in where we live. Long live the animals and their habitats!"

Stella Payne, 3rd Grade teacher,
Nansemond Suffolk Academy

Robert has published many childrens' books and is influencing a new generation of young readers who will be the caretakers of our delicate environment and the many species with which we share our lives. His publications for adults and children, and the timeless stories and poetry he has published in *Pleasant Living* magazine for over twenty-five years, will serve as a light to future generations.

I write this tribute in the knowledge that Robert may be passing the baton to a new publisher of *Pleasant Living* magazine. It is my hope that PL will continue as a publication, embracing all the values that have made it such an impelling periodical, celebrating Virginia's past and present.

In the words of my fellow countryman, the late, great Oscar Wilde, "A writer is someone who has taught his mind to misbehave."

Let's hope that Robert and his writers persist in valuing the misbehaving mind, bringing new, challenging and enlightening works to publication.

I know Robert will continue in his passion for good storytelling. Even if PL may set sail for new territory, Robert will be back in his office early on Monday morning, reading, editing and inspiring authors to share their stories and dreams with others. For many fortunate authors and illustrators, the quest has just begun and Robert will be at the helm steering them on their fascinating journey. *pl*



L to R: Robert Pruett, Tanya Pruett, Sarah Meschutt, Nuala Galbari, and David L. Justis, M.D.



Robert in PL office, circa 1989

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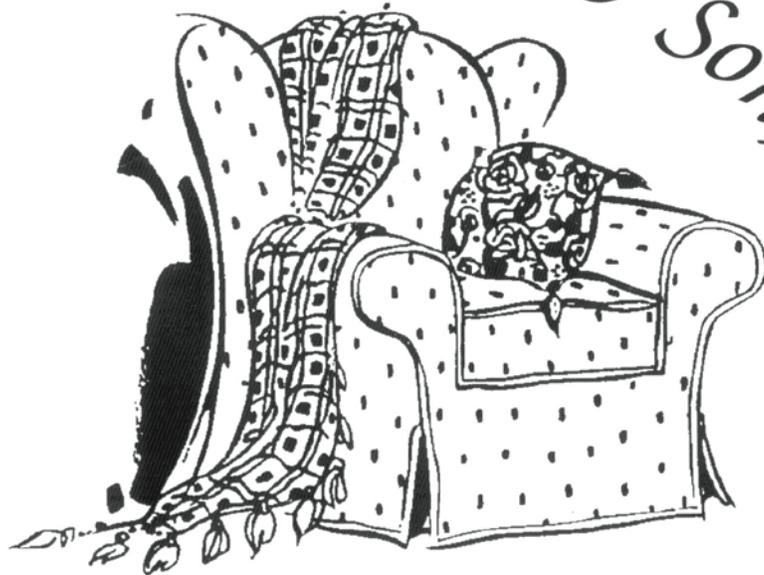
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Coco's Number Nightmare

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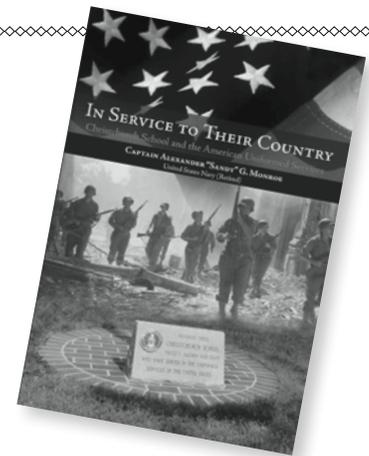
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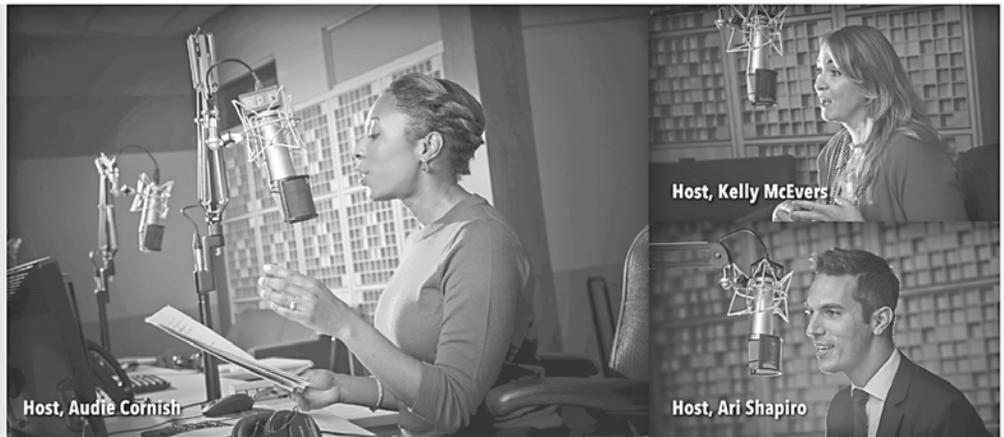
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