

THE HEADSTONE

Vol. II

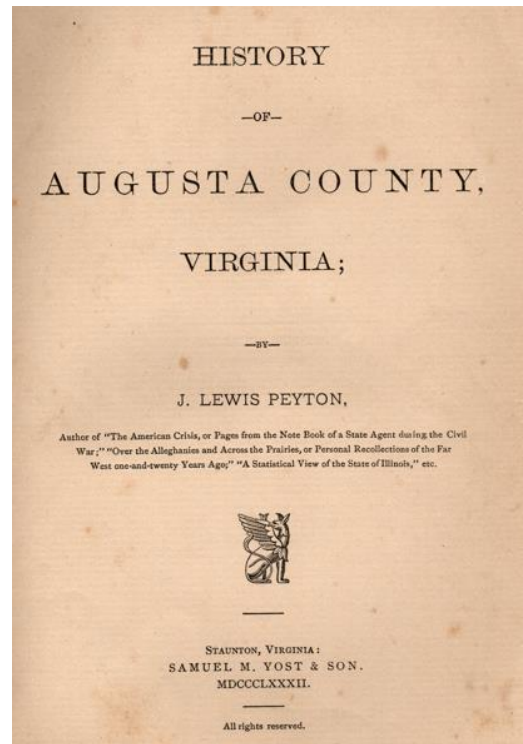
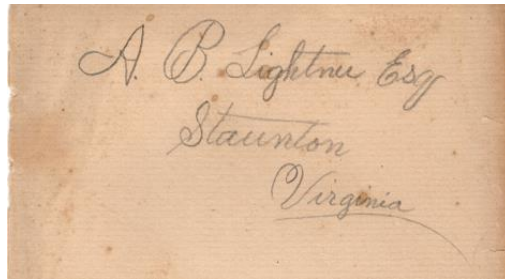
September 2024

Issue IX

Hello and greetings to all!

Well, it is just hard to believe that we are on the cusp of September, but we are. As cemetery work goes, it has been mostly mowing and weed-eating every few weeks even though there is much yet to be done. The unmarked graves that have been identified by ground penetrating radar still need to be properly marked with field stones, and several trees still need to be removed. The lane project will hopefully get attention when the weather cools and personal obligations get back to ten-hour days instead of the sixteen-hour days they are right now because of the house we are building for our son. When I look back at what we have accomplished over the last three years at the cemetery, the work ahead does not seem so daunting.

I reported in the last issue of *The Headstone* that I was bidding on two books through an online auction, one of which was the *History of Augusta County Virginia* by John Lewis Peyton, a first edition copy printed in 1882. I got the book and have included below the title page and the inside cover page from the book¹. As commented on in the newsletter, Alexander Brownlee Lightner was a distinguished gentleman of the 1800s and had a number of roles in the early years of government administration in Staunton and Augusta County. A photo of him is also below².



¹ Peyton, J. Lewis. *History of Augusta County Virginia*. 1882. Samuel M. Yost & Son, Staunton, Virginia. Inside cover page and title page.

² Find a Grave, database and images (https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/21501791/alexander_brownlee-lightner: accessed August 18, 2024), memorial page for Alexander Brownlee Lightner (1824–7 Sep 1891), Find a Grave Memorial ID 21501791, citing Thornrose Cemetery, Staunton, Staunton City, Virginia, USA; Maintained by G VanB (contributor 46618035).

After I purchased the book believed to have been owned by A.B. Lightner, I did a little checking on the family history. It seems that A.B. Lightner had a son born in 1850 named Charles Albert Wayland Lightner who died in 1892. He married a gal who was born in 1851 and died in 1926. Her name was Mary C. "Mollie" Hanger, daughter of John Brown Hanger (1826-1866) and Hannah Smith Hanger (1829-1903). Mollie was my 1st cousin 3 X removed. Her grandparents were John & Catherine Wehrle Hanger, my 3g grandparents and buried at Dutch Hollow. I'm glad I got the book.

Sometime back I found what I consider an interesting article describing the Shenandoah Valley³. It is a descriptive narrative written by a newspaper reporter for the purpose of accentuating the valley from Staunton to Lexington, which is the area comprising the headwaters of both the Potomac River (via the Shenandoah River) and James River drainage. Beyond retyping the article to format it to the newsletter template, it is presented as originally printed in 1884. The article, while somewhat broken in delivery and rife with punctuation (and the lack thereof), is adjective filled and in my opinion written for anyone with a hint of appreciation for nostalgia. It is the view of the upper reaches of the Shenandoah Valley through the lens of a rider aboard the Baltimore and Ohio on the Valley Railroad. It is indeed a story of the railroad and the new era its development was ushering into existence in the late nineteenth century. I hope you enjoy.

FROM STAUNTON TO LEXINGTON

THE VALLEY RAILROAD-THE COUNTRY ON THE LINE AND ADJACENT-NOTED PLACES AND HISTORICAL REFERENCES-AN OLD COUNTRY BECOMES NEW-THE VALLEY PLATEAU-CHARMING VIEWS-WAVING MOUNTAINS IN LONG LINES-CRAB-TREE FALLS-PEAKS OF OTTER

Staunton and Lexington are situated on the Central Valley plateau, equidistant from its most elevated point. The elevation also forms another interesting feature in the topography of the country there is the interlocking Ridge or watershed crossing the valley at right angles forming the divide between the waters of the Shenandoah and James rivers. 1365 feet above the sea, Lexington 1023 feet, and the summit elevation, midway between them, 1930 feet. It is also the dividing line between Augusta and Rockbridge counties.

There are no worthy circumstances concerning the location of the two towns and the relations each holds to the state, and to the largely extended interest of education, which in its distinctive purposes and classification embraces all-those whom the boundary of the Commonwealth has in its watchful care, as well as those who may seek at the large fountains of knowledge for its varied benefits. Progressive agriculture and growing commercial interests with gradual development in industrial pursuits, sustain the young city and the advancing town in a steady course of prosperity.

³ Newspapers.com. Staunton Spectator, Staunton, Virginia. 19 August 1884. Page 2.

THE VALLEY RAILROAD

The scenes of pastime along the valley, when the commerce between Baltimore and Tennessee were moved by the great road wagons characteristic of that day, are yet fresh in the recollections of our older citizens. The Indian trail, the Buffalo path, the packhorse, the emigrant wagon, the commercial wagon, and the railway are the periods of progress. Along the eastern slope of the plateau the railway has planted itself in its extension from Stanton to Lexington. Its route is through the oldest settlements of the valley. The lands have passed through the stages of tillage neglect and then to recuperation. Under lighting meadows with their dove tailed streams expand into plains between green rolling hills and dark old forest. The location of the railway is parallel with the old valley stage Rd. above and never far from it. Scarcely one of the old homesteads along the way or under the invigorating influences of the new method of transportation, but gives evidences of systematic effort in the ways of good tillage and lasting improvement.-grain and grass and fruit and livestock grow and prosper in an old land which has become new. The stations are numerous, and along the Direct Line there are no more than from 2 to 3 miles travel to reaching 1, whilst the distance diminishes to the greatest number. West and southwest from Greenville and Raphine stations, the wide expanse of country running back to the north mountains is tributary, and is rapidly giving evidence of the great value those sections of Augusta and Rockbridge are in the diversified productions they are sending to market and when the stimulating effects of the railway are fully realized there will be an increase in industrial pursuits worthy of the well to do and energetic population, whose habitations are among the Highlands of the great valley of Virginia.

The management of the railway appears to be in full accord with the desires of the people. The usually large number of stations and stopping places have been referred to. Three trains per day, each way, carrying passengers and full freight accommodations, certainly places the transportation facilities in quick dispatch and far beyond the anticipations of the earliest and most earnest advocates of the work and we think time will improve the suggested sagacity of this city, the county of Rockbridge, and town of Lexington, and the liberal contributions made to the capital stock, thereby ensuring the construction of the line. All the interests are mutual and in harmonious cooperation will prosper all to a grand and beneficent future.

HISTORICAL REMINISCENCES-INVENTIVE GENIUS

The strong characteristics of the early settlers of this portion of the valley left and enduring impress which is still cherished by the inhabitants. The progress of opening the country and planning its industries, like the dissemination of the religious faith, called into requisition their highest aims guided by stern determination. The written history sketches the location and prominence of the old Ironworks along the base of the mountains, but there were other establishments of iron industries anterior to those mentioned by the historian, which, if ever assigned a place in the printed records of the country, have not fallen within the limits of our reading. The following named iron works in ruins from a point opposite mint spring station to a like limit near Lexington, have a place in written history, and established about the dates named: Mount Torry, 1800; Kennedy, 1832; Cotopaxi, by Cyrus H, McCormick, 1834; Vesuvius, 1828, by Thomas Mayburry and Buena Vista, 1848, by Samuel F.,&B. J. Jordan.

The older works, not mentioned, the sights of which are still visible or the more furnace on the moral run, between Vesuvius and midway, by Wm. Moore; the works on Irish Creek, 2 miles above its confluence with South River, and two furnaces, one near Buena Vista called Etna, and another, with two forges, one mile below Buena Vista, and near the confluence of the South with the North River, all four of which were established shortly after the close of the revolution by enterprising men named McCrory, whose descendants still exist in Rockbridge. The Irish Creek furnace is the oldest of all doubtless the first in the valley as tradition hands down as a fact that its productions were worked into projectiles of war, and did good service at the siege of Yorktown.

Moore and Mayburry were men of enterprise, the first a brother or near relative of Gen. Andrew Moore of Revolutionary memory. Mr. Mayburry also established other works than Vesuvius in the valley. He built Victoria in Louisa County, where he died in 1850. Mrs. Weir, the only survivor of his immediate descendants resides on the beautiful eminence just South of Raphine, her finely cultivated accomplishments of early life are conspicuous in the fluency and precision with which she entertains her visitors in relating the events of the times, when her father was prominent in association with the old iron masters of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia.

In primitive times when the people were dependent upon native skill and ingenuity in handiwork for edge tools and farming implements, John McCown erected a first-class establishment, propelled by water power, on the South River, near to White's Gap, which continued to grow with the progressive times, till it succumbed to the great flood of 1842. Here, about 1831, a foundry was established working the Vesuvius medal, and introduced the Livingston plow in the valley. The iron pipes for the Lexington Water Works were cast there. The proprietors were the Messrs. Avery and Bradley. One of the first named and his sons, now conduct extensive agricultural works in Louisville, Ky. After the disastrous flood of 1842, the foundry was re-established at Vesuvius by Mr. Bradley, and for 20 has been conducted by Hugh F. Lyle and Co.

At and about Raphine are many subjects of interest which, in reference thereto, appropriately have a place along with the progress of the present time.

It is but one mile east of the station to the old mansion home of the McCormicks. The farm comprises 600 acres of elevated land, just sufficiently undulating to secure good drainage. Fountains of cold water burst forth, and many little streams meander through the Meadowy plains. The old brick mansion and its surrounding park of native growth and extensive farm buildings, are so many evidences of the taste and good judgment which laid out this historic place. There is the shop and the time worn forges and the work bench where father and son planned and labored on the invention which places the son alongside of Henry, Morse, hoe, Hoe, and others, in the class of progressive men-the inventors of the age. From the quiet Rockbridge home went forth one, whose name has gone to distant lands and is sung in many tongues. The click of the Reaper and the mower is heard wherever progressive cultivation is known- all over our own fair land, in Australia, in India, and on the continent; wherever grain waves and grass grows.

Beside the same station was reared another, who still lives to reap the comforts and the pleasure of his own good works. Aching eyes and weary fingers from time immemorial have been the lot of woman as she applied the needle in meeting the daily pressing demand for clothing by those whose care was assigned to her. The sewing machine has lightened burdens and made glad hearts all over the world. As others followed McCormick and contributions of ingenuity and skill, so how found a young man-a native and his home still on the elevated lands of the valley-a valuable axillary in perfecting the busy needleworker in its missions of general relief and quick in bestowing comforts. An inquiring, searching mind, laboring in the fields of knowledge and ingenious works, directed by good, practical judgment, has with the most commendable industry interwoven the name of J. E. A. Gibbs with the progressive and leading men of our day.

At Fairfield station, looking to the east a skirt of forest partially obstructs the view which otherwise would fall on the village, located in a charming Amphitheatre of green fields, and a little South of it Cherry Grove, the family seat of the McDowells of Colonial and after history. There in the long past were re-unions and entertainments in which William C. Preston, Thomas H. Benton, and other distinguished men, were guests. The old farm is now in the course of the highest grade of improvement under the skillful management of the proprietor Mr. Fultz.

A few miles farther south, and just after passing timber Ridge station, the eye catches a view taking in the Church of that name and other points of interest around the old Colonial sanctuary. The congregation was formed in 1743; the edifice was erected in 1756. A school was established period from it sprang Liberty Hall Academy; from that Washington College, which has become Washington and Lee University. It was under the old oaks which surrounded the church that Graham formed his company for the purpose of intercepting Tarleton at Rockfish Gap when planning his raid into the valley.

Under the shadow of the old church, Gen. Samuel Houston was born and reared in boyhood.

As the passing trains pause, and Timber Ridge station is called, what an amount of thought rapidly forces its way into the reflections of the passenger?

GRAND MOUNTAIN SCENERY, CRAB-TREE FALLS, AND PEAKS OF OTTER

Travelers along the old Valley Road have dwelt upon the grand mountain scenery which rivets the eye when glancing eastward. The railroad being on an elevation still higher renders the scenery still more attractive and presents it in bolder grandeur. Leaving Staunton, Folly Mills and Mint Spring stations are not passed before long, broad- topped mountains are noticed in the east period from the southern end of Massanutten and the opposite point of the main range, the unbroken line is followed south till lost in the horizon. Passing Greenville and on to Raphine the summit is reached where is to be obtained the longest continuous mountain view to be had from any railway in Virginia, or, doubtless, elsewhere. Away southward, beyond the great, broad summits overhanging the James River Valley, are the waving elevations piled one against the other for 80 miles or more in length. Along the base of this range flows north the South River of Augusta, draining a valley which in fruitfulness crowns one of the choicest districts of the rich county of Augusta.

In the opposite direction flows through its trough-like valley the South River of Rockbridge, sweeping onto its destination with the James.

From the borders of Rockingham away to the plains of James River the eye beholds land which contains the unestimated wealth in iron resources, classed by geologist as the "Cambrian" system, and at no part of the extensive range is its richness in valuable metals more complex than the section now under view.

A short distance South of Raphine two towering round-top elevations in the mountains are observed to rise in superior grandeur. They stand, as viewed from the railway, in echelon on the field where nature has marshaled a long line of her wonderful works. In the valley, formed between them, are the Crab-Tree Falls, the greatest of the known cataracts plunging from the steep mountainside for nearly 2000 feet.

North of Timber Ridge station, the railway line passes west for a short distance of the center of the plateau, and for a few minutes the Blue Ridge Mountains are lost to view, but, on the other hand, it brings to site the north mountains of the Allegheny range. From Elliott's Knob or Mount Rogers, to the frowning purgatory that lifts its huge crest above James River at Buchanan, the eye surveys new scenes in the West. Wide cultivated fields, the Jump and House mountains, Walker's, Hayes Creek and the North River valleys, with the Goshen Pass form a beautiful picture post, as the line of travel sweeps back again to the eastern side of the plateau here, as the grade descends toward Lexington is perhaps the most picturesque of all the charming views now passed rapidly by. East of Lexington and far down the North River valley the rapid train in kindness seems to realize in its somewhat checked course that the last grand display in nature for the weary traveler is at hand. Soon he will glide along the North River cliffs, sweep around the Virginia Military Institute, and Washington and Lee University to be landed in the heart of Virginia Athens; but before this comes to pass, his eye has penetrated far over the beautiful landscape that stretches from Mount Atlas to Balcony Falls. Nor is this all. In a depression in the Blue Ridge Mountains, forming the distant background of the picture, there comes into full view the Peaks of Otter and the most charming of all the views to be had of them from our valley elevations. It is a grand feature of travel by the railway that these, the best of all the limited western glimpses of this great curiosity are obtained by the passenger as he glides along comfortably seated in the car.

CONCLUSION

Where else, in the distance of thirty-six miles and less than one hundred minutes of travel, will be found a country identified with such interesting history, or the field from which can be viewed natural grandeur thrown broadcast in its wonderful designs. Lewis, Mackey, and Salling beheld it, and, in defiance of savage ferocity, pitched their habitations within its borders. In all one hundred and fifty miles in length of majestic mountains meets the eyes of all who look toward them. An old and time-worn agricultural country is putting on the green of new life and refreshed vigor. The people are alive to present and perspective advantages in connection with the railway, and realize how beneficent the future will be in mutual prosperity. Social intercourse and business pursuits welcome the means which widens the channels of union and fraternal brotherhood. The church awakens to renewed life, and revives the spirit of the wilderness founders, when religious liberty associated itself with free-men's rights. Agriculture,

progressive of the late years, receives it wanted fostering care, and air long the plateau fields will rival and luxuriance the veils below. The desire to go West is passing away, and the old land claims , in the disposition of good rewards, the energies of the young men it has reared. The steel-ribbed Highway invites new capital and new energies for good investments along its course. With such a combination of interest - of railway progress with agriculture, commercial and industrial pursuits - the central Valley plateau will achieve a degree of prosperity worthy of association with all its richly illustrated history.

Just to add maybe a little to this story, I have included a photo that I took in 1993 while flying marijuana eradication missions in Augusta County. We were still using Hueys left over from Vietnam so the open doors made for an open view photo opportunity. It is a trestle on the same Valley Railroad (B&O) which the writer pens his article about. He would have crossed it while making notes for his article! It is one of only two such stone crossings that I am aware of on the complete line, the other being just four miles further south in Greenville, Virginia. The carved keystone date is 1878 if I recall correctly and the date is clearly visible from the adjacent highway which is the southbound lane of Interstate 81 at mile marker 217. The roadbed is clearly visible extending from the crossing in both directions. Next time you travel that route, take a peek for yourself. It is still a magnificent structure.



Valley Railroad (B&O) Stone Trestle at Mint Spring, Virginia

Next month I do hope to be able to report that some things on the cemetery “to do” list are marked as completed. In the meantime, if a cool day comes your way and you are close enough to make the trip, come out to the cemetery and watch the leaves fall. It remains a special place to just be at for a spell from time to time.

Website Updates: Members Section

In The Library / Archives Section

Ship Passenger Lists 1732-1754 – 15 Total

Unpublished Documents - 9 Total

Published Documents – 11 Total

Life in Dutch Hollow – 144 Total

Obituaries & Death Notices – 678 (Still several hundred, thousand to go)

Lucas-Fix Private Collection 109 Total

Department of Historical Resources Augusta County Archaeological Site Surveys – 16

DHH Cemetery Forensics, Etc. – Preliminary Findings of Ground Penetrating Radar for lower 35 feet of Cemetery and GPS of entire cemetery – 2

Frederich Hanger Descendants Over 200 pages of his descendants’ names with city, county, and state of residence when known.

Cook-Teaford Cemetery - 2 Files

Coming Soon:

Elijah Jacob Hanger Private Collection (Approximately 450 files to be uploaded as time permits)

In The Focused Research Section

18 Files (40+ more to be researched, formatted , and uploaded as time permits)

The **Miscellaneous Research Files** module now contains 39 files. There are over 350 files contained within those 37 files. Please use them. All of that work is for your benefit and was done with you in mind. Take advantage of it! By the same token, let me know what you would like to see changed or added and I will do my best to accommodate.

Remember folks, there’s a fine line between a packrat and a serious family historian.

This month’s “chuckle” might just describe me! Just sayin.

Until next month, Blessings & Happy Trails.

Glenn Hanger

President, Dutch Hollow Hanger Cemetery