

THE HEADSTONE

Vol. III

April 2025

Issue IV

Hello and greetings to all!

As predicted in the last newsletter, spring has sprung! Maybe not for the long haul till Summer is here, but for right now – it's here. Two weeks now of lows only in the 30s and 40s and highs on a couple of days nipped at the 70-degree mark! Finally.

Augusta County Court Records

Augusta County Circuit Court is the court of record for all things Augusta since 1745. Prior to 1745 when Augusta was formed, all records were kept at the Orange County Courthouse located on Orange, Virginia and can still be found housed there. When formed from Orange County, Augusta stretched all the way to the Mississippi River, and if you were to read the language used to describe Augusta when it was formed, one could agree that it stretched all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

Augusta being formed from Orange so long ago, some really odd things appear in the Augusta County Circuit Court records. It is where the charter was filed when Pittsburg, Pennsylvania was established in 1764. Their city status charter was filed in 1816 but that was long after western Pennsylvania was no longer part of Augusta County. The deed from the Six Nations of the Iroquois to George Croghan was filed in Augusta on November 4, 1768. It too is still right there in the courthouse. And so it is also with all of the records of our ancestors that started out in Augusta County regardless of where west they have migrated to.

I bring all this up because Virginia for the last few years has worked hard to promote and assist financially in the preservation of old court documents. It is called the Circuit Court Preservation Program and funding for preservation grants comes from a \$3.50 recordation fee that is attached to each land transaction that is recorded in the circuit courts of Virginia. This program is administered by the Library of Virginia and they just announced in a press release March 3rd the grant amounts awarded to each circuit court. There were 114 grants applied for from 105 circuit courts. Augusta County requested \$36,378.00 and received \$21,517.00.

Steve Landes is the Augusta County Circuit Court Clerk, and he does a great job as such. Many of the archived records have already been preserved, and the experts will tell you that some were just in the nick of time. I have attached a link below for anyone wanting to learn more about this grant and if you are reading this in a state that may not have a preservation program for court documents, maybe you know someone that knows someone that would be able to get the ball rolling in your state. If so, please share with them what I have shared with you.

[Circuit Court Records Preservation Program](#)

Virginia's Revolutionary History

I will not try to add anything to the volumes already written on the Revolutionary War, especially since many of you reading this newsletter have forgotten more about history than I will ever know. But I would like to share a link featuring a part of Virginia's role during that period.

The Virginia Museum of History and Culture has produced a virtual tour of sites throughout Virginia which the narrator goes to great lengths to explain in detail. It is part of an all-out effort by Virginia and most if not all of her localities to commemorate the 250th anniversary in 2025 of the beginning of a free country and those men and women that gave all they had to make it free.

If you click on the link and make your way through the tour, you will hear stories of the men and women that were there, you will see artifacts and the buildings and grounds owned by men like Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, James Madison, and many more. With most of you having deep roots planted here in Virginia during that same period, I think you might enjoy the history, I sure did, and I live here.

[Virginia's 250th Anniversary of the Revolution War Virtual Tour](#)

Augusta Community Portal

The Augusta County Historical Society has been around since 1964, 61 years! They have done a great job of compiling and making endless collections available from families in Augusta County and elsewhere that have donated. Papers and photographs that would have otherwise passed into oblivion are now cataloged and are available to researchers. In addition, which is the purpose of this particular little section on ACHS, they have published a bulletin every year since 1965. They were published twice per year until 1999 and since that time, once a year. There are 87 volumes in total as of 2025, and each are filled with items of historical significance, some of which can be found nowhere else in the world. They published an article in the 2023 edition featuring Dutch Hollow Hanger Cemetery.

Each year the ACHS solicits articles from the public and that is how many of the stories, research and photographs are made available to us researchers. All of the subject matter is indexed which makes finding things of interest easy. For example, if you were to search for Eva Margretha Hanger, my 5g grandmother and wife of Frederick Hanger, you would find that her name appears in the fall edition of the 1974 Bulletin on page 22. I have cut and pasted a portion of that article¹ just as an example of the expertly researched material that is compiled each year. The excerpt is from a larger article written by Peggy Shomo Joyner titled *St. John's Church 1779-1839*. I encourage you to visit the website and read the entire article since it has many of the names of our ancestors just in that one document. If you choose to do so, just click on the **Augusta Community Portal** icon on the home page and you will get to the menu page.

¹ Joyner, P. S. (1974). St. John's Church 1779-1839. *Augusta Historical Bulletin*, 10(F74), 23, 23.

The history of an organization cannot be separated from the individuals who labored to make it a success. Who were those people who first organized the Germans in the area of St. John's? Perhaps we shall never know but some names seem to appear more than others. Some of those will be given here. "Family registers" in the front of the ledger were entered for Johannes Kaumann, Johan Nicolaus Linck, Peter Frenger, and Georg Lidick. John Georg Miller, Samuel Runckle, and Jacob Sheets may have played major roles. Georg Adam Brecht (Bright), Jacob Kephart (Gabbert), Christian Zimmerman, Philip Ollinger, Philip Doll, Jacob Fulweider, Jacob Balmer, Peter Kahl, Stephen Beck, Augustine Ehrgebenrecht, Philip Greaver, and Jacob Grass, among others mentioned, were in the area before 1780. Frederick Hanger was a trustee at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Woodstock in 1764. On an altar cloth at Emmanuel, dated 1767, were the names Friederich and Eva Margaretha Hanger. Within a few years Frederick's name appeared in the records at Frieden's in Rockingham County and then at St. John's where he was a faithful member until his death. There is little question that Frederick Hanger at least assisted in assembling the Lutherans, if not all the Germans into a unified group. Other Germans soon arrived to aid and strengthen the congregation. A few familiar names are Christ, Imboten, Engleman, Behler, Klemmer, Grimm, and Haun.

The land on which St. John's is located has been traced to the ownership of William Campbell and wife, Margaret. On May 10, 1778 the Campbells sold 200 acres to John Cowman (Kaumann) who was one of the first persons mentioned in the St. John's register.⁵ On May 18, 1784 John Cowman sold eight and a half acres for seventeen pounds

for a church or Presbyterian meeting house or schoolhouse and the congregation thereto belonging...being part of the plantation where said John Cowman now lives...not to be disposed of to any person but for the use of the meeting house and the congregation.⁶

The word "Presbyterian" caused misgivings. To prove that St. John's German Reformed Church was the "Presbyterian meet-

— 22 —

ing house" referred to in the deed, Mr. William Crawford, retired Surveyor of Augusta County, was consulted. After extensive research he was able to verify the survey and the deeds. "Dutch Presbyterian" was a term sometimes applied to the Reformed Church,⁷ so that the Cowman deed holds a clue to which denomination actually purchased the land.⁸

In 1793 John Cowman sold his plantation to Christian Bosserman "except eight acres formerly sold for the use of a meeting house by said Cowman."⁹ This land was willed to Jacob Bosserman, Christian's eldest son.¹⁰ On December 9, 1837 Jacob and Eve Bosserman granted to John Ott and John Christ, Jr., trustees for the congregation of St. John's and their successors, a tract of land on which the church of St. John's was built, together with the graveyard, containing five acres. The deed recited that Bosserman—"doth grant and lease for 99 years... Bosserman reserves that in case the German Reformed Congregation should become extinct the said lott of ground is to return to the original tract from which it was taken."¹¹

It is curious that the congregation paid seventeen pounds for eight and a half acres in 1784 and was then granted a lease for five of the same acres for ninety-nine years in 1837. The Lutherans moved to Mt. Tabor in 1839. Could the lease have been a protective measure to insure the Reformed of keeping the property or what other circumstance might have provoked such an action? The reduction of acreage from eight and a half acres to five acres is also interesting.

The first mention of a structure being built on the property was found in File 447 in the Augusta County Clerk's Office. Two sets of papers were included in this file, entitled John George Miller vs. Samuel Runkle — Slander and John George Miller vs. Jacob Sheets — Slander. Proceedings began in November Court 1791 and were continued at four successive court terms until a jury's verdict was issued at May Court, 1793. Verdict: "Each party to pay their own costs."

Samuel Runkle and Jacob Sheets accused John George Miller of being a "roage" and a cheat. To maintain his good name and reputation George Miller brought slander suits against the two. In their defense, Runkle and Sheets had the court of Augusta County order that depositions be taken in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. These depositions and sundry other papers in the file contain some of the earliest documented history of St. John's that this researcher has found. While the name St. John's

— 23 —



Augusta County Historical Society

last Tuesday



Check out an exciting, free event celebrating Major General Lafayette this Saturday, March 1st at Bethany Lutheran Church in Fishersville! This event is a salute to all veterans and will have several family-friendly activities to enjoy all afternoon.



The ACHS also does a lot of community events in addition to what is offered on the website. The Dutch Hollow Hanger Cemetery was the topic for the spring program just last year. So far this year they advertised and promoted a program on General Lafayette on March 1st, which was a perfect topic given that as stated earlier we are in the midst of our 250th celebration. It was held at the Bethany Lutheran Church in Fishersville and was presented by the District VII Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Members of the James Wood II Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution, and Paul, from the General Daniel Morgan Chapter, provided color guard and escort for the General. But this presentation tacitly comes full circle back to Dutch Hollow Hanger Cemetery in two ways. I will explain.

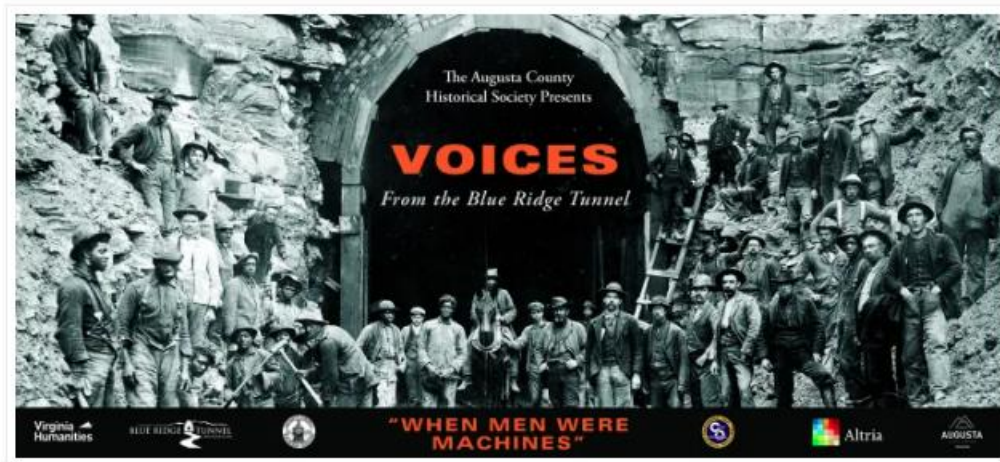
If you have read the newsletters of late and can recall, I have mentioned the name of Paul Parish a number of times. He has been to the cemetery and is the colonial period surveying subject expert who believes that the stone that I refer to as the Beverley Manor Stone actually is a boundary marker affixed around 1736 or so marking the Beverley line between the Beverley land patent and the adjacent Borden land patent to the south. He is also the gentleman that sent the link which I included in last month's newsletter which shows that George Adam Brecht (Bright) and Johannes Follweider (Fulwider) are listed as Revolutionary War Patriots, both buried at Dutch Hollow, which by default designates Dutch Hollow Hanger Cemetery as a Revolutionary War burial ground.

Paul sent me a photo of the General Lafayette program referenced above. He was kind enough to give me permission to put it in the newsletter this month, Thank you Paul. The folks in the photo are, from left to right: Sean Harrigan (JWII), Marc Robinson (JWII), Chip Daniel III (JWII), Charles Wissinger as General Lafayette, Elissa Parish (Paul's wife and soon to be DAR), Paul Parish (GDM), Dale Corey (JWII) Alan Phillips (JWII).



The Augusta County Historical Society also has ongoing exhibits set up at their building in Staunton. Now and through early November the exhibit being featured is called *Voices From The Blue Ridge Tunnel*. The following is from the ACHS web page which describes what the exhibit is about.

Voices from the Blue Ridge Tunnel



After a break during the holiday season, the Society's exciting educational interactive exhibit **"Voices from the Blue Ridge Tunnel: When Men were Machines"** is back in full force and will remain open until early November. The free exhibit can be seen in the History Gallery of the R.R. Smith Center for History and Art on Tues-Thurs 1-4, Fri-Sat 10-4, Sun 10-2.

ACHS's inspiring educational interactive exhibit shines a light on the compelling human story behind the Blue Ridge Tunnel construction – the historic railroad tunnel 700 feet under Afton Mountain. The tunnel that opened in 1858 for trains and reopened in 2021 (after two decades of cooperative restoration work) to walkers and bicyclists, was designed by French engineer Claudius Crozet, but it and the railroad were built by several thousand Irish immigrants and enslaved African Americans whose blood, sweat, and lives (at least 14 Irishmen and 3 slaves died during construction) turned Crozet's idea into one of the greatest engineering feats in the world at that time. This exhibit is their story.

Using hand drills, picks, shovels, hammers, gunpowder and fuses, they opened up the mountain inch by inch, laid tracks, and otherwise worked to bring America's newest transportation sensation—the railroad—into the southern Shenandoah Valley.

I encourage you to check out the website and use it in your research. It is a valuable resource and does not require membership to access although they can certainly use your support if you choose to become a member. When the new website is finished the bookstore will be back online and I can assure you that they have something that you will want for your own research library. The bookstore will hopefully be accessible again by early fall. This is the link for the ACHS.

[Augusta County Historical Society](#)

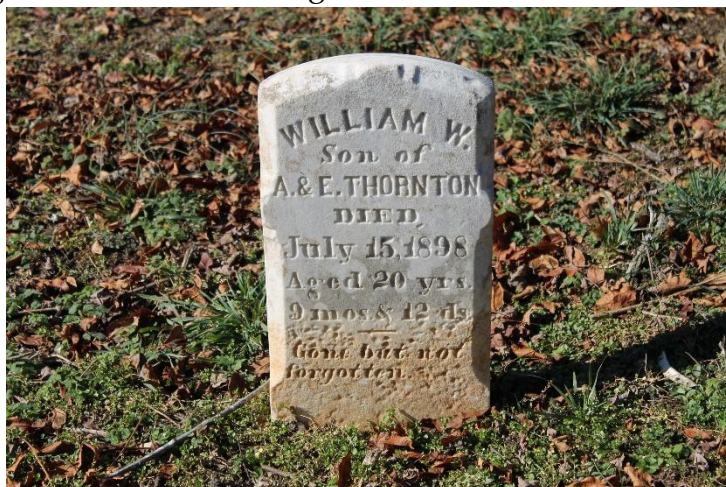
If you do check out the website, scroll down to ACHS Diamond Jubilee YouTube icon on the home page and take a few minutes to watch the slide show. While you may not know the names or recognize the faces you will get an idea of where their heart is!

Thanks to all who completed the survey that I emailed a link for on March 16th. Your opinions really do matter!

Cemetery Work

Thus far this year work at the graveyard has consisted of picking up twigs, sticks and branches that the winter-long wind brought down. Two stones that were in need of repair have been attended to. The story of one such repair is detailed a little further below. I am in possession of fifteen gallons of stain which sooner rather than later I plan to apply to the rail fence not counting what ends up on me. The entrance lane will be graveled in the next two weeks, weather permitting.

When I reset William Thornton's headstone back in 2022 during the initial work, I thought it to be just a "sticker," a slab of marble that was just inserted into the ground with no base. There are several stickers in the graveyard but most are much taller than William's. The photo at right was taken November 24, 2022, and you can see that it just sort of "sticks" into the ground. And ever since I stuck it in the ground especially of late it has wanted to keep falling over, either from the planet Jupiter-like winds we had this winter or deer running through the graveyard helter-skelter or just plain ole gravity. Below is how it has looked more than once this year



So the last week of April I decided to dig the hole a little deeper and thus secure the headstone a little deeper. That is when I hit something, and it was a headstone base.

I should have known better than to assume that this size stone would ever be a sticker, but then again, until finding the base, sticking it in the ground really was my only option, sticker or not.

I have included some photos below of the work to recover and reset the headstone base. Not much narrative needed for the photos other than to say this is how most of the recovery and resetting went during the entire graveyard cleanup process. Find it, dig it up, and reset it on the surface or thereabouts. William's headstone is at the bottom of the slope that the graveyard is on, and the depth of the base is where all of the recovered stones there have been - deep. Although this one was not so bad. It makes me wonder how many are down there that I will never recover.





And this is the result. Not a new find or even a great find, but it puts the graveyard one stone closer to being like it is supposed to be, the way our ancestors left it.



Understanding Cousin Relationships

Last but not least, a neat YouTube video offered by RootsTech on how to calculate cousins without a chart which I am sure most of you already know, but it also shows how to figure out the common ancestor generation with a DNA match when all you know is 1st cousin, 4th cousin 1 X removed, etc. The Link is below.

[Understanding Cousin Relationships](#)

I know I have provided a lot of links that take you away from the newsletter, but I found the subject matter of interest and I hope you do as well. I hope it proves to be more corn than fodder. I learn something every time I write anything for the newsletter and this month was no exception. If only there was a link I could click on to help me retain it!

Next month I will have an article about the Hanger's that went west in the 1850s to Missouri. And the wonderful thing about this article is that some of the information comes from one of their descendants. He came back to Virginia Sunday, April 23rd, to visit the graveyard and share some genealogy. I will save the rest for next month except to tell you.....we are 7th cousins. He is the only 7th cousin I have ever shook hands with. That handshake would not have meant more had it been my brother. Just sayin. Hopefully more to come next month.

Just keep saying to yourself, spring has sprung, spring has sprung!



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 – 183 Total

Obituaries & Death Notices – 869 (Still several hundred, thousand to go)

Marriages – 77 Total

Lucas-Fix Private Collection 109 Total

Department of Historical Resources Augusta County Archaeological Site Surveys – 16

Deed Histories – Dutch Hollow - 5

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

Schoolhouses-Augusta Co. – 1800s - 14

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.

Until next month, Blessings and Happy Trails,

Glenn Hanger

President, Dutch Hollow Hanger Cemetery