

THE HEADSTONE

Vol. III

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Issue VIII

Hello and greetings to all!

With the first part of July so rainy, I got a little behind on mowing and weed eating but finally got caught up in time to watch it grow again. Farmers have had a tough time getting hay up before being rained on, but they always seem to endeavor to persevere through the hardships.

Tuesday Club of Augusta County

I was asked by my neighbor, Brookes Cushman, to speak at the July 1, 2025, meeting of The Tuesday Club of Augusta County. This group has been meeting monthly since June of 1914 and is comprised of women from throughout Augusta County who meet, conduct business, have a lunch, and then usually have a guest speaker on a topic of their interest deliver a short program. They meet at a member's home each month and my presentation was at the home of Marynell Eyles near the village of Newport, six miles or so from Dutch Hollow. Population – about 40 (Pets & livestock excluded).

There were 37 ladies in attendance and the program seemed to be well received with a lot of questions and compliments from the attendees. The members of the group have a true appreciation for history, and it showed through their attention and questions. It was my privilege to do the presentation and as a result they made a donation to the cemetery, and we had one attendee join our website using the family plan. Thank you Jeanne.

The Willow Spout

From around 1800 until the turn of the 21st century, the term “willow spout” appears in Staunton Newspapers 1,024 times. It was located along the Great Wagon Road, now Lee-Jackson Highway (Rt.11) between Verona and Fort Defiance in Northern Augusta County. It was used as a geographic reference point in articles announcing auctions, marriages, births, deaths, car wrecks, and everything in between- the epitome of a landmark. But a lot of folks have never heard the term, particularly those not from these parts, that is unless you have done any research on the Peter Hanger family or the Link family. Rather than attempt to restate what others have already done quite well, I have included four such Staunton Newspaper articles about the willow spout spanning just about a century. One from 1903, one from 1932, one from 1960, and one from 2000. I hope you enjoy them. There is a little redundancy in the articles but that notwithstanding, it gives a great historical picture over time of just what the willow spout was all about. In the 1932 article the writer implies that the willow was planted adjacent to a pipe and the tree grew around it. I do not think there was ever a metal pipe there until after the last willow died. Since the age of 18 or so I have only known of the pipe and a wooden trough to catch the water. The willow got destroyed by ice when I was in my late teens. The 2000 article is written by none other than our board of directors' member, Nancy Sorrells. Thank you Nancy.

THE WILLOW SPOUT.

Some Traditions and Scenes Connected With this Famous Place.

Perhaps there is no more noted place in the Valley of Virginia than the one bearing the above name. To give the exact date and origin of the "Willow Spout" is the object of this article. But as the surroundings are preceeded by a history that reaches far back into colonial days, I will refer to those worthy pioneers of that vicinity.

If traditional history is correct, this land was first owned by Peter Link, who resided where James Crawford now resides, west of the Old Stone Church, he died and was buried there. One of his daughters married a Mr. Grisom, who succeeded in ownership, and who is also buried in the old family grave yard. Another daughter of Mr. Link married Peter Hanger, who located at what is known as the "Willow Spout," and there built and established what for years past has been known as Hanger's Tavern: (or the 8 miles house) called so because it is 8 miles from Staunton. There is a history connected with this place which perhaps has been crowded out by passing events or forgotten in the lapse of time. In those days merchandise was hauled from Baltimore to Knoxville, Tenn., on wagons drawn by four or six horses, and Hanger's Tavern was one of the camping places for what was known in those days as the Knox teams. It was no unusual thing to see from four to six or more teams camped on what was called Hanger's wagon stand at one time, and the finest teams that went over any road, the horses in weight surpassing any in Virginia.

In former days the fountain that has for years quenched the thirst of the weary traveler and his horse was used to run a distillery, the house the distilling was done in—a small brick structure—is still standing, and is occupied at this time as a dwelling by A. T. Groom, the toll collector for the Valley Turnpike Co.

In addition to this being a great camping place for wagons, and repose for travelers generally, it was here that the 36th Va. regiment rendezvoused once a year (in May) for the regimental muster. This was a gala day for boys, a holiday for negro slaves, and a feast for politicians. I remember well being there at the regimental muster in May, 1840, when politics was at a higher tide than the history of the country has ever known it, before or since. After the regiment had returned from the field—Augusta's favorite son, the Demosthenes of Virginia, Hon. A. H. H. Stuart, then in his palmy day, appeared on the northeast corner of the yard in defence of the principles of the great Whig party, of which William Henry Harrison, of Ohio, was the standard bearer. As he continued to pour hot shot into the Democratic administration, and Martin Van Buren its head, that old hero of Democracy, Col. George Baylor, could stand it no longer, so he went to the southwest corner of the yard and defended the sinking ship of Van Burenism with marked ability. Both speaking at the same time.

These were some of the scenes of Hanger's Tavern in days gone by. But the scene has changed since then. The old Hanger Tavern was a large, commodious house, with many chimneys, and a long porch extending the entire length of the building, surrounded by shade trees which rendered it quite a pleasant place.

In after years it became the property of the late Col. Samuel Harnesberger, and the hotel was continued to be kept by him. I called on the colonel on business one day in Augusta, 1849, I have not the exact day, but have date showing the month and year to a certainty. After sitting on the porch for a while after dinner he told me that he was going to plant a willow post in the ground at the road side through which he proposed to carry the water which was piped to that place from a spring some distance in the rear of the house, into a trough, for the convenience of the traveling public, as well as himself, and perhaps it would grow, he rather thought that it would. The post was a log cut from a weeping willow, about 15 inches in diameter and bored through the center, through which the water was conveyed by a spout into the trough. The parties who were on the ground and helped to erect the post were Col. Harnesberger, the late Cyrus McCue, John Gregory, myself and two negro men, Boley and Joe, slaves of Col. Harnesberger. I am the only living person of the party. The only one left to tell the story.

The post, though cut off square at the ends, without roots, did put forth branches and in a few years grew to be a beautiful weeping willow tree. It was the admiration of the weary traveler, and the thirsty soldier during the late war, some of whom I have met in other localities, who took a delight in enquiring about the spring running out of a tree.

out of a tree.

Alas! time defaces all things. The historic old tavern has for many years been burned to the ground, the tree planted fifty-four years ago that gave name to the place, decayed and yielded to the storm. Another has been planted and is growing in its stead. Many, very many of the weary sojourners and soldiers that rested under the shade of the Willow, and quenched their thirst at the spout, are now resting beneath the shade of the trees beyond the river of death, and are drinking from the crystal fountains in a brighter and a better land.

E. L. H.

Not to Molest Willow Spout in Building Road

With the building of the Lee highway north of Staunton to the Rockingham county line being contemplated for the near future by the state highway department, a number of people have been wondering what would become of Willow Spout, and the coffee house across the road, at Fort Defiance.

It was learned that the Willow Spout, famous since long before the Civil war, would not be bothered by the road builders, and that the coffee house, almost as famous as the spout, would probably be moved back from its present location and not destroyed.

T. F. Loughborough, district engineer for the state highway commission, has stated that the center line of the new road where it will pass Willow Spout, will be just about on the eastern border line of the present road, the right-of-way of which is now forty feet. With the eighty-foot right-of-way that the state is requiring along the Lee highway, the new road would take forty feet on the coffee house property, or practically the entire present site.

House Must Be Moved

This necessitates the moving of the house, and Mr. Loughborough said that he understood that this will be done, the necessary land having been acquired to move it.

The new road will remain on the east side of the present road in front of A. M. A., thus leaving the front of the school grounds as it is now.

The coffee house was built, according to Major Chas. S. Roller Jr., by the Valley Pike company, in 1832, and was used as a toll gate and gatekeeper's house. Opposite the tollhouse and close to the Willow Spout was Willow Spout tavern, a hotel accommodating fifty guests. The stables, large enough to accommodate twenty horses, were across the road from the tavern, adjoining the toll house.

The toll house was occupied by the family of one of the grooms, who acted as gatekeepers, and never a horse or vehicle managed to get by the sharp eyes of the keepers.

The Willow Spout tavern was destroyed by fire some years after it was built, and the toll house, after it had outlived its usefulness in that capacity, since the road was made free, became a school in 1888.

It was used as a school until about 1900, according to Major Roller, and was again made a toll house, in which capacity it lasted until its purchase several years later by Miss Hannah Corbett, of Washington. This owner sold the building to its present owner, Mrs. R. W. Trott, in 1926.

Miss Corbett remodeled the building, and in the course of these operations it was discovered that the inside walls were of logs, two feet thick, and fastened together with old-fashioned hand-made nails. It has remained in its present state since the completion of the extensive remodeling operations.

Willow Spout, just across the road, is justly famous throughout the land, and it is recorded in several histories of the Shenandoah Valley and of Augusta county, that during the Civil war, hardly a Union or Confederate soldier passed that did not stop to drink from the stream of water coming out of the willow tree.

It was learned that several trees have been used for the spout, the original one dying years ago. The water from Willow Spout is piped from a nearby spring, and the willow tree, planted near the pipe, grew up around it, to give the impression that the water was spouting from the tree.

—o—

Willow Spout

The Willow Spout story has been told again and again through the years, but not for the past ten or so, to our knowledge. And since hundreds of new residents have come to this area, we tell it again, with some new flourishes.

The following information comes from the column, "Gardening in Virginia," conducted by Arthur A. Dugdale in the *Richmond News Leader*. The columnist apparently got most of his information from General Charles S. Roller Jr., head of Augusta Military Academy.

In part Mr. Dugdale said:

Few if any trees in Virginia are better known than the "Willow Spout" at Fort Defiance, in Augusta county.

The writer is grateful to General Roller for contributing this unusual story.

The present U. S. Route. 11, known for many years as the "Valley turnpike," was a thoroughfare before 1824. About that time, the stagecoach from New York to Washington to Staunton, then south, used this road. These stages were pulled by four horses and one of the stables for changing teams was at the Willow Spout.

In the early 1820s, officials decided to install a long watering trough at the present Willow Spout. This tree was growing there then. It is believed to be at least 150 years old.

For the water supply, a dependable spring nearby was used. It was located west of the Valley pike, on land now owned by Augusta Military Academy.

Workmen cleaned and deepened the spring and dug a ditch by hand in which to lay the pipe.

Because this was before the days of iron pipe, they used long, slender saplings of willow or locust, bored out the centers, and wedged them together, end to end. They were called wood spring water pipes.

The men had the ditch dug and the pipe laid, with the west end lying in the spring. The east end came to the bottom of the present willow tree.

At quitting time, which in those days was 7 p.m., the men did not realize that water was running through the pipe. The tree happened to have a small hollow inside, probably an inch in diameter. The east end of the pipe was down among the roots of this hollow tree, which had in it a crack about three feet above the ground.

The next morning, when the men arrived, they were amazed to see water squirting out of the tree, about three feet high!

They secured the pipe with cement, so that all the water was forced by gravity up into the hollow tree, into which they bored a hole and inserted a wooden spout. It worked and that was how the Willow Spout tree came into being.

"I can well see all this as a small boy," recalls General Roller, "as we went there several times a day to wade in the 30-foot-long watering trough that was made by hollowing out a large willow log.

"It may have been longer than 30 feet, because I have had many a soldier tell me that as troops marched up and down the Valley in the campaigns from 1861 to 1865, they looked forward to getting to the Willow Spout.

"They got into the trough, some with shoes on. The cold water helped to ease the pain of blisters and burning feet.

"I have been commander of Sons of Confederate Veterans since 1906. At the last Confederate reunion, held in Richmond — in 1932, I think — I was delegated one of the men to help beddown the veterans in the Blues and Grays armories there. I went by a crowd of Georgia troops, who called themselves the 'Georgia Volunteers.'

"They were lamenting the fact that they came to this reunion, but they would go back home without seeing the old Willow Spout and without wading in the long willow watering trough.

"I had to tell them that it was not a willow trough any more, but a concrete one; that I owned the spring and had supervision of the tree. I offered to take seven of them up to wade in the waters of the Willow Spout

once again. They took me up fast, so I brought them early the next morning and my wife gave them lunch that day in our home, which is only 200 yards from Willow Spout."

Surely, no other tree in Virginia, in its claim to fame, can boast that it has provided water for drinking, washing and wading, for children, weary soldiers and all travelers who passed that way during the last 160 years. •

Spring offered water for distillery

By Nancy Sorrells
Special Writer

FORT DEFIANCE — Modern travelers zipping down U.S. 11 at 55 mph probably barely give this historic site a second glance, and if they do look extra hard it is probably only to wonder why there is water flowing from a pipe sticking several feet above the ground and then splashing into a wooden trough. Even those who stop and read the sign will be confused because there is no willow spout here.

Ah, but once (or actually three times) this water gurgled out of a tree trunk, not a pipe, and weary travelers and their beasts of burden stopped here to take a cool, refreshing drink or to spend the night.

U.S. 11 is one of the oldest roads west of the Appalachian Mountains; 250 years ago it was the Great Wagon Road used by pioneers to migrate into and settle western Virginia and beyond. By the 1830s the road had

Marking History

■ An ongoing series cataloging historical markers in Augusta County, Staunton, Waynesboro and the surrounding area. Nancy Sorrells is president of the Augusta County Historical Society.

been improved, macadamized and operated as a toll road called the Valley Pike. A toll booth stood in this vicinity.

The land where the Willow Spout is located was a prime business location because of the large number of travelers along the Pike. According to a 1903 article in the *Staunton Vindicator*, this particular tract was first owned by Peter Link. One of Link's daughters married a Mr. Grisom, who owned the land for a while before it passed to another of Link's daughters who married Peter Hanger.

Recognizing the commercial potential of his land, Hanger built a large tavern with many chimneys and a porch that extended the length of the structure. In those days, the spring not only

quenched the thirst of man and beast but supplied water for a distillery. This made perfect sense, for distilling was the second leading industry in Augusta County before the Civil War, behind only milling.

Not only was the tavern a stopover for covered wagons hauling freight up and down the Valley and droves of cattle, pigs, and sheep being driven to market, but it was a gathering place for locals as well. There were political rallies and a yearly militia muster at the site.

This popular spot was called variously Hanger's Tavern, Eight Miles House (because it was that many miles from Staunton), or, of course, Willow Spout.

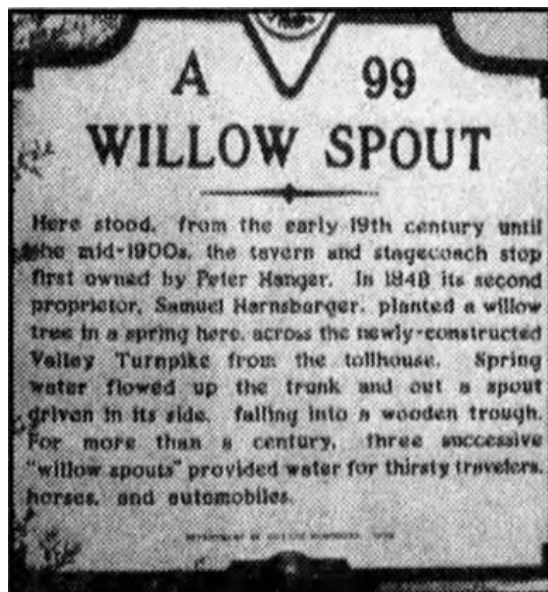
The reputation of the spot was developed early. In June, 1867, the Staunton Vindicator

Learn More

■ Ken Keller will be speaking about the Valley Pike at the Nov. 19 meeting of the Augusta County Historical Society conducted at 3 p.m. at the Augusta Stone Church.

talked about "That old and popular House of entertainment, Willow Spout, located on the Staunton and Winchester Turnpike." The article went on to "advise persons from a distance who wish to spend pleasantly a few weeks or more during the summer in the Valley, that we know of no place where they could spend their time more pleasantly and agreeably than the 'Willow Spout.'"

Just how the willow spout got there is presumably answered in the 1903 article by the author, who claims to have been part of an 1849 group of men who put a weeping willow log, 15 inches in diameter, in the ground at the spot of today's metal pipe. The log was bored through the center and conveyed water by this



means into a trough. The spring itself was located some distance away from the road but was piped underground to the spout and trough so that it could be available for travelers.

The idea for the willow spout belonged to Samuel Harnesberger, who succeeded Hanger as the tavern proprietor. The men who constructed and installed the spout were the article's author, E.I.H., Harnesberger, Cyrus McCue, John Gregory and two of Harnesberger's slaves, Joe and Boley.

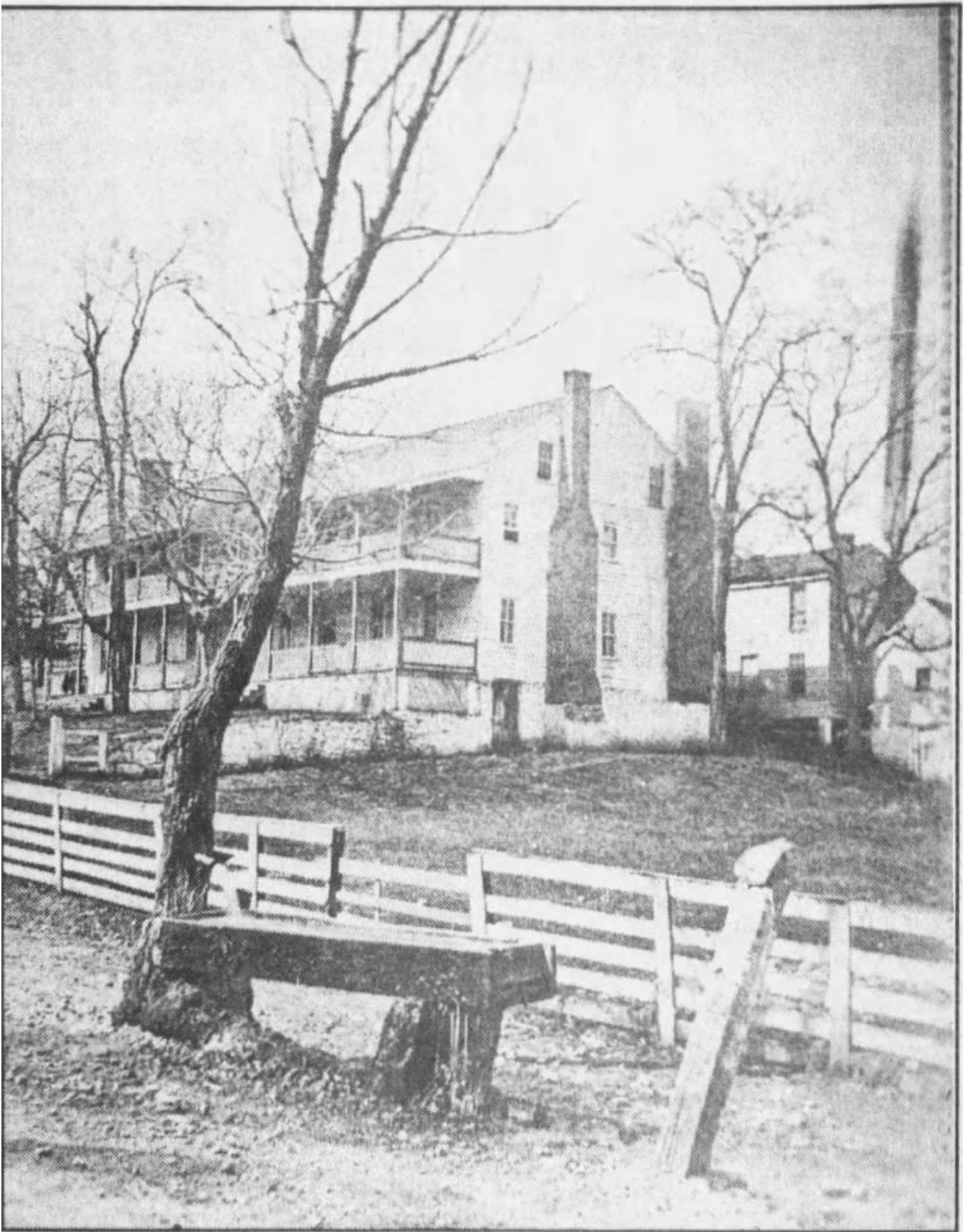
Interestingly enough, the post, which was squared off at the ends and had no roots or shoots, eventually sprouted, as willow wood is apt to do, and grew into a full-fledged tree with water spouting from its trunk. Well before 1903 that tree grew old and died and two more successive willows have been planted. The last tree was severely damaged in the Easter Ice Storm of 1978 and eventually was removed. Today, the spring flows from a pipe instead of a tree.

In October, 1992, the Augusta County Historical

Society supported the placement of a historical highway marker at the site. Heading up the Willow Spout Marker Committee was Kit Carter. On her committee were Ralph Coffman, Faye Cooper, Ann McCleary and Katherine Bushman. A replica of an old wooden trough was built by Donald Link's Fort Defiance Industrial Art class and strategically placed to catch the spring's flow. James Shreckhise, Nelson Cline, Thomas Erskine, Joe Nutt and Malcolm Livick helped with the dedication as well.

More than 150 years after that first willow spout was planted, the landscape has changed. The old tavern burned to the ground, and travelers no longer need to stop and quench their thirst at a roadside spring. However, as the author of the 1903 newspaper article remembered, once there were "weary sojourners and soldiers that rested under the shade of the willow."

Thanks for much of the information in this article goes to Dr. Ken Keller.



HANGERS TAVERN is pictured here behind the Willow Spout and trough in a photograph apparently taken before 1890 when, it is recorded, the large old tavern burned. The willow tree pictured may be the second on the site, as the first willow, placed there in 1848, lasted approximately 40 years.

ACGS Planned Programs for Members

- **Wednesday, August 20, 2025 Regular meeting ~ 1:00 PM**
 - Speaker: Debbie Harvey, Certified Genealogist
 - Topic: *"Using Artificial Intelligence to Advance Your Genealogical Research"*

- **Wednesday, September 17, 2025 Regular meeting ~ 1:00 PM**
 - Speaker: Glenn Hanger, President, Dutch Hollow Hanger Cemetery
 - Topic: *"Tools & Techniques to Research the 225-year-old Dutch Hollow Hanger Cemetery"*
 - Field trip to the cemetery directly after presentation

- **Wednesday, October 15, 2025 Regular meeting ~ 1:00 PM**
 - Speaker: Lynn Scott, Professional Genealogist
 - Topic: *"New FamilySearch Full-Text Search by Their AI"*

Website Updates: Members Section

LIFE MEMBERS

Al Wilkerson 2025

Glenn Hanger 2025

In The Library / Archives Section

Ship Passenger Lists 1732-1754 - 15 Total

Unpublished Documents - 9 Total

Published Documents - 11 Total

Life in Dutch Hollow - 199 Total

Obituaries & Death Notices - 1102 (Still several hundred, thousand to go)

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. Roughly 8,000 names.

Cook-Teaford Cemetery - 2 Files

Schoolhouses-Augusta Co. - 1800s - 39

Marriages - 145

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 52 folders. There are over 350 files contained within those 52 folders. 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