

THE HEADSTONE

Vol. IV

October 2026

Issue X

Greetings to all and happy fall! It seems like I am flipping the calendar a lot more often these days. When I was a boy and would wish out loud that I was older my mother would always say, “don’t wish your life away, it will go fast enough.” I think she was right. She most always was.

The weather here in Dutch Hollow continues to be hot and dry. Dry except for one rain during the month that washed our farm lane gravel from the barn down to the mailbox at the state road. Roughly 600 feet. That has only happened three times in forty years. It was not even a big rain as big rains go – 1.72 inches. The problem was that it came in just a few minutes and fell on ground that was all but pottery hard from the drought. It had no choice but to run off. I just wish it had not done so with all my gravel. Oh well, at least it didn’t get any drier that day. That same storm took a locust tree down at the cemetery which took out one fence rail. I don’t have a photo because by the time I made it over there later in the week my neighbor, Jeff Pletcher, had already cleaned it up – spotless. He worked the tree up for firewood and piled the debris. All I had to do was apply glue and screws to the broken rail and it was again all but new. I have extra rails at the barn but since this one could be repaired rather than replaced, I went that route. Waste not want not. Yet another thing my mother would tell me when I needed to hear it.

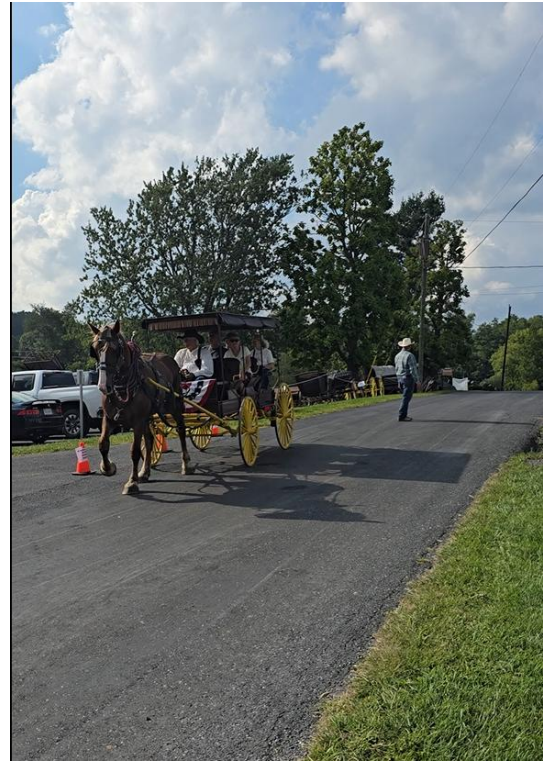
2nd Annual Middlebrook Horse Drawn Heritage Days

Our son Adam put together quite the show the last of August with his heritage days event. I helped cook at our horse drawn chuckwagon and Adam’s wife Jasmine did all of the prep for cobbler and biscuits. All I had to do was not burn anything. Laurin had her tent set up to sell her Shady Acres Country Soaps products. It was a good three days. Folks from ten states were in attendance, including two cowboys that are in charge of the events for Cheyenne Frontier Days in Wyoming. Not a bad turnout for a town with a population of 201. Hats off to Adam for making this happen. He had two other chuckwagons and cooks, one from Texas and one from Ohio, so we all three cooked for the Friday supper – chicken fried steak, potatoes, green beans, biscuits, and cobbler with homemade ice cream. Adam only planned for one hundred meals but sold out well before the supper. On Saturday everyone got free cobbler - peach, apple, or cherry and another round of homemade ice cream (Chocolate or Vanilla). Really homemade. It was churned by true horsepower. One of Adam’s Mennonite friends brought his horse “treadmill” up and the horse walked on the treadmill, which was connected to the ice cream churn, and that is what turned the churn paddle to freeze the ice cream. Adam had over forty horse drawn implements on display and an original Conestoga wagon that dates back to the mid-1800s. The wagon had four original wagon jacks in the bed and the oldest was dated 1841. Free wagon and buggy rides were available and a lot of folks enjoyed that. Joe Mischka, owner, publisher, and director of Rural Heritage TV and Rural Heritage Magazine traveled to Virginia to put together a documentary of the event to be released later. I have attached links to several videos that he

and my wife both took during the event. A picture is worth a thousand words – especially my words. I hope you enjoy the videos. Email with questions. We have more videos to share if you are interested in seeing them. (You will have to double click the play icon to see the MP4 videos.)



Horse Treadmill Ice
Cream.mp4



Free Buggy
Rides.mp4



[Rural Heritage Event Overview](#)

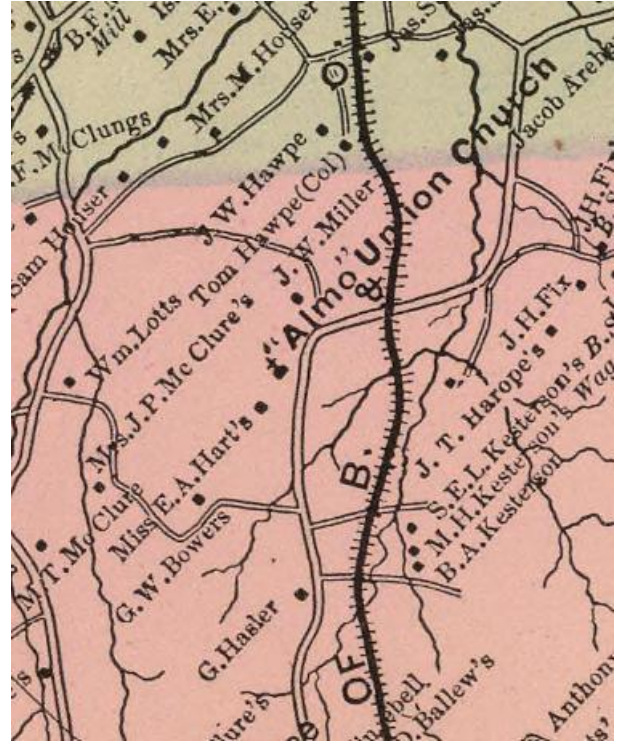


[Rural Heritage Interview With Adam Hanger](#)

Almo Chapel

There are many mysteries associated with history, that is for sure. Sometimes the mystery is spawned after a legend somehow becomes a “fact” and we undertake the task of ferreting out just what the fact of the legend was. Other times we just have a hunch about something we are interested in and set out to investigate. And still other times we hear about something that was clearly fact, yet no one knows a single fact pertaining to that something. It is the latter that has kept me busy on and off for almost ten years now.

According to the 1885 Jedidiah Hotchkiss map, once upon a time there was a union church called Almo Chapel near Spottswood, Virginia. There is a road near Spottswood now named Almo Chapel Road. Thus ends the facts I have had to work with for those ten years. That was up until about one year ago. I wrote a little piece in the November 2025 issue of *The Headstone* about discovering Shultz Cemetery on Almo Chapel Road and it was that discovery that led me to “reopen” the case on Almo Chapel. As a sidenote, I had during those ten years questioned scores of locals about the original location of Almo Chapel with not a single old-timer or otherwise saying they knew.



When I first started trying to piece together the genealogy and history of those buried at Shultz Cemetery I naturally had occasion to research a lot of deeds associated with the Shultz families as well as the farm on which the cemetery is located. That farm very early on was owned by Job Hart (1769-1855), also buried in Shultz Cemetery. (The Hart and Shultz families also intermarried). This farm is situated as previously stated, on Almo Chapel Road and arguably near where Almo Chapel should have been located since the road is only about three miles long and sparsely populated. As you can see on the Hotchkiss Map¹ above, Almo Union Church aka Almo Chapel appears to be fairly close to Elizabeth Hart's residence. Elizabeth (1844-1914) was Job's granddaughter. On the right is a photo of Elizabeth².



Miss Bettie Ann Hart - born April 11, 1844; died January 18, 1914. Buried in the Mt. Carmel Presbyterian Church Cemetery at Steeles Tavern, Va. Miss Bettie Ann Hart was the great aunt of Margaret H. Shultz Whitesell.

Using names that I had harvested from surveying the Shultz Cemetery and examining the headstones, I went to work on finding what I could. I looked first to Dorothy Weaver's book on cemeteries in southern Augusta County, *Here Lyth*³. In her book Dorothy made a facinating notation in the

¹ Hotchkiss, Jed. (1885) *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Augusta County Virginia 1885*.

² Brake, John w. (1994) *The History of Greenville, Virginia*. Campbell Copy Center, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

³ Weaver, Dorothy Lee. *Here Lyth, Tombstone Inscriptions of Most Cemeteries in Riverheads District of Southern Augusta County & Staunton, Virginia*. 1987. Iberian Publishing Company. Athens, Georgia.

Shultz Cemetery section, and I quote "*Old Mt. Carmel Graveyard, Rt. 671 in Spottswood, VA. On B. F. Hutchens farm. The Shultz were founders of Mt. Carmel Church.*" End quote. I knew at this point I needed to look at the history of Mount Carmel in hopes there would be some mention of Almo Chapel if what Dorothy had written was accurate. It was in a book written by James Ramsey titled *A History of Mount Carmel Church*⁴ that I got what I considered a very good lead. The first good lead in years.

The Church also encountered a drop in attendance.

August 7, 1876. The following resolution was adopted: In view of the laxity of members, in the duty of attending on the ordinance of God's House. Resolved: That habitual absence from church, without Providential hindrance, is, and will be held a matter of discipline; and that those derelict in this duty be so informed.

April 15, 1877. The Committee to examine S.S. Books reported they had found about 80 Vols. that were approved by our Bd. of Publication. On motion, 50 of said vols. were ordered to be sent to S. School at Almo Chapel, together with such question books and New Testaments as they may need.

This is the first mention in the Sessional Record of *Almo Chapel*. On the road leading north from Spottswood, about two miles from the village (on the northeast corner of the farm now owned by Brent Hutchens) a log house of worship was built sometime prior to 1876 on land donated by Mr. G.W. Bowers.

On October 26, 1874 "G. W. Bowers and his wife and Elizabeth A. Hart" deeded "the house and lot of ground" to James R. Yates, James W. Miller and William H. Steel, Trustees for the "Union Church." (The grantors had inherited the land from their father Jonathan Hart, and he had purchased it from one Adam Shultz.) (Augusta County Deed Book 90, page 93). The property was given "for the benefit of the Community in which it is located . . . to be used and held as a Union Church to be occupied alternately by any evangelical denominations. Secondly, said house can be used for school purposes, also for Sabbath School and Prayer meetings and other literary purposes. Said house is not to be used for political meetings, immoral public exhibitions or amusements or speeches the tendency of which is to corrupt the minds and hearts of the young or old as understood by evangelical Christians." The property totalled one-half acre, and is identified as being on the road from Old Providence to Greenville—there was no "Spottswood" in 1874. The origin of the name "Almo" is unexplained.

It is interesting to speculate on the connection between Almo Chapel and Greenway, which had been organized as a Sunday School in 1867. Barely one-half mile (as the crow flies) separates the location of the two. Greenway ceased to function sometime prior to 1876. The land under both "chapels" had originally been owned by Adam Shultz, a member of the German Reformed Church. Around the turn of the century some Shultz' heirs gave money to Mount Carmel in return for the Church's agreement to maintain the "Adam Shultz Graveyard" which is located on a knoll on Brent Hutchens' farm, not far from the location of Almo Chapel. Mr. Hamilton writes that in 1876 eighteen persons were received into the membership of the church at Almo Chapel, apparently on June 3, 1876. (This note was written when some of the members who joined were still alive.) The Sunday School and Preaching Services there must have been well attended; numerous mentions are

⁴ Ramsey, Jr., J. W. (1987) *A History of Mount Carmel 1837-1987*. Mid-Valley Press, Verona, VA Page 62 & 63.

made in the Minutes. The Almo Chapel Sunday School closed on April 3, 1909, when it was merged with the Sunday School held at Spottswood School.

Evangelism, with emphasis on Sunday School and preaching at the various outposts, was very important for Mount Carmel at the beginning of Mr. Hamilton's ministry. "There is an amusing story which Mr. Hamilton used to tell. Once he went up into the Blue Ridge Mountains in back of Vesuvius. Coming to a small cabin, he knocked at the door, which was answered by a rather timid looking woman. Mr. Hamilton said, 'Are there any Presbyterians up here?' The woman answered, 'Deed I don't know; my husband did kill a funny looking animal yestidy; it's laying out there in the wood shed now. You can look at it and see if it's one of 'em if you want to'." (32)

Congregational Meeting — September 1, 1877

At a meeting of the congregation on the 1st day of September 1877 Rev. A. H. Hamilton taking the chair and J. A. Spencer act [ing] as secretary.

A report of the Trustees was lead by Jas. E. A. Gibbs showing the condition of the Parsonage fund. On motion, W. T. Rush, the board of collection were instructed to continue their efforts to procure additional funds for the Parsonage fund. Meeting adj.

J. A. Spencer, Sect.



HOME OF A. H. HAMILTON
(MOUNT CARMEL MANSE - 1876 to 1948)

In 1876 a manse (parsonage) was secured for the use of Mr. Hamilton. The property was purchased in Mr. Hamilton's name. It is the large white house on the hill in Steeles Tavern just east of the village facing on to Route 56. A note in the financial records, hand-written by Mr. Hamilton reads as follows:

I did get a copy of the deed from the Augusta County Circuit Court to verify the language, and the author did make an accurate summary in his book of the restrictions set forth in the deed for the use of the structure since known as Almo Chapel. But the deed for the property really made no mention of the location.

To address the notation made by Dorothy Weaver in her book about The Shultz cemetery being the “ forerunner” to Mount Carmel Church, David Shultz (1784-1847), brother of Adam Shultz, did serve as a trustee for Mount Carmel. Strange thing is there is no record of David ever being a member of that church. There is also the notation in James Ramsey’s book about the heirs of Adam Shultz’ estate leaving money in the hands of Mount Carmel folks for perpetual care of the old Shultz Cemetery. While all of this certainly shows a significant connection between Almo and Mount Carmel, including the gift of surplus books and bibles to Almo in 1877, I have found no indication that Mount Carmel started anywhere other than where it now stands.

In between occasional findings such as the deed to the property, I found an array of newspaper articles about Almo Chapel, a couple of which are included below⁵⁶. I also concluded based on

ALMO TO THE FRONT.—Almo church, about four miles southwest of Greenville, has been repaired and partly painted lately and looks well in its new garb. They will have preaching twice a month by Mr. Hamilton until spring, at which time Sunday-school generally commences. They have a singing class there, it being taught by Mr. David Price, in which the neighborhood is represented from the smallest school-boys and girls to gray-bearded fathers. The class meets every two weeks, Friday and Saturday evenings, at 6:30, beginning Friday and Saturday last. The Almo people are the American people. A.

over one mile east of where Elizabeth Hart’s residence was located. I recalled that when I first secured permission from the farmer who now owns the former Hart property, Scott Winfield, he said his son Courtland was living in the house formerly occupied by Elizabeth. (or at least on the same site) I got in touch with him and told him a little about my investigation and where I thought Almo Chapel might be located and he told me he

the Hotchkiss map that Almo chapel was just east of Elizabeth Hart’s residence ...and I knew where that was. The problem was that looking at the map, it is shown near where the road curves southeast. That was the area I focused on, interviewing landowners and residents resulted in no one knowing anything about the existence of Almo Chapel. But that curve is

ALMO AGAIN.—The singing class at Almo, conducted by Mr. Price, closed its session Saturday, the 22d inst., according to appointment. It being a clear evening the house was crowded, most of whom were singers, consequently the music was good. The organists were Misses Bettie C. Fix, and Hattie B. Craig, the latter from Deerfield. There were singers from adjoining classes and two from Rockbridge county. The exercises consisted of quartettes and chorusses, the most successful chorus being at recess, when all joined. After the singing closed the leader was paid the full amount promised him for his services.

March 31.

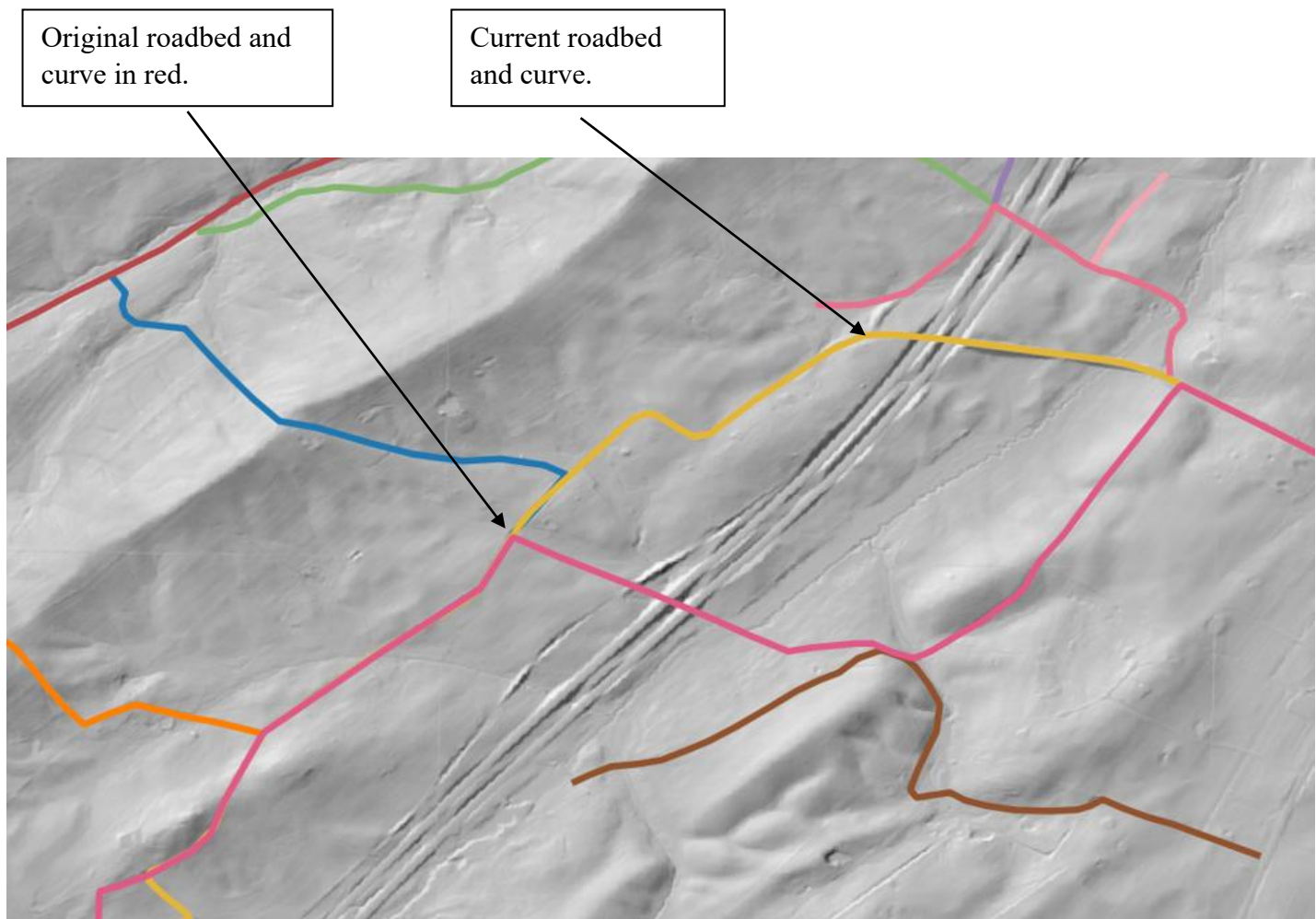
ALMO.

⁵ Virginia Chronicle. *Greenville Banner*, Greenville, Virginia. 13 February 1884. Page 1.

⁶ Virginia Chronicle. *Greenville Banner*, Greenville, Virginia. 2 April 1884. Page 1.

might be able to provide some technical assistance using computer-based LiDAR. LiDAR is a remote sensing technology that uses pulsed laser light to measure distances and create precise 3D maps of objects and surfaces. It can detect a sunken grave for example. He checked and sure enough, the area of Almo Chapel road had been surveyed using this technology by the federal government. Below is the map of the area. It did not show any irregularities such as a foundation but after Courtland did a little more work, the location of the curve in the road that was causing me to place the location of Almo over one mile from where it should have been was finally explained. It can be explained in four words...They moved the curve!

The magenta lines, plotted on the LiDAR map by Courtland based on the results of the LiDAR was the original road with the original curve. Based on this new information and in conjunction with the plotted location of Almo on the Hotchkiss map it put Almo's suspected location on the Hart farm. Which seemed to fit everything learned from research to this point.



I went back to looking at deeds and that is when I hit paydirt. After looking at deeds for the transfer of the Hart property from first one and then another party in the years of 1899, 1901, 1909, and 1915, I came upon the second transaction and deed for 1915 dated 29 September. On page two of that deed was the information I had been seeking. A survey reference to Almo Chapel. That same page 2 is below for your review⁷. The next challenge was what to do with this data to get to the point of knowing exactly where this location on earth actually was.

⁷ Augusta County Circuit Court. Deed Book 181, Page 422. Sept. 29, 1915. Retrieved Feb. 24, 2026.

References
to the Almo
Chapel lot.

Houder and Lott's corner, thence with Lott's lines S. 48-1/4 E. 53 poles to a chestnut near top of hill, N. 44 E. 64-1/2 poles to a chestnut and hickory, S. 62-1/4 E. 105 poles and 13 links to a stone on west side of public road, Miller and Hawpe's corner, thence with Hawpe's lines along said road, S. 25 W. 32-3/5 poles to a stake on east side of said road and passing Almo Church lot about one pole, S. 53-1/2 W. 30 poles to the middle of said road, S. 50-1/2 W. 57-3/4 poles to a point in the middle of public road, S. 56 E. 18 links from a stake on west side of road, Hart's corner, thence with her line N. 56 W. 101-1/5 poles to a stake at edge of timber, Lightner's corner, thence with Lightner's line N. 48-1/2 W. 38 poles to the beginning. The grave-yard containing one-quarter acre, located within this tract is reserved, and does not pass with this conveyance. And a tract containing one-half an acre, being the old Almo Church lot, being the same which was conveyed unto the said Isaac Kennedy by James W. Miller and others, Trustees and Commissioners, by deed of date June 29th, 1909, the same adjoining the above tract, said deed being recorded in said Clerk's Office in D.B. 160 page 86. In said deed said tract is described and bounded as follows: Beginning at a stake in the line of the lands above described, about _____ poles from the corner of James W. Miller's line; thence with the above tract and the Hawpe line along the public road S. 25 W. 10 poles to a stake, thence N. 55 W. 8 poles to a stake in clear ground, thence N. 25 E. 10 poles to a stake 4 links east of a black oak, thence S. 55 E. 6 poles to the beginning. Reference is hereby made to the deeds above referred to, and the deeds and records therein mentioned, for further and fuller description of the tracts of land herein conveyed.

Witness the following signature and seal this the day and date first above written.

F.B. Kennedy, Executor of Isaac Kennedy,
Deceased. (SEAL).
\$1.50 revenue stamp attached
to original and cancelled.

State of Virginia:

County of Augusta; to-wit:-

I, Harry Burnett, a Notary Public in and for the County of Augusta, in the State of Virginia, hereby certify that F.B. Kennedy, Executor of Isaac Kennedy, deceased, whose name is signed to the writing hereto annexed, bearing date on September 29th, 1915, has duly acknowledged the same before me in my County and State aforesaid. My commission expires October 23rd, 1916. Given under my hand this 12th day of October, 1915.

Harry Burnett. Notary Public.

Virginia-- In the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court for Augusta County, October 12th, 1915. The foregoing Deed from Isaac Kennedy's executor to H.W.H. Miller, et al., was this day presented in the office aforesaid, the State tax of \$5.60 being paid thereon, it is with the certificate of acknowledgment annexed, admitted to record.

TESTE, *Harry Burnett*, CLERK.

DEED REFERENCES PASSING ALMO LOT HERE

Scale: 1" = 250'

Countryside Service Company, L.C. 28 BARFORD DRIVE • STANFORD • VIRGINIA • 24401 PHONE (540) 886-6155 • FAX (540) 886-6154	DRAWN: JGW	SCALE: 1" = 250' DATE: MARCH 18, 2018
	SKETCH OF ALMO LOT RIVERHEADS DISTRICT AUGUSTA COUNTY, VIRGINIA	

The next step in the search for Almo seemed to me to be checking out the location, maybe with a metal detector. So I called my neighbor Kenny Reed. He is the same Kenny Reed that found the coffin handle in Dutch Hollow Hanger Cemetery. That Kenny Reed (I have two neighbors named Kenny Reed). He called his brother and asked him to assist, and we agreed on a day to meet on Almo Chapel Road right where Jason said the Almo lot once existed. I had shared with several folks at church the news brought about by Jason's work and my intention to metal detect the location and one of them had even asked, "what do you expect to find?" Not a bad question. My answer was, "well I could always hope for a key to the church door!" Actually I was hoping for nails, maybe some window glass found incidental to digging up some metal piece, hinges, almost anything to indicate that a structure once stood there.

On April 1, 2026, we met and metal detected the location indicated by Jason's survey analysis. Below is a photo of Gary Reed in the foreground with his brother Kenny in the background. Beyond Kenny in the distance is the house listed on the 1885 Hotchkiss map belonging to Elizabeth Hart. Possibly not the same house but the same house site I suspect. The Shultz Cemetery is to the right of the barn and up the hill and beyond the view captured by this photo.



And what did we find? Nails and more nails. Oh yea, and a key! Well, at least part of a key.

I cannot give any reason for all those nails and a rusty key being at that location unless there was a structure there. And with the survey in the deed and the expert work Jason did plotting the survey, I have no doubt that the location of Almo Chapel is now known after many years of not knowing. The only question that I still



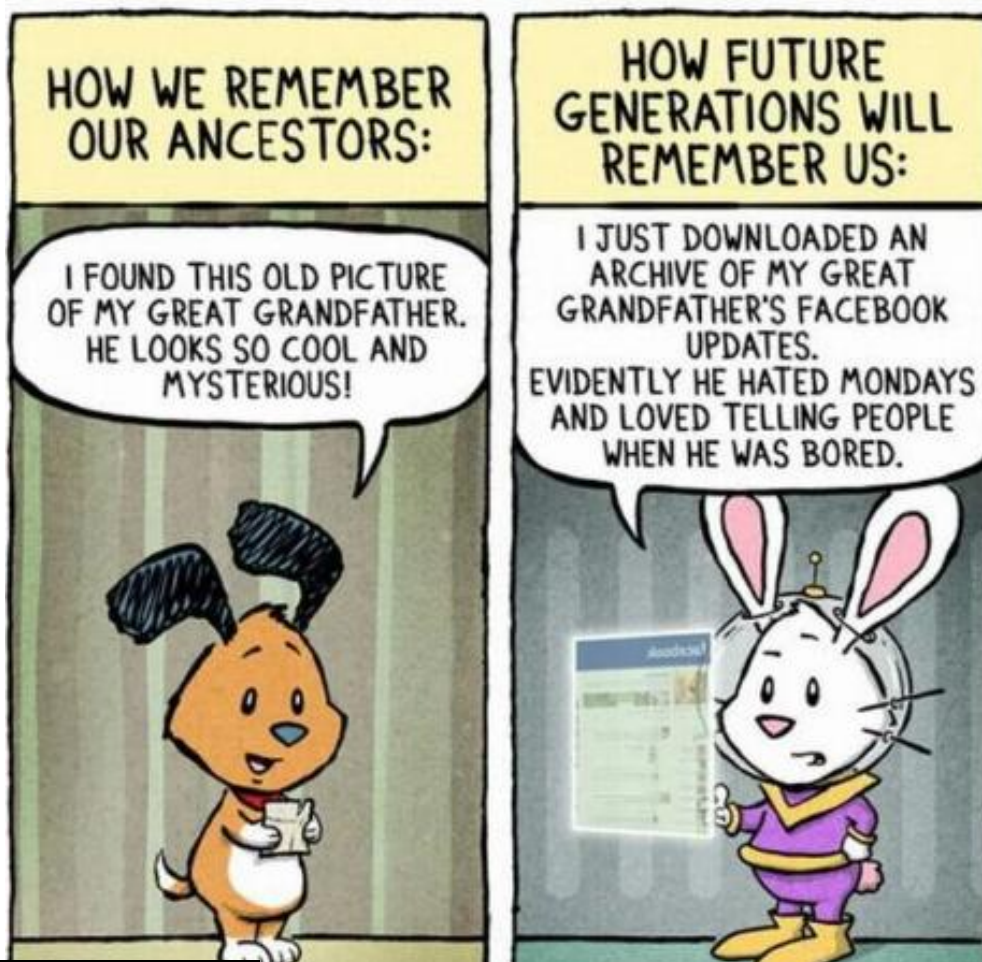
have about Almo Chapel - What is the origin of the name? And boy would I love to see a picture of that Chapel.

I know I have crammed a lot of information into just a few pages and I hope that it is in a form that can be followed with some reader success, but the fact is, I have pages upon pages of field notes from this one little mystery and I have just tried to hit the high spots for you the reader. I do hope I was successful in doing that. One thing is for sure, if you have read this story then you are one of only a literal handful of folks in the world that knows where Almo Chapel once stood. Tell anybody who will listen!

Searchable Database

The Old Providence Church cemetery records have been uploaded to the searchable database, and I have labeled it as its own data set. Long story short, the format is a little different from all the other records in the existing cemetery records data set so that is why I did that. It is just a skeleton file set right now with hopes of getting it populated with all the data this winter if time allows. About 1,200 records just for Old Providence thus far. There has been a rough total of 3,700 files of all types uploaded to the searchable database as of this newsletter.

I will leave you with your own thoughts as you ponder the cartoon below⁸.



Website Updates: Members Section

LIFE MEMBERS

Al Wilkerson 2025 Glenn Hanger 2025 Crim Lotts 2025

Michael Clinebell 2025 Ted Harrison 2026 Mary Ellen Kutas 2026

<u>Some of the Website Records</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Added Since September 1st</u>
Death Records	1383	0
Burial Records	212	0
Marriage Records	314	0
Miscellaneous Documents, & Photos	1,344	0
Augusta County Schoolhouses	266	0
Ship Passenger Lists	20	0
Auctions & Estate Settlements	24	0
Chancery Suits	20	0
Old Providence (New Cemetery) Records	1201	1201

Until next month, Blessings, Happy Fall, and Happy Trails,

Glenn Hanger

President, Dutch Hollow Hanger Cemetery