



# Tales from the Tavern

For Friends of the King and Queen Courthouse Tavern Museum  
and Members of the King and Queen County Historical Society

## Fall 2018

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Holiday Open House, October King & Queen Historical Society Meeting. A veteran remembers D-Day. Thanksgiving memories -1930s.

Contributors: Nancy Herman-Thompson, Brownie Bevan, James Croxton, William Gwathmey, Stacy Richardson  
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## 2018 Courthouse Tavern Museum Open House

Sunday, December 2, 2018 2-4pm



*Bring Family and Friends. Enjoy Delicious Food, Good Cheer, Children's Fun, Gift Selections and Holiday Music.*

146 Court House Landing Rd, King and Queen Court House, Virginia 23085

FREE Admission

**The Museum will close on December 3rd until Spring of 2019.**

### King & Queen County Historical Society Meeting

The fall meeting of the King & Queen County Historical Society is held at a historic location in the county. Aspen Grove, the home of Stacy and Hunter Richardson was featured on Sunday, October 28, 2018. The cool, sunny day was very welcome after so much heat and rain this fall and the crowd met briefly outside before the program, a tour of the house, began. President John Spain welcomed three new members. In addition, he read a resolution recognizing the significant contributions to the HS and the Tavern Museum by member and volunteer Mrs. Anne Mitchell Motley Ryland who had recently passed away. The Richardson's welcomed the visitors and gave a brief history of the house built in the early 19th century by Absalom Bland, Hunter's third great-grandfather. During the tour Stacy and Museum docents provided more details about the house. Mrs. Duanne Massey Hawkins, a previous owner, related stories about her tenure and renovations made in the 1970s. Her daughters, Susan Carlton Fleet and Katherine Carlton Hagerty talked about growing up in the house. Classic southern refreshments were served. In 2019 the Historical Society will meet on January 27, April 28, July 28, and October 27.

## Be sure to mark your calendar for the Annual Museum Open House.

### Holiday Open House

The Courthouse Tavern Museum extends an invitation to an old-fashioned holiday celebration on December 2, 2018. Step back in time to the sights, smells and sounds of holidays gone by. This annual event is free. Enjoy hot cider & chocolate, delicious refreshments, and music by students from King & Queen schools and Aylett Country Day School. There will be family activities including decorating gingerbread cookies and houses, digging for fossils, making ornaments, miniature horse cart rides, and a visit from Santa. The museum will be decorated with fresh greenery, a toy Christmas train, hand-made quilts, and antique toys.

### A Veteran Remembers

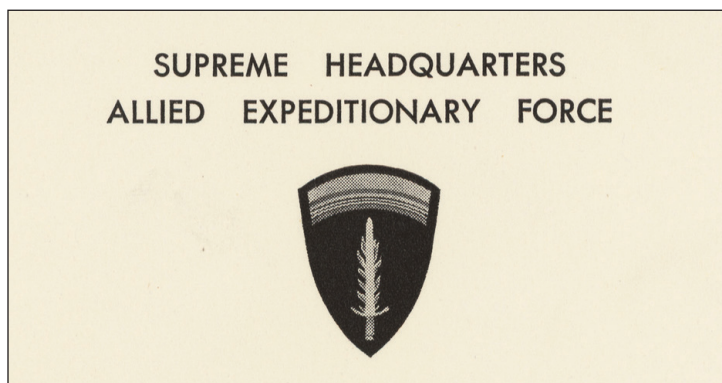
As told by William Gwathmey  
In England less than a week, HS member William Gwathmey, age

23 at the time, was part of the World War II expeditionary force of the largest seaboard invasion in history. As a pool replacement he did not cross the English Channel on D-Day, June 6, but did so soon afterwards. William shared the letter that General Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, distributed to each of the 175,000-member expeditionary-force on the eve of the invasion. The invasion force consisted of over 4000 American, English, and Canadian ships and 1200 planes. General Eisenhower's message was:

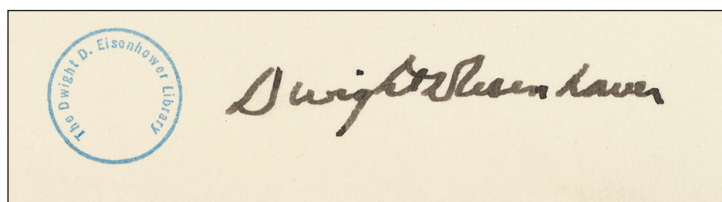
Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!  
You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with

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our brave Allies and brother-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world. Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely. But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory! I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory! Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.



Gen. Eisenhower carried a letter of resignation in his pocket to submit if the D-Day invasion was not successful, taking responsibility for any failure. William said that thankfully when he landed in Normandy a week after D-Day, the beaches had been cleared and there were no bullets flying to welcome him. He noted that he had made it all the way to England on a ship without being seasick, but was made ill by his trip across the English Channel.



## Thanksgiving Memories

by Nancy Herman-Thompson

As goes the old Thanksgiving song ...'Over the river and through the woods to grandmother's house we go...' We asked two of our volunteers, Brownie Bevan, and James Croxton, both of Walkerton, to share their memories of Thanksgiving when they were about ten years old. To set the stage: in the 1930s there were few houses in King & Queen County with electricity and plumbing and these included "grandmother's house" in these tales. Most of the roads were dirt and the grandparents traveled by horse carriage/wagon. Radio's provided some entertainment, but as a whole folks made their own entertainment.

### Thanksgiving in Walkerton, 1939, as told by Brownie Bevan

As a boy, Brownie, his parents, Thomas and Anthar Bevan, and brother Thomas would visit his grandparent's, Charlie and Flossie Samuel on Thanksgiving Day. They would drive from Henrico County in a '37 Ford to the Samuel's 37-acre truck farm near Walkerton. The Samuel family attending included five grown children with their families, about 30+ people from King William, King & Queen, Henrico and Richmond. As Brownie put it, there was a "yard-full" of children (12-15) playing outside. Grandma Flossie's kitchen had a large cook stove and a true "ice-box" at the end of the house. Off the kitchen was a large store-room where a 30 gallon barrel to store flour sat. Water was drawn from the hand pump 10' outside the kitchen door. Grandma churned her own butter, milked the cows, helped butcher the hogs, and kept a large flock of chickens. Upon arriving at their grandparents, all the children stayed outside playing horseshoes and baseball. However, they were called to help. Brownie remembers carrying in firewood for the stove and pumping water for the kitchen. The Thanksgiving meal was served in the dining room at a large round table. The children ate at a small table and on the porch. The meal began with a prayer and ended with prayer giving thanks for the harvest. Nature's bounty was served: country ham, sweet potatoes, dressing, cranberry sauce (always), good rolls, cornbread, milk, and finished with Grandma Flossie's "famous" sweet potato pie and coconut cake. Everything on the table was home-grown (except the cranberries, probably purchased in Walkerton). One of the uncles always made sure there was a quart of fresh molasses from a mill in Aylett. As soon as the meal was over, the children went outside to play, and some of the men and older boys went hunting for rabbit and squirrel – a Thanksgiving tradition. Brownie was allowed to go



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at the early age of 6 or 7. With the men and children out from underfoot, the women cleared the table and started to clean up. The water had to be heated on the wood stove and dishes were washed in a wash pan and rinsed in a second wash pan, dried, and put up. Once the kitchen was clean, the women retired to the dining room to sit and visit (possibly gossip!). Grandma had a fainting couch in the dining room she used for resting and **it is now displayed in the Museum's 20th century room exhibit.** Before leaving the family gathered back at the house for another round of dessert. With sentiments of "have to get home to feed," the family dispersed before dark.



## Thanksgiving in Stevensville, 1937, as told by James Croxton

On Thanksgiving Day James' parents William and Blanche, brother Edward, and James would drive from Walkerton to Stevensville in a Model T Ford to grandparents Lewis and Fannie Croxton's farm. The drive could be "brrrrrrry" cold since the vehicle had a windshield but no coverings or glass over the open windows. James' three aunts and four uncles and their families were there for dinner, about 40 family plus some visitors. In later years as the family grew, the Croxton's gathered at the firehouse in Tappahannock for Thanksgiving. James was the oldest cousin. Grandmother Fannie did all the cooking. The house wasn't large, and the kitchen and dining room were separate from the 2-story house and connected by a breezeway. The well was in the backyard and had a wheel & pulley used to pull up buckets. All had to help carry in wood for the cook stove and water for kitchen use. Everyone 'washed-up' in the kitchen at a basin on a stand. The family ate "in shifts" around an oblong wood table in the dining room. The dishes were washed between shifts. Children were served last. James

doesn't remember a tablecloth or decorations, but remembers all gathered in the dining room for prayer prior to the meal. This was a large family that got along and was glad to see each other. Thanksgiving Day was remembered as a good, enjoyable time with plenty of food. This family's meal was a ham from their own hogs, any vegetable you could think of from the garden, sweet potatoes, biscuits or rolls and dessert. James remembers his grandmother made the best biscuits and her specialty was sweet potato pudding served as a side dish. Fried oysters from Fred Garrett's (now Garrett Marine) on the Rappahannock were also served. Fannie made several cakes and fruit pies for the meal and they were kept in a pie safe in the breezeway. She often cut smaller pieces of pie to make dessert stretch for all her guests. One of her expressions James remembers is "if you don't see it, don't ask for it!" Well said from a hard-working farm wife. The cousins played games and kickball outside all day and stayed out of the house. The men went rabbit and squirrel hunting in the morning and then again after the meal. The women were left with the work of cleaning up: heating water on the stove, washing dishes, and putting up any food. The Croxton's didn't have an ice-box or root cellar and extra food was stored in one of the unheated rooms of the house. Once done in the kitchen, the women sat down in the living room and had an afternoon-long visit. When the men came back from hunting they dressed out the game. James also remembers if the weather was cold enough, some families butchered hogs on Thanksgiving Day. Late afternoon, they crowded into the house, said their goodbyes and families started to leave, heading to Tappahannock, Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Abington. The day after Thanksgiving, everyone was home and James and his brother often went hunting with their squirrel dog 'Coco'. That weekend, one didn't hear anything about going shopping or up-coming Christmas festivities. James Croxton was 18 before he ever saw Christmas decorations being put up in stores. He boarded with his Aunt & Uncle in Richmond while attending Smithdeal Massey Business School, and walked by the F.W. Woolworth store a week or two after Thanksgiving and saw the decorations.

We thank Brownie and James for sharing their memories of Thanksgiving. No turkey, pumpkin pie, parades on TV, football games, or Black Friday shopping, but they have special memories of spending time with family, friends and home-cooked meals at their grandparent's home. We wish you all a happy Thanksgiving for 2018! And by the way, the Thanksgiving song we used to sing, "Over the River

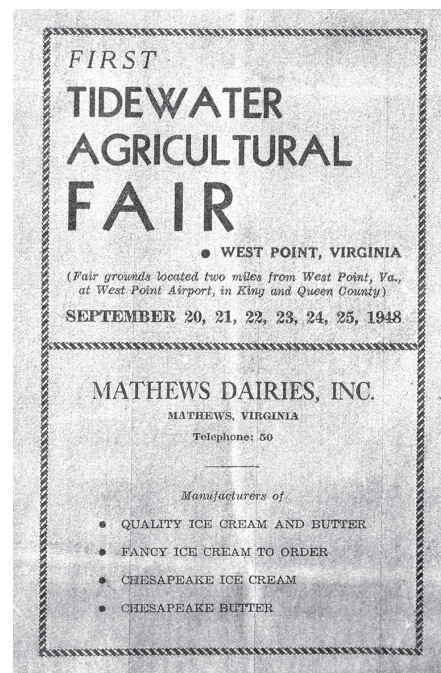
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and Through the Woods,” was a Thanksgiving poem by Lydia M. Child, originally published in 1844 and later set to a tune by an unknown composer.

## Then and Now - Fall Fairs

Today, during the cool, colorful fall days, residents of rural communities have many opportunities to attend outdoor events organized as fund raisers for volunteer organizations or small businesses. There are demonstrations, food, vendors, and entertainment. And, of course, the Virginia State Fair opens the last week in September and closes the first week in October and includes juried exhibitions of homemade goods, crops, and farm animals; displays of farm equipment; lots of food and beverages; and fun rides. Some individual counties also hold fairs with a similar format. Although there is still a rural focus, the rural emphasis is not as great as 60 years or more ago. Did you know that in 1946 there was a King and Queen County Fair at the King and Queen Court House? For some years following there was a Tidewater Agricultural Fair held at the West Point Airport located in King and Queen County. Local agricultural based organizations provided leadership: 4-H, Future Farmers of America, Home Demonstration agents, and the Farm Bureau. Fairs encouraged learning through demonstrations and competition among residents of

surrounding counties in various areas: farm animals, home canned goods, crop produce, baked goods, and hand crafted items such as quilts and handwork. In addition, there were hay loading contests and tractor races. Of course there was food, much of it homemade, and rides of all kinds, but much more tame than today. Rural residents did not have the mobility and communications tools of today, and fewer entertainment opportunities. These fairs were used to promote knowledge of agriculture, and generated great excitement as occasions to socialize with friends and family.



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