



# Tales from the Tavern

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

## Winter 2021

### **From The Museum Council**

*We are thankful that the dark, uncertain times of 2020 have been left behind. Fortunately, 2021 looks much more positive. Although the Museum has no date for opening this year, new exhibits and improvements will be on display when we do reopen. More specific information on the opening and special events will be included in the next "Tales From The Tavern". We look forward to greeting visitors and visiting with supporters again.*

### **From The King & Queen County Historical Society**

*by Cynthia Carter*

*While we are still unable to meet in person, please join us for a virtual program on **Sunday, April 25 at 3:00 p.m.**, Virginia's Lewis and Clark Eastern Legacy Trail presented by Margaret W. Crosson, president of the Lewis & Clark Legacy Trail. Learn how King and Queen County, which has important connections with Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, is to be included in a future expansion of the Lewis and Clark Eastern Legacy Trail. **To attend this program, send an email to KQCHSprograms@gmail.com to receive the Zoom link and optional dial-in number or contact Cynthia Carter at 804-445-3570.** We hope the July and October 2021 meetings will resume as usual, in person.*

### **Inside this issue:**

From The Museum Council, From The King & Queen County Historical Society, About Charles Palmer, Fossil Man, he's back!, King & Queen County Early Public Schools, The Schools At Stevensville, Ruffin Academy and the King and Queen Training School. Student Questions While Visiting the Log Schoolhouse

Contributors: Newell Randall,  
Cynthia Carter, Linda Barnes  
Editor: Biddie Shelor

(804) 785-9558  
www.kingandqueenmuseum.org

### **About Charles Palmer**

*by Linda Barnes*

Within the article "The Schools At Stevensville", student reporter Charles Palmer provides a glimpse into events in early 1924. Linda Barnes, his niece and a Tavern Museum Council member, talks about him, "The Charles Palmer on page 3 was my dad's youngest brother. He was the valedictorian at Stevensville HS, and after WWII he purchased Rice Business College in Charleston, South Carolina. His business college expanded into Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. He was appointed the Director of Technical Education for the state of South Carolina. His business colleges were purchased by South Carolina and became the basis for the community college system in that state. He said that his education at Stevensville was the best he received and contributed to his success."



Newell Randall, The Fossil Man

### **Fossil Man, he's back!**

*by Newell Randall*

It was a long dry stretch in 2020 for Fossil Man. No schools wanting fossil presentations. No Science Night at Reynolds Community College. No River Camp presentations. No 4-H Camp presentations. No groups requesting special tours at the Museum, or onsite presentations. It has been over a year since Fossil Man has even been to the Museum! No road trips to the Aurora Fossil Museum in NC, Natural History Museum in DC, Natural History Museum at the Gray Fossil Site in TN, and the Virginia Natural History Museum in Martinsville, Virginia. A trip to go to the Calvert

Cliffs Fossil Museum in Maryland was postponed.

Very little fossil hunting was undertaken in 2020. Some of my favorite sites have changed ownership. I am currently looking for streams in K&Q and King William to fossil hunt in. Some research was completed in some reference books such as: *Fossil Fish Volume III, Fossil Reptiles & Birds, Land Mammals Volume IV-Part*

*I, Fossil Marine Mammals Volume IV-Part 2, and Fossil Invertebrates.* In case anyone is interested in some light reading. The first three references were produced by the North Carolina Fossil Club. The last was published by the Natural History Museum and was a timely gift.

Hopefully, groups will open up and start requesting outsiders to come in again. Fossil Man is completely vaccinated, Covid 19 (Pfizer), Flu and even Rabies (long true story). Hopefully, the Museum will need us docents back soon. If you have a group that wants a private, CDC compliant (socially distanced, masked) tour please contact us at the Museum. Off-site presentations can also be provided!

# Tales from the Tavern

## King & Queen County Early Public Schools

Throughout its history King and Queen County has emphasized education. In the Tavern Museum archives and library are histories and stories of schools in the county. The most comprehensive histories are Mr. Russell Gill's paper on education during the colonial period, private schools and academies 1753-1914, and public high schools 1906-1938 complemented by Mrs. Caroline Gwathmey Jones' book *From Fifty-two to Two: An Account of the Public Elementary Schools of King & Queen County*. Other artifacts and books, and DVDs on the schools and video histories of county residents, augment these. The Museum is developing an exhibit that focuses on all early public schools, both elementary and high school. A map of school locations, photographs, artifacts, and fun comparisons to today's schools will be on display. This newsletter provides a brief history of two of the schools that are examples of how schools evolved. Additionally included are some questions asked by students visiting the Museum log schoolhouse and the answers that surprised them.

With the ratification of the Underwood Constitution of 1869, the Commonwealth established the free public school system. However, the schools were segregated by race. Also, initially no provision was made for education beyond the elementary level. Anything above it was paid for privately. Before public schools, the white population received formal education, and then only if your family had resources for tutors or private academies. In 1870 the population of the county was 9709, 4221 white and 5488 black. Almost 8000 were illiterate and of these 46 percent were white and 54 per cent were black.

The school system was funded through taxes and, while some schools evolved from existing schools, most were created from scratch. In the period 1873-1900, forty-six schools were established, 24 white and 22 black. Initially, schools were to operate for five months for all residents of the state between the ages of 5 and 21, covering grades 1-7. For the first 37 years, no provision was made for public high schools. Subjects taught were orthography (spelling), reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and geography. Some private schools in the county such as the school at Eastern View, now an exhibit on the Museum grounds, became the first public school buildings. Usually one teacher was allocated per school to teach all grades and all subjects. There was no public transportation and schools were located near communities where students and teachers could walk to school.

In 1870 shortly after the Civil War, the state of the county was most aptly described in "Recollections" published in 1950 by Dr. Bathurst B. Bagby, M.D., "All our people were poor...we rarely raised enough to eat and had little or nothing to sell. Many of the poor whites and Negroes were hungry a large part of the time. They were poorly clad and poorly housed." Education was strongly supported by the churches and communities as a path to improving the wellbeing of individuals and building better communities. Over the years the number of teachers grew and some of the school buildings were enlarged or rebuilt. The curriculum was expanded, high schools were created, libraries were added, and organized activities and sports were offered. Eventually transportation was provided and schools were merged. Today there are three public schools, two elementary and one high school.

The history of Stevensville High School and King & Queen

Training School are examples of the formation of public education in the county. These schools attracted students from the county as well as from surrounding counties. After graduation, many continued their education, were very successful in their chosen occupations, and made considerable contributions to their communities.

## The Schools At Stevensville

In an article, believed written by Miss Olive Bagby of Stevensville in the mid-twentieth century, Stevensville is presented as the "Oldest Center of Education In Surrounding Counties." There have been formal schools at Stevensville or in the vicinity that attracted students from local families, but also from surrounding counties. Private girls academies came first: Locust Cottage Female Seminary in 1837 operated by the Southgate family and Croton Female Seminary in 1847 operated by Dr. Zachary Lewis (Name changed to Croton Female Institute in 1855 and then to Croton Female College in 1858.). In 1839 John Bagby and John Pollard established Stevensville Academy, a school for boys. After the Civil War, Rev. A. F. Scott operated the school until it was merged into the public school system in 1875 and he became its principal. In 1885, Stevensville School was the first graded (accredited) school in the county. At that time there were 47 pupils with Mr. Milton Thurston as principal, assisted by one other teacher.

In 1906 the Virginia General Assembly passed a bill authorizing the establishment of high schools and, due to the influence of several former graduates of Stevensville School, by 1907 with 90 students Stevensville became the first public high school in the county. The first principal was Mr. J. A. Towler with Mrs. D. C. Sutton and Miss Olive Bagby as teachers. In 1938, the high school was closed and students transferred to either the new Marriott High School or Pleasant Hill High School.

Over the years as the school changed, the buildings in which it operated also changed. Originally the school was operated in the Stevensville Academy building. Then a two-room schoolhouse was built and used until 1907 when Stevensville School became Stevensville High School and a three-room school building was constructed over the foundation of the old Stevensville Academy dormitory.



Stevensville High School 1916-17

The public school had such an excellent reputation that students from other counties would board with local families in order to attend. There are many alumnae who became prominent leaders and educators in the county and the Commonwealth.

(See Bulletin 12 for more detail.)

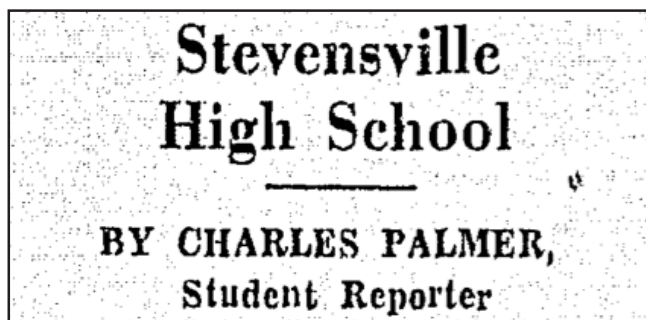


# Tales from the Tavern

*From the Richmond Times Dispatch:*

May 28, 1916: The closing exercises of the school at Stevensville were well attended....diplomas were given to ...Misses Elizabeth Hundley, Lou Williams, Gulie Griggs, Gladys Walker, Viola Hall and Ada May Richards. Miss Elizabeth Hundley was presented with a scholarship from the Lynchburg Christian College for having made the best average class mark of the session.

February 2, 1924: Stevensville High School by Student Reporter Charles Palmer: We have improved our library very much by the addition of a new magazine rack and subscriptions to about 12 new magazines which are being read by the pupils. We have also added a great number of new books, both fiction and reference..... The measles started in our school about a month ago. ...For the past two weeks, the attendance has been very poor....Two teachers.....missed school for a period of two weeks. The question.....was whether or not we would close school.....We decided to continue.



*Richmond Times Dispatch banner for Stevensville HS Student Report*

November 17, 1929: Stevensville High School has an enrollment of 192 pupils, the largest in the county with 9 teachers. The high school faculty consist of the principal, Douglas S. Mitchell; assistants, Misses Olive E. Bagby and Lousie Eubank; grade teachers, Mrs. Mancha Sutton, Mrs. Jeff Vaughan, Misses Grace Cluverius, Ellen D. Moody, Edna Phippin and Mrs. B. H. Walker, Jr., music teacher.

March 24, 1935: Stevensville High School by Porter Vaughan Jr.: The senior class has been organized with 12 members... Mary Helsabeck, president; Margaret Coleman, secretary; Rebecca Beane, treasurer....The athletic association has bought new baseballs, bats and a mitt for the baseball team. The team has begun practicing, but because of bad weather we have not been able to play...

## Ruffin Academy and the King and Queen Training School

The black community strongly believed that education was the route to self-improvement for individuals and their communities. In 1894 Rev. R. James Ruffin, son of slaves, founded private Ruffin Academy near Cauthornville in upper King & Queen with a goal of offering higher education. Students were from local families and, as the school's reputation grew, students came from surrounding counties, and even out-of-state. As the student body grew funding for school expansion into the first black high school in the county was received from the Southside Rappahannock Baptist Association for additional teachers, new classrooms, and dormitories. Ruffin School was renamed King and Queen Industrial School and moved to nearby Owenton. It closed in 1922, two years after the death of Rev. Ruffin.

In 1922 the private King and Queen Industrial School was replaced with the public King and Queen Training School



*King & Queen Training School 1920s*

located near the grounds of current day Mt. Olive Baptist Church. The first and only public black high school was established 15 years after the state law that created public high schools was passed. Rev. R. N. Lawson was the first principal. This school building cost \$10,000. The Rosenwald Fund, a national endowment established in 1917 to improve the school environments of black students in the South contributed \$1500 and the building plans designed by architects of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute under the direction of Booker T. Washington. The county contributed \$500 and the \$8000 balance was raised by the black community. Local craftsman and residents contributed labor for construction of two buildings: a main building which included an office, a library, and six class rooms and a vocational building containing a shop and one classroom.

Along with traditional high school curriculum, home economics and vocational agriculture were emphasized. No public transportation was provided and local students walked, rode on horses or mules, and came in various drawn conveyances. Some boarded with local families during the week. This school acquired an excellent reputation. In 1951 it was merged into the new Central High School, located in the middle the county with better access and facilities for students.

*(See Bulletins 79 and 80 for more detail)*



*Richmond Planet Banner for First Mount Olive Baptist Church*

From First Mount Olive (Baptist Church) Notes in the *Richmond Planet*:

March 11, 1922: We are glad to report to our friends and well wishers that work on the new school to be located at Mt. Olive has begun; the lumber is being cut. Yesterday twenty-two men were at work clearing off the grounds.

May 23, 1922: We have begun work on our new school which is located on what tradition calls the highest spot in King and Queen County.

August 23, 1922: On the 4th of September there will be an educational rally at Mt. Olive for the benefit of the training school.

November 20, 1923: Three rooms of our new six-room school are now open; the enrollment at present is more than one hundred. There will be an oyster supper on Thanksgiving Day for the benefit of the new school.

# *Tales from the Tavern*

## **Student Questions While Visiting the Log Schoolhouse**

- Where is the water fountain? They were shown a water bucket and dipper.
- Where is the bathroom? There is no indoor bathroom. You used the woods or outhouse, if it was available.
- Where is the lunchroom? You bring your lunch (a buttered biscuit or cornbread and maybe an apple) in a covered pail and eat it outside if the weather is good.
- How do you get to school? Most days you walk in all types of weather, possibly up to 5 miles. If you are fortunate, you catch a ride in a cart or buggy.



Log Schoolhouse on Museum Grounds

King and Queen Courthouse Tavern Museum  
PO Box 129  
King and Queen C.H., VA 23085-0129

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