

NEW KENT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



P. O. Box 24 New Kent, VA 23124
12007 Courthouse Circle
New Kent, VA 23124

Newsletter

July 2014



1862 drawing from *Battles and Leaders* - The burned jail is on the right next to the courthouse. The Ordinary is on the left looking much as it does today.



Inside

Message from the President	Page	1
General Meeting July 21, 2014		
Cedar Grove	Page	2
The Importance of Providence Forge, Virginia in the American Revolution	Page	3 - 8
Susan Allen, Slavery and the Declaration of Independence	Page	9
The Jailer's Corner	Page	10
Look What's Happening	Page	11- 12
New Members	Page	13
Membership Application	Page	14

HISTORY IS WAITING COME VISIT!

Our Next General Meeting will be Sunday July 20, 2014 2:30 p.m. at the old courthouse 11290 New Kent Highway, New Kent, VA

Our speaker will be Michael Nelson and his topic of discussion is geophysical sensing to assist in archaeological and historical site investigations.

Visit our website at:

www.newkenthistoricalsoc.com

FOLLOW US

New Kent-Charles City Chronicle every other Wednesday at <http://www.nkccnews.com>

And

Tidewater Review every Wednesday at <http://www.tidewaterreview.com>

Happy Birthday
AMERICA

From Your President

I became your president November 2012. Since then, our membership has increased and you have supported us in our various projects; Open House, the NK Quilt Raffle, Bus Tours, and attending the general meetings. Our Research Center has gained notoriety for the great research material that we maintain in the jail, thanks to Ms. Pomeroy. Thanks to our historian, LaVonne, the Research Center is open each Monday and other days by appointment as our visitors continue to grow. If you would like to volunteer, just let us know. We will be thrilled to have you. The New Kent Historical Society is committed to the history of our great County and we have taken great strides in purchasing a museum to maintain this history. We thank you for supporting us in this endeavor.

Another way that you can continue to support us is to keep your membership current. If you can't remember the last time you paid your dues, send us an email or call us at 804-966-8587. We will respond back to you as soon as possible. Please be kind and continue to be a member of the Society. Ensure you visit our "Look What's Happening Section" in this newsletter so that you can keep abreast of our future projects and events. In November 2014, we will be voting again for NKHS Officers: President, 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President, Secretary, and Treasury. I will be on the ballot in November.

Your President,
Camilla Lewis Tramuel

Next General Meeting - Sunday July 20, 2014

Our speaker for our next meeting will be Michael Nelson owner of MT Nelson & Associates, LLC: an Archaeology Consulting firm. Michael received his BA degree from Kent State University, his MA degree in Anthropology from Vermont College. He interned at Gettysburg National Military Park, and is a PhD candidate in Archaeology at the University of Leicester. He is a fellow in the Registry of Professional Archaeologist (RPA) for prehistoric and marine archaeology. Michael is married to Trudy Nelson and has two daughters and lives in Quinton with their rescued greyhounds Tom, Al and Brigit. Michael plays the great highland bagpipes, enjoys all types of music, outdoor activities, travel, reading and anything to do with history.



Cedar Grove

Picture and Article By Hawthorne Davis

After the crepe myrtles have recovered, the view will be prettier, but you will of course not be able to see the house. The birthplace and residence of our nation's tenth First Lady, Letitia Christian Tyler, Cedar Grove was once an 18th century frame farmhouse. The brick "addition," which is now the main part of the house was built about 1811. It is very bright and open feeling inside primarily because of the large windows. A 20th century frame addition has replaced the original farmhouse.

In some ways Cedar Grove is the story of Letitia Christian, who was the wife of our tenth president, John Tyler. Letitia inherited Cedar Grove when her parents died soon after she and Tyler were married in 1813. She apparently ran the farm and raised 8 children, while John worked his way through the political system eventually being elected Vice President in 1840. He became the President when William Henry Harrison died.

Letitia was in poor health before becoming First Lady. She died in 1842 and is buried in the family cemetery at Cedar Grove. A picture of the cemetery is shown below, and a transcription of her tombstone is shown on the right.



The property is now owned by Ed. Ruffin who has done a large amount of restoration. Information here is mostly from the Cedar Grove web site.

ALL THAT IS MORTAL OF

LETITIA TYLER

*Wife of
JOHN TYLER*

*President of the United States
lies underneath this marble.*

*She departed this life
10. Sep. 1842*

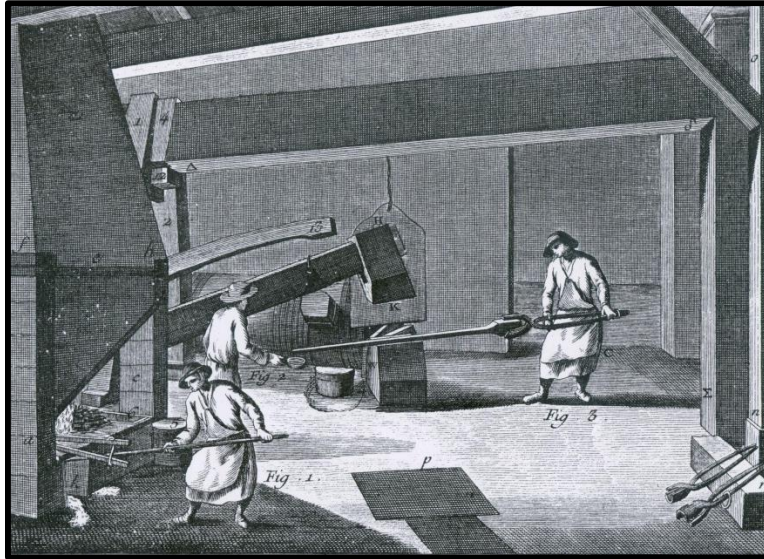
*at the President's House
in the City of Washington
in the 52nd Year of her age*



*Her life was an illustration of
the Christian Virtues,
and her death the death
of the righteous.*



The Importance of Providence Forge In the American Revolution



Interior of an 18th Century Iron Forge, *Encyclopedia de Diderot et de'Alembert*

Providence Forge, Virginia was one of the earliest areas in New Kent County to be settled, although we do not know what it was called at the time. We can only imagine the vision of those who chose the location in 1654, but surely they could not have foreseen the possibility of an iron forge being built there – a forge that would one day play a significant role in a war for independence from England.

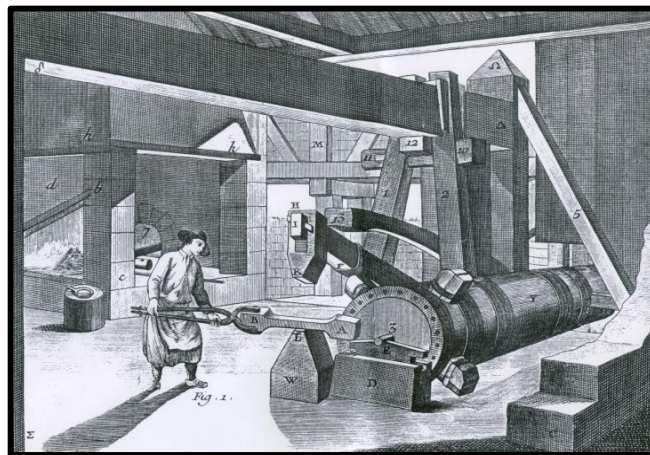
Or is it possible these early settlers might have envisioned an iron forge? The iron industry had already been born in the Chesapeake Region in 1609 when the Jamestown colonists, after failing to find silver and gold, began to send iron ore back to England to be assayed as a possible source of revenue. History tells us England did need iron at the time because their main supply of iron, which had come from Sweden, had been lost due to war. As a result, King George I and Virginia Company stockholders quickly looked to Jamestown and later settlements throughout the Chesapeake as potential suppliers.

The Chesapeake provided an ideal location for producing iron, as it had all the required natural resources – iron ore, an extensive supply of wood as a source of charcoal to fuel the furnaces, and an abundance of oyster shells which served as flux in the smelting process. Therefore, in the early 1600's, several locations throughout The Chesapeake Region began to produce a modest amount of iron to ship to England, including a settlement just south of present day Richmond where a furnace is known to have been located.

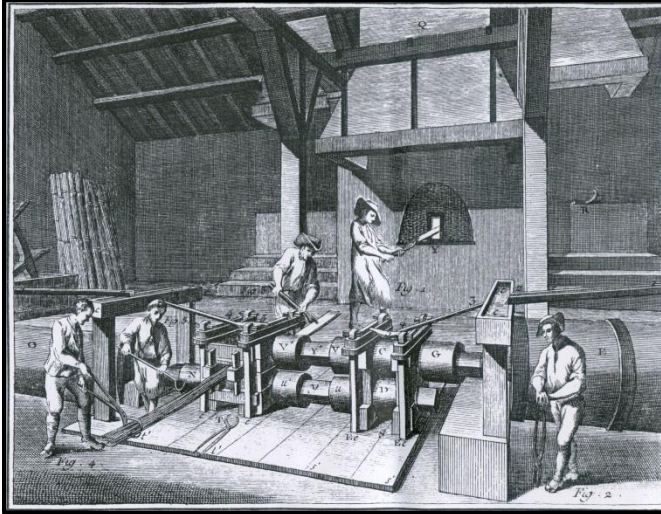
Unfortunately, in 1619 and 1622 Indian raids up and down the James River brought the infant iron “industry” to a halt, and it took nearly a hundred years for the industry to be revived.

The production of iron in the late 17th and early 18th centuries was not a simple undertaking. It required not only the right natural resources, but a skilled labor force. According to the National Park Service Ethnography Program, “Central and West Africa (i.e., Angola) became the source of many skilled people, albeit enslaved. African men with iron making skills were imported to the Chesapeake to work as blacksmiths on plantations, and in the iron industry that by the early 18th century had begun to develop in Colonial America. Ironworkers in the Chesapeake were the most privileged of African and African American workers.” Anne Willis, who researched slavery in the Chesapeake for Colonial Williamsburg, reports the highest financial value of an enslaved Virginian of the period was for a slave responsible for the operation of an iron furnace.

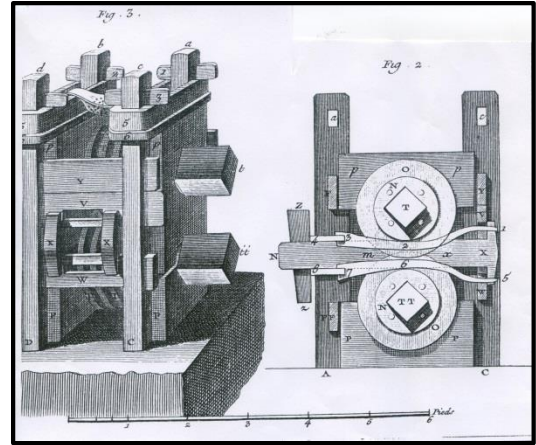
As can be seen in the illustrations below from the French publication *Encyclopedie de Diderot et d’Alembert*, the production of wrought (forged) iron involved very heavy machinery. Wrought iron was made from pig iron. The “pigs” were produced when liquid iron was drawn off from the bottom of the furnace (which reaches temperatures of 2000 degrees) into sand channels. The iron was then cast into ingots of various sizes called pigs. The pigs were then forged with large water-powered trip hammers. The hammers weighed between 100 to 500 pounds, their size dwarfing that of the workers. The hammers pounded the iron, thinning and widening it into iron bars. This process was repeated until the desired refinement was achieved, the degree of refinement resulting in wrought iron of various quality and pricing. Finally, after the bars met the required size they could be shipped as one heavy bar or cut into smaller sizes.



**A trip hammer hammering a pig into iron bars.
Note the size of the hammer in relation to the man.**



The three men in the foreground are slitting the bar into rods. In the left background note bars ready to be shipped to a blacksmith.



Detail of the slitting machine.

Based on the demand for iron, and the difficulty of producing it, it is understandable that the production of iron was of major importance during the century following the Indian raids. Fast forward to the mid-1700's and we find that England's dependence on iron from the colonies had not only increased, but was now in competition with the colonists. In the last years leading up to the American Revolution, the production of iron in the Chesapeake was at its peak. To illustrate, the Customs Report of 1771, reported that Virginia and Maryland together produced 654 tons of bar iron (wrought iron) worth 9-11 pounds (English currency), and 1,857 tons of pig iron worth 18-20 shilling per ton. Manufactured items such as wagon wheels and anchors would be made from lower quality iron (pig iron) while gun barrels would be made from very high quality wrought iron.

When in 1750, England passed the Iron Act, it was of grave concern to the colonists. By this time unrest had built amongst the colonists about multiple issues, the production of iron being just one. The Iron Act compelled the colonists to manufacture more pig and bar iron by restricting the production of plate, sheet and nail rod. It also prohibited the building of any more rolling and slitting mills. This meant the colonists were less and less able to produce iron for their own manufacturing and trade purposes, and instead were forced to send iron to England for its commercial success.

Among the colonists who objected to the Iron Act was William Holt who, in 1770, along with Reverend John Jeffrey Smith of Long Island, New York, started a Presbyterian settlement in the same area of New Kent County that was originally settled in 1654. They named it Providence. "The two men built a blacksmithery, storehouse, granary gristmill and dwelling at what became known as Providence Forge, and converted Kennon's Mill to a bakehouse-milling complex where ships' biscuits were baked and sold." Kennon's Mill, at that time, was not located in

present-day New Kent County. By 1774, when the colonies first came together to act as a unit in defying England and passed the Nonimportation Acts, Holt was an ardent supporter.

He claimed to the General Assembly “his mills were capable of producing 75,000 bushels of wheat a year.” (source: Geneology.com).

The location of Providence Forge was ideal for the success of Holt’s businesses. It was in a rural area with plenty of space and a reliable source of water. A millpond was built which supplied an ample source of water in all seasons, as it was needed to turn the waterwheel which drove the machinery required to process iron. Typical of this period, a breastshot waterwheel was probably located underneath the center of the building. The water flowed from the millpond, striking buckets near the center of the wheels edge, or just above it, causing the wheel to rotate. The rotation of the wheel transferred power to gear-driven machinery located above.



**Providence Forge, Old Forge Pond, Providence Forge, New Kent County, VA
From Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Online Catalog**

The Chickahominy River provided another location advantage. In order to transport heavy materials such as lumber to and from the saw mill, and iron to and from the forge, a canal was dug to take advantage of water transportation. The purpose of the canal was to achieve a navigable waterway from Providence Forge to the easily navigable sections of the Chickahominy which connected to the James River. Today, as you cross State Route 60 and drive south on Route 155, a short distance after crossing the railroad tracks you will pass over two small bridges. The first bridge crosses the remnants of the old canal; the second bridge crosses the Chickahominy (also the county line between New Kent County and Charles City County). The canal was critical to the success of Holt’s enterprise.



**Even today you can see how straight, and easily navigable
Holt's canal was for transporting materials.**

Another colonist who objected to the Iron Act was James Anderson who, at the age of twenty two, established a blacksmith shop in Williamsburg after relocating from his birthplace in Gloucester County. It did not take long before Anderson was recognized by the leadership of the community, and he was appointed as the Armorer to the Magazine. The Magazine stored equipment for the militia – arms, gunpowder, blankets, etc., and it was Anderson's responsibility to periodically inspect and clean all weapons to be sure they were in working order.

As unrest toward England accelerated, both Holt and Anderson had to decide whether to be loyalists or rebels. Holt, who was well-established (twice mayor of Williamsburg -- 1776-77 and 1782-83), and Anderson, who was newly-established, took different risks by siding with the rebels. The fact that Holt and Anderson were acquaintances during this period is known by records that show William Holt sold his home located on Duke of Gloucester Street, just in front of Anderson's blacksmith shop, to Anderson in 1770 – the same year Holt started Providence Forge. Once Holt established his forge, he became a supplier of rod iron and rolled iron to Anderson.

In 1775, a Committee of Safety was created in the Capitol in preparation for the impending conflict between the colonists and England. Anderson was one of the tradesmen who was taking an increasingly important role in providing expertise and finished goods for the defense of the Commonwealth. Then, of course, came the Revolution. In March of 1777, Anderson agreed to "...do blacksmith's work for the Commonwealth of Virginia at his shop in Williamsburg. He is reimbursed for the rent of ... his shop, six sets of tools and eight vises for gunsmith business ... as well as ... two forges and five apprentices ..." Eventually there were forty people working for Anderson, including apprentices, several slaves, white laborers and captured British soldiers. In addition to the main shop, Anderson had a kitchen which fed everyone bread, stews and soups.

During all this time, and as the war progressed, Holt continued to supply Anderson with needed iron, so it is no coincidence that Holt's forge, or Providence Forge, was important enough to attract the attention of the British. Enter British General Banastre Tarleton, leader of a mixed force of cavalry and light infantry known as the British Legion and Tarleton's Raiders. He personally earned the nicknames "Bloody Ban," and "Butcher," as he and the troops under his command won victories and ravaged the Carolinas. Tarleton and his green-uniformed troops traveled north from the Carolinas toward Gloucester Point with Cornwallis, and by most accounts, it was Tarleton and his Raiders who destroyed Holt's Forge and Mill on their way to the siege and ultimate surrender at Yorktown, effectively ending active fighting in Virginia.

It was also the end of the forge at Providence, for after its destruction, the site of the forge was lost for a long period of time. It was not found until 1868 when it was uncovered by the great flood. The mill, however, remained active, supplying local farmers with milling services well into the late 19th and early 20th century.

While not mentioned in today's student textbooks, William Holt, along with James Anderson, took great personal risk by joining with their fellow rebels rather than joining Governor Dunmore and staying loyal to England. The fact that military supplies were made available to the militia and General Washington's troops through the partnership of Holt and Anderson, clearly demonstrates that Providence Forge had an important role in the American Revolution. This little-known story, like hundreds of others, has nearly been lost over the years, but it is never too late to be rediscovered and passed forward to future generations.

By David Whiting

Susan Allen

Slavery and the Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence - Adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776

The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America

The First Two Paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence

When the Course of human events, It becomes necessary for our people to dissolve political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by the Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these rights are *Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness* - -



Susan Allen

Susan Allen was born a slave about 1827 fifty one years after the Declaration of Independence was adopted. Her owners were John and Maria Blayton of New Kent County. For thirty-eight years Susan Allen was a slave and her life was not hers, it belonged to someone else. There was no liberty and was there happiness? It is hard to imagine that you can have happiness when your life belongs to someone else, and you have no control over what happens to you or your family. Susan Allen as most slaves had no life, liberty or the pursuit of happiness.

John Henry Blayton, the son of John and Maria Blayton, fathered several children by the Susan Allen. The children of Susan Allen and John Henry Blayton were born slaves and carried their mother's surname Allen. These children fared better than a lot of slave children. They were fed and clothed, better than most, and they were taught to read and write while they were slaves. Perhaps this gave Susan Allen a bit of hope knowing her children's welfare was being taken care of by their father. But can you consider a bit of hope as happiness? After the end of the Civil War, several of these children received further education and became teachers in New Kent County and in other near y areas. They were moving toward the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness that Susan Allen did not have.

Family research has established that Susan Allen's children are descendants of John Hancock, who was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. How ironic is it that John Hancock, who believed in life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and signed one of the most important documents in the history of America, had descendants who had a life that was controlled by someone else, who had no liberty and who could not pursue happiness. However, life is full of ironies.

What would John Hancock say to his Allen descendants today after the celebration of another July 4th?

Enjoy your Life, your Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness!

By LaVonne Patterson Allen

The Jailor's Corner



The old jail is bustling with out of town visitors. Locals are stopping by to do research, and to chat. Our visitors have increased since last year this time. We are still getting first time local visitors who have never visited the New Kent Historical Society and some who did not realize that the old jail is the headquarters for the New Kent Historical Society. Our out of town visitors have come from North Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia, Maryland, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Florida, Texas and several areas of Northern Virginia.

The number of inquiries that the New Kent Historical Society receives by e-mail and by telephone voice mail has tripled since last year. New Kent County is a very popular county for genealogical research. Even though the records for New Kent County were burned on three separate occasions, we still have a lot of information to offer those who are researching their family tree.

I often refer to Our Most Wanted List in the jailor's Corner. I was recently asked the meaning of Our Most Wanted List? Our Most Wanted List is a list of surnames that are currently being researched by those who come to the visit the New Kent Historical Society and the surnames that are in the inquiries that we receive by e-mail and voice mail. Surnames on Our Most Wanted List for the past several months include: Massie/Massey, Clackson, Claxston, Clarkson, King, Sclater, Hockaday, Hubbard, Hazelwood, Timberlake, Harman, Ratcliffe, Pettis,/Puttus, Pearman, Johnson, Jackson, Hicks, Moss, Morris, Blayton, Allen, Binns, Crump, Munford, Overton, Ragland, McKay, Anderson, Nunn, Sims, Barnett, Strange, League, Mills and Lafayette,

I am happy to announce that exciting things are happening at the old jail. Thanks to Loretta and Hawthorne Davis, for the donation of a computer along with a keyboard and monitor. Thanks to Kelly Johnson who is helping to organize our files and newspaper clippings. Thanks to Catherine Pomfrey who is scanning our notebooks and files in our Family History section. Hopefully we will be able to put some of this information from the Family History section on line and then make the information available on the New Kent Historical Society's web page. This is a long - term project and it will be a while before these records are available on line. Thanks to Trudy Nelson who has and will continue to scan our obituary records and make them available on a flash drive along with a hard copy of the index to the obituaries that are available at the New Kent Historical Society.

It is time to take out the old key and lock up. I will be back in the next newsletter to keep you informed of what's new, who comes, who stays, and who is on our *Most Wanted List*. The jail is open every Monday. Come by and see us, sit and chat for a while, check to see if your name is on our *Most Wanted List*.

LaVonne Patterson Allen,

The Jailor

Look What's Happening!

Congratulations!

To:

William Royal Drumheller



William is our student member and the recipient of the New Kent Historical Society's 2014 Hunter W. Martin Scholarship. William is the valedictorian for the New Kent High School's Class of 2014. He will attend Randolph-Macon College and pursue his studies in the field of computer science.



CONGRATULATIONS

To the New Kent Historical Society 2014 Essay Contest Winners

NK Historical Society name essay winners

New Kent's Historical Society has announced its 2014 middle school contest essay winners:

Grade 6: Newspaper article: 1st place- Kameron Logan, 2nd place Amber Zahn. Comic or illustrated history: 1st place Katya Lebert, 2nd place- Lance Gray.

Grade 7: Comic or illustrated history: 1st place- B.J. Leader, 2nd place- Elianna Burgos. Newspaper article: 1st place- Jessica Chambers, 2nd place-

Robert Gibson. Poetry: 1st place- Chantale Barder, 2nd place- Danielle Peyton.

Other participants are Justin Jenkins, William Haupt, Riley Lipscomb, Abbigale Reece, Natasha Lange, Jennifer Fowlkes, Hailey Patterson, Leslie McKinney, Paige Hillis, McKenna Garner, Hannah Gentry, Bri'Anna Chavis, John Richart, Tanner Robertson, John Mehalko, Ben Wilson, Carlie Shaffer, William Madison, Breyden Smith, Isaiah Jonson, and Xyzoreyiah Sargent.



RESEARCH COMMITTEE

NKHS is looking for people dedicated to researching New Kent History by documenting, celebrating, perpetuating, and to keep alive New Kent County's historical importance. This research will be published and the researcher recognized. This committee is "ALL ABOUT RESEARCH" and research only! This is not a committee for people who "DO NOT" like to do research, who do not like to write, nor for someone "who throws something together" to say they have completed research. This is not the committee to join just to say you belong to a committee. We want only serious members who have a passion for writing to write



NKHS Research Center

We are making great progress in the reorganization of our files in the old jail. We are starting a long term process of scanning our family history collection and our obituary collection. If you have a copy of your family history or partial copy, please contribute a copy for our family history collection. We are also indexing and scanning our obituary collection. If you have any old obituaries with a New Kent connection, please contribute a copy for our collection. You can also stop by and we will make a copy for you. If you need further information contact lavonne@newkenthistoricalsoc.com or call 804-966-8587.



Transcribing New Kent County Slave Records

We will be transcribing slave records for New Kent County. If you have any old deeds, bible records or other documents that name slaves and their owners, please send me a copy or e-mail me that information. You can also come by the old jail (our research center) we will make a copy. If you need further information on this project contact lavonne@newkenthistoricalsoc.com or call 804-966-8587.



New Kent Historical Social Renewal Membership

Membership renewal is now due; please renew your membership today! Mail checks to the New Kent Historical Society, P. O. Box 24 New Kent, VA 23124 or come by on Monday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and renew your membership. We have a lot of exciting things that we are working on and your support and membership is greatly appreciated. To check on your renewal contact us at info@newkenthistoricalsoc.com, or call 804-966-8587 or come by and visit us.

New Members



Robert Haussermann – Providence Forge, VA

Laurie Ann-Sargent – Quinton, VA

Leah Tysall – West Point, VA

Robert Wilson – Quinton, VA

Brandon Baumann – Barhamsville, VA

Steve Long – Quinton, VA



Research Your Family History

At

The New Kent Historical Society

Join Today

_____ Yearly: \$15.00 _____ Lifetime: \$200

_____ Student (age 21 and under): \$5.00 _____ Business Sponsor: \$100 - \$500

_____ New Member _____ Membership Renewal Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Mail to: New Kent Historical Society P. O. Box 24 New Kent, VA 23124

