



Gateway to the West



Lee County Historical and Genealogical Society P. O Box 231 Jonesville, Virginia 24263

July 2017



President's Report

By Becky Jones

We have all had a busy spring keeping our yards mowed, weed eating and bushes trimmed. The same goes for the Historical Society. We have done more mowing etc. this spring due to much rain.

My husband and I have raised a little garden this spring. I told him it had been a pleasure to work and watch the stuff grow; not having to worry about not producing enough beans, the coons getting your corn or just the weather. It is a relief knowing you are not depending on your crop to feed your family like our parents and grandparents did.

Debbie Jessee was our speaker in January. Debbie is a member of The Historical Society of Southwest VA. The Society takes in the Counties of Lee, Scott, Wise, Russell, Dickenson, Tazewell and Buchanan. It was established in 1960 and meets three times a year. They put out a journal each year with articles about the different counties.

Mary Ruth Laster gave us the History of Stickleyville in February. She had an article in the Powell Valley Electric Cooperative living magazine about Stickleyville. Mary Ruth is a retired educator and lives in Stickleyville.

In March Sheriff Gary Parsons spoke to us about his family and growing

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Before the atomic bomb, William Davidson foretold it

by John Barry, Staff Writer Tampa Bay Times original article published in the Tampa Bay Times June 11, 2010

William L. Davidson recently sent a letter to the editor, giving a heads-up that he is turning 95 and — probably sooner than later — his one-page obituary will arrive from Curlew Hills Memorial Garden. He's not sick, but he's a scientist. The human life span being what it is, he can't be too careful. Near blindness bears down on widower Davidson, but he gets by pretty well with the help of a caretaker. His mind is sharp and active. Mortality and legacy occupy his thoughts.

In his letter, he advised that his obituary will include a particular claim to fame: In 1938, when he was 23, he co-authored a book that foresaw the atomic bomb and explained how it would work, how just one would unleash enough power to wipe out a whole city. Though the book, dryly titled Applied Nuclear Physics, was intended only as a technical manual, it became a bestseller as its horrific predictions became fact. That, Davidson wrote, was why the editor might want to look out for his obituary. If not, so be it. "Feel free to toss it in the waste basket, and little harm will have been done."

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Brick Walls *by Kim Hurst*

If you have ever done any genealogical research, I am sure you are very familiar with "brick walls". I have run into several brick walls in researching my own family history. Recently, we were asked by Mr. Steven D Hess (sghess4451@comcast.net) to do some research on his Fletcher family. I have been researching this family since receiving his request. I have run into multiple "brick walls" with this family so if anyone out there has any information, please contact Mr. Ness via e-mail or the historical society.

Mr. Hess is searching for information on Amanda and Elijah John Fletcher, both born in 1835 in Pendleton Co. KY. I have found their marriage record of Oct. 27, 1858 in Pendleton, Ky. Her maiden name is Rough/Rouk. I then find them in Pendleton, Ky in the 1860 census. Daughter Louisa was born in Virginia in 1861 which indicates they must have moved to Lee County, VA after the 1860 census; followed by the birth of L.E. Fletcher, Henry Mack C Fletcher born 1868 (This is Mr. Ness' line) H.M. Fletcher and William Lee Fletcher who was born in Lee County, VA in 1874. Amanda is listed as a widow in the 1880 census which would indicate that Elijah John died after 1874 and before 1880 but I have not found a record of his death.

In the 1880 census, Amanda is listed as the head of the household with children Louisa 19, L.E. 14, H.M. 10, William Lee 6 and grandsons John A (2) and Wesley M (1). A side note in the research reveals that Louisa is the mother of John A and Wesley with the father being John McDonald who is listed in the 1880 census as a mulatto.

Louisa later married James Ingle of Lee County, Virginia. (This of course has nothing to do with Elijah John, Amand and son Henry Mack C Fletcher but when researching it sometimes pays to look into other family members).

Henry Mack C Fletcher (often listed as Mack C, Henry Mack and sometimes John Henry Mack) married Pricie Winnie Melvin Sykes about 1888 in Lee County, VA. This marriage ended in divorce. He then married Crisy Catherine Counts in 1899 in Dickenson County, VA. He died in 1922 in Dickenson County, VA.

This is where the "brick wall" comes into play. Mr. Ness is looking for the parents of Amanda Rough/Rouk and Elijah John Fletcher. I have been unable to find parents. There marriage record lists witnesses as George, Calvin and James Fletcher. I do not know if these are brothers, uncles, father etc. and have been unable to trace any of them. I am also unable to find Amanda Fletcher after the 1880 census until 1920 when she was living with Mack C and Crissa (Catherine) in Dickenson County, VA where she is listed as Mandy. I found an Amanda Fletcher in Clarke County, VA listed as a lodger in the 1900 census but I am not sure if this is the same Amanda.

So the questions remain; Who were Amanda and Elijah John's parents? When did Elijah die? Where is Amanda after 1880 and before 1920? When did Amanda die? If you can help break through any of these "brick walls" it would be greatly appreciated!

History of St. Charles (Stone Mountain) Health Clinic *by Jean Martin*

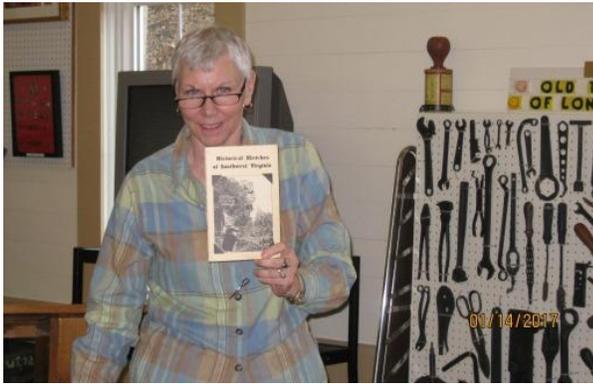
St. Charles Health Council, Inc., a private, not-for-Profit Corporation was founded by local citizens during the summer of 1973 with the aim of establishing a primary health clinic. The money was raised by bake sales and donations (\$74,000 +) -- More than one pot of beans were cooked and lunches sold to help supply the money and a 12 room building was finished by the summer of 1975. A lot of labor on building was done by volunteers. This clinic first started when a group of students working with Vanderbilt University came to St. Charles to conduct a health fair.

St. Charles Community Health Clinic opened on January 26, 1976 with a nurse practitioner and a part-time physician. In September Dr. Art VanZee replaced the part-time doctor and has continued to serve the area. He is still active with the health and wellness of his patients. The original clinic offered medical, lab and pharmacy. The building was expanded in 1983 with 12 more rooms which allowed the clinic to employ another physician and a dentist; they also added medical x-ray facilities. In 1991 an outreach program was started for elderly and disabled

patients. Throughout time different programs have been added to insure the people get the best affordable health possible which includes access to Pharmacy Connect programs to help with the cost of medicine.

In 1991 St. Charles Clinic was expanded a second time of 10 rooms. The new space housed exam rooms and patient education, outreach and administration services.

The St. Charles Health Council began doing business as "Stone Mountain Health Services" in 1991. The consortium St. Charles and Western Lee clinic have been the foundation for sustained growth over the years. The consortium sponsored the development of a respiratory clinic and a community health center in Castlewood in 1992, a respiratory clinic in Vansant in 1993. Also in 1993 they acted on request for help to help develop clinics in Haysi, Davenport, and Vansant. As of today they have 11 clinics from Western Lee to Konarock, 2 respiratory centers which have Black Lung programs. The newest clinic is located in Jonesville with a new clinic to be built in Appalachia with opening date for 2018.



Debbie Jessee



Sheriff Gary Parsons

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up in Robbins Chapel. He said his information is by word of mouth. His grandfather was raised on Child Creek Ky. married Rhoda Smith and moved to Robbins Chapel, Lee County. His mother's people were Hoovers.

Ada Vandeventer was our speaker in April. Ada was asked by another Historical Society member to help her do some research on the Robinsons who were in Grayson County, Va. Her great-great grandfather Wilburn Filmore Robinson came to Lee County in 1860 and married Elizabeth Ayers. She had been a midwife in the western part of the county. Many of the Robinsons had served in the different wars. It turned out her visitors coming from CA., OK., and Fl. were 5th cousins to Ada and another one of our members, Ora Rowlett.

May speakers were Steve Gilly and Ron Mullins telling us a tale about an early preacher in these parts named Jesse Bolling. Jesse was married to Mary E. Pennington whose family founded Pennington Gap. In 1780 he was preaching in Lee County now Scott County at Stony Creek Baptist Church, Fort Blackmore. It took the people two days to go to his services from Blackwater. Their attendance at Church was documented and is possibly the first written use of the word Melungeon. Elder Bolling had taken in two brothers, Frank and John when their parents were killed by Indians. Elder Bolling later moved to Bolling Town in Perry County, Kentucky, to start

a church and spread the gospel. One of those boys, John, was our speakers' great-great grandfather. You can watch and hear more stories about Appalachia on their podcast. www.storiespodcast.net.

After the May meeting members who wanted to visit the D. Carr McClure house near Friendship did so. This stately home was built around 1910. The McClures lived there until it was sold to William and Kathleen Warner in the fifties.

Occasionally you have a speaker not show up. That is what happened to us in June. We have a poem that Mildred Ray Hall had written about Jonesville in the early years. We read that poem and had a good discussion about the way things were back then. Arlene Hall and Birg Sergent said they enjoyed the meeting. See Mr. Hall's poem and picture of Jonesville in the early 1900 enclosed.

The Lee County historical Society had a good article in the Powell Valley News this month. We want to make our local people aware of what we are trying to do and to get more Lee County artifacts and family's lineages. We would like to get more local people involved and more visitors to our building. We need volunteers to help keep the Society going. We still have a membership of about 140, most out of the area. Our dues are \$10.00 per year and life membership is \$100.



Steve Gilly and Ron Mullins



Mary Ruth Laster

Before the atomic bomb, William Davidson foretold it *from page 1*



William L. Davidson at 37. As a young nuclear physicist he co-authored a book foretelling the atomic bomb.

William Davidson's front-row seat at the brink of the nuclear age was accidental. It all started, in fact, with a motorcycle accident. In 1934, a drunken driver knocked him off his Harley-Davidson, breaking his left leg in two places. He developed gas gangrene that reduced the leg to raw flesh. It took six months to save his life. His long recovery cost him a scholarship offer. In the midst of the Great Depression, he cast about for something else and won an assistantship at Yale. There, working toward a doctorate in physics, he met nuclear physicist Ernest C. Pollard, who was then designing Yale's first cyclotron.

"He put me to work, diligently winding coils for the particle accelerator." Pollard and Davidson began using the cyclotron to create radioactive isotopes, which have many applications in medical diagnostics. That caused Pollard to conceive a book — a guidebook — written not for physicists, but for technicians working with radioactive isotopes. He recruited Davidson to help him write it.

A textbook publisher accepted the book, but warned the authors they wouldn't get rich. The publisher estimated it could sell about 3,000 books at \$3 each. Pollard and Davidson would get a royalty of 45 cents per book — to split. That worked out to about 10 cents an hour for their labor. "But at the time, you could buy 2 pounds of hamburger for 25 cents." They took the deal.

Applied Nuclear Physics was published in November 1942. Davidson's first-quarter royalty check was \$39. But in December 1942, Nobel Prize-winning physicist Enrico Fermi announced a nuclear breakthrough: Conducting experiments on a squash court in Chicago, he proved that a chain reaction could be created in natural uranium.

The proof triggered an immediate expansion of the secret Manhattan Project to build an atomic bomb. It also triggered a moratorium on the publication of any material that included the words "nuclear fission" or "atomic bomb." It so happened that Pollard's and Davidson's Chapter 11 included a detailed description of nuclear fission, of a futuristic atomic bomb and its capacity for annihilation. All this was published before the moratorium. Their book was the only game in town. Davidson's next royalty check was for \$1,000. The one after that was for \$2,000. Many of the books apparently were purchased by people hired for the Manhattan Project who weren't sure what the project was even about. *Applied Nuclear Physics* went through 11 printings. It sold 100,000 copies.

Davidson and his wife, Miriam, bought a house with his \$20,000 in royalties. They tried to have children but couldn't. Davidson always wondered whether the radiation experiments he conducted on the unshielded cyclotron at Yale were the reason. He never got checked. "Let nature take its course," Miriam said.

After the book, Davidson went to work for B.F. Goodrich. His first project: to design a golf ball that would fly farther than any competitor's. He failed. He could never get one to go farther than an Acushnet. Goodrich gave him a second project: to design a gas tank for American warplanes that wouldn't leak when riddled with bullets from German Messerschmitt fighter planes. That time, he succeeded, wildly. He developed a rubber coating that expanded when exposed to gasoline — sealing those bullet holes shut and saving countless pilots.

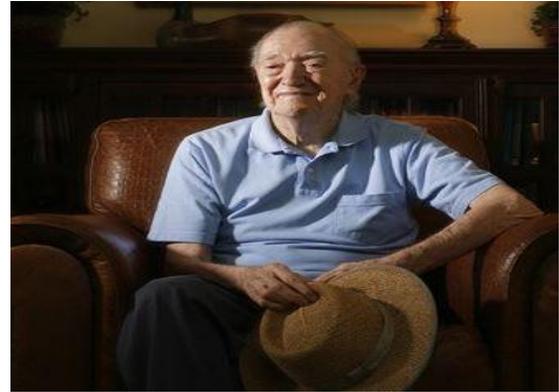
He retired to Dunedin at age 50, figuring, as a scientist, that the average man's life span was 75, and a 25-year retirement was about right. His calculations proved way off. He's turning 95 this summer. Miriam passed away in 1999 after 57 years of marriage. He won't predict exactly when that obituary will arrive from Curlew Hills Memorial Gardens. The wonders of 65 years ago seem like yesterday, yet the skin grafts that saved him from gangrene and sent him to Yale have long faded. He realizes he's the only one left to tell his story. "All the others were middle-aged and have long since gone to their reward."

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Before the atomic bomb, William Davidson foretold it *from page 6*

For the final printing of Applied Nuclear Physics in 1951, Davidson and Pollard looked back on the nuclear age that they foretold in 1942:

"Thus far, the utilization of atomic energy for destructive purposes has had an impact on civilization far outweighing the beneficial gains. As we stand today, perhaps in the shadow of another world catastrophe, it requires a brave man indeed to suggest that the scales will be balanced tomorrow or even a century hence. . . . "We must believe that in the final analysis it is the constructive, good, and useful side of this double-edged sword which will prevail."



William L. Davidson in 2010

William L. Davidson Obituary

William L. Davidson, 100, of Dunedin, FL died on Friday January 5, 2016. Born and reared in Jonesville, VA, Dr. Davidson, a nuclear physicist, was educated at the College of William and Mary and Yale University. He occupied several research and administrative positions with B.F. Goodrich Co., Monsanto Chemical and FMC Corp. In 1952, he organized the Office of Industrial Development for the Atomic Energy Commission, Washington, DC, and served as its Director for two years. He published a number of scientific papers and co-authored two scientific texts. He collaborated in early research on neutron diffraction studies with 1994 Nobel laureate Clifford Shull. Dr. Davidson was a fellow of the American Physical Society and the American Institute of Chemistry. He and his late wife of 57 years, Miriam nee Alloway, moved to Dunedin in 1965. In 1978, he published *Dunedin - Thru the Years*, for the Dunedin Historical Society. He was predeceased by his parents, William Lee Davidson, Sr. and Zelma Albert Davidson, and by a sister, Jamie Davidson Smith, all of Jonesville. He was survived by a sister, Mrs. Mary D. Hancock, of Charlottesville, VA, as well as several nieces, nephews and cousins. The committal service and burial of William and Miriam's cremains was held at 1:00 p.m. Saturday, May 21, in the Davidson Cemetery, Jonesville, VA. Rev. Layne Pennington officiated.



The D. C. McClure house west of Jonesville built ca. 1910.



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We're on the Web!

See us at:

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Millard Ray Hall with movie posters from the old Keithley Theatre and a certificate from the 1920's that he donated to the LCHGS.

Historical Society Books On Sale!

Bicentennial History of Lee County 1792-1992

Regular \$65.00 – Sale \$52.00 Book
2.75 Tax (VA Residents)
5.00 S & H
\$59.75 Total Cost

Volume I Cemeteries of Lee County

Regular \$40.00 - Sale \$32.00 Book
1.70 Tax (VA Residents)
5.00 S & H
\$38.70 Total Cost

Volume II Cemeteries of Lee County

Regular \$45.00 – Sale \$36.00 Book
1.90 Tax (VA Residents)
5.00 S & H
\$42.90 Total Cost

Volume III Cemeteries of Lee County

Regular \$50.00 – Sale \$40.00 Book
2.10 Tax (VA Residents)
5.00 S & H
\$47.10 Total Cost

A Pictorial History of Lee County

Re-print of the First Volume
Regular \$49.99 - Sale \$40.00 Book (Tax Included)
5.00 S & H
45.00 Total Cost

Our Library and resources are available for use by appointment.

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