



Volume 23

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Issue 1

Strasburg, Virginia

NEWSLETTER

strasburgvaheritage.org

Strasburg Heritage Association
Annual Meeting & Program
“Every Picture Tells a Story”

Book Signing & Sale

Sunday, Feb. 26th at 2 pm

St. Paul Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall. 193 W. Washington Street,
Strasburg

Join us for a program about the making of the new vintage photograph book, “Strasburg”. Making this book proved to be an interesting working partnership of the people of our hometown, from those who provided their family photos to those who shared their knowledge for the captions.

The book, part of the Images of America series by Arcadia Publishing, by Kathy Kehoe and the Strasburg Museum, will be for sale. Kathy and president of the museum, Dennis Hupp, will be available to sign copies .

The public is invited.

Cash or Check Only if buying books. We will not have capability for credit or bank cards.

President's Message

Tim Taylor

I hope 2023 has started off well for everyone! The Strasburg Heritage Association is looking forward to another year of offering and participating in events to share our rich local history. I am excited about our Annual Membership Program Meeting which will be on Sunday, February 26 at 2 pm at St. Paul's Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall. Our program will consist of our own board member, Kathy Kehoe, talking about her new book, "Images of America - Strasburg." The book will be on sale after the program. Kathy and Dennis Hupp, who wrote the Foreword for the book, will be happy to sign your book(s).

This is our annual membership meeting so we will be conducting the business of approving board members and officers for the upcoming year. We need at least 10% of our membership to constitute a quorum, so I hope you can join us. The Nominating Committee's Proposed Slate of Board Members and Officers will be shared at the meeting and listed on our website as well.

It is the time of the year we ask everyone to renew their membership by paying their annual dues of \$20. We appreciate any financial support you can provide. We continue to support our community by giving scholarships to graduating Strasburg High School students, providing support for two community meals, sharing Strasburg Community history and folklore via our awesome newsletter, a podcast channel, informational programs, and assist with various events such as Vintage in the Valley and Shenandoah County Heritage Day. Any donations are appreciated in helping us serve our community!

Thanks for your continuing support! We look forward to another exciting year of sharing the Strasburg Community's culture, heritage, and history.

Sincerely - Tim Taylor - SHA President and the SHA Board

Strasburg Historic Walking Trail

The Grand Opening of the revitalized Strasburg Historic Walking Trail
will be held on

Sunday, May 7, 2023 at 1pm at the Strasburg Museum.

You're invited to enjoy an opening ceremony and refreshments.

Afterwards you may take a guided tour or tour on your own.

Shenandoah County Heritage Day 2023

The annual Shenandoah County Heritage Day 2023 will be held in Strasburg at the Strasburg Fire Department and Rescue Squad on Saturday, April 15 from 11am-3pm. Since the location of Heritage Day is in Strasburg, event hosts Shenandoah County Historical Society and Shenandoah County Library Archives are hoping that many area individuals will participate and bring exhibits about the history of their families, homes, farms, businesses and other historic information. The exhibits aren't limited to Strasburg area history. Anyone who wishes to participate and bring information about local Shenandoah County history is welcome. There is no cost to attend the event.

There is no fee to participate with an exhibit. Tables and chairs will be provided. For more information contact Zach Hottel at 540-984-8200 or Barbara Adamson at 540-975-0037.



Our plaque program hopes to increase awareness of, and pride in, buildings important to the history of Strasburg and Davis District. Obtaining a plaque is purely voluntary. Real estate taxes will not increase, nor will any limitations be placed on the property. There are neither restrictions nor covenants associated with obtaining a plaque.

The building must be at least 60 years old. Thus, in 2022 for example, the structure must have been built no later than 1962. What matters is the year the original house was built. Additions do not affect eligibility. The building must be within Strasburg or Davis District.

The beautiful bronze plaque is made by the Erie Landmark Company in Columbia, Pennsylvania, and it usually takes a month from the time an application is received until the plaque arrives. Although the cost is approximately \$200, including shipping, the applicant pays \$120, and the Strasburg Heritage Association pays the remainder. Information on how to apply can be found on our website, www.strasburgvaheritage.org.

-----Board of Directors 2022-----

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Today this building is the law office of Brandon G. Keller PLC at 142 E. King St.

A Little Folk History Stovers Variety Store

"The Dime Store"

By

Kathy Kehoe

It was Christmas 1964, when two little boys were told by their parents that they would be getting a special surprise at Christmastime. The parents, Bill and Evelyn Stover, wouldn't tell their sons, Billy and Steve, what that special surprise was. "Oh, man, oh wow, this is going to be great" thought Billy. When

Christmas finally rolled around, the boys were told the family was buying a store. They weren't quite as excited about that as their parents were. "A Store?" And then, when Stovers Variety Store opened on January 1st, 1965, the boys realized it was a family endeavor. This meant, Billy recalls, that after school "we walked to the store to work. Boxes needed to be moved. We were pretty much slave labor." When he complained to his father he wasn't getting paid, his dad would say, "Did you have a place to sleep last night? Did you have supper?" When Billy replied yes, his father would say, "Then you got paid." Billy, or Bill Jr., recalls this with a laugh. Bill has many good memories of the store: "One of the things I really enjoyed was the candy sold by the pound." Brach's candy came in boxes and he and brother Steve put the candy in glass containers on display for sale. "And we had to sample to make sure they weren't bad," said Bill with a grin. "I don't think he made any money on chocolate covered peanuts."

Bill remembers that downstairs in the basement, there was a storeroom where they cut window shades. The pull shades had to be cut to fit the customer's windows with a machine they had in the cellar. Sixteen year old Jimmy Ferguson worked at Stover's while still in high school, enrolled in the ICT (Industrial Cooperative Training), or DE (Distributive Education) program where he split his school day between classes and a job. Steve remembers that "Jimmy Ferguson taught me how to cut window shades." The boys had to crank the machine by hand and custom cut them to fit the customer's windows. Jimmy remembers using a workbench with a vise on the dirt floor of the basement with Billy and Steve. He also stocked shelves and kept an eye on the ten and twelve year old Stover brothers for their mother. One of the other jobs he remembered is watching for shoplifters. One day he observed a woman looking through the stacks of socks, underwear and t-shirts laid out on shelves. He saw her put on some clothing and wear it out of the store. A typical teen boy, Jimmy said he was so embarrassed that he never told Bill or Evelyn. One customer Jimmy remembers is our high school business economics teacher, Kenton Gamble, who would come to the store to buy a box of paper clips. There were fifty in a box, and Mr. Gamble would count them all before he bought them. Jimmy said he made 50 Cents an hour at Stover's, and made 75 cents an hour at Artz Esso Service Station. "We sold everything", recalls Bill Stover Jr. "Buttons, yarn, pretty much everything." He remembers "we'd walk from school down by the hotel and come up the back alley." The boys would use a tall ladder to change lightbulbs and take boxes out back of the store to burn in a firepit. "Every night," remembers Steve, "when Daddy counted the money, he would pick out old coins and save them."

The brothers did inventory once a year and "we had to count everything and put the tags on by hand."

said Billy. This was way before store items could be simply scanned into the cash register. Steve remembers how they had to count “every one of those buttons and every screw. It took a long time and not a very pleasant thing.” But he also remembers that it was a good experience to go to the store after school. “Daddy had an office upstairs where he could look out over that store and he used to send us up there to watch for people who might be pocketing more than they were paying. Daddy wouldn’t do anything to them if they did. Most of the time it didn’t equal a dollar.”

Steve remembers he was given 25 cents an hour but then he had to spend his money at the Virginia Restaurant. “So Daddy was just giving me money for dinner.” Steve remembers it was a six day a week job. “But I was young and had a lot of nice experiences. We had a lot of local people who shopped there to support the store. And it was a really great time for a five and ten cent store, times were tough, and people didn’t have the money to buy like they do today. There were a tremendous amount of wonderful people who worked there.”

Steve recalls that when Vaughns Drug Store went out of business, the boys had to haul the safe from the back room of the drug store which was a few buildings down the street, to the back door of Stover’s Variety. “Bill Walton brought his wrecker down there. The safe was on wheels, and we wheeled that thing with crowbars to the back of Vaughn’s and Bill picked it up with the wrecker and took it to the back door of the store.” Steve laughed and said, “We were upset that old man Vaughn didn’t leave anything in it.”

Steve said that past employees have told him what a wonderful experience they had working at Stovers. “There was an awful lot of merchandise in that store—from dried flowers to yarn to anything and everything.” said Steve.

Both boys were taught how to gift wrap for customers, especially at Christmas time. Steve recalls how “I helped my mother wrap Christmas presents for customers. I got pretty good at it. I don’t get to do it anymore, my wife and kids and grandchildren do all the wrapping.” He remembers how “I didn’t go to school that people didn’t tell me how good I was at wrapping Christmas presents.”

For Billy, wrapping Christmas presents conjures up the memory of how his father Bill “would only allow you three little pieces of tape on each package, one on the back and one on each end.” That was a hard and fast rule with their father. Billy says “and a roll of tape probably only cost about forty cents.” But the boys learned how to fold and tape using only three pieces.

“The children nowadays probably don’t get that experience dealing with people and having to be accountable for working in a store. There were times I didn’t want to go, but after I got there it wasn’t too bad.” remembers Steve. He remembers when Marie Williams worked at the store. “She made sure we did things the right way. Mother took care of the flowers, making arrangements and Christmas wreaths from plastic and dried flowers.”



Pictured: Bill Stover Sr. with employee Marie Williams



Neither brother is sure of when the store closed, but Steve thinks it was about 1968, when he would have been 14 years old because that was when he went to work for Buddy Painter on his farm. Bill Jr. said he put a band booster sticker on the window over the front door to the store. The sticker shows the school year as "67-68". The band boosters were window stickers that were sold to raise money for the high school marching band. That sticker is still there over the door to the law office of

Brandon G. Keller on King Street.

All Steve remembers is that "I was ten when he bought it. We had that store four years, maybe five," said Steve. The Stovers bought the business but Harry Keller owned the building."

"What happened to the store," explained Bill Jr., "was that he let a lot of people buy stuff on credit. Then he had to buy on credit. When he decided to close, we tried to talk him into taking bankruptcy, but he wouldn't. For sixteen years he paid everybody he owed and paid all his debts. He never collected the money that was owed to him."

While Bill Stover Sr. still had the store, he went to work for the Keister Advertising Services selling advertising and worked until he died at age 91. Steve reminisced that "We used to not have to go out of town to get anything you needed. We had Western Auto, Joe Wolfsons clothing and other stores. It's pretty much all gone now."

According to the Shenandoah County Library Truban Archives post card collection, the Grove Building was built in 1911 by F. E. Grove, who operated a store there which is believed to have been a Five and Ten Cent Store. At some point, the store was operated by the Rosson family, a couple by the name of Purdy, and at one time was known as Slanton's Five and Ten Cent store. When Stovers Variety closed, the business was sold to cobbler Byrd Barrick. Barrick's Shoe and Variety Shop sold many of the same items. Kitty Miller has fond memories of Barricks, remembering "it was just one of those places you like to go and browse. I loved hearing the machine run as he repaired shoes."



Steve remembers that "An elderly man sold it to daddy." The elderly man he remembers could have been Mr. Purdy, Mr. Rosson, or the mysterious Mr. Slanton. At one point in time, possibly late 1950s or 1960, a main street parade photo shows the building with a sign that says "Slantons 5 and 10 cent Store". I can't find anyone who remembers the business being called Slantons. Pat Striker remembers she worked for a couple whose last name was "Purdy" but she thought they operated under the same sign as Rossons, likely leasing the store from the Rossons after Mrs. Rosson went to Lloyds Department Store to help her husband. But Bill Stover Jr, remembers that when they started working at the store, there were boxes with shipping labels to Slantons. While Pat was still working for the Purdy's, Bill and Evelyn Stover took over the management of the store and put up a new sign: Stover Variety Store. The parade photograph shows the business signs of Northern Virginia Power Company and Dalton's

Alteration Shop. Kitty Miller identified the man in the photo holding a camera to be Northern Virginia Daily employee Bill Orndorff. Kitty remembers taking clothes to be altered at Dalton's and believes the time frame to be the sixties which would indicate the photo was taken in the 1960s. That would mean Slanton's existed after Rosson's but before Stover's. It is still a mystery when Slanton's 5 and 10 Cent store was operating.



Kitty Jean Miller tells me that her first memory in 1950 of the building was of Rossons 5&10. It was owned and managed by Lloyd and Doll Rosson. Lloyd then opened Lloyd's Department store in a building that is now part of First Bank, across the street, while his wife ran the Five and Ten Cent Store. In the early 1950s, Rossons even had children's clothes, remembers Kitty, "little crawlers with feet in them--baby things, and baby dresses. When Bill Stover took over he ran the business the same way with a wide variety of everything. You could buy most anything in town back then."

Joanne Carrier Brown worked at Rossons when she was in high school, in 1956/57. She remembers that Dr. Grove had his dentist office there on the 2nd floor. "I made 40 cents an hour—a lot of spending money for a high school kid. Grace Wallace and Richard Beeler were two other high school kids working there. My sister Kay Keffer was the assistant manager. The Rossens were back and forth between the two businesses once he opened the Lloyd's Department Store. We sold everything: candy, jewelry, clothes, toys, paper and pencil, curtain rods, dishes, etc. It was a gathering place on Saturday night when people came to town to shop and visit. The streets would be full on Saturday nights. Those were good ole days. Lots of memories."

Pat Striker also worked there part time as a teenager. She remembers working for a couple with the last name of Purdy. Bill Stover bought the business while she was working for the Purdys. Pat recalls that she worked there in 1961 and 62 and stayed when the Stovers took over. She went to school half the day and worked the other half under the ICT or DE program, then worked through the summer while school was out. She left after graduating from Strasburg High School and went to work full time at the Aileen sewing plant.

Pat Striker also remembers that during that period, when she worked at Stover's, "there were still some stores left in town, but not a lot." She recalls that they had regular customers every year before school started. One customer in particular had six children and she would buy new socks and underwear just before her children began a new year at school. Once, Pat remembers, there was a bottle of Blue Waltz perfume that was on a shelf too close to the radiator and apparently got too hot. "The bottle burst, drenching the heating radiator." Blue Waltz didn't have a good scent to begin with, thought Pat and it was some "stinking stuff that stunk up the place." Pat loved weighing out the loose candy that they sold by the pound for the children because they would be so excited. The store was the "only place in town that carried sewing notions. People in those days used to sew a lot." She remembers the cash register and how you had to push really hard to get the cash drawer to open and a little card to pop up in the window of the cash register. One of the items she remembers selling was oilcloth, which was a close woven linen cloth that had a coating of boiled linseed oil to make it waterproof.

Customers would give her the measurements they wanted and she would cut the large bolts of oilcloth to the size they needed for their dining tables and kitchen counters. "It stood up forever", she remembers. "It was hard to wear out. People usually scrubbed the pattern off before they wore the oilcloth out."

The "Dime" stores in our hometown were an important part of our community and the people who operated the small stores on the main street were equally important. They lived and worked in the same neighborhoods as their customers. They provided jobs for high school kids and for women who supplemented the family income. The Stovers offered a family friendly business where their friends and neighbors could find what they needed for their families at an affordable price. At the same time, they taught their sons the value of hard work, giving them experiences that taught them many life lessons. Those "dime stores" where townspeople shopped have evolved into today's Dollar stores, one of which is still on King Street. But the nostalgia of those "five and ten cent" stores will never die.

George Hoffman, Pat Striker's younger brother, remembers Bill and Evelyn Stover and how they were an important part of their community. George writes:

I remember the store vaguely, especially in size and smell. It was a big store, long from front to back, and relatively narrow, but the 'five-and-ten,' as we knew it, had a bit of everything! I can remember going there with my mom to buy several friends' birthday gifts when I was invited to parties. I remember the smell...a mix of old wood, floor varnish, fabric, and a little plastic, probably from all the toys! I remember when I was very small, my sister, Pat worked there, and I remember it was kind of fun to go in there when she was working. More than anything, I will always remember the owners, Bill and Evelyn. They were two of my very favorite people in the world. I knew them, also, of course, from seeing them in church every Sunday. They both taught Sunday school and worked with youth there from time to time. Evelyn was in my mom's class, and I remember her even coming to our house for meetings, parties, etc. She was always so warm and loving. She was never, in my mind, without a smile, even when faced with illness and her own mortality. Even now, I can hear her very infectious laugh!

And Bill...well, he was always an inspiration, especially musically. He sang in the church choir, and often soloed there and all around the community. He was known for his large booming baritone far and wide! But he was also one of the nicest, most laid-back, most respectful MEN I think I ever knew. As a side story, Bill was taking his son, my brother and a few of their friends to the very first Beatles' concert in Washington, DC. When one of the guys found out he wasn't able to go, Bill called my mom, and said that he knew how much I was dying to go, because we had talked about it. Needless to say, I WAS dying to go! Bill told Mom that he'd be happy to take me along if she'd allow it. So, all because of him, I was allowed to go along and pal around with him all day, attend the concert, etc., while the older boys probably tried not to be seen with the little brother! He was the best!! As I look back, I realize what a role model he was to so many! So, walking into the five-and-ten, for me, was always a comforting experience, because one of these awesome folks was always going to walk toward us to greet us with smiles, help us with our shopping needs, and generally make our day. I am sorry for folks who never had such amazing people and opportunities in their lives.

To Our Readers: If you have memories to add to folk histories, please contact Kathy Kehoe by emailing strasburgheritage@gmail.com, calling 540-465-4185 or contacting any SHA Board Member.

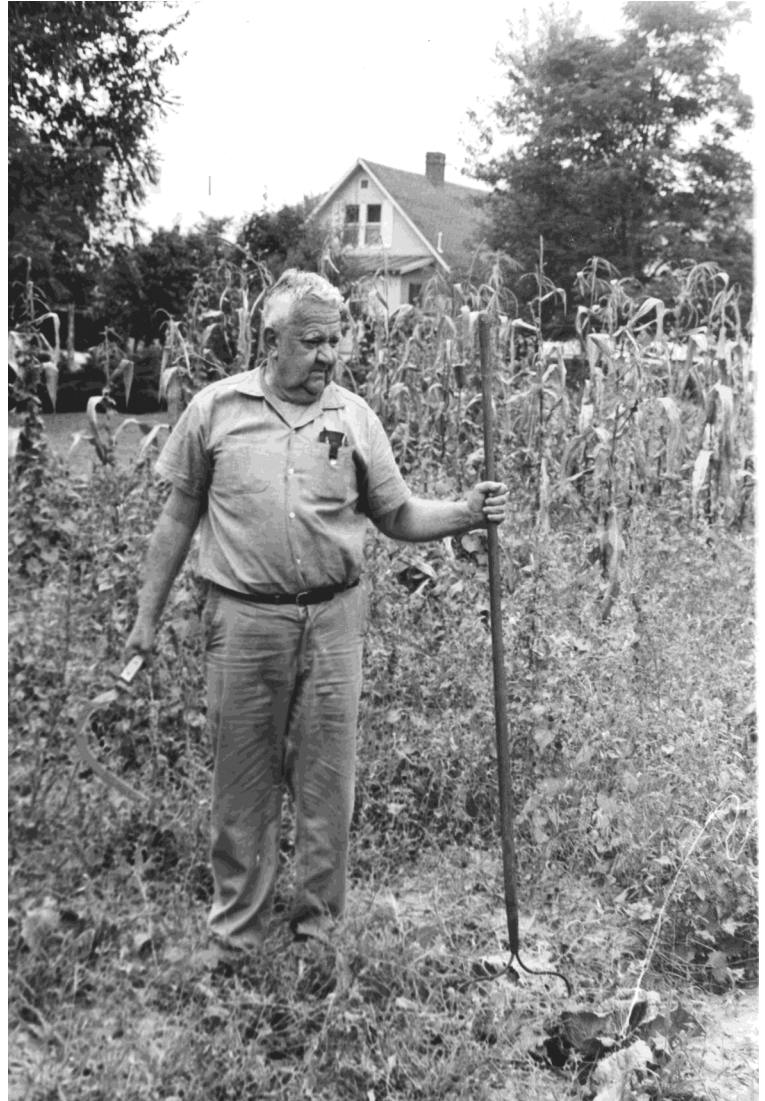
A Little Bit of Folk History

My Father's Rake

By John P. Painter

Before my father died, he set that rake against a nearby tree. The toothed end was at the top with the teeth pointing away from the trunk. As that rake nestled into the tree's accommodating crotch, the years passed. Though the place was very close to the house, in plain view, and only an arm's reach from the path, no one disturbed the placement. My mother lived alone for over 22 years. After her passing, when my hand closed around the rake handle, in the same place where my father's hand had last been, I was shaken in body and spirit. Instead of the rake willfully following my hand, it asserted an instant stubbornness. The tree and the rake were now one and the same. Tree bark, an inch thick, now covered the common top rail onto which each tooth was attached. The center teeth were submerged at least halfway into the enveloping wood. There would be no hope of ever undoing what my father had done. I knew this to be true of the man. He had a sense of right and wrong that was just as strong and stubborn. His will could not be bent or budged on matters of morality. He never eluded even in jest or cracked a smile at hearing jokes that flirted with such topics. It was as if his hand reached from beyond and gripped my forearm for an instance, to silently say "Boy.....be good!"

I miss him.



Eugene "Punk" Painter in his backyard garden on A Street
(now Ash Street)



PO Box 525

Strasburg, VA 22657

Strasburg Heritage Association

Strasburgheritage@gmail.com

www.strasburgvaheritage.org

Annual dues are due in February; if you are not sure if you have paid your dues, please email us.

Membership Application

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MEMBERSHIP _____ Cost is \$20.00 annually

Additional Donation: _____

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