

STRASBURG HERITAGE ASSOCIATION



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STRASBURG, VIRGINIA

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY

MICHAEL WHITTLE

The Strasburg Heritage Association Membership meeting in June was held at the Hottle-Keller Homestead. We had a wonderful event that was well attended. The Board at our August meeting voted to donate \$250 to the Hottle-Keller Homestead and Museum in appreciation of Gae Ward's contributions to the program. Thank You Gae!

Over the next couple of months the Strasburg Heritage Association will be involved in many great events to promote the heritage of the area. September 16 we will have the first Strasburg Family History Share Fair. The share fair will be a great

opportunity for citizens to learn about local families and share information about the history of their family. During OctoberFest, Strasburg Heritage Association will have a living history presentation. The living history presentation will be in front of the Dosh house. SHA's last event of the year will be the Holiday Heritage Homes Tour on December 1.

We hope you will be able to attend many of these wonderful events over the next couple of months. I would like to thank the Board for their outstanding work on the events that have already taken place this year and the events scheduled this fall.

I would encourage all to consider volunteering to service so that we can continue to have these wonderful events.

Strasburg Family History

Share Fair

We're excited about the Strasburg Family History Share Fair on September 16 and are especially pleased to be co-hosting it with the Strasburg Community Library. We hope you can join us from 3 – 6 PM at St. Paul Lutheran Church. The Share Fair will highlight local family history with displays of genealogy, photographs and other family papers. We hope to encourage others to collect their own family history and stories and want to point out that the information doesn't have to be "ancient" history. Remember, what may seem like just yesterday quickly becomes the past and can easily be lost!

We'll have displays about the communities of Lebanon Church, Oranda and Fishers Hill which were created for the countywide Heritage Day held in April of each year, and many families will have their own displays including the Artz, Baker, Fisher, Williams and Rosenberger families. Jim Artz, an enthusiastic genealogist and Strasburg native, will present a short program on getting started on your family history. "Laying the Groundwork for Family History" will start at 4 PM and again at 5 PM. Morrison Photo Collection albums from the Shenandoah County Historical Society, especially those with pictures taken in Morrison's Strasburg studio during the 1930s and 40s, will be available. Also we'll have samples of family tree forms and other genealogical aids and resources.

We encourage folks to bring family documents (Bibles, deeds, photos, etc.) that we may scan or photograph digitally in order to create a permanent

archive of local history. We're hopeful that we'll find photos from in and around Strasburg that we can use in the Oral History project, "In Our Own Words", that is at the Strasburg Community Library.

Please join us to learn how you can begin to research your own family history, learn about the rich history of the Strasburg area or find out who YOU might be related to! Come to enjoy. Bring and share.

2007 SHA Homes Tour

The 2007 Strasburg Heritage Holiday Homes Tour will help to kick off the Christmas season this year on Saturday, December 1 from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM. We don't yet have a complete list of those who will be on the tour, but are very pleased with those who have agreed to participate. They include the Dosh House, owned by the Strasburg Guards, SCV, who will welcome the community to see this important former home, the oldest portion built in the 18th C.; the home of Elaine Letterman on Orchard St., also known as the Borum House, which had connections to Spengler Hall; the Umberger home on Devine Dr., which was the original farmhouse in the Madison Heights neighborhood; and St. Paul Lutheran Church, a historic building and the oldest congregation in Strasburg. We'll have more details about these wonderful historic buildings and the Homes Tour later. We depend on our many faithful volunteers to make the tour a success but always welcome new volunteers. If you would like to help please call co-chairs Judy Troxell (465-4747) or Barbara Adamson (465-5570).

Highlighting the Williams Family

Kathy Kehoe

Peter Stover "laid out" the Town of Strasburg after buying 438 acres from Jacob Funk. Local author Virginia Cadden tells us in her book, "The Story of Strasburg" that the town was established in 1761, adding that "The original citizens were all German."

Growing up in Strasburg in the 60's, I never thought much about which kids were descendents of our founding fathers. I went to school with Stovers and Hottles and Funks as well as Blys, Ritenours, Strothers, Millers and Alsberrys. I paid no attention to whether the names were Irish or German, nor did I have any premonition that this little Dutch girl would someday have an Irish last name. In the small town of my childhood, they were my world, no matter what their origins. Now in my fifties, I know which names are historic Strasburg families, which names are only half as historic, and which names have become well known in the last fifty years. But I also know that after a while, all family names become familiar and their origins blend, even in small towns.

One of the families sharing its heritage at the Family History Share Fair will be the family of Arch & Lucy Belle Williams. I am sharing this family history because they were my great grandparents. Depending on your perspective, the Williams' may be considered "old" Strasburg society. One might label them outsiders, however, since they won't reach 100 year residency until 2011. The Williams' moved to a large frame house on "B" Street in 1911.

Lucy Belle gained local fame by living to be one hundred years old. An article in the Northern Virginia Daily in 1964 highlighted her 100th birthday, the day she joined the local chapter of the AARP. President Lyndon Johnson sent her birthday congratulations. She told the reporter that she remembered her father James Robert "Wesley" Hall "being brought home wounded toward the close of the War Between the States." Considering that General Robert E. Lee surrendered in April of 1865, and Lucy Belle was

born on Aug. 15, 1864, she would have been only 8 months old. Since Lucy Belle was one hundred years old when she was quoted as "remembering" her father returning home from the War, I'm sure that what she meant was that she remembered the stories about her father's return home, a story which would have been told and retold many times. According to a letter written to grandson Robert "Bob" Cameron by Ed Hall, who researched the Civil War military records, Robert Wesley was wounded on October 12, 1863. Lucy Belle wasn't born for ten more months. One might surmise that Great-Great Grandma Betsy was really happy to have her husband home after a year away at war and she lovingly and quickly nursed him back to health. Wounded at Warrenton Springs, Virginia, he was taken home to Warren County. Lucy Belle's father was about 35 years old when the Civil War ended, and he had four children under the age of nine at that time. He and his wife Elizabeth "Betsy" Jane Kibler Williams would have two more sons.

As in most family research, there are discrepancies. As she aged into her 90's, there were newspaper articles at each birthday. The article about her 100th birthday lists Lucy Belle's place of birth as Page County. Her obituary lists her place of birth as Bentonville, which is in Warren County but close to Page County. An article about her 90th birthday lists her birthplace as Rappahannock County.

Vicky Cameron McDonald, great grand-daughter of Lucy & Arch, has researched the Hall family back to the 1600's. The Hall family included familiar Shenandoah County names of Kibler, Sealock, Schaeffer, and Pence who originally came from Pennsylvania. On the Williams side, the family can be traced back through Warren and Rappahannock counties to Arch's Great-Grandfather Presley Williams, born 1790 in Warren County, to Presley's Great-Grandfather Thomas Riley, who died of unknown age in 1730 in Stafford County.

Lucy Belle, referred to in the family as "Grandma Williams" married Henry James "Arch" Williams on November 11, 1886 and raised seven children in Strasburg: Two daughters, Mattie & Jessie and five sons: Owdy, Bedford (Ned), Sandy, Rob, and Douglas. According to the Williams family Bible, Lucy Belle gave birth nine times between 1890 and 1911. She was 26 when her first child was born and 47 when her last child arrived. Two daughters died, one at age 16 and the other age 11. Arch, who died in 1935, made his living in the ice business and

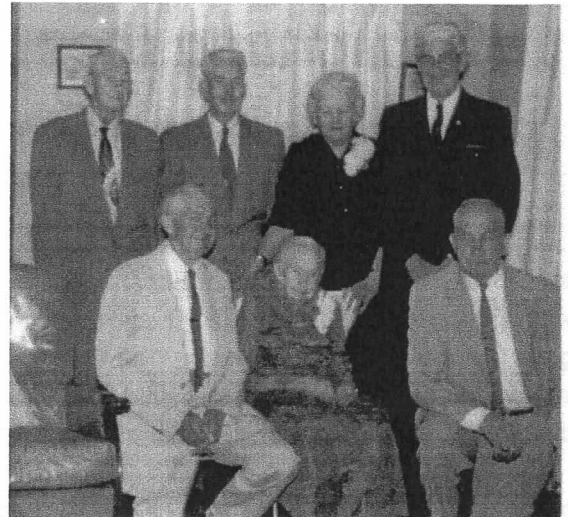
was well known in the community. Before electric refrigerators replaced the "icebox," Arch's sons and sons-in-law helped him deliver blocks of ice to Strasburg homes. His name was Henry James, but we know from our folk history that he didn't like his name, and so took the name Arch. Lucy Belle was widowed at age 71 and outlived her husband by almost 30 years. Four of their children made their homes on "B" Street near the Williams home place. The descendants of Arch and Lucy Williams that are still living in Strasburg number in the hundreds—definitely too many to count. A project for our next Williams Reunion will be to count all the descendants.

Our second most famous relative is probably Marie Williams, a local Strasburg girl who grew up on the same street and married into the Williams family in 1924. Marie was well known for her volunteer work with the Strasburg Teen Dances and serving on the Town Council. She and her husband Sandy also raised seven children in Strasburg in a house next door to Arch & Lucy. Marie, like her mother-in-law before her, has also lived to be 100 years old. She turned 100 on Feb. 20, 2007.

I encourage all townspeople to write down the family stories. Writing it down invites questions and provides new information. You may even start a small, good natured, family feud. I suggest, to avoid any real conflicts, to be open to interpretation and remember to consider the source. Also remember that small town citizens live in a fishbowl. All families have skeletons in the closet, and there are probably people around who still remember their version of any story. So if you come across something you didn't really want to know, choose what you want to share. I realized a long time ago that most people don't really care about keeping family secrets. What they do care about is whether they want to discuss what polite Southern society considers unmentionable. Sometimes, they also forget the good stuff—how great our ancestors really were, from the pioneer who came from Pennsylvania and settled in the Shenandoah Valley wilderness to the "new people" who didn't arrive until after the 1800's. I believe that how long it takes you to become a native is in your own heart.



Arch & Lucy Belle Williams



Lucy Belle Williams, 100th Birthday 1964, five sons Owdy, Sandy, Rob, Doug & Bedford (Ned) and daughter Jessie Robinson. Daughter Mattie Cameron passed away in 1958.



The Williams Family around 1912



Grandma Williams & Great-Grand Daughter Kathy Combs Kehoe, 1964



BIRTHS



Ruby Williams Borned feb 1. 1905 7
Douglas Williams March 17. 1903 6
Robert Williams Sept 30 ~~1899~~ 1899 5
Sandy Williams January 12 1897 4
Bedford Williams March 17. 1896 3
Cudy Williams May 5. 1893 2
H. Williams Sept 20. 1890 1

Jessie Williams July 3. 1908 8
Mattie Williams Feb 21. 1911 9
Mr. A. C. Williams Feb. 25 1864
Lucy Belle Hall Williams Aug. 15 1864
~~W. Williams~~ April 13 1864

Strasburg Heritage Association
P. O. Box 525
Strasburg, VA 22657

Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email address _____

Membership: \$20.00 _____

Patron (donation) _____

Total Enclosed: _____

Please mail completed form to: Strasburg Heritage Association
P.O. Box 525
Strasburg VA 22657