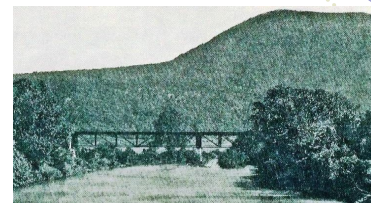


# Strasburg Heritage Association



Volume 17

Fall 2017

Issue 3

Strasburg, Virginia

NEWSLETTER

[strasburgvaheritage.org](http://strasburgvaheritage.org)

## ***On The Homefront:***

### ***Women's Leadership Role during the Civil War***

Join us as Strasburg native Michael Smith shares with us his research and his conclusions about the roles the women of Winchester were forced to play during the Civil War. They, and women throughout the northern Valley, were often left to face the challenges of living in the front lines of war, struggling to feed their children and working to ensure their safety. These women also took on new roles within their community in politics and the public sphere.

Mike's work is the result of his doctoral dissertation,

### **The Transformational Leadership of the Women of Winchester during the American Civil War.**

He is a native of Strasburg and is currently Principal of Skyline High School in Front Royal.

**Sunday, September 24, 2017**

**2-4pm**

**St. Paul Lutheran Church 193 W. Washington St. Strasburg**

Join us for fellowship and refreshments

## President's Message

### *Tim Taylor*

As the summer comes to an end and fall begins, I hope everyone looks forward to this time of year as much as I do. I enjoy the fall colors, the fall harvest, and fall sports! Also, the SHA begins planning for our annual Ghost Tours and this year, for our Holiday Homes Tour. More information about both of these great events can be found in this newsletter. I hope everyone takes time to enjoy these two events which not only support our mission of sharing local history but to thank all the people that are willing to share their homes to make these events happen. Also, we look forward to our Fall Program meeting this month featuring a presentation by Mike Smith. Again, you will find more information on the program in this newsletter and I hope you can join us!

We are currently working on promoting sales of our bronze historic building plaques. To be eligible, the building must be at least 60 years old. What matters is the year the original house was built and additions do not affect eligibility. The building must be within Strasburg or the Davis District. These plaques are beautiful and they make great Christmas gifts! See our website or contact Carla Wallen for an application.

A new project we have started work on is the housing and storage of historical documents. Our goal is to make these accessible to the public. We are working on solutions where we can store the original documents and digitize them so they can be accessed online and searchable. Nick Racey and George Hoffman are leading this effort, so if you have any thoughts or ideas, do not hesitate to contact one of them.

I hope everyone has a great fall season and if you have an interest in our community's heritage, do not hesitate to contact a board member to find out how you can join and/or contribute to the Strasburg Heritage Association! Hope to see everyone at our Ghost Tours and Holiday Homes Tour!

Sincerely - Tim Taylor - SHA President

## SHA Board of Directors

2017

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## **2017 Strasburg**

### **Holiday Heritage Homes Tour**

*By Joan Williams*

*We are delighted to share with you information of this year's tour. We are so lucky to have six homeowners who are pleased to open their lovely heritage homes for your enjoyment. All these properties are architecturally different, have an interesting history and the homeowners are eager to share their stories, pictures, and documents with you. Our homes are within walking distance of each other. This year we have two on High Street, two on King Street, and two on Sharpe Street. Refreshments will be provided by the recently opened Holliday House Bed and Breakfast at the corner of King & Holliday Streets. So, put on your walking shoes, invite family, neighbors, and friends to join you and enjoy an historical journey through some of Strasburg's most unique properties. Just so you know ~ our tour will ignore the weather and be held no matter if it is cold, rains, or snows!*

*We will be introducing the homeowners of the homes on this year's tour at our September 24th meeting. Please join us at The Strasburg Heritage Association program at St. Paul's Lutheran Church on Sunday, September 24th at 2:00 p.m. Not only will you enjoy the presentation by Mike Smith but you will have the opportunity to speak with the homeowners after the meeting, while enjoying refreshments. We look forward to seeing you there!*

### **The Ghosts are Back!**

**We will be hosting our Ghost Tours on Saturday, October 28 from 6 to 9 p.m. beginning at the Hotel Strasburg. Come and hear some new and classic ghost stories as we walk the streets of Strasburg stopping at our haunted destinations. Listen to tales of objects being moved without explanation, sightings of apparitions and learn about the history and beautiful architecture of our haunted homes! Enjoy walking through Strasburg's historic district and viewing decorated homes for the Halloween season. This is a family friendly event so we hope to see all ages joining us for entertainment and education. Come out to support the Strasburg Heritage Association as we continue to preserve and share the history of the Strasburg community! The only thing you have to be afraid of is the fun you will be missing if you do not attend!**

Pre-sale: Tickets \$3.00 each on sale at Strasburg Town office, [540-465-9197](tel:540-465-9197)  
Day of Event: Tickets \$5.00 each on sale at the Hotel Strasburg, starting 5:30 pm  
(children age 5 & under free, 13 & under must be accompanied by adult)

~Walking Tours leave every 15 minutes. Tour takes approximately 1 hour  
Note: last tour leaves at 8:30 p.m.~

**This is a Rain or Shine event!**

# A Little Folk History

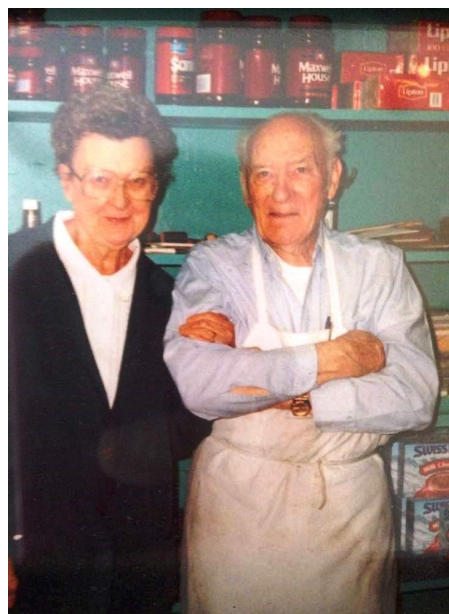
## Brills Grocery

by Kathy Kehoe

*"Every morning at 6 a.m., the man known throughout the town as "Brillo" arrives at the store and dons his white apron before sitting down to read the newspaper. It has been that way for 50 years." –Jennifer Stover, Reporter, "Brills Grocery is Golden", Northern Virginia Daily (March 4th, 1996)*

Stacie Rinker, one of the Brill granddaughters, remembers fondly that when she was a little girl, "He always went right in and put on his white apron, and he'd put one on me because I always had to wear an apron, like I was part owner in the store."

Harry T. "Brillo" Brill and his wife Frances owned and operated Brills Grocery on main street in Strasburg long after the other small town groceries closed.



The Brills lived near the store, on Sharpe Street where they raised four children, Harry Jr., Berlin, Joyce Rinker and Connie Shorter. Their granddaughter, Stacie Rinker, recalled recently how much she loved her grandparents store. "I remember the old wood stove granddaddy had in there. He'd heat it up and stand by it when it was chilly. You had to stand close to be warm because it didn't heat the whole building." She remembers her grandfather as a most hospitable person who had much patience. As a little girl she sat on the counter eating cheese and crackers. She remembers how the old cash register had round buttons that you pushed to put in the amount of the sale and when she hit "Open" the register would open with the sound of a bell ringing. A special memory was of watching the Strasburg parades from the store. "Granddaddy kept the store open during the parades so people could get a

bottle of pop or a popsicle or something." Stacie and her mother, Joyce Rinker, recalled how every year for the Fireman's carnival, Mr. Brill would cut up fresh ground beef and take a hundred pounds over to the "hamburger stand", which was the fire company's major fundraiser every summer at the carnival on the town lot. "He always prepared and donated whatever they needed. He loved being part of the town." And every Sunday, Stacie and Joyce remember, Brillo had to check with his brothers Buggy and Pearly who ran the Virginia Restaurant just up the street, to see if they needed anything. (See SHA newsletter, Fall 2009).

"They really had a thriving business" Stacie recalls. He always had fresh meats, beef and pork, and customers would bring in a ham from their butchering and Brillo would slice it for them. During deer hunting season, customers would bring in deer to be processed. "Granddaddy and Grandma would spend hours on the deer, and put it in white freezer paper for customers to take home. It was a huge undertaking for them." said Stacie. "My mother-in-law used to give us a country ham every Christmas and we always took it to Brills to have it sliced." remembers Belinda Pappas Palmer. "They would slice my Dad's hams too" recalls Janet Hodson Sargent. "I shopped at Brills with my mom as a child" said Sharon Bly Ferguson,

"and I remember standing in front of the meat counter waiting on an order for fresh cut meat. I remember Mr. and Mrs. Brill as being so very kind and polite. As I got older I would still go in the store for fresh meats and pick up other items that I needed. I really miss the grocery stores we used to have on main street."

George Hoffman shared his memories of Brills Grocery: "As a kid in Strasburg, I was very familiar with Brillo's store! Since hamburger was a staple in our diet in those days, and since Mr. Brill had the best little butcher shop for fresh meats in those days, it was THE place to go! We got lots of meats there, but hamburger, then, something like 29 cents a pound, was the biggie. I wish I had a dollar for every time I was dropped off, either by my mom or my sister, to run in and get a pound or two of hamburger. Brillo's store had a smell that I will never forget. It was that combination of fresh produce, freshly cleaned wooden floors, and meat and blood and cheeses from the butcher area. It was unmistakable. And it was the same every time I entered. A few years ago, I walked into a little general store up in Pennsylvania, and I remember being instantly transported back to Brillo's, simply by the smell as I walked in. Mr. and Mrs. Brill were two of the nicest people too! And Berlin too! I know its cliché, but I miss those good old days of small family businesses where we were greeted with smiles, questions about the family, and good, fresh food! Ah..the good old days!"

Mr. Brill, in the 1996 NVD article, went on to tell Jennifer Stover that he started working for Bill and Bessie Little when he was in the 7th grade. They were the first owners of the building and called it "Little's Grocery". He said that Mr. Little gave him the nickname "Brillo" because he couldn't remember his name was Harry. His customers would sometimes ask him what his real name was, telling Mr Brill: "The only thing we've ever heard is Brillo."

Mr. Brill joined the Navy and while he was gone during WWII, Mr. Little passed away. He told Mrs. Little if she ever sold the store to please give him first chance, and she did. He bought it March 1st, 1946. When Strasburg resident Nick Racey was doing some research in 1993, he talked to Brillo about the Knights of Pythias meetings which were held upstairs in the store building until 1946. Mr. Brill told Nick that he "joined the lodge to keep an eye on the building if it were to sell."

"I reckon I've been dedicated to this store." (NVD, 1996) He used to walk from his house on Sharpe Street to open the store during snow. Many people remember he seemed to never miss a day of work and was always there for his customers.

"Grandma and Granddaddy offered delivery service to many people." said Stacie. The Brills delivered long after other small town groceries closed. Their son Berlin Brill made the deliveries, many to the senior housing apartment building Massanutten Manor, as many of the residents did not drive. Taralyn Manuel Nicholson remembers her mother caring for older people in the town and having their groceries delivered from Brills. Mrs. Brill told Jennifer and was quoted in the 1996 NVD article, "And when we close up, what are some of them going to do?" Their customers were more than customers, they were friends and neighbors to the Brills. Donna C. Campbell said that "My Mom shopped at Brills many times over the years. She bought groceries for the Tuesday evening Rotary Club meeting. Since she didn't drive, it was very helpful that the store was just across the street and the groceries were delivered to the Strasburg Firehall kitchen, where she fixed the dinner. That was a lot of stairs to climb carrying bags of groceries. Back then, local grocers delivered your purchases by truck. A free service, greatly appreciated. Mr. and Mrs. Brill were always helpful and pleasant mannered!"



For many years, the Town Run which ran near the grocery store, was home to a flock of ducks that many townspeople loved to feed and watch. Stacie loved to feed the ducks when she was at the store. Mr. Brill told Jennifer in the NVD article that he "remembers buying a hundred pound bag of corn for the town ducks and felt that the town should not have taken them all away." He missed them after all those years working beside the town run and seeing them every day. The ducks became a traffic problem when they paraded single file across main street causing traffic to come to a complete halt. Some drivers waited patiently, others beeped their horns or revved their motors, but the ducks were used to traffic and focused solely on getting across the street. Sometimes town residents would shoo them across, but they barely picked up their pace. Nobody wanted to hurt the ducks, but eventually the town considered them a safety hazard and they were relocated.

Stacie said Mr. Brill was noted for his Culpeper tomatoes, so named because "he'd pick them up from a man in Culpeper. They were larger tomatoes because of the red sandy soil and people would request those tomatoes all the time." Brill's also sold summer sausage he'd cure in his meat house on Sharp Street. Stacie and Joyce remembered how he'd salt and pepper and cure summer sausage and country hams. The Brills house, bought and renovated by Craig Morris and Mike Marcheterre, has been on the Strasburg Heritage Homes Tour twice. In the 2013 Home Tour Brochure, the "Ham Shack" was described as "formerly been used by Mr. Brill for hanging hams and other meats which were sold at Brills Grocery on King Street in Strasburg. Mike and Craig have restored, redecorated and repurposed the building as a cozy nook with additions of a fireplace and screened porch. While the interior color has changed since the 2008 tour, the Ham Shack still sports a whimsical collection of antiques including vintage shoeshine boxes." Stacie was there to see it. She said "It will always smell like the hams, the smell never dissipates." The Brills' grandchildren, Stacie remembers, would ride their bikes to the store and to their grandparents' house on Sharpe Street. They spent a lot of time there. "Kim, Stephanie, and I played in the school band" recalls Stacie, and when the band went marching for practice, Mr. Yeakle took us up the high school hill, around the old middle school and down Sharp Street and Grandma would come out onto the porch and watch when she heard the music. She was so happy to see the band."

"Grandma was a wonderful cook" said Stacie. "We'd call her at 3:30 or 4 and tell her we wanted to come to dinner and she'd have dinner by 5:30—a full spread on the table, pork chops, baked mac and cheese, nothing boxed, everything hand-made, prepared fresh, tomatoes and green beans..... They had a garden in the back yard, in their early years.

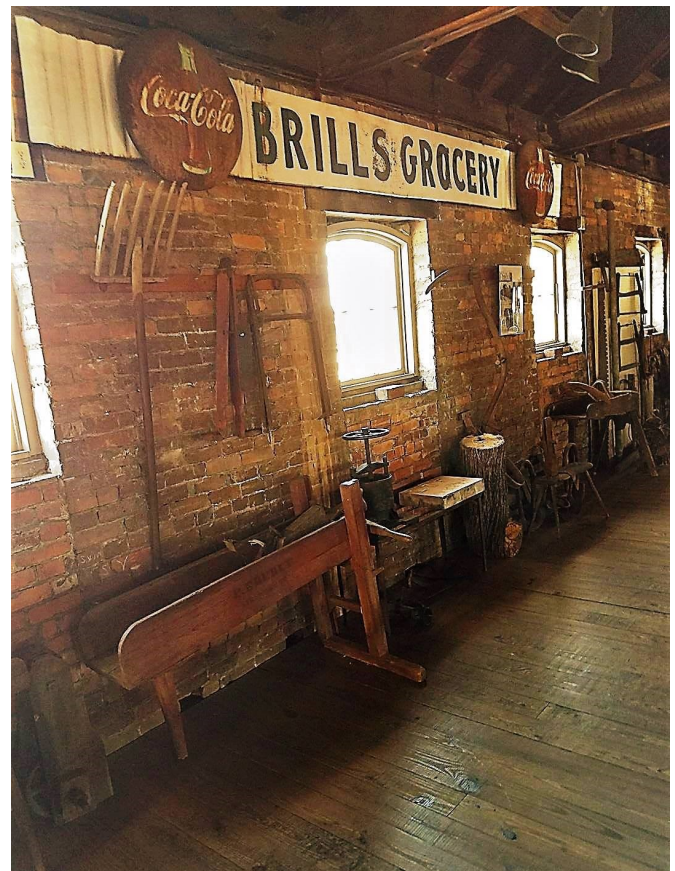


Photo by Rich Cooley, Northern Virginia Daily, March 1996, Brill's Grocery is Golden, son Berlin before starting the morning deliveries.

We had many family meals on Sundays, turkey and ham, and summer sausage. When Thanksgiving came, we'd say, "we're having turkey and ham again?" Stacie said with a laugh. And on Sundays she said, "we all sat at the table together, a family gathering, no one sat watching TV, no phones, all sat at the table." The family made homemade ice cream in the summer and the kids would take turns doing the churning. Stacie and Joyce described how the taffy was made. "We used to make taffy on colder days, around the holidays. We'd make the ingredients on the stove and let it cool, then butter our hands and pull it. We'd take it out on the back porch where it was cool and pull it as wide as our shoulders, go back and forth and when it turns from yellow to white, that's how you know it's finished." According to the book *Strasburg Virginia and the Keister Family* by E.E. Keister, (pg 112-114, Shenandoah Publishing House, 1972), the store building was built in 1886 by Luther D. Funkhouser, who was "in the brick manufacturing and pottery business" to operate a store. The keystone brick of the building is marked "LDF 1886" and was salvaged when the store building was demolished in 2017. The keystone and the Brills Grocery sign, complete with a red, round "Coca-Cola" sign now are on display in the Strasburg Museum.



*Brills Grocery is another business from our small town past that exists only in our memories. But what a special memory we have of the family who treated people with kindness and helpfulness for so many years. Thank you "Brillo" and Mrs. Brill and Berlin for your years of service to your community.*



*Strasburg Museum display preserving the sign and keystone.*

Strasburg Heritage  
Association

PO Box 525  
Strasburg, A 22657

Strasburg Heritage Association

Www.strasburgvaheritage.org

Membership Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBERSHIP: \_\_\_\_\_Cost is \$20.00

Additional Donation: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED: \_\_\_\_\_

Please Mail Completed form to:  
Strasburg Heritage Association  
PO Box 525  
Strasburg, VA 22657