



Strasburg Heritage Association

Volume 13 Issue 1

Strasburg, Virginia

Winter 2013

www.strasburgvaheritage.org

2013 Annual Meeting and Program A Rooftop View of Strasburg, 1906

You are invited to enjoy a power point presentation of a panoramic photograph taken in 1906 of Strasburg. Local photographer Edgar Stickley took the picture from Sunset St., located on a steep hill that afforded a wonderful view of the town. Join us in a conversation about the buildings and landmarks we see in the picture, what's still there and what isn't, and how the town has changed. We'll zoom in to see some interesting details. We will also present some tidbits about the people and businesses of the time. The panoramic photograph belongs to the Strasburg Museum and is displayed there during the museum season. We thank the museum for allowing us to use this wonderful picture for our program. The presentation will be led by John Adamson, with audience participation encouraged. SHA will also conduct a short annual business meeting.

Sunday, Feb. 17

St. Paul Lutheran Church from 2-4PM.

It is free to the public and refreshments will be served.

Old Queen St. Cemetery

Improvements at the old graveyard on W. Queen St. have taken a hiatus during the winter months. Ken Lutz's Tree Service did an excellent job last fall trimming trees and grinding out some old tree stumps. In the spring we will proceed with fence installation along the back of the property, grass seeding and weed control. As always, we're appreciative of the efforts of the town crew who keeps the cemetery mowed and picked up.

President's Letter

Barbara Adamson

Happy New Year! We've had many wonderful SHA programs over the years, and I'm always impressed with the resources available to us from our own Strasburg community. 2012 was a good example. In February, Andrew Thayer presented an enjoyable afternoon of photo images of the Shenandoah River taken on his trip on the water. In June, Richard Kleese wowed a large crowd with his program about Strasburg and Banks Fort in 1862. Then, in September, Strasburg native Daniel Bly presented a very interesting program about the Sabbatarians who lived on Sandy Hook in the 1750s, with assistance from Nick Racey, who has a great deal of knowledge about the location of some of their settlement activities. It was especially nice to be on land where Sabbatarians lived. We thank Mrs. Wanda Sager for her generosity in making this possible. And in December, we had lots of fun with Laura Ellen Wade's wonderful power point presentation about early playthings. Laura Ellen did an excellent job showing us images of toys and, when possible, their owners and the stories to go with them. To top it off, we had members of the community bring some of their own special playthings for show'n tell. Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to our programs this year and every year.

I also want to express my thanks to Richard Seelbach, who is retiring from the board, for his many contributions to SHA since he came on the board in 2005. His support as board member and treasurer have been much appreciated. SHA is pleased to have hosted a Community Meal at St. Paul Lutheran Church again this year. We served a good crowd on Jan. 16 and I thank our board members who provided a welcoming meal for those attending.

Calendar of Events

Tuesday, Feb. 12. 2:00 p.m. – **Lincoln's Birthday celebration**, held annually, is sponsored by the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society. It is a walk to the Lincoln family cemetery located 6 miles north of Harrisonburg on Rt. 42 in a field several hundred yards from the road. Dr. Philip Stone will give an oral address about some aspect of Lincoln's life. Held regardless of the weather! Call 540-879-2616 for further information.

Saturday, Feb. 16. 10 -4 p.m. **MSV Day** at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley in Winchester. Admission to the museum galleries is free all day. **Sunday, Feb. 17. 2-4 p.m.** **SHA Annual Meeting and Program.** "Rooftop View of Strasburg 1906". See information elsewhere in newsletter.

Saturday, March 2. 9-5 p.m. **Symphony of Stitches.** St. Paul's Heritage Ctr. Edinburg. "Victoria's Original Secrets: Undergarments in the Valley" & "Iron (of) Chefs in the Valley: Iron Stoves and Cookware". For registration (required) and information call Sandra Armentrout at 540-984-9309.

Saturday, March 9. 9-4:30p.m. MSV, Winchester. "**Avenue of Invasion: Lee, Gettysburg, and the Shenandoah Valley in 1863**". A sesquicentennial conference featuring Brandon Beck, Eric Campbell, Steve French, Jonathan Noyalas, Joseph Whitehorne and George Wunderlich. Registration required; \$20pperson. See www.shenandoahatwar.org.

Tuesday, March 12. 7 p.m. St. Paul's Heritage Ctr. Edinburg. Hal Sharpe will discuss his book, "**Shenandoah County in the Civil War (Four Dark Years)**". Free. See www.shenandoahcountyhistoricalsociety.org.

Nominating Committee Report

This year SHA board members Dennis Hupp, Kathy Kehoe, Wendy Pieper, Richard Seelbach, Tim Taylor, Judy Troxell and Laura Ellen Wade are up for re-election to a two-year term. All have consented to serve again except Richard, who has decided to take a break from the board. Many thanks to Richard for having served as a board member since 2005 and also as treasurer for four years. Our new nominee to the board is Joan Williams who, as a SHA member and member of the Massanutten Garden Club, has been active on the Homes Tour Committee. Our thanks to nominating committee members Sue Foster and Polly Wilson for their good work. *****

Historic Building Plaques

If you have a home or other building that you would like to honor with a Historic Building Plaque, we encourage you to order one. These bronze plaques, which serve to bring attention to Strasburg's historic buildings, include the date of construction of the building and are available for \$120.00, with SHA subsidizing the cost of each plaque. The building must be at least 60 years old to qualify. You can view a plaque and print out a request form from our website, www.strasburgvaheritage.org. *****

Spring Litter Pick-Up

Our spring litter pick-up date along Rt. 11 south has been set for Saturday, May 4th. As in the past, we will meet at the Old Mill parking lot at 8AM. Bring gloves and wear sturdy shoes. Our thanks for a successful fall pick-up go to members Linda Williams, Sue Foster, Ginger Aliotti, Bill Foster, Jim Carter, Donna Bollhoefer and Ed Bolloef. *****

DUES ARE DUE:

When you pay your annual dues of \$20.00 each February, you are helping the SHA to meet our goals of preserving local heritage, presenting educational programs and receiving our newsletter in your mail three times a year. *****

SHA Board of Directors 2012

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A Little Folk History Keffers Store

by
Kathy Kehoe

"I loved sitting on the old weather-beaten porch floor and eat my orange dream stick and drink a bottled coke. There was a large tree there at one time which made good shade for summer." --Sharon Bly Ferguson, on Keffers Store, circa 1960

Keffers Store was a little corner grocery that served the West End of town. It was owned and operated by Richard "Dick" Keffer and his wife Margaret on what was once known as "A" Street. (After the 911 addresses were created, the street became "Ash" Street.) Grandson Mike Keffer was told that when his grandfather opened the grocery store, he also opened a barber shop next door which he closed a few years later. Johnny Ruffner, whose mother Dot, worked in the store, said he moved to the neighborhood in 1941 and he remembers the store was open then. He estimates that it probably opened in the 1930s. After Mr. Keffer passed away in 1976, the store was sold to Marcus Ritenour who ran the store for a couple years, said his grandson Mike. Then the building was turned into rental apartments, which is what it is today.

Growing up next door, Mike Keffer worked in his grandparents store. He recalls how "I would come home from school when I was seven or eight and empty out the pop top opener (on the coke machine) because the bottle caps would have pictures of football players under them and if you collected the whole series they would give you a football." Mike helped with pricing and stocking and remembers his first lessons in marketing. His grandparents would compute the price of a case of a product, divide by the number in the case, and mark it up 15% as the sale price. There was a scale to weigh the meat and an adding machine to add up the purchases; and then the total would be entered into the cash register. When Mike counted the money at the end of the day, a hundred dollars "was a good day." Mr. Keffer also extended credit to the neighborhood. Mike recalls the "credit pad" he used to record groceries bought through the week or month. On payday, the customer would come in to pay their bill. The store opened at 7 a.m. Monday through Friday and closed at 5 p.m. On Friday and Saturday they stayed open until 7 p.m. but if someone in the neighborhood needed something after hours, they could go to the living room door to make a purchase. Jimmy Whetzel was the huckster who brought eggs to the store, and Leroy Henry brought in the Shenandoah Pride milk.

Sharon Bly Ferguson remembers when she and her brother Ricky would walk over to Keffer's from their Grandmother Williams house on B Street. "We made so many trips there from Grandma's house with a wagon full of pop bottles. We would work for (Grandma) and she gave us the soda pop bottles to turn in for cash, candy or ice cream. I remember when they went from 2 cents a bottle to 5 cents. Mr. Dick Keffer would get so mad when he saw us coming; he would bite our heads off sometimes, but he did have good days also. He gave me free candy a few times." George Hoffman said that "Jerry Campbell and I used to pick up bottles too and carry them up there to redeem them for money. Dick used to yell at us" because the kids were turning in bottles that weren't purchased in the store. The Campbells and Hoffmans lived on King Street. In those days, soda pop came in glass bottles that could be returned to the bottling company to be cleaned and reused. It's hard to imagine now, how people would throw glass bottles from passing cars or as they walked, onto the side of the road or in roadside ditches. This was before the "no littering" campaign; before "Adopt a Highway" programs. But for those who didn't mind a little work, there was money in picking

up pop bottles on the walk to the store. Five bottles was a whole dime! And a dime could buy a lot in those days.

When I was small, my mother and I would take a walk after supper to Keffer's and get a grape-ette pop. My mother, Patsy Cameron Rutz, remembered that the red pop cooler in the corner, with Coca-Cola written on the front, had water circulating through it to keep the pop cool and there was always a cloth rag nearby to wipe the bottle dry before placing the cap under the opener on the side of the cooler. Robin Bott Boston, who grew up on A (Ash) Street near Keffer's, remembers when her brother Hoyt came home wounded from Viet Nam. "He was so skinny," said Robin, that her mother, Una, sent her to Keffer's to "fatten him up a little." Robin said "I probably made 5 trips a day to Keffer's store to get him ice cream!" George Hoffman, growing up on King, remembers Keffer's: "Penny candy, 25 cent cokes, and Margaret giving me heck for touching the glass showcase!!!" Recalls Robin, "I'll never forget Keffer's. Margaret used to yell at me too for putting my hands on the glass and not being able to make up my mind which candy I wanted. Great times!" John Painter, who lived a block and a half from the store, remembers the practical jokes that he and his pal from King Street, Eddy Campbell, used to play at Keffer's. His favorite candy to buy at Keffer's was Reese cups. He loved to eat the chocolate off the top and bottom, saving the peanut butter for last and chasing it down with "an ice cold Pepsi." George Hoffman said, "I was a Campbell family adoptee.... Jerry Campbell used to mimic Dick Keffer and his sister Melissa did a pretty good Margaret!! Those were the days!" Kids barely able to see over the counter were often sent to the store with a note from their mothers, often rewarded with a few cents worth of candy for their trouble. Donna Campbell Stacey was part of that steady stream of neighborhood kids and remembers how she "felt so grown up when I was sent to Keffer's by my Mom. Even more enjoyable were trips for myself--for penny candy! Mr. Keffer stood behind the glass showcase filled with boxes of different candies. There were Black Jacks and Fireballs, Kitts, and BB Batts in chocolate, strawberry, vanilla or banana flavors; Mary Janes, Bit-o-Honeys, and Squirrel Nut Zippers. There were sooo many goodies to choose from and the names would tumble off my tongue faster than Mr. Keffer could keep up. Kitts had four little squares to a package, but I reeeeeaaalllly liked Squirrel Nut Zippers. I would always change my mind a few times.... I'd leave the store pouring the sour powder from the Pixie Stix on my tongue and recounting my candy to make sure he picked the right ones. Yep, a Zipper, two Fireballs, a pack of Sweetarts and a penny pretzel rod.....". Jo Williams, who grew up on B (Branch) Street, recalls: "I remember walking home from school and stopping at Keffer's to get the penny candy and cream soda!" Now the West End kids can look back and have a greater respect for our neighborhood store keepers, a couple who lived and worked in the West End neighborhood, who grumbled about paying the 2 cent bottle deposit but paid it anyway;

who scolded when the kids got fingerprints all over the clean showcase glass, but still sometimes gave them free penny candy. Dick and Margaret Keffer and their little neighborhood grocery are fondly and long remembered. Keffer's Grocery enriched the lives of a neighborhood, and certainly impacted the lives of the neighborhood children, who reminisce about the shade tree, the porch steps, and a grape-ette pop.



Strasburg Heritage Association
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www.strasburgvaheritage.org

Membership Application or
Annual Renewal
Renewal Year 2013

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Email address: _____

MEMBERSHIP: _____ Cost is \$20.00

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TOTAL ENCLOSED: _____

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