



Volume 19

Winter 2019

Issue 1

Strasburg, Virginia

NEWSLETTER

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

## ***Two Eras, Both Gone: Archaeology in Shenandoah County in the 1960s***

***Presenter: Mike Kehoe***

Mike will present a slide show and interpretation of archaeology projects of the 1960s & 70s by the Northern Shenandoah Chapter of the Archaeology Society of Virginia. The original chapter consisted of many members from the Strasburg community and surrounding area. Mike will talk about several local excavations, primarily prehistoric in nature, including the 1964 Bowman site on Cedar Creek near Fort Bowman, and explain how archaeology has changed over time.

**Sunday, February 17, 2019**

**2-4 p.m.**

**193 St. Paul Lutheran Church**

**W. Washington St. Strasburg**

Free. The public is welcome. Refreshments follow.

## President's Message

### *Tim Taylor*

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I hope everyone's 2019 has gotten off to a good start. The Strasburg Heritage Association Board wants to thank all of you for your continued support as we strive to fulfill our mission of documenting the history of the Town of Strasburg and the surrounding Davis District, assuming a leadership role for the historical preservation of our community, and to promote it as a desirable place to live, work and visit. I want to personally thank all of our Board Members for all the time and energy they give in fulfilling our mission. They are selfless and a joy to work with. Please take the time to thank them for serving on the Board when you get a chance. All of their names are listed in the newsletter.

We are always looking for ways we can share stories and educate our community about the history of our community. If you or someone you know is willing to share stories and/or items of historical significance, please contact a Board Member. We would love to see people willing to share their historical interests during one of our program meeting. Finally, we will be having our Holiday Homes Tour this year, so if you know of anyone willing to open up their home this coming holiday season, please let us know. Thank you!

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## Dues are Due for 2019

Send your annual dues of \$20.00 and continue to have the SHA newsletter mailed to you. Members get the newsletter first. Your dues help:

- ◇ Funds to update walking tour brochures
- ◇ \$500 Scholarship to a SHS graduate planning to study history
- ◇ Printing of the newsletter - thank you Kathy Kehoe!
- ◇ Help with costs of historic bronze plaques
- ◇ Community Dinners - twice a year
- ◇ Ads for events
- ◇ Off set costs for our Christmas Home Tours and Ghost/Graveyard Tours
- ◇ Joint projects with the Strasburg Museum:
  - Mt. Olive Drum restoration, pre-Civil War quilt restoration, repair of Museum roof, and currently the restoration of the Miller Family Bible

## SHA Board of Directors

2018

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*Tim Taylor*

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## *A Little Folk History* *Artz Esso and Cameron Exxon* *by Kathy Kehoe*

One of the first full service stations on the west end of Strasburg was on the corner of Capon and King where we now have a convenience store. You can still buy gas there, using a plastic card and pumping it yourself. But back in time, a gas station attendant in a blue and white striped uniform pumped it for you. In those days, every gas station had a bell that was activated when a customer drove their car over a rubber hose, creating that famous "ding-ding". When a customer bought gas, their windshield got washed and their oil checked. After World War II, when gas rationing was over, the gasoline station business was booming. John Artz began operating the Esso station sometime before or during World War II, according to his son Jim Artz, operating as Artz Esso until John retired. Then one of John's long time employees, Tommy Cameron, took over the station as Cameron Exxon.



Jim Artz remembers a story about how people had to have ration stamps to buy gasoline during WWII. Vehicles had a ration sticker on the window, much like our inspection stickers today. Jim says the commercial vehicles sticker had the letter "C". A personal vehicle had the letter "A"—they could only get five gallons of gas at a time and they had to have two ration stamps to get that five gallons. Without their coupons, their "ration stamps", they could not buy gas. Jim remembers Dr. Miller, a veterinarian who lived on West King Street, was a "good customer", who bought all his gas from Artz's Esso. One day during WWII, he came to get gas. John pumped gas into his vehicle and then Dr. Miller realized he'd forgotten his ration stamps. John siphoned the gas back out. Jim remembers how they kept the ration stamps in a cigar box, and each evening, the coupons had to be put in a book that would be given to the driver who delivered gas to the pumps. Each evening says Jim, "That was my job before I was old enough to work." John had to prove that he'd only sold gas to people who had coupons and that they only got their allotted amount; if he could not account for the gas he sold, he could not receive more gas in his pumps. During the war, according to Wikipedia. Org, "A national speed limit of 35 miles per hour (56 km/h) was imposed to save fuel and rubber for tires.<sup>[4]</sup> To get a classification and rationing stamps, one had to appear before a local War Price and Rationing Board which reported to the Office of Price Administration. To receive a gasoline ration card, a person had to certify a need for gasoline and ownership of no more than five tires. All tires in excess of five per driver were confiscated by the govern-



ment, because of rubber shortages. An "A" sticker on a car was the lowest priority of gasoline rationing and entitled the car owner to 3 to 4 US gallons of gasoline per week. "C" stickers were granted to persons deemed very essential to the war effort, such as doctors. T rations were made available for truckers."

"I had to go there after school to work. Dad thought playing football was a waste of time" said Jim, but he wanted to play on the Strasburg High School team so he would hurry to work as soon as football practice was over. One day Jim was late for work after practice, and when he arrived, he told his father he'd go home around the corner to get something to eat. "No," said his father, "You stay here. I'll have your mother bring you a sandwich". That determination and love of football stayed with Jim through college. He returned home to coach football at Strasburg High School for a few years after graduation.



John Artz

Jim describes his father as "a tough old guy, the only time he closed that station down was on Christmas Day. He worked 7 days a week." John would arrive at 6:30 a.m. to open the station. His employee Tommy would arrive a little later and John would go home to eat breakfast. He'd return to stay until afternoon, when Tommy and Freddy Jackson, another employee, got back from lunch. Then John would go to his farm, where his daughter Susie Artz Grimes now lives, to work the farm. He would return to the station at 5 o'clock when Tommy would go home and Jim would come in from school or football practice. When Jim went to college, he would return home and work for his father on weekends and summertime. "I worked the whole time I was in high school, most times at night." "Dad was a hard worker", said Jim, and he didn't retire until he was 65.



Another job Jim remembers is that "Mrs. Eberly who lived on the corner of Washington and Capon, would call once a week and ask if I could bring her 5 gallons of kerosene. I would bring her a 5 gallon can and pour it into the tank on the back of the stove she used for heating." Mrs. Eberly was a widow so this was good customer service for a woman who was unable to lift and carry five gallons of kerosene or pour it into her tank.

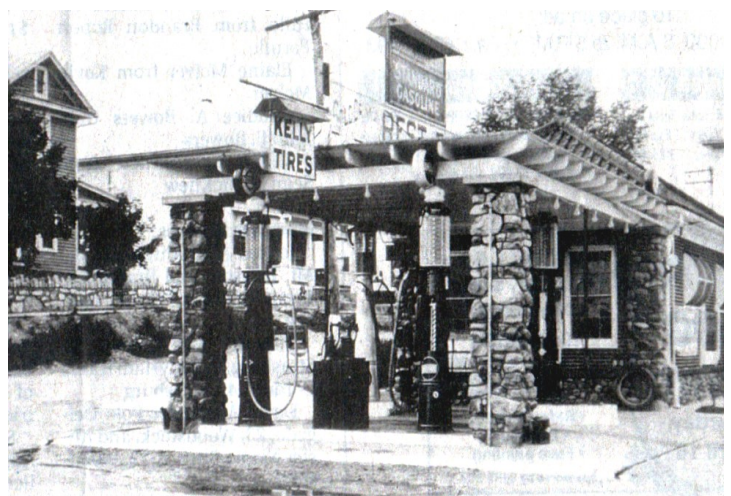
"Dad's station was a sort of centerpiece for my friends. We guys would walk to school together" all boys from the west end of town. Another job Jim had when he was in high school was to deliver special delivery letters from the post office on his bicycle. "Every day when I came home for lunch, I'd go to the post office to see if there were any letters to deliver." Jim was sworn in by the postmaster to deliver U.S. mail. He also delivered newspapers for Joe Pifer, owner of the News Stand. "I had a pretty big route of over 400 customers." He got a half cent for the daily paper, and  $\frac{3}{4}$  cent for the Sunday paper, delivering from his bicycle with a "great big basket on it. I made twenty dollars a week sometimes, pretty good for a kid in high school."

While Jim worked for his father at Artz Esso, he also worked at a small restaurant across the street when he was in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade as a part time cook. He made fried baloney and fried egg sandwiches. Jim was born in 1936 and was a teenager in the 1950s, graduating from Strasburg High School in 1954.

Another job Jim had after school in the 1950s was taking care of a piece of equipment placed on the station property. He doesn't know the name of it and is unsure where it came from but he believes it was something experimental that came from the agricultural department or some other government agency. "We didn't get any money from it; we were just doing it to help out," said Jim. "I don't know if worked or not. It looked like a propane tank for outdoor grills. I had to open a valve and light a match, and flame would come out of it." It was thought to prevent lightening from striking.

The first service station on the site was a square building with rock columns supporting the canopy over the gravity flow gas pumps. That station was torn down and two new buildings were built. When Jim was in the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade, one of his teachers, Irene Rickard, sponsored an after school activity in the upstairs of one of these buildings. A juke-box played popular rock and roll music and Mrs. Rickard taught kids how to dance. John Artz offered the teacher the space for the kids in the community.

Jim's sister Sue Artz Grimes remembers walking home from school and stopping there for a bottle of grape Nehi pop. When she started driving in the early sixties, she would get 50 cents worth of gas at a time. Susie's good friend Julie Tate Bauserman remembers: "I don't think I ever bought more than a dollar's worth of gas at one time. I can't remember a time when you would say 'fill it up.'"





Tommy Cameron was 19 years old when he started working for Artz's Esso station in 1953. He remembers the new buildings and the bridge that was built "over the gully. They finished it in '54, I was there the whole time they were building it, and we never closed". Tommy took over the station when John Artz retired in 1970 and when the gas company name changed from "Esso" to "Exxon" in 1973, the station was called "Cameron Exxon". In 1986 Tommy bought the buildings and business from Exxon, retired in December 1989 and sold the property in 1990. The new Handy Mart still sells gas but it's not a full service station anymore. When the station was Artz Esso and Cameron Exxon, the men, wearing striped uniforms, went out to pump the gas when a car pulled into the station. Tommy's wife Nancy never had to pump her own gas; even after Tommy retired and most stations had self-serve gas pumps, Tommy would still take his wife's car to fill up as he had all their married life. A couple years ago during an illness, when Tommy couldn't take the car out, Nancy's daughter took her to show her how to put gas in her car. Now in her 70s, Nancy said with amusement that she was pretty sure she could do it, it's just that she never had to learn because Tommy always took care of it. Tommy recalls they did oil changes, fixed tires and washed cars at the station. "I think it was a good career. I was able to take care of my family all those years. John Artz was good to work for." Both of Tommy's daughters graduated from Strasburg High School and Camerons Exxon supported the high school annual by buying an ad.

Tommy remembers wearing the blue and white striped "coveralls" and kids bringing pop bottles in for deposit. People would throw pop bottles on the ground when they were done with them and neighborhood kids would carry them to the station for "two cents apiece" and Tommy would stack them in the wooden pop bottle crates for the delivery man to pick up and reimburse the station.

*George Hoffman shared his memories with us: My memories of Artz' Esso station go way back to my very early years. We had it good when I was growing up! The neighborhood kids and I would play until dark sometimes, often going home only to have dinner! Part of our routine was to gather up soda pop bottles to take down to Mr. Artz or Mr. Freddie Jackson, who worked for Mr. Artz, for the deposit. We would then use that deposit to buy as much penny candy as we could, either right there at the station from the little glass shelves in the corner (although their choices weren't very diverse), or a few blocks away at Keffer's store. The Esso station also had soda pop varieties in the cooler, and a freezer chest with ice cream! I must say, I remember both Mr. Artz, and Mr. Jackson always being so nice and patient with us. I can't remember exactly when Mr. Tommy Cameron took over the station, but I remember him working there for some time prior to ownership. I knew Mr. Cameron because he and his family were friends with my family. In fact, his wife and children went to church with us. Mr. Cameron was always good to us, but he was always really busy too, so he didn't have a lot of time to wait around for us to make decisions. We probably drove him crazy!*

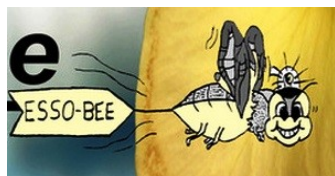
*Since the station was open later in the evening, Johnny Campbell, my friends' dad, would often send us kids down there after dark to get Pepsi. The Campbells loved their popcorn and Pepsi in the evening, and so did any and all of the other kids who hung around their house all the time (not mentioning any names!). Sometimes we would walk down the old-fashioned way, usually taking a carton of empties to redeem for the deposit. The best times, however, were when we would pull out one of the Campbells' go carts...one without a motor...and we'd take turns pushing and driving to the Esso station with the carton of empties stashed on the back. I can actually remember more than one occasion, when those nice men at the station would see us rolling down that King Street hill toward the station, shaking their heads in disbelief! Good times!"*



This generation did their part in saving our environment long before anyone understood the importance of recycling. People tended to throw their used pop bottles on the ground before littering laws came into effect, and the area kids would do their own version of Adopt a Highway long before that program existed. Every home had a place to keep used pop bottles until someone, usually a child, returned them to the place they were bought. Tim Taylor remembers "that was where I would pull my red wagon full of pop bottles to get a nickel for each one! I usually went down to the Newsstand then and spent it on comic books and candy!"

**Sharon Bly Ferguson writes:** "My memories on the Esso station are a lot ... That was one of the main stops for our family. I remember John Artz and Freddie Jackson well. When I started driving I probably drove them crazy. I pulled in my old black 1952 Plymouth many a time and asked for a dollar's worth of gas so my friends and I could cruise the town for a few hours. Then we would pick up more friends and put more money together and go back for a few more gallons of gas. The station was where you'd go when you had troubles like a flat tire or you needed air in your tires.

You didn't have to pay for air back then. That is also where Jimmy and I started talking. He worked there and would pump my gas and clean my windshield and check the oil. You don't get that anymore. We talk and laugh about it



sometimes. (Sharon and Jimmy are now husband and wife). He tells people about me wearing my miniskirts and how he couldn't wait to clean my windshield, and how he wanted to put a tiger in my tank (like the Esso commercial.) I also remember when they would get advertisements like signs or cardboard pictures, I would ask for them when they were done with them and hang them on my bedroom walls. I have a pic of my bedroom with the big plastic bee that they used. I staged my room with my record player and 45's on the floor scattered around and my stuffed animals and the picture of the big bee on the wall. I also remember the open bathrooms that the customers were welcome to use anytime and you didn't have to buy gas to stop and use it. Mr. Artz was a good man. I sure do miss those good old days."

Another romance that the station sparked was that of Tommy's daughter Paula Cameron Judy who met her husband there in the spring of 1983. "We were dating about a month later, engaged about 3 months after that and married in May of 1984. AJ worked at North American Housing but started working for Daddy part-time after work and on weekends in the fall of 1983 and continued to do that until Daddy retired at the end of 1989."



John Painter grew up on the west end of town. He remembers long-time employee Freddy Jackson. "I just remember how Freddy always presented himself as a kind, patient gentleman. He was the kind of man that made everyone around him want to be a better person."

*Donna C. Campbell remembers how Freddie Jackson saved her one day at the station. "I was about 4 years old when Daddy took me and the four older brothers in the Woodie*

*station wagon and stopped off at Artz's. (Jerry was much too young to tag along). I was probably 3-4 years old. I needed to use the restroom and I went around to the outside entrance and pushed the door open. When I was ready to leave, I realized I did not have enough strength to pull the heavy door back open. I must have pounded on it or yelled or something but I remember it finally opened and there stood wonderful Freddie Jackson in the doorway with his big round smiling face. He picked me up and put me in his pickup truck and drove me the one and a half blocks to my house. Mom came to the door and there stood Freddie holding her little girl. "Jewell, I think this belongs to you. Johnie left the station without her while she was in the bathroom." Daddy never even realized he had left me behind! You'd think he'd notice since I was the only girl and I'm sure I wasn't very quiet but I think so many kids piled into the Woody that he didn't realize I was in the car when we left the house. Years later I wondered if Freddie, my hero, recognized that kid that came in buying Juicy Fruits and Good n Plenty with her little brother, on the way to school. Most likely, he did because everyone knew the Campbell Kids!"*

And that's how it was, in a small town in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, on main street, where the adults knew all the kids and looked out after them and where the neighborhood filling station was a safe place to be.





Esso is a trading name for ExxonMobil and its related companies. The name is the phonetic pronunciation of the initials 'S' and 'O' in the name Standard Oil. The company began as Standard Oil of New Jersey following the breakup of Standard Oil. In 1972, the name was largely replaced in the U.S. by the Exxon brand after the company bought Humble Oil, while the Esso name remained widely used elsewhere,—Esso Organization



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

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## Signal Knob Middle School Trailblazers

Forty SKMS students will be researching about our local people, culture, economy, natural resources and really any topic of interest related to Strasburg Community history. The goal is for students to complete applications for Historical Highway Markers via the Virginia Department of Historic Resources that could be located within the Strasburg area. The hope being that at least one of the applications will be submitted for actual approval and eventually installed. As part of this process, the students will be researching and investigating all about Strasburg's rich history and culture.

The community can get involved with this project by providing resources to assist with research, donations for instructional materials, and being a mentor for a student(s) in specific areas of interest. If you are interested in helping, please contact Jackie Weitman at Signal Knob Middle School at 540-465-3422 or via email at [jpweitman@shenandoah.k12.va.us](mailto:jpweitman@shenandoah.k12.va.us) or Rich Lorton at [rlorton@shenandoah.k12.va.us](mailto:rlorton@shenandoah.k12.va.us).

What a great opportunity for these students and our community. We hope you are willing to support this great project.

Strasburg Heritage  
Association

PO Box 525  
Strasburg, A 22657

Strasburg Heritage Association

Www.strasburgvaheritage.org

**Membership Application**  
**Dues are Due for 2019**

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