

Virginia Research Facilities—Shenandoah Valley—Augusta Co.



R.R. Smith Center for History & Art in Staunton, Va.

Augusta County Historical Society

R.R. Smith Center for History and Art
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Region: Upper Shenandoah Valley

Open: Tuesdays, Thursdays, & Fridays, 9 a.m.-noon, or by appointment.

Augusta County, Virginia, was founded in 1738 from Orange County. At that time Augusta's boundaries stood at the Mississippi River, and it encompassed part of Pennsylvania including present-day Pittsburgh.

Repository

The Augusta County Historical Society concentrates on collecting, preserving, and educating about the history of Augusta County, Staunton, and Waynesboro. The research library and collection are focused on the history of the Upper Shenandoah Valley, although there are materials relating to the greater Augusta County boundaries in the 18th century when the county stretched to the Mississippi River, particularly from the Pittsburgh area as well as Southwest Virginia. There are some books in the collection relating to counties in Virginia outside of the Shenandoah Valley.

The society has been actively collecting and preserving books, archives, and artifacts since its founding in 1964. For the last 10 years the society has been located in the restored 19th-century railroad hotel now known as the R.R. Smith Center for History and Art. The archives are now stored in a climate-controlled area and are being actively catalogued in the museum software program PastPerfect by an Archives Committee directed by the ACHS Archivist and Associate Archivist. No items, including library books, can be removed from the ACHS office.

The society operates an exhibit gallery on the first floor of the building.

Be Prepared

The historical society office and archives are open to the public on a limited regular basis at this time: Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 9 a.m. to noon. You may visit and conduct research at other times by making an appointment either by calling or e-mailing. The society is in the process of training volunteers so that researchers can access the archives and research library on a more regular basis.

A fee of 25¢ a copy for letter-sized copies and 50¢ a copy for legal-size and larger copies will be charged. You may bring your own scanners and cameras to make copies of materials at no charge. Scanning might be prohibited if the item is too fragile to be placed on a scanner.

The library has a microfilm reader as some of its records are on microfilm. However, there is no means of making copies from the machine. You should be prepared to take notes from the microfilm.

Planning Ahead

The society is in the process of redoing its website. Once complete in late 2014, the site will contain the searchable database of the list of collections housed in the society archives. Researchers can then e-mail the society in advance so that collections can be pulled and ready for use upon arrival.

- The society has published a research journal, the *Augusta Bulletin*, since 1964. The index to the entire series of *Bulletins* will be made available online as well so that researchers will know what articles they might want to read. The entire run of *Bulletins* is available in the society research library. The articles include anything related to area history, genealogy, architecture, and archaeology. The journal was published twice yearly until 1999 and then once a year since that time. The annual journal is usually about 200 pages in length.
- Society staff and volunteers will conduct a limited number of research requests. Fees include photocopy costs, postage, and a fee of \$15 per hour.
- All searchable indexes are available on the computer in the society library as well.

Holdings

The society has an uncatalogued research library of several thousand volumes, focused very specifically on Augusta County and the Shenandoah Valley with some related works pertaining to Pennsylvania, overall Virginia, and social history.

The society has miscellaneous copies of area newspapers from various time periods (see the collections database) as well as the complete run (and accompanying original photographs) from the local monthly newspaper, *Augusta Country*, that was published in the 1990s and included a number of historic articles and human interest stories of local individuals.

The society has several oversize maps, including originals from Jedediah Hotchkiss's Augusta County map and the original of the Hotchkiss/Waddell 1885 atlas of Augusta County.

Collections

The society has several thousand individual collections in its archives. Some collections contain only a few items such as a letter or a diary while others are housed in many Hollinger boxes. Many have a catalog number and an entry into the database, but the collection remains unprocessed meaning that the scope of the collection remains to be discovered by the researcher!

There are many family collections as well as many club records – scouting groups, women's clubs, farmers clubs, the Welcome Wagon, and others – that have been placed in the society when those clubs were disbanded.

There are also records from certain public agencies that no longer exist, such as the District Home (formerly called the Poor Farm). There are two extensive collections associated with Dr. Joseph DeJarnette, the longest serving superintendent of Staunton's Western State Hospital who has come to be quite a controversial figure in history.

The society has a limited number of 3-dimensional artifacts related to local history, including some textiles as well as memorabilia from organizations such as the Stonewall Brigade Band and the now-defunct Staunton Military Academy.

The society has several extensive photographic collections including the Margo Kent (Portrait Studio) collection, the Hamrick Collection (mostly Staunton), and the Coffman Collection (mostly northern Augusta County) that researchers might find useful.

Publications for Sale

Augusta County History: 1865-1950, by Richard K. MacMaster. Carefully documented, well-illustrated, annotated updating of Augusta County history by a skilled professional historian. \$30

Augusta Declaration (a poster). Historic statement of the grievances of Augusta County residents against the British. \$3

Augusta Historical Bulletin, back issues 1965-2011. Prior to 2000, copies published semiannually, saddlestitched, unindexed. From 2000 to present copies published annually, perfect bound, and indexed. Not all issues are still in stock. (Prior to 2000, you get the 2-vol. set for any year designated) \$15

Free Negroes in Augusta and Staunton, compiled by Katharine G. Bushman. Thoroughly done collection of names from local records vital to understanding early African-American history. Done by an experienced genealogist and local historian. \$10

Gibraltar of the Shenandoah – Civil War Sites and Stories of Staunton, Waynesboro, and Augusta County, Virginia, by Robert H. Moore II. Accurate and scholarly tour guide to Civil War sites in the Augusta County vicinity. Well illustrated with specific directions to locations. Maps, index, and appendices with names of persons who served. \$10

The Gospel Hill Cookbook, compiled, by Janet Lembke. Recipes from an early 20th-century Staunton woman who lived in the Gospel Hill neighborhood. \$12.95

Great Valley Patriots, by Howard M. Wilson. Inspiring account of patriot leaders of the Shenandoah Valley from the American Revolutionary era by a veteran historian of the Valley. Special emphasis on early Scotch-Irish settlers. \$15

J.R. Hildebrand Map. Useful map of early Augusta County. \$6

Images of America, Augusta County, Va., by Nancy Sorrells. Book of Historic images and short history of Augusta County. \$21.99

Kenton Harper of Virginia: Editor, Citizen, Soldier, by Thomas Jeffries. Detailed biography of Harper of Staunton. Harper fought in the Mexican and Civil War and was publisher of the *Staunton Spectator*. \$24.95

The Life and Times of John Brown Baldwin, by John Hildebrand. Well-researched biography of this 19th-century lawyer and statesman from Staunton. \$13.95

Marriage Records #1 (Supplement). Essential compilation of early Augusta County marriages. Valuable for genealogists. \$3

Marriage Records #2. Continuation of early Augusta County marriage records for genealogical researchers. \$6

A Mennonite Journal: 1862-1865. Transcribed and annotated by John Hildebrand, descendant of the diarist. \$12.95

Mills of Augusta County, by Janet and Earl Downs. Comprehensive survey of Augusta County flour mills during the age of wheat agriculture in Augusta County. Well illustrated and indexed. Names of many Augusta County families in all parts of the county. \$10

Naturalization Records, compiled by Katharine G. Bushman. Important collection of names of persons naturalized in local courts from the extensive research of a professional genealogical researcher in Augusta County records. \$5

Our Century Together—100 Years of Photos, Memories and Newsleader Front Pages. Publication celebrating centennial of Staunton's newspaper with many captioned photographs and reproduced front pages from the paper. Arranged by decade. No index. \$29.95

Portals to Shenandoah Valley Folkways, edited by Dorothy A Boyd-Bragg, softcover, illustrated, and fully indexed, 137 pp. Four well-known experts on Shenandoah Valley folkways are featured. Folklorist John L. Heatwole considers aspects of local folklore, including witches and hexing. Local historian Nancy T. Sorrells talks about cattle in valley life, including cattle drives. The importance of crafts, especially pottery and basket making, is the theme Scott H. Suter pursues. Food historian Danielle M. Torisky follows foodways of the Civil War era, including local recipes. \$15

Shirey's Guide Book to Augusta County, Staunton, and Waynesboro, Virginia, by Paul C. Shirey. Wealth of information about landmarks and everyday life from a local historian who recorded his memories about the area. Indexed and arranged in alphabetical order. \$3

Staunton's Newtown: Portrait of a Historic District, by Katharine Brown and her students in historic preservation at Mary Baldwin College (330 pg. softcover, more than 250 photos, maps, and drawings), 2006. This book tells the story of the people who made Newtown from its addition to Staunton in 1787 to its recent rediscovery and revival, and the houses, churches, and schools that they built. With seven churches and seven schools featured, the institutional history of the district alone is impressive. Staunton's prominent architectural

firm, T.J. Collins & Son, designed many Newtown buildings and structures, including the monuments of Thornrose Cemetery. \$25

Wip Robinson, III, by Jones. Biography of beloved Augusta County announcer and radio pioneer. \$3

William Sheppard, by William Phipps. Well researched biography of pioneer African-American Presbyterian minister and missionary to the Congo who was a native of Waynesboro. \$22.95

The Word Gatherer: An Oral History of John Heatwole, by Carol Maureen DeHart. Famed woodcarver and folklorist John Heatwole passed away in late 2006. Before his death, he sat down with the author and gave her his own story. They fine-tuned and edited the work and had planned to publish it together. DeHart finished the project that includes many never-before seen photos of Heatwole and his art pieces. \$14.95

*For postage and shipping fees as well as sales tax, contact the society at augustachs@ntelos.net or call 540-248-4151.

Nancy Sorrells
ACHS Board Member

Dated: 22 August 2014