



Shenandoah
County
Historical
Society

Fall 2021

Newsletter

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SCHS is Now on FACEBOOK

www.facebook.com/SCHSVA

New Life Members

Patricia Mason

New Members

Tom and Sherry Hawkins

Glen Hoptman

Owen Heine

ATTENTION

ARE YOUR DUES DUE??

The date beside the name on your mailing label is the month and year your membership is due. Thank you for staying current. Rates on Page 6.

2021 Preservation Awards Presented



Left to Right: Rev. Anna Havron, Mt. Zion Lutheran Church; Zachary Hottel, Shenandoah County Archivist; John Taylor, St. John Bosco Catholic Church; Eryn Kawecki, Shenandoah County Archives Intern; Rev. Augustine Tran, St. John Bosco Catholic Church.

The Shenandoah County Historical Society was pleased to present the 2021 Excellence in Preservation Awards to three recipients at the Society's annual dinner in Edinburg on August 10, 2021. The awards seek to recognize outstanding preservation projects in Shenandoah County in the fields of history, architecture, scenic beauty and material culture. They are intended to bring public recognition to these achievements and in so doing encourage others to follow their examples, bringing greater awareness of the value of historic preservation. Awards were given to:

St. John Bosco Catholic Church for preserving the historic structure of the first Catholic church to be built in Shenandoah County in 1888. The Rev. Augustine Tran and church member, John Taylor, were present to accept the award on the behalf of the congregation.

Mt. Zion Lutheran Church, located in the Fairview community west of Woodstock. By transferring the church records to the Shenandoah County Library Truban Archives, they have preserved these historic documents dating back to 1829 and will make them accessible to the public. Accepting the award was the Rev. Anna Havron, pastor of Mt. Zion Lutheran Church.

Shenandoah County Library Truban Archives for the creation of a digital program, Bondage Biographies: Enslaved People of Shenandoah County. This database includes many names and personal stories of individuals who were enslaved in Shenandoah County from 1772-1865. Shenandoah County archivist, Zachary Hottel and Truban Archives intern, Eryn Kawecki, accepted the award on behalf of the volunteers who worked on this project.

New Museum Exhibit and Visitor Center Reminder

SCHS Volunteers host the Museum and Visitor Center every Friday and Saturday from 11 AM to 4 PM. The bookstore is located in the Visitor Center. The new exhibit, by Jim Stevenson, is a Revolutionary War diorama with a panel on Peter Muhlenberg and one on the 8th VA Regiment and can be seen beginning Oct. 1st.

The Museum and Visitor Center, as usual, will be closed during January and February.

Members Meet for 2021 SCHS Annual Dinner Meeting

An enthusiastic crowd met at the Edinburg Town Park on August 10th for the SCHS Annual Meeting, postponed from May. The outdoor venue was perfect for the event and attendees and guests enjoyed each other's company.

The business meeting was kept brief so that the audience could enjoy the traditional songs shared by musicians Bill Foster and Don Crigler. Their renditions were accompanied by remarks that enlightened our knowledge of the songs, song writers and the circumstances in which they were written. Delicious picnic fare was enjoyed by all.

Board elections were held with members Barbara Adamson, Rick Lytton, Ellen Markel, Margie Hisey Tackett, and Susan Walls confirmed for another term and Hank Zimmerman elected to a two-year term. New board member Hank Zimmerman was especially welcomed to the board.

As reported elsewhere on this page, Excellence in Preservation Awards were presented.

The SCHS web site:
www.SCHS1795.com



From the: Shenandoah County Archives

By Zach Hottel, Archivist

Colored Voter Registration Rolls →

In 1902 the Davis District Board of Registers began using this book to collect the names of new registered voters in their district. The board, consisting of members W.L. Green, G.H. Evans, and J.W. Eberly, were responsible for recording the information of those who wanted to vote and collecting their poll tax. Based on other books in our collection, they would have used the book for at least that year and most likely through the 1920s.

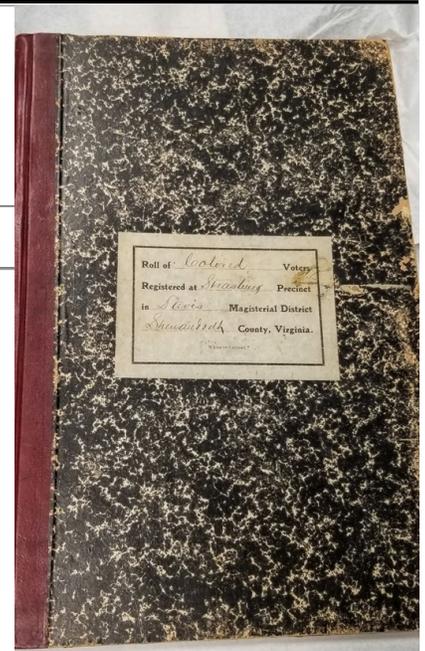
This roll book records the information of the “colored” voters they registered during that period. It contains only a single name, Amos R. Bird.

Amos Randolph Bird was born on or around July 8 1858. His parents were Benjamin and Millie Bird. He lived on Capon Road in the eastern part of the Town of Strasburg. He married Evelyn Thompson (also called Lina or Tina) on July 31 1884. They had one son, John in 1887. Amos could read and write and was employed as a laborer for most of his life. He died of tuberculosis on March 24, 1912 and is buried at the Pifer Cemetery on Red Bud Road.

Why was Amos the only African American registered during this period? At the time several hundred African Americans lived in this district, so there should have been more than one person who registered to vote. However, the Commonwealth of Virginia and local officials would have worked hard to disenfranchise these “colored” voters. While the number of African American voters would have been higher immediately after the Civil War, by the time this book was placed into use these things like the poll tax, literacy tests, and other racist policies would have prevented many from registering or voting.

Somehow Amos Byrd made it past these obstacles and registered to vote on September 29, 1902. Whether he did head to the polls is unknown, but this act and the determination it would have taken should be commended.

Learn more about local voting history, our communities, and the people who called them home by visiting the Shenandoah County Library’s Truban Archives open Monday-Friday 10-5 with appointments recommended.



Roll of Colored Voters Registered at Strasburg Precinct in Davis Magisterial District Shenandoah County, Virginia, 1903. Virginia Voter Registration Books Collection, Truban Archives, Shenandoah County Library, Edinburg, Virginia.

This Newsletter can be sent to you electronically. Many photos will appear in color, and it saves postage! Notify us at: schs.va@gmail.com

The Shenandoah County Historical Society, Inc.

is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization.

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Susan Walls
Hank Zimmerman

Newsletter Editor:
Janet Wagniere

Virtual Program Announcement : “Using Tree-Ring Dating to Examine Historic Barns”

Earlier this year, SCHS completed a program to examine six historic barns using dendroarchaeology (tree-ring science). This science allows us to determine the year trees used in barn construction were cut down, or felled. Because barns were usually built within one year of the felling of the trees, an implied construction date can be determined. Join team members John Adamson, Kristen de Graauw and Barbara Adamson as they present information about six old Shenandoah County barns which were investigated by this project. How old are the oldest barns? Did they survive the Civil War? What do family history and public records tell us about these barns?



Anyone interested in this subject can attend the program which will be presented virtually, via Zoom technology on Tues., Oct. 26 at 7 pm. The event will last approximately one hour with time for all attendees to ask questions of the project team. To register for this program, send an email to adamsons@shentel.net

Details will be sent via email about one week before the program.

Message from the President

SCHS has kept me busy lately. Nothing new there, just adds to a busy summer since the annual dinner was an August event rather than Spring. I thank all of our board members for their service and welcome Hank Zimmerman as our newest member.

I don’t have an update for Shenandoah County 250 activities except to say that I hope you will visit the website, www.sc250.org to learn more about activities and consider offering your support for the festivities planned for 2022.

With a heavy heart I note the passing of the incomparable Gloria Stickley on September 2, 2021. Born and raised in Strasburg, Gloria embraced the history of her community. She served for 12 years as president of the Strasburg Museum. She was a co-author of *Reflections Early Schools of Shenandoah Co., VA*, published by SCHS in 1995 and of *Legacy: A History of St. Paul Lutheran Church*. Gloria was the author of *Strasburg, Virginia: Our History in Post Cards*, for which she won an Excellence in Preservation award in 2015. Gloria was an important figure in my appreciation of and commitment to our local history. She will be sorely missed.



Shenandoah County Quilts in Exhibit at Belle Grove

On Friday, August 20, American Quilt Study Group members from around the US had an opportunity to enjoy a dozen historic Shenandoah County quilts at an exhibit at Belle Grove Plantation. These scholars, serious quilt makers and quilt enthusiasts, attended an annual seminar which this year focused on the Shenandoah Valley. SCHS was invited to bring outstanding historic quilts made in Shenandoah County. Attendees enjoyed many colorful quilts from Frederick County as well as Shenandoah County. The exhibit was held in Belle Grove's beautiful 1918 barn/Visitor Center.



Barbara Hollar and Marlyn Hoffman brought quilts made in the 19th C. by family members. Elizabeth Stratton displayed two historic quilts from the Strasburg Museum. And Barbara Kesser, with help from Jean Martin, gathered a group of quilts from the Woodstock Museum collection for display. Attendees enjoyed sharing information about quilt patterns, stitching, dyes and fabrics, with quilt owners often learning new information from the scholars.



Showing Shenandoah County Quilts:

Front, L-R: Barbara Hollar, Jean Martin, Back, L-R: Barbara Adamson (Pres. SCHS), Marlyn Hoffman, Elizabeth Stratton

Barn Praising

On Sunday, Sept. 12 SCHS members and guests enjoyed an afternoon of "barn praising" at the renovated barn of Eric and Amber Reiley west of Woodstock. Pictured above is Eric as he shared their story of becoming the barn's owners and the realization that this wonderful structure deserved their love and commitment. Guests enjoyed the barn visit, fellowship and refreshments. Many thanks to the Reileys for their hospitality and preservation of Shenandoah County history.



Message from 2021 Preservation Award Honoree

At the recent SCHS Annual Meeting where the 2021 Preservation Awards were presented, those in attendance were very impressed by the message delivered by one of the honorees, Pastor Anna Havron of the Mt. Zion Lutheran Church. With her permission we print it:

Greetings! I am Pastor Anna Havron with Mt. View Lutheran Parish, which is St. Luke and Mt. Zion Lutheran churches in Woodstock.

It is such an honor to be with you tonight. Your work is near and dear to my heart. I was a proud member of the Peterborough New Hampshire Historical Society when I was in middle school. Peterborough had a small museum where they trained school kids like me to give tours, which was very canny of them. When I was eleven years old, I marched in our town's bicentennial parade, representing the Historical Society. It is the first and last time I ever wore a mob cap. That experience sparked my lifelong love of artifacts and archives.

And obviously, given my line of work, I also love the Bible! Before offering the blessing this evening I would like to say two things about the library of books, collected over thousands of years, that we now call the Bible.

First, in the Hebrew scriptures, God is continually telling the Israelites to remember: Remember that God is the God of their ancestors and was faithful to them. Remember that God is the God who led them out of slavery to freedom. The refrain of the God of the Bible is, "Remember. Remember. Remember."

The second thing I want to help us remember, to remind us of, is the reason that we have this library of books -- poetry, proverbs, chronologies, covenants, stories, letters, histories, and genealogical records -- that we now call the Bible. The reason is because for thousands of years, many thousands of people handwrote and hand-copied these records, visions, stories, and memories down, and carefully preserved them for future generations.

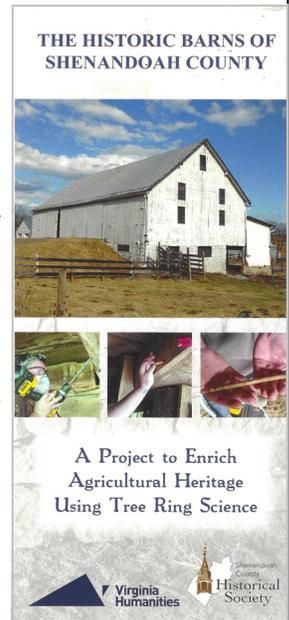
Whatever wisdom traditions you as individual members of the Shenandoah County Historical Society follow, we all have something in common with the ancient biblical scribes and preservationists of thousands of years ago.

We all have something in common with the generations upon generations of people who lovingly guarded these records from decay and destruction -- people who snatched precious documents from fires, or hid them from invaders. We all have something in common with the people who not only preserved the old records but who recorded new revelations throughout the millennia which enriched their understanding not only of

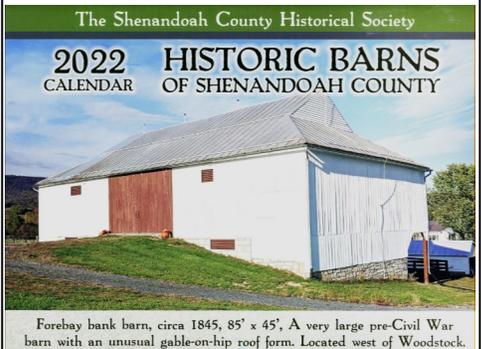
New Barn Project Summary Report Brochure is now Completed

The SCHS has recently published a new brochure which is a summary report of the ongoing Barn Project using tree-ring science to establish the construction dates of six historic Shenandoah County barns. The report is printed as a twelve panel color brochure with explanation of the tree-ring dating process and the findings for all six barns.

If you would like to receive a copy of this report, please send us a note, along with \$1 for postage and handling to: SCHS Historic Barn Project P.O. Box 506 Edinburg VA 22824



2021 Barn Calendar Available



Forebay bank barn, circa 1845, 85' x 45', A very large pre-Civil War barn with an unusual gable-on-hip roof form. Located west of Woodstock.

Our Shenandoah County Barn Calendars have been extremely popular and we are pleased to announce that the new one for 2022, with all different barns throughout the County is now hot off the press. You can purchase one by mailing a check (payable to SCHS) for \$10 + \$2 shipping to SCHS, PO Box 506, Edinburg VA 22824

themselves, but of their relationship to others, and their relationship to what is eternal: what is beyond time and history itself.

So to all of you, I want to say, Remember: The work that you do in the Shenandoah County Historical Society is one of the great human endeavors. Your work allows us all to remember who we are, and where we come from, as we travel together to the challenges and opportunities of the future.

✦ Continuing Series on Historic Buildings in Shenandoah County ✦

THE BELGRAVIA BARN

By: John Adamson

Shenandoah County is a treasure for old barn lovers. By my estimate, today there are at least 600 barns in our county that were built before 1950. The fact that so many survive is due to several factors including very large numbers of barns built between 1750 and 1950 and a generally stable economy dominated by agricultural methods that required barns. Other factors contributing to our barn population are an abundance of local materials to build barns, especially limestone, oak and pine, and, very importantly a community ethic that values these icons of our history and place. Thankfully, barn owners are often reluctant to remove their barns even if they are expensive to maintain and not as useful as in the past.

Though the number of surviving barns is very large, there can be no doubt that more old barns have been lost through the years than survive today. Barns have been lost for many reasons: the destruction of the Civil War, severe weather, abandonment, removal due to deterioration, sale for the value of materials, removal to make way for new development, replacement by new barns and, significantly, loss due to accidental fire.

Shenandoah County Historical Society members who follow the Historic Barns program know that one of the primary reasons for my surveying of historic barns is to document as many as possible before more are lost for any of the causes listed above. Every barn which is photographed, surveyed and documented is a barn that will be a permanent part of history. That is one of the primary reasons to survey old barns, not just to learn how they were built, where they were, and what they looked like, but to preserve them in a virtual sense for as long as the records survive regardless of what happens to the physical barn.

The Belgravia barn is one such barn. Unfortunately, it was lost recently due to accidental fire. It was a unique barn in our county, not a forebay bank barn, as many of the county's barns are. So in a sense, its loss, is a greater loss than the loss of other barns which have many surviving



The Belgravia barn was 160 feet long. This view from the east.



Like many English barns the entrance was on the gable end. Most local barns have their entrance in the middle of the long side.



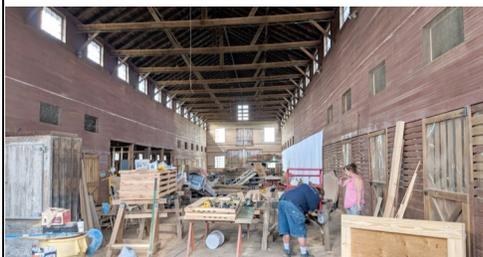
View showing the bar area of the finished event space.



View showing the seating area for up to 300 persons.



Gone but not forgotten. The fire of August 27, 2021 totally destroyed the magnificent barn.



The massive central bay under reconstruction. Note the large number of framing bents supporting the long roof.

"barn cousins". If there is a positive aspect to the story of the Belgravia barn, it is that we were able to photograph, measure and document it before the fire which destroyed it. What follows is my description of the Belgravia barn.

The Belgravia barn, located just north of Mt. Jackson and about one half mile west of the Old Valley Pike, was built by James Cox in 1890. Cox was a wealthy Englishman who was looking for a place in the United States to build a new home and raise horses. He found what he was looking for just west of Mt. Jackson and purchased a farm that suited his desires. He built his massive barn and an elegant house paneled in rich oak imported from England. Our newsletter editor, Janet Wagniere, wrote about Cox and his house in the Fall, 2012 SCHS newsletter.

Like his house, the barn James Cox built was very English in form, like nothing to be found among the many hundreds of barns in Shenandoah County. At 160 feet long by 76 feet wide, it was the longest barn ever built in Shenandoah County. It was built to be a giant stable to raise Standardbred horses with a massive central bay flanked on each side by two long stable areas. Like many English barns the entrance was on the gable end. This gave the barn a cathedral-like appearance and is related to the great titling barns of medieval England several of which survive to this day. It is hard to describe how impressive the barn was using mere words, but here is an example using barn structure terminology. Most barns have transverse framing elements called "bents". These H-shaped structures run across the width of the barn. Locally, larger barns have five bents, the very largest ones have six bents. The Belgravia barn was built with sixteen bents! I can only imagine the conversation among the local carpenters as they worked to build this barn 130 years ago.

Cox did not stay in Mt. Jackson and in 1911 he sold the property with the barn to John Wissler. The barn stayed in the Wissler family until it was sold to Frank Dinges at auction in 1944. Dinges operated the farm as an orchard and used the barn as a massive packing shed. In 1960, the barn passed to Winifred Dinges and in 2003 to her daughters. During the 1970s the barn once again found use as a stable with the Dinges family breeding Arabian show horses. As many as 25 horses were stabled there during this period.

The barn and 67 acres was sold to Sparky (Cecil) Miller in 2014. Mr. Miller had a vision of transforming the unusual structure into an event venue for the benefit of the surrounding community.

(Continued on Page 5)

New Courthouse Visitor Center Staff Members



Sharon Lee

Sharon is a relatively new Virginia resident, having moved to the area four years ago. She joined our team shortly after moving to Woodstock, and we are so glad she did.

After her husband of 48 years passed away, she decided to move East in order to be closer to one of her 4 daughters and 2 of the youngest of her 11 grand-children. So, she retired from her job with the Register of Deeds in Michigan, and migrated to our beautiful Shenandoah Valley.

She likes history so she has been enjoying visiting the many historical sites the area has to offer. Hosting the Historic Courthouse Visitor Center and Museum and meeting the many visitors who stop in fits right in with what she already enjoys,

Welcome to our team; we are so glad you found us.



Liz Sollenberger

Liz has been a member of the SCHS for many years, has served on the Board and she has recently joined our team of Visitor Center/Museum hosts.

Having taught herself to play the piano at an early age, she went on to obtain her Bachelor of Music Education degree and Master of Education from JMU. She then taught music, chorus, language arts and US History for 34 years in the County school system.

In addition to her teaching career, she served as a church organist and at times also as a choir director since 1961. →

Belgravia - [Continued from Page 4]

He worked diligently, using his own resources, including much sweat equity to create a unique and attractive, large space for public events. Sparky made extensive use of heart pine repurposed from the stable areas of the barn to create a gracious and inviting public space in what had been the east stable area. This space was completely equipped with modern bathrooms, a bar and tables and seating for as many as 300 persons. Many events were held here including the Historical Society's annual preservation awards ceremony in September, 2020.

Work continued on the remaining portions of the barn with plans to eventually convert the entire structure into event space. I first visited the barn to survey it on August 21, 2019 while the work continued. Along with survey team members Sharon Weatherholtz and Anne Dellinger, I met with Sparky who graciously gave us access to every part of the structure which we explored and photographed. Remarkably, my 100 foot steel tape was not long enough to measure the length of the barn in one pass. Sparky answered all of our questions and invited us to return any time including free use of the facility for Historical Society events.

On Friday, August 27, 2021 disaster struck and the barn was completely destroyed by fire. This terrible accident deprives the entire community of a valuable resource. I have subsequently met with Sparky to gather information for this article and to learn of his future plans with the site. But it is too early for him to be able to know what can and should be done. Hopefully, the site can become a useful facility again, but no amount of time, money, and effort will ever be able to replace what was lost. Though the original barn cannot be recreated, I hope the site can once again become a valuable community resource. I was fortunate to be able to survey and record this barn before it was lost.

SCHS COMPLETE BOOK LIST

Is available on web site:

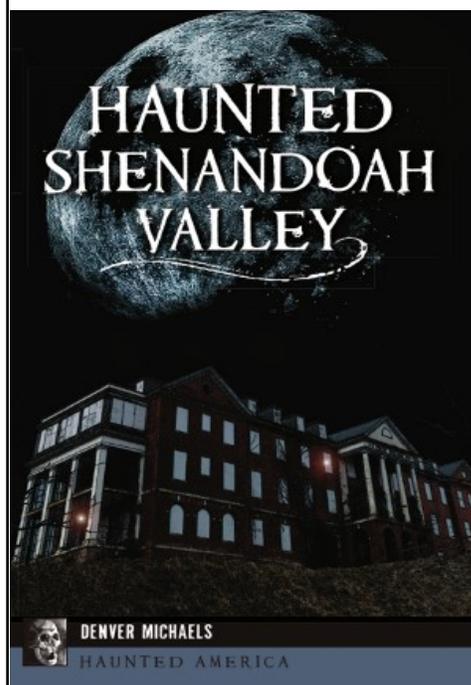
www.SCHS1795.com

Presently, she is the organist at Woodstock Presbyterian Church.

A few years ago, Liz provided one of our quarterly programs wherein she played the organ and shared the highlights of her trip to Germany wherein she visited the village of her German ancestors of her mother. While there, she was invited to play the organs in each town that the group visited.

She and her late husband had two daughters, Katie and Mary, and she has two grandsons.

New Book Available



The abolitionist John Brown still roams the West Virginia panhandle -- and beyond. In Lexington, a statue sheds real tears, mourning Virginians killed in battle. Decades of abuse at a sanatorium unleashed malevolent entities in Staunton. Spirits of Native Americans, Civil War soldiers and children frequent natural springs in Frederick County and caves near Strasburg. Ghosts stay free of charge at the nation's oldest inn in Middletown, and at the Natural Bridge Hotel, phantom children play in the halls. Visitors from beyond the grave enjoy live performances at several theaters in the region, while spectral soldiers gather for combat in the battlefields scattered throughout the area.

Join author Denver Michaels as he delves into folklore, eyewitness accounts and urban legends to bring you the best ghost stories from the Shenandoah Valley. *Haunted Shenandoah Valley* is available for \$22 (Members: \$21) plus shipping. It is also available at the Courthouse Visitor Center.

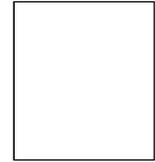
SCHS FINANCIAL STATEMENT

At the 5/31/21 end of the fiscal year, the Treasurer

**reported a total of
\$61,022.95 in the
SCHS accounts.**



Shenandoah
County VA
**Historical
Society**



P.O. Box 506
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Phone: 540-459-1795
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WEB: www.SCHS1795.com

Join the SCHS

New Yearly Dues:

Member: \$15 (Newsletter by E-mail)
Member: \$20 (Mailed newsletter)
Lifetime \$250
Send Fee to address above.
Renewal Date is beside name on
mailing label →

**Shenandoah Valley Regional Archives Fair
Is October 20th**

On Wed., Oct. 20, 2021 archivists from throughout the region will gather to share information about their collections during the 3rd annual Shenandoah Valley Archives Fair.

This virtual event will be held via Zoom and Facebook live at 11:00AM. Participants include the Clark County Historical Association, Thomas Balch Library, Stewart Bell, Jr. Archives at the Handley Library, Truban Archives at the Shenandoah County Library, Massanutten Regional Library, JMU Special Collections, Rocktown History, and Bridgewater College's Special Collections.

During this event, representatives from these institution will discuss their collections, new materials, how to access them, and important tips for conducting research. They will also talk about their work within the communities they serve. A question and answer period will follow.

To participate via Zoom, RSVP to zhottel@countylib.org. The Facebook live broadcast will occur via the County Library's Facebook page and those of other institutions.

New Market Historical Society Program:

Thursday, Nov. 18th at 7:00 PM @ Town Council Chambers

The Story of John Rodgers Meigs will be presented by Jerry Biller who will delve into this story of an officer in the Union Army during the American Civil War. His killing, thought to have been by Confederate partisans, brought about the order to burn the Town of Dayton to the ground. Hear the rest of the story. Public is invited. For info: Email: nmhs@newmarkethistoricalsociety.org

FAIRFAX



**GENEALOGICAL
SOCIETY**

2021 FALL FAIR

— with —

Rebecca Whitman
Koford, CG®, CGL

\$25/member
only available to FxGS Members

\$35/non-member

Register today
<https://fxgs2021oct.eventbrite.com>

Back to the
National
Archives:
Unlocking Its
Secrets

OCTOBER 9, 2021
9:15AM TO 1:30PM

VIA ZOOM

- Unlocking the Secrets of Military Records
- Unlocking the Secrets of Land Records
- Unlocking the Secrets of NARA's Online Resources

