

# NEWS - NOTES

The Newsletter of the Rockbridge Historical Society

Volume XXXVII Issue 4

September 2010

*The past educating the present.*

Headquarters and Exhibition Space at Campbell House, Washington & Randolph Streets, Lexington, Virginia

Editor, George Wm. Warren, IV • Graphic Design by B.R. Floyd

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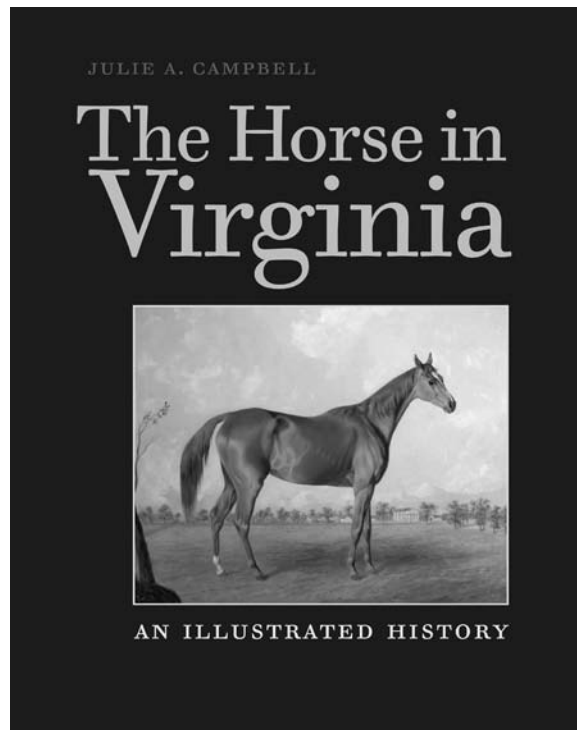
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## September Program to Explore History of the Horse in Virginia



*Cover Illustration – “Johnson’s Fanny” by Edward Troye (1839)*

Julie Campbell’s new book, *The Horse in Virginia: An Illustrated History*, examines 400 years of Virginia’s heritage, beginning with the horses that accompanied some of the first settlers to Jamestown. (Their story did not have a happy ending.) Since then, the state’s special relationship with the horse has never waned. Published by the University of Virginia Press this spring, it is the first book to cover the complete history of the horse in the Old Dominion, and is illustrated throughout with color and black-and-white images, including historical depictions of the horse by painters, photographers and commercial artists.

Virginia has been home to some of the most notable breeds in the world, nurturing the Thoroughbred and actually birthing the Quarter Horse. It also can claim some of the most famous individual horses, including the great Triple Crown champion Secretariat (subject of an upcoming Disney movie) and Misty of Chincoteague, one of the most beloved horses in all of children’s literature.

The most significant figures in the Commonwealth’s history have almost invariably enjoyed a special bond with horses, from George Washington—whom Thomas

*Continued on page 2*

# History of the Horse in Virginia

*Continued from page 1*

Jefferson called “the best horseman of his age”—to Robert E. Lee. As everyone in Rockbridge County knows (or should know, anyway), Lee rode into battle and, after the war, into Lexington on his gray gelding, Traveller, who became nearly as famous as his owner.

This tradition has continued into the present day, when horse farms are still a proud feature of the Virginia countryside and famed equestrians such as David and Karen O’Connor have represented their state and their country in the Olympics.

Rockbridge County has played its part in the overall history of the Virginia horse, with a recent starring role

thanks to the Virginia Horse Center. Famed Lexingtonians, Stonewall Jackson and his steed, Little Sorrel, also make an appearance in the book, which includes the equine history of the Virginia Military Institute.

In her talk, Campbell will discuss the genesis of the book, the research materials she used, and some of the Virginians (both horses and people) she met along the way. You’ll find out where the real Misty of Chincoteague lived; what the horse named Lady Wonder was famous for; the breed that got away from Thomas Jefferson; and what happened to those first horses at Jamestown.

## Meeting at a Glance

**Date:** *Monday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010*

**Time:** *Dinner – 6:15 p.m., Program – 7:00 p.m.*

**Where:** *Virginia Horse Center, Appomatox Mezzanine*

**Program:** *“The Horse in Virginia”*

**Speaker:** *Author and Editor Julie Campbell*

## Fall Picnic Information

Please note that everyone is invited to the history portion of our program at no charge. There is ample parking, and ample seating, for Julie Campbell’s talk, which will begin at 7:00 p.m.

Seating for the 6:15 p.m. picnic dinner is, however, strictly limited to the first 100 paid reservations received at Campbell House. The meal price is \$24, and the buffet-style meal will be provided by the legendary Mrs. Rowe’s of Staunton. The menu consists of a garden salad, her fabulous, home-made Meatloaf, Chicken Breast stuffed with home-made cornbread, her signature scalloped potatoes,

baked apples better than grandmother used to make, hot rolls and butter, cobbler (chef’s choice), coffee, iced tea, and water.

Vegetarian meals are available upon request (chef’s choice).

**A remittance/reservation envelope is enclosed with this newsletter for the convenience of folks wishing to partake of the meal portion of the program. Please return them as promptly as possible, but no later than September 20<sup>th</sup>.**

## About the Speaker

Julie Campbell, author of *The Horse in Virginia: An Illustrated History* (University of Virginia Press, 2010), is associate director of communications and public affairs at Washington and Lee University.

She grew up in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and earned the B.A. in history from Arizona State University and M.A. in history from the University of Arizona. Our speaker began her publishing career in Denver, working for a variety of magazines. From 1987 to 1994, she was an editor of books and a journal at the Arizona Historical Society, in Tucson. She moved to Richmond, Virginia in 1994 to assume the position of editor of *Virginia Cavalcade*, the illustrated magazine of history at the Library of Virginia, which ceased publication in 2002.



Credit: Patrick Hinely

Ms Campbell is the primary author of *Studies in Arizona History*; a high-school textbook published in 1998 by the Arizona Historical Society, and has contributed articles and book reviews to numerous journals, newspapers, and books.

She is a past president of Virginia Press Women, and of the Friends of the Richmond Mounted Squad. She serves on the boards of the Friends of the Rockbridge Regional Library and the Friends of the Washington and Lee Library. She also serves on an advisory committee to the Museum of the Virginia Horse, which is planned for the Meadow Event Park in Doswell, Virginia.

Needless to say, she has had a life-long love affair with horses.



Credit: VMI Archives

*A view of a parade at VMI, showing horse drawn Artillery unit in the foreground. Barracks and the 1907 Library building can be seen in the background. (circa 1930)*

## Notes from Collections

*By Seth Goodhart, RHS Curator/Librarian*

Greetings from Collections...In this "Dog Days of Summer" installment of "Notes," I would like to share with our readers an array of interesting objects that has been accessioned since my last article. Before I mention our new additions, allow me to emphasize the importance of maintaining those rich tales that often accompany donated artifacts. Whether you plan to give objects or archive-worthy material, such as photographs or letters, to an institution or museum, or whether you plan to begin or continue a family tradition of passing treasures down to later generations, it is critical to attach some degree of provenance to the heirloom or family archive. When an object is accompanied by a story, it immediately becomes more significant. The object now assumes a perch on a branch of the historical record.

With that side note, I will now introduce a few of the artifacts recently donated to the Society by life member Margaret Cole Davis. We have received numerous artifacts from Ms Davis over the years, including the beautiful walnut dining room table (and accompanying chairs) in the Campbell House Board Room, which are used daily.

I will now leave the introductions to a selection of her recent gifts to the words of Ms Davis herself:

"This rocking chair belonged to my great grandfather William Weaver Davis, who owned Gibraltar Forge in Rockbridge Baths.

The rifle belonged to my father, when he was a young

man, and stayed in the house in Rockbridge Baths. My aunt once used it to shoot a 'possum that was invading the hen house in the middle of the night.

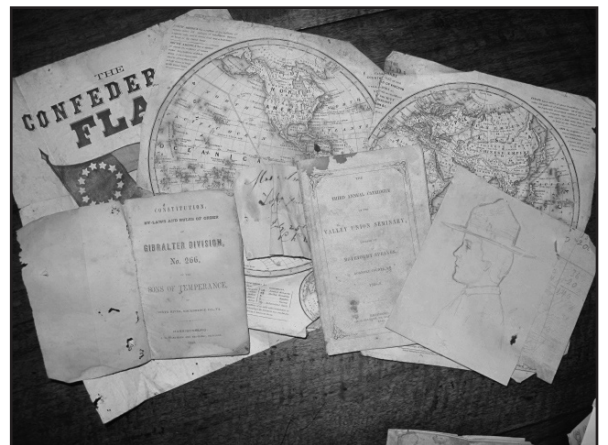
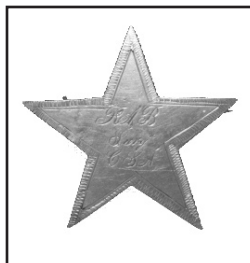
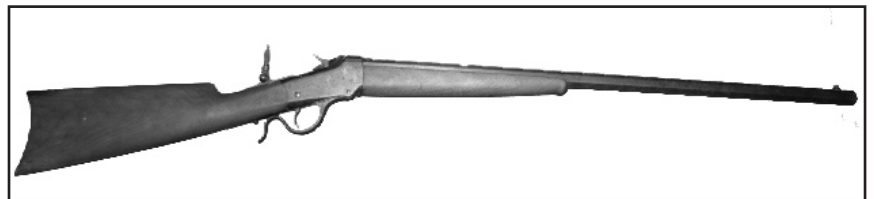
The badge belonged to Robert A. Burton, my grandmother's father in Helena, Ark. [a CSA surgeon].

The letters I pulled from the attic through a trapdoor. Dust, bugs, and time have taken their toll..." – Margaret Cole Davis, Summer 2010

Before I sign off, I would like to say a word or two regarding our collections at RHS: Article 3 of our Constitution and Bylaws states that the Society, "shall also collect, preserve, interpret and present to the general public on a continuing basis, in so far as practicable, its historical objects and artifacts (including buildings) records, documents, photographs, and books related to the antiquities, history, landmarks, and literature of the Rockbridge County area."

The scope of responsibility of the Society to its Collections is enormous. We are stewards of a large and ever-expanding collection. This stewardship is constantly challenged by the need to provide storage, collections management, artifact conservation, and display techniques. Your financial support for the cause of RHS Collections will help meet this critical responsibility. Anyone interested in volunteering time or donating money towards RHS Collections should contact our Director, George Warren, at 540/464-1058 or [rochist@hotmail.com](mailto:rochist@hotmail.com).

Cheers till November!!!



## Membership

### *The Importance of Dues*

Members' dues have always been a significant source of financial support for your Society's missions and stewardship responsibilities. Memberships are on a calendar-year basis.

**Please check your mailing label to insure your 2010 membership dues have been paid.**

#### Annual Dues

Family – \$30 • Individual – \$20  
Student – \$10 • Corporate/Business – \$50

#### Special Opportunities for Higher Levels of Support

• Benefactor – \$500 • Patron – \$250 • Sponsor – \$100

The Society is a 501 (c) (3) charitable corporation. Dues above the basic level, as well as contributions in cash or kind, are deductible to the extent provided by state and/or federal law, and the tax regulations of each jurisdiction. For particulars, consult your tax advisor.

## Major Sale!

**For a limited time only the Society is pleased to offer the complete set of *RHS Proceedings, Volumes I through XIII*, for the astonishing price of \$99.95, including tax and shipping.**

Orders accepted by:

- e-mail ([rochist@hotmail.com](mailto:rochist@hotmail.com))
- telephone (540/464-1058)
- mail (P. O. Box 1409, Lexington, VA 24450)

**Already own *Volume XIII*? Deduct \$20 and buy *Volumes I through XII*.**

## Development

The ever-increasing cost of maintaining our three historic houses and grounds, plus the multitude of other activities we undertake, or sponsor, require financial support considerably beyond the income generated by membership dues and rental property revenues.

In addition to enhanced memberships and donations, RHS friends and supporters have arranged employers' matching gifts. Moreover, philanthropic individuals and private foundations are also contributing.

If you haven't had the opportunity to do so, please consider a gift and/or include RHS in your estate planning.

**For additional information and opportunities to support RHS, please visit our website at [www.rockhist.org](http://www.rockhist.org), or contact us at 540/464-1058 or by e-mail to [rochist@hotmail.com](mailto:rochist@hotmail.com).**

## 2010

## Event Calendar



**Monday • September 27th • Fall Picnic Dinner**

Dinner 6:15 pm • Program 7:00 pm

Program: "The Horse in Virginia"

Speaker: Author and Editor Julie Campbell

Location: Virginia Horse Center, Appomatox Mezzanine



**Saturday • October 9th • 11:00 am – 3:00 pm**

Program: Living History Festival/Ice Cream Social

Location: Campbell House



**Monday • November 29th • 7:30 pm**

Program: "The Religious Life of Robert E. Lee"

Speaker: David Cox

Location: R. E. Lee Memorial (Episcopal) Church,

Parish Hall



**Saturday • December 11th • 11:00 am – 3:00 pm**

Program: Victorian Christmas Open House

Location: Campbell House

*Scheduled events are subject to change.*

*For confirmation check the RHS Website:*

*[www.rockhist.org](http://www.rockhist.org) or call 540/464-1058.*

## A Salute to 2010 RHS Supporters

Kudos to the generous folks who have made financial contributions to the Society so far during our current annual fund drive. Our gratitude is boundless. Thank you so very much.

RHS cannot meet its mission without grants and donations from our friends and supporters. There's still time to be a part of our 2010 development campaign. And remember - no gift is too small.

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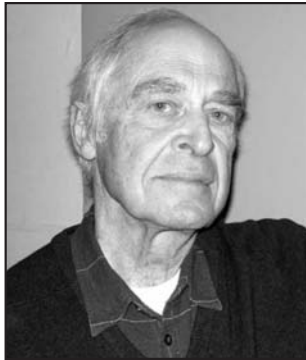
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## President's Perspective

By Charles A. Bodie, Ph.D. – President and Board Chair

Twice a day, my wife and I walk to our barn to feed our two horses, check their condition, and assess their overall contentment. Feeding and riding horses have been part of our lives for some thirty years.

These are pleasure horses to us, not the work horses that were central to our ancestors' lives. Even when tractors were common in the 1930s, farmers in the county still harnessed horses to plow their fields and gather grain, grind sorghum, and skid logs from the woods. Children still rode to school on horseback. But the Age of the Horse was rapidly disappearing. Horses were about gone in the cities, and people everywhere were replacing Old Dobbin with the newest internal combustion engine. Virginia had just over 300,000 horses in 1900. In subsequent years, their numbers dropped dramatically. People were zipping along in their Fords and Chevrolets. And let's not forget their fascinating kin, the mule. From the time of George Washington this tough hybrid cross between a jackass and any other equine was the main work animal for many farmers. Numerous family photographs included a mule and a dog in the gathering. I have my stern South Carolina grandfather, who lined up his two black workers on the one side and his mule and dog on the other for a photo opportunity. And yes, one of my uncles was a



sharp mule trader.

I touch on the horse and mule in anticipation of our September 27 program at the Virginia Horse Center (how appropriate!), given by Julie Campbell to introduce her new book, *The Horse in Virginia*. Like our other programs, it shifts between the past and present. Our ancestors' lives once centered around their horses. They traveled on them, harnessed them to plows, wagons and other equipment, hunted with

them, went to war with them, and bet on them at race tracks. If you didn't want to walk to town, you needed a horse.

Years later, during the Oil Age, with the work horse replaced by the pleasure horse, a residue of equine culture still resides in our language. We still talk about horsepower and horse sense. Locally, leaders lobbied successfully to bring the Virginia Horse Center to Rockbridge, and horse farms multiplied throughout the county. We still love our horses (and some are still partial to the lowly mule). Indeed, we sentimentalize them to an extreme. Recall that the Ford Mustang was once one of America's most popular cars.

This is a fascinating aspect of history. When we open doors to the past, our journeys often circle round and bring us back to the present. Come and enjoy the dinner meeting and Julie's talk. And bring along a nonmember friend to join the Society.



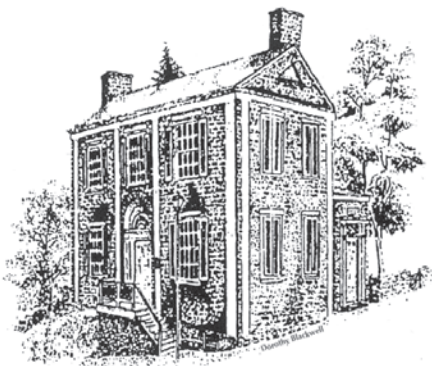
Credit: B.R. Floyd

**THE ROCKBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY***EST. 1939*

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## Director's Corner

*By George Wm. Warren, IV, Executive Director*



Our September program – and this newsletter as well – is chuck full of the marvelous history (as well as the legend and lore) of horses. Like our President and Board Chair, my family has been blessed by the company of horses over a long period of time. I owned and rode a wonderful Quarter Horse for 24 years. Our girls both started with ponies, and then graduated to horses.

Over a period of more than two decades, we also owned two teams of mules, and a team of marvelous Percheron draft horses, who were full sisters. All this fooling with horses was wonderful for our girls, and quite an education for my wife and me. The daily interaction with horses, which people enjoyed from ancient times up through the early twentieth century, kept folks closer to nature, and more attuned to the needs and benefits of the other animals that share our globe with us.

A close connection with domestic animals is simultaneously humbling and enlightening for the human part of the equation. No one fully appreciates the

expression “stubborn as a mule” until he or she has had to complete a task with a mule that is tired, hungry, or just plain bored. They don’t call the sires of these critters jackasses for nothing.

So many of our common expressions were born out of our relationship with our equine friends. The “dashboards” on our motor vehicles were borrowed straight from the “dashboards” on the fronts of buggies to protect passengers from the mud and stones thrown up by horses’ hooves when they picked up the pace and “dashed along.”

Then there’s “teamwork.” I learned a lot about teamwork from my experiences with our mules and draft horses. One of my mules acquired the habit of “ghosting,” meaning he would slack off slightly on steep hills and with heavy loads, so that his teammate was doing most of the work, while he just ambled along. It was important to correct this behavior, as it wasn’t just unfair; it could have overworked and injured the other mule, and endangered the driver, equipment, and load. Unlike my lazy mule, our Society understands and employs “teamwork.” Our Board, volunteers, members, and staff, work together harmoniously to get the job done. And that is the secret of our success.