



News from the Bedford Historical Society

For Members & Friends

Fall 2004

Curiosity Shop Sale at Centerfest

Bargain hunters and antique lovers, mark your calendars for **Saturday, September 25 at 8:00 A.M.** when the Bedford Historical Society will once again hold its "Curiosity Shop Sale" at the Bedford Historic Meeting House, West Main Street. A variety of interesting items from children's toys and clothes to dishes, pictures, crystal and costume jewelry will be offered at the sale. Proceeds from this event benefit the ongoing preservation and restoration projects of the Bedford Historical Society.

Donations are still being taken and we welcome those unique and interesting treasures tucked away in closets, basements and attics! **Please bring items to the Meeting House on Friday, September 24 from 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.** For more information contact Roni Sutton at (540) 947-5228.

Plans Complete for Fall Event

Mark your calendar for the Bedford Historical Society's Fall Barbecue on Sunday afternoon, **October 17th** from 4-6 P.M. in the delightful gardens behind the Society's permanent headquarters at the Wharton House in the center of Bedford.

Those who attended last year's Fall Gathering at the Ballard-Worsham House will remember the delicious barbecue smoked on site by Ken's Barbecue of Ev- ington, and all that went with it. They will also recall the fine Blue Grass music provided by Bedford's own, *The Family Grass*, who will be returning for this fall's event.



It is hard to improve on a good thing, so this year the Society has decided to repeat it, at last year's price of only \$15 per person.

If you have not visited the gardens which have been completed adjacent to the Wharton House property, in the preservation of which the Society played a prominent role, you will be in for a surprise that something so fine is located in our city's midst, largely unseen by many passing along Bridge Street.

There are other treasures within a few

feet of the garden and we hope to arrange for members and guests to visit the superb stained glass windows at St. John's Episcopal Church, directly across from the Wharton House. Also, the Christian Church on the corner, which is to be developed as a community fine arts' resource once the congregation moves to its new location, will be available for walk throughs. The Historical Society will be supporting the preservation and adaptation of the church to serve the new century as it served the past two centuries. Of course, the Society's own rooms in the Wharton House itself will be open for your inspection.

You will be receiving an invitation by mail for the Fall Barbecue on Sunday, October 17th, but please make plans now to attend – and bring your friends who are not members. This year's event marks the 35th anniversary of the Bedford Historical Society.

by Ray Garland



One Room Schools in Bedford County

Virginia's and Bedford County's modern day budget, elaborate school plants, ex-

tended curriculum and expensive equipment is a far cry from the lowly beginnings of the educational program of our county.

During the Colonial Period, many of the Virginia colonists were a cultured class and clergymen served as tutors for the young. The rich planters arranged for the education of their own sons and the children of their neighbors.

Before the War Between the States, many pupils attended subscription or pay schools called Field Schools. A few citizens, ambitious for an education for their children, would combine their efforts and money and build a schoolhouse in an abandoned field and employ a teacher. The school building was constructed by community effort. One man furnished logs from his land, another, hand wrought nails. Books and study materials were brought from home which were handed down from parents and grandparents. For writing lessons, pens were made of the wing feathers of a goose, sharpened to a point.

In 1870 public schools became mandatory. At this time there were thirty-six one-room, white schools in Bedford County. Twenty-nine of the thirty-six teachers were men, seven, women. The men received \$36.52 monthly salary and the women averaged \$24.36.

These schools were full of activity from nine in the morning until four in the afternoon. There were usually twenty-five to thirty-five students consisting of seven grades. Classes were fifteen minutes long.

The day began with salute to the flag.

During this time history was taught. Why do we have the kind of flag we have? Who took an active part in making the flag and why the flag was flown at half-mast was explained. Patriots' birthdays were also recognized.

Next was a short devotional, then a brief nature study. Children were taught to observe leaves, trees, wildlife and flowers. Other subjects taught, according to grade level, were music, drawing, history, geography, arithmetic, English and reading.

There was only one door and on a shelf just inside the door a water bucket was kept from which all the pupils and teacher drank, using a long-handled gourd.

Desks were arranged in double rows, girls on one side and boys the other. In the center of the aisle, between the rows of desks, was a wood stove. Wood for the stove was hauled in by the families and cut in lengths by the older boys. The teacher sat at her desk in front of the class, opposite the one door.

From these little schools the girls were trained to become teachers, secretaries, stenographers and homemakers. The boys became farmers and business men.

by Frances Owen

Partnership Underway

The Bedford Historical Society is working with the Center for History and Culture of Central Virginia at Lynchburg College to develop aids for fourth grade students in Bedford County as they prepare for the SOLS. Feeling that local history has much to offer our students as they un-

dertake a study of Virginia history, the society wants to provide a broad picture of what life was like in Bedford and its environs from the earliest times to the present. Several members of the board met with Mike Santos, Director of the Center and his assistant, Freda Kendall to begin planning. Lynchburg College has a Service Learning component in their curriculum where students work on projects within the community, both to help them develop habits of community service and to help organizations themselves. Canvassing the schools to determine what types of information and activities are needed is the next step. History can come alive for students and their parents and the Society is excited about the possibilities. If you have an interest in helping with this project or have information that you think would be beneficial, please contact either Betty Gereau or Ann Vest at 525-8697.

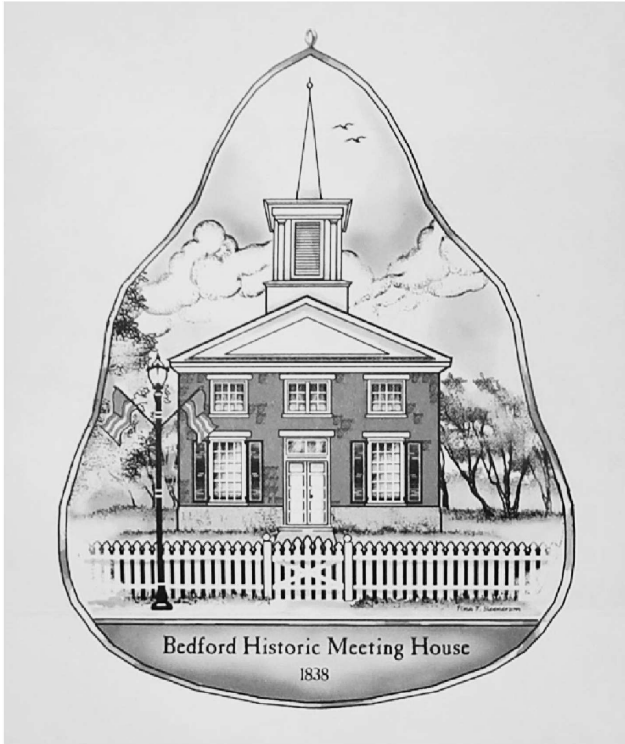
by Ann Vest

Stained Glass Commemorative Now Available

A new stained glass commemorative of the Historic Meeting House has been commissioned from artist Tina Steener-son of Mauldin, S.C and is currently available. Being sold at The Curiosity Shop at Centerfest and the soon to open Visitor's Center on Burks Hill Road, this commemorative must be seen to be appreciated.

The Bedford Historic Meeting House was erected in 1838 as the first Meeting House for Methodists in the town of Liberty. From 1886-1968, it was St. Phillip's

Episcopal Church. The building was purchased in 1970 by the Bedford Historical Society and subsequently restored. It is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.



So, as you think of gifts for birthdays, housewarmings, Christmas and such, these commemoratives would be greatly appreciated by friends and relatives who currently live in the area or those who have moved away. For more information contact Ann Vest at 525-8697. The cost is \$20.

Historical Society Supports Bedford Main Street

The Bedford Historical Society has supported the work of Bedford Main Street to preserve and enhance retail and professional services in Centertown Bedford.

Due to the development of outlying shopping centers and big-box stores, it is

something of a struggle to maintain the commercial viability of the old heart of the City of Bedford - a problem common to many cities. But Bedford Main Street is an active and dedicated group which has made significant progress in maintaining a vital city center.

Because of our common interest in preservation and in recognition of the significant role played by the Historical Society in the establishment of Bedford Main Street, the original by-laws of Bedford Mainstreet were written to include a permanent board position to be selected by the Historical Society. This role is being filled by Ray Garland, formerly of Roanoke, now residing at Cifax.

Bedford Main Street has been given a \$20,000 state development grant provided 75 per cent of its board members attend a series of training sessions, where state experts will provide advice and guidance on preserving older retail centers.

Where it is practical for you to do so, the Bedford Historical Society urges its members to support businesses and services in Centertown. In a phrase, "use it or lose it."

The Bedford Historical Society
 Charles & Louise Wharton House
 315 Bridge Street, P.O. Box 602
 Bedford, Virginia 24523
 Web site: <http://www.bedfordhistory.org>
 E-mail: webmaster@bedfordhistory.org

Membership Dues

Patron	\$100	Sponsor	\$50
Friend	\$25	Husband	
Individual	\$15	& Wife	\$20