



Local Letters Shed New Light On Civil War



Left to right: Peter Rippe GHS president; Phyllis Silber GHS executive director; David Kean; Margaret Kean Mulah; McGuire Boyd (holding images of William Callis Kean and Susan Kean Boston) and Hylah Boyd.

A special meeting of the Goochland Historical Society was held on March 12 at Byrd Church to mark the publication of the latest edition of its journal, which showcases little known letters from the front lines of the Civil War.

Written by William Callis Kean, whose family tree includes many prominent names in Goochland history, to his niece, Susan Kean Boston, the letters provide an intimate look at the war through the eyes of one soldier. Kean survived the war and lived out his life at Oakley near Dogtown Road. He is buried in the cemetery at Byrd Church.

Dr. Bruce Venter of Goochland, GHS vice president and renowned historian, said that the letters offer new insights into the conflict. Venter's detailed annotation of the letters gives great depth to the information provided by Kean's communications.

For instance, Kean comments on the mail system whereby Confederate soldiers could send letters from

the field without postage, which would be paid by the addressee. He also tells his niece about his experiences in battle and army life between engagements. He shares observations about strategy, generals and units from other states, including the fearsome Louisiana Tigers and their colorful Zouave uniforms.

The magazine includes pictures of Kean and Susan as well as photos of generals and weapons mentioned in the letters. The entire Kean family tree is included in the publication.

Copies are available for \$10 and may be obtained by calling 804.556.3966; emailing goochlandhistory@verizon.net. and in the Goochland Registrar's office at the county administration building.



A Letter from Our Volunteer Coordinator



Dear Present and Future Volunteers:

You are the heart and soul of the Goochland County Historical Society. Under the supervisory leadership of Phyllis Silber, our executive director, you have contributed immeasurably to the success of our society as a moving and visible force in our community.

The Society is so fortunate to have a wonderful Historical Center with an outstanding resource library which includes hundreds of books on Goochland and surrounding counties; files of historic photos; newspaper reports; deed information; a comprehensive book on cemeteries in Goochland; plus many family genealogy files and books.

The elected officers and Board members head our list of volunteers. Many serve as committee chairmen; the nuts and bolts of the Society. In addition, we have at least twelve office volunteers who work one or two days a month greeting visitors, helping with genealogical research and working on special projects. The need for volunteers does not stop there.

We are excited about a few upcoming events which will provide an excellent opportunity for those of you who love history and would like to help the Society bring history to our Goochland residents.

Please consider the following:

- 2nd Annual Rassawek Festival in May
- Our booth at the Field Day of the Past in September
- Our new museum in the old Clerk's Office will be open on Fridays and Saturdays to coincide with the Farmers' Market in May
- Extra help for our program meetings – parking, posting signs to direct members to the meeting site, and setting up and cleaning up refreshments

If one or more of these activities interests you, please let us know and we will put your name on a list as a willing volunteer. You can call the office (556-3966) to leave a message concerning your interest and we will be in touch at an appropriate time.

Thank you for your interest in the Goochland County Historical Society. We look forward to seeing more of you and welcoming you as a volunteer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marty MacMillan".

Marty MacMillan

The Historical Society's Web Presence Grows

The Goochland County Historical Society's web presence has grown quite a bit in the past year. In addition to our main website (www.goochlandhistory.org) which is currently being re-imaged for a more modern look, we now have sites on social networking giants Facebook and Twitter and we have joined the blogosphere.

Our Facebook page, Goochland-County-Historical-Society keeps members and the public up to date on current Society functions and upcoming events. Twitter (www.twitter.com/GoochlandCHS) is also helping us get in touch (through short bursts of information called "tweets") with new members and keeps us up to date with other institutions that "follow" us such as the Library of Virginia and The Virginia Historical Society.

The Society's blog (www.goochlandhistory.wordpress.com) is our newest creation. This site allows us

to publish new articles and photographs pertaining to Goochland and it's history. This in no way detracts from our magazine, but allows us to present shorter articles and news items that may otherwise go unpublished. Recent stories featured include reminiscences of Cardwell School, the Walker Family reunion, and the early days of the Goochland County Fire Department. We also use this site to promote society publications and calls to action such as the proposed destruction of the historic James River Correctional Center buildings.

The ever-changing world of the information highway has created many new ways to communicate with each other, so the next time that you are on the Internet, please take a few minutes to visit out one or more of our sites.

Colonel Ulric Dahlgren Rides Again!

The Goochland County Historical Society is sponsoring a recreation of Dahlgren's Raid through Goochland on September 28-30, 2012 as a Civil War Sesquicentennial educational event. We expect to attract 150 uniformed riders for the three-day event. A recreation of Dahlgren's mounted attack on Richmond's Local Defense Troops is planned for Tuckahoe Plantation on Sunday, September 30.

The GCHS is working with Goochland County's Civil War Sesquicentennial Committee, the 2nd US Cavalry, Company A/9th Regiment Virginia Cavalry, Company D, a mounted reenactment and living history group and Goochland County officials. Over the last several months representatives from these groups, including the County Administrator, have been meeting to plan the ride. GCHS director Phyllis Silber is organizing logistical support, fundraising and volunteers. Ms Ginny Perrin of the Deep Run Hunt Club has helped secure landowner permissions so the cavalrymen can follow Dahlgren's original route through Goochland. Rick Smith of Rockville, who represents the 2nd US Cavalry will be portraying Col. Dahlgren. GCHS 1st Vice President Bruce Venter is the group's historical consultant and will be riding with the troopers.

For the most part, Goochland County was spared the horrors of war after Fort Sumter. No great armies slugged it out over our fields and ridges. But on March 1, 1864 the serenity ended when a 21-year-old Yankee colonel named Ulric Dahlgren swooped down with nearly 500 cavalrymen on a raid that would forever be known as the Kilpatrick-Dahlgren Raid on Richmond. Ostensibly the raid's purpose was to free some 13,000 Union POWs languishing in the hellholes of Libby Prison and on Belle Isle. When the game played out, more sinister motives were credited to the operation. After Dahlgren was killed in King and Queen County, orders were found on his body which exposed a plot to either capture or kill the Confederacy's president, Jefferson Davis and his cabinet.

Dahlgren's troopers wrecked havoc at "Sabot Hill," "Eastwood" and "Dover" plantations. They also blew up James River and Kanawha Canal locks, and burned Dover Mills and the Dover steam plant; the ruins still



stand as a bleak reminder of the raid. Dahlgren's raid gave rise to many legendary stories. For one, Sally Seddon's attempt to delay the one-legged Yankee colonel by plying him with blackberry wine so General Henry Wise and Plumber Hobson could gallop to Richmond to warn authorities. The raid also created a true Goochland hero when James Pleasants singlehandedly captured 13 Yankees, 16 horses and dropped a Union officer who challenged the 19-year-old Confederate trooper.

More information and details about Dahlgren's Raid in September will be coming soon. The Society is recruiting volunteers to help with this event. Meals will be provided and we need people to assist with service and clean up at each stop.

Article written by: Dr. Bruce Venter

Help Save Our History

The old clock tower building and Chapel at the James River Correctional Center have been roadside landmarks for 99 years. The State of Virginia has decided that the old prisons dotting the landscape are no longer needed and are in the process of tearing them down. These Goochland buildings, currently the oldest prison in the state, are part of our history and deserve to be preserved and reused.

From River Road West, it would appear to the driver that they are passing an old time town square. The clock tower building with its classic columns and imposing stature resembles a courthouse and the chapel's stained glass windows seem to be waiting for Sunday services to resume. Sadly, they can't wait forever. Unless action is taken, these buildings will be one more Goochland and Virginia historical site lost to "progress".

The clock tower and neighboring chapel, both built in 1913, have provided many benefits to the community through the years. The clock tower building, built primarily as a guard's quarters, has housed a barbershop, hospital, post office, and store among other services. The Chapel, while likely forgotten today, was Goochland's first movie theater.

Each Saturday, a movie would be shown in the Chapel and with ticket in hand, the public and the prisoners could watch the latest movies. In 1936, these buildings would be among the sites of the Library of Congress Field Recordings. Blues legends Jimmie Strother and Joe Lee performed classics such as "Do Lord, Remember Me" and "Cripple Creek" in a two day session held at the prison.

The struggle for these buildings to survive is going to be a hard one. The Department of Corrections has custody of the land and buildings and convincing them of the importance of saving a few old buildings will not be easy, however, it can be done. Adaptive reuse of old institutional buildings has worked in other areas, the old High School in Goochland is an excellent example. After the loss of so many historic buildings, do we really need to lose more?

Contact the Department of Corrections (contact information below) and tell them you would like to see this area preserved.

Department of Corrections - Harold W. Clarke,
Director - docmail@vadoc.virginia.gov

Article written by: James Richmond



Goochland County Historical Society Meeting
Goochland First Baptist Church
Sunday, April 29, 2012 at 3 PM

Speaker: Dr. John Fea

Topic: "Religion and the Founding Fathers: A Historical Perspective"



Dr. John Fea is associate professor and chairman of the history department at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania. His most recent book, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation: A Historical Introduction* was a finalist for the

George Washington Book Prize, one of the largest literary prizes in the United States. His first book, *The Way of Improvement Leads Home: Philip Vickers Fithian and the Rural Enlightenment in Early America* was chosen as the Book of the Year by the New Jersey Academic

Alliance and an Honor Book by the New Jersey Council for the Humanities. Dr. Fea is also co-editor of *Confessing History: Explorations in Christian Faith and the Historian's Vocation*, a finalist for the Lilly Fellows Program in Arts and Humanities Book Award. His book *The Power to Transform: A Christian Reflection on the Study of the Past* will appear in 2013.

His essays and reviews on the history of American culture have appeared in *The Journal of American History*, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, *The Journal of the Early Republic* and other scholarly journals. He has also written for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *CBS News*, *New York Daily News*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Salt Lake City Tribune*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, and other newspapers.

Dr. Fea is a popular speaker who has done many media interviews for both sides of the political spectrum. Copies of his books will be available for purchase and signing by the author.

*Directions to
Goochland Baptist Church*

*From Broad Street in Centerville
turn North onto Manakin Road
(by Satterwhite's Restaurant).
The church is about 2 miles north
on the left.*



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Library of Virginia
Longwood University Library
Pamunkey Regional Library
SWEM Library of William & Mary

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Bland County Historical Society
Historic Buckingham
Virginia Depart of Historic Resources
Virginia Div of Historic Landmarks
Amherst Co Historical Society
Madison Co Historical Society
Powhatan Co Historical Society
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Scottsville Museum Historical Society
Nelson Co Historical Society
Henrico Co Historical Society
Amelia Co Historical Society
Virginia Historical Society
Greene Co. Historical Society
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Visit the Goochland Historical Society
The Society's headquarters are located a half mile east of the Goochland Courthouse at 2875 River Road West (Route 6).

Winter hours (October - March) are:
Wednesday - Friday, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Summer hours (April - September) are:
Tuesday - Friday, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Those travelling long distances should call the Society to confirm it will be open that day.
(804) 556-3966

Email the Society:
goochlandhistory@verizon.net

Visit us on-line:
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Phyllis Silber, *Editor*
Pam Bullock, *Research Asst.*

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Goochland County Historical Society
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Goochland County Historical Society

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Upcoming Events

Sunday, April 29, 3 o'clock
Spring Meeting at
Goochland Baptist Church

September 28 - 30, 2012
Dahlgren's Raid Reenactment

Dates yet to be determined:
Yard Sale
Genealogy Class
Barn Dance
Wine Tasting

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