

BLAND COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Quarterly Newsletter

September, 2013

FALL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

SEPTEMBER 21, 2013
1:30 P. M.

BLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY

Guest Speaker

Rev. Jo Ellen Hetherington

Topic:

The Polio Epidemic of 1950

Rev. Jo Ellen Hetherington will be our featured speaker at the Fall Quarterly Membership Meeting, September 21, 2013 at 1:30pm at the Bland Public Library.

Jo Ellen Hetherington was born in 1950 in Mechanicsburg, Bland County, VA. At the very young age of 5 months, she contracted the polio virus. Recently, her cousin, Martha Penley Umberger, gave her a book edited by the Town of Wytheville Museums entitled *A Summer Without Children: An Oral History of Wythe County, Virginia's 1950 Polio Epidemic*. After reading this book, Jo Ellen was inspired to prepare a presentation about the polio epidemic and her experiences with the disease. **(Note: Copies of the book mentioned above will be available for purchase at the September meeting.)**

Rev. Jo Ellen Hetherington, a retired Methodist minister living in Dublin, graduated from Radford University. After college she went on to become a legislative assistant, working in Washington, DC, for the Senate Subcommittee on the Handicapped chaired by Senator Jennings Randolph of WV. Next, she was called to the ministry and ordained as a Methodist minister and served in the Virginia Conference for 25 years.

We hope you will join us for Jo Ellen's presentation. Afterwards, we will have a short membership meeting, followed by a reception.



President's Message

Where has the summer gone? We have had over 40 visitors each month at the Bland County Historical Society. Most have been our local friends inquiring about their genealogies, bringing us items for our collection, and regaling us with stories of old. There have also been out of town visitors who were in the area for family reunions or just passing through on I-77 with questions about Bland County and its history.

In late July, John Bastian was traveling from NC back to his home in Bozeman, Montana, when he noted the name of the exit on I-77 for Bastian. He was referred to BCHS for information. We looked up the naming of Bastian in our 1961 *History of Bland County*. The town was named for F. E. Bastian, first manager of Bland County's only railroad. John Bastian was thrilled to purchase cups showing our county map with the name of the town of Bastian on it. He also purchased our book, *Images of Bland County*, which has a number of pictures of Bastian. He left us an outline of his family tree so we could see if he is related to our "F. E. Bastian."

Many of you remember when Whit Price was the sheriff of Bland County. Sheriff Price's grandson, Michael and wife Nancy (Burke, VA), his great-granddaughter, Amy Showalter (Blacksburg), and his great-great grandchildren came for a visit and a tour of the jail. Mike showed us the location of his bed while visiting his grandparents. The bed was situated in a corner of our display room (the jail kitchen at the time of his visits). Buzz Richardson, who has Whit's gun belt and Mike, who has his grandfather's billy club, badge and other memorabilia have agreed to contribute these items to our collection. They will be added our permanent jail display.

Please come see us this Fall at BCHS. We're having a **Yard Sale** on Sept 13- 14, **Booth at the Festival of Leaves** Oct 12-13 and an interesting **Fall Quarterly Membership Meeting** on Sept 21st.

Ann Hardy Beardshall

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HAPPENINGS at BCHS

The Historical Society office has been humming. In June we had 46 visitors and 9 requests for assistance with family research, and even higher numbers in July. Beginning August 1st there has been a steady stream of visitors to vote on the pictures for our 2014 Calendar featuring barns, as well as the usual visitors. A nice photo of the wall of pictures in the Bland Messenger reminded people to come vote. We have 52 submitted pictures and only 13 can be included. The last day to vote will be on August 30, 2013.

Volunteers at the Jail have been busy working on organizing obituaries, newspapers for the collection and such. Barbara Laban's work planting and maintaining the flower boxes has paid off in a beautiful way as many of you have noticed. It certainly gives a welcoming appearance to the old Jail.

BCHS participated in several local events including, the Rocky Gap Flea Market and the Bland County Reunion in Bastian where many people purchased our new book, ***Family Histories of Bland County***.

In July, JoAnn Scott was elected by the Board of Directors as Secretary after the resignation of Barbara Kemp. Barbara remains on the Board but had technical difficulties with her computer that made the job difficult. We appreciate Barbara's efforts and JoAnn's willingness to take on this office.

We are also getting items for our planned **YARD SALE** which will be a fundraiser for the Society. That will be held at our office on Sept 13 and 14 in the afternoon. Be sure to look in when you are visiting the Bland County Fair.

The 4th in our series of **Bland County Ornaments** is to be Sharon Springs College, and we plan to have both the **2014 Barn Calendar** and the ornament available by the Festival of Leaves. Having seen the plans for the ornament, I think it will be a beauty. We still have the other 3 ornaments (the Courthouse, the County Jail and the Wolf Creek Bridge at Rocky Gap), so it is not too late to complete your collection.

Buzz's Corner

One of our most frequent visitors and volunteers is "Buzz" Richardson, who has been sorting through old Messengers for us and finding lots of reminders of the past. Buzz lived in the Jail at one time and often is reminded of his younger days while visiting with us. Recently, he was talking about his favorite teacher, Mrs Marie Groseclose, who was Miss Carr when she taught him. He still has trouble calling her by her married name, he says.

In remembering what a wonderful teacher she was, he recounted how she had even saved one of her pupil's lives. It was a frosty morning and Miss Carr was teaching at Walker's Creek School and boarding with a Burton family there. Ethel Burton, who was probably 8 or 9 years old, had left the house earlier and as Miss Carr neared the log they both had to cross over Walker Creek she saw the small girl slip off the frost covered log and fall into the creek which was flowing full. She threw down all she was carrying and immediately jumped into the stream. As she did this, she yelled for Ethel to grab on to something and close her mouth so she did not take in too much water. Ethel was moving rapidly and the young Miss Carr feared she could not catch up with her as the current was swift, but suddenly the child's clothing was grabbed by a branch along the creek and the teacher reached her. With great difficulty she pushed the child up the bank and dragged herself up as well. They lay there exhausted until they were able to pull themselves together and walk back home. Miss Carr was late for school while Ethel was excused for the day.

A week or so after hearing this story from Buzz, I had the opportunity to ask Mrs. Groseclose about the story and her eyes lit up as she told the story just as Buzz had. She also added that when she arrived at the school that morning, she was worried about being late because it was her job to be there early to start a fire in the classroom. To her surprise, all her students were there waiting for her, anxious to hear about the rescue.

BCHS Yard Sale - September 13 and 14 (1-6 PM each day)

Stop by and see us on your way to the Bland County Fair. We are cleaning house at the jail to make room for our collection. Please note: We will NOT be selling anything of historical interest that has been donated previously without the permission of the donor. Among the items for sale are: floor model antique radios, a large solid oak display case, display items, decorative items, tools and hardware. A number of other items that have been donated by the membership will be available for sale. We also have surplus office equipment which includes chairs, printers, scanners, keyboards, and cables. We will be selling books, cookbooks, and packs of excess Bland Messengers (from the 1950s) and old calendars with local pictures for a donation. In addition, the Historical Society Office will be open during the Yard Sale. In the Gift Shop, you will be able to purchase any of the afghans, books, caps, ornaments, and calendars generally available. The Jail will also be open for tours during the Yard Sale.

If you have items to donate items, we will be storing them in the “new” jail before the Yard Sale. You can bring them by any Thursday or Friday between now and September 13th. We appreciate any help you can give us with this fundraiser! Call 276-688-0088 for more information.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS IN BLAND COUNTY

- Sept 6-7 Bland Horse Show
- Sept 13-14 **BCHS Yard Sale Fundraiser at BCHS Parking Lot (1-6 pm)**
- Sept 13-14 Bland County Fair
- Sept 21 **BCHS Fall Quarterly Membership Meeting, Bland Library, 1:30 P. M.**
- Sept 28 Downtown Bland Street Dance
- Oct 5 Lord's Acre Sale
- Oct 12-13 Festival of Leaves (**Visit BCHS Booth**)
- Nov 9 Rocky Gap Christmas Parade
- Dec 14 **BCHS Winter Membership Meeting, Bland Library, 1:30 P. M.**
- Dec 14 Bland Christmas Parade 5pm

BCHS GIFT SHOP – New Items Available at the Festival of Leaves

2013 Christmas Ornament: The 2013 ornament features Sharon College (circa 1891). Look for our special display of Sharon College at the Festival of Leaves.

2014 Barn Calendar: The Bland County Historical Society has been displaying the 52 photographs of Bland County barns submitted by local photographers. The public was invited to vote during the month of August. The Calendar will feature the top selection for each month and the best of show selection for the cover.



The Bland County Historical Society is located in the "old jail building". Volunteers are at the jail each Thursday and Friday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm for research and shopping, and on other days by appointment. ph (276) 688-0088.

Purpose of the Bland County Historical Society

The purpose of the Bland County Historical Society is to bring together those people interested in history, and especially the history of Bland County. Understanding the history of our community is basic to our democratic way of life, gives us a better understanding of our state and nation, and promotes a better appreciation of our American heritage. The Society's major function is to discover and collect any material which may help to establish or illustrate the history of the area. It provides for the preservation of such material and for its accessibility, as far as may be feasible, to all who wish to examine or study it. Through the Society's office, the Bogle Library and this website, assistance with historical and genealogical questions is offered.

Bland County Historical Society is a 501c 3 Non-Profit organization.



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