



PRESERVE PORT

Newsletter of The Society of Port Republic Preservationists, Inc. October 2006

8691 Water Street P.O. Box 82

Port Republic VA 24471

www.heritagecenter.com/SPRP

Here We Go Again... ..

The Society once again is trying to strike a blow for Preservation. Not since we first pledged to save the Frank Kemper House (Turner Ashby House) and convert it to the Port Republic Museum, have we undertaken such a mammoth (and costly) project.

We have signed a contract to fund the first stages of the construction of an exhibit building on the Museum site, using the logs from the old Harrison Bateman Barn/H.B. Alexander Canning Company. Its opening will be our contribution to the Jamestown 2007 Celebration.

While we are pleading for funds, we are also searching for information about what is now the "ghost town" of New Haven, about Harrison Bateman, or the H.B. Alexander Canning Company. There are surely family members or people who lived or worked there in their youth. In addition, we hope to find someone who can contribute flooring from an old barn (30 years old or more). This would help with the total cost,

A recent newsletter told some of the history of this building. Since its owners are selling their home and property, the project cannot be postponed; they are willing to donate this building provided its materials are used to construct a barn-like exhibit building on the Museum grounds and, within it, tell the building's stories.

The barn

The 18th century log barn (two pens with a dog-trot) is now deteriorated beyond restoration. It was owned by the boat captain, Harrison Bateman, during the Civil War. At its location in New Haven, it stands in the core area of the Battlefield of Port Republic; it was later spared from being burned by Federal forces only by the pleas of Bateman's little daughter. Ironically, it was from this barn that Stonewall Jackson had ordered hay taken to burn the North River Bridge preventing the union of two Federal forces and allowing a Confederate victory in the last battle of his Valley Campaign.

The cannery

After the Civil War, the barn was adapted for use as a cannery by an entrepreneur, Homer B. Alexander, a Port Republic Methodist Episcopal Circuit minister. The new tin-plated steel can was used to preserve yellow corn, shoe peg corn, peaches, green beans, and tomatoes. It was an early example of "women in the workplace". It continued in operation through World War II.

The site

Equally interesting...and a mystery we want to solve...is the building's site. The town of New Haven was laid out on the land of William Lewis, on the northern bank of the river opposite Port Republic. The town was chartered by Act of Assembly in 1804, streets, mill race, boat landing and "publick square" were laid out and at least 48 lots sold; only nine families were recorded living there in the 1810 census: those of Charles Davis, Adam Abright (Ebright?), Valentine Miller, John Roberts, James Smiley, James Shepherd, Mathew Watson, Nathaniel Gunnel (Grinnel?), and Willis Copelin. Other lots were used for boat-building, other industries or businesses.

Its developer, Gideon Morgan, killed a man during an altercation and fled west. Apparently the land was eventually sold for back taxes, but why the houses and roads disappeared is not known. The answer will hopefully be found through archaeology of the site.

The quest

As the completed **exhibit building** is expected to cost \$40,000, the need for raising funds is obvious. And the work must begin immediately. The finished product will be only half the size of the original barn (as many of the logs have deteriorated) but it will be large enough to house many of the artifacts that the Preservationists now have in storage. Your help will be appreciated.

Harrison Bateman

In 1810, at the age of two, Harrison Bateman came with his parents to Port Republic. He grew with the town, prospering as a farmer, stock-raiser, and boat captain on the River for 50 years. He was first married to Martha Ann May whose parents were Adam and Nancy (Raines) May.

In 1858 he built a grand house, Cloverdale, on his farm, overlooking the area of New Haven, the River, and the mountains beyond.

Bateman's direct descendants also bear names of Diehl, Alexander, May, Heidenreich, Dinsmore, Maupin, Melton, Berry, Richards and Kaylor, among others.

In 1867, he married Rebecca Jane Hooke, daughter of Robert (Captain "Robin") Hooke who owned a large farm nearby (now the JMU farm).

Incentives

Although a donation of any size is appreciated, anyone who contributes \$50 or more will receive an original canning label for Alexander "shoe peg corn". It is beautifully colored and "gilded". (supply is limited) The first 100 donors of \$500 or more will each receive a signed limited edition print (1-100) of an artist's reconstructed drawing of the barn when first converted to a cannery. (8½" x 11") Both are suitable for framing. All gifts are tax-deductible.

The Artist

We are fortunate that Gene Gibb, a local artist, has agreed to produce a series of drawings for the Society. Based upon research, interviews, photographs, and the current measurements of the structure, he will recreate the barn/cannery as it appeared at different times in its history.

Remember the Past---Preserve for the Future

Board of Directors: Tom Aycock, Anita Cummins, Kevin Gabel, Tamara Gibson, Sherry Gordon, Ellen Kaylor, James Oppy, Carol Poulson, Peggy Richardson, Wayne Smith, Joe Solometo, and Frances Wilkerson.

In Other News...

Great Picnic! More than 60 people attended our picnic on a beautiful July Sunday evening. Some were new folks in town...others traveled from as far as Pennsylvania or Florida to what is becoming a great annual "reunion". In addition to good food, we were particularly pleased to be entertained by the excellent "old-time music" of the Trout Pond Pickers. Our thanks!

Christmas in the Village, December 17, is still being planned. So mark your calendars to visit with us for a lovely celebration of the season.

Annual Election of SPRP Board. At our regular meeting, Monday, Nov. 17, 7:00 p.m. at the Museum.

A Bit of Port History- The New Haven Lottery

The following ad appeared in the *Staunton Political Mirror*, September 1, 1801

Scheme of a Lottery.

THE subscriber has laid off a town on his lands in Rockingham County, opposite and immediately below the confluence of the North and South rivers, where they form the Shenandoah river, and on the north branch of the same, called New-Haven, containing one hundred and fifty Lots, in a beautiful level situation, being at the head of Navigation, and supported by an immense fertile country, it is expected by the best judges, that it will naturally command, very shortly, as great a trade as any inland town perhaps in America, from the prospect of every obstacle being immediately removed by the Potomack Company's clearing and making the river navigable for boats to the spot.*

The above Lots will be sold on the following terms, to wit: There will be One Hundred and Fifty Tickets numbered and sold at Fifty Dollars each...

...The Town is laid off on a very handsome plan, is intersected with handsome Streets and Alleys, with a Public Square in the center of 360 feet. The Main Streets are 60 feet wide, the others fifty feet; the Alleys are 16 feet wide. The Lots fifty feet in front and eleven poles back, except the water Lots. From the peculiar advantages of nature, with those which art will be capable of rendering, when prompted by interest, it may shortly vie with the finest inland Town in America.

GIDEON MORGAN.

* The Potomack Company was a failed venture; however, the New Shenandoah Company was formed in 1811 and established river trade that was successful for more than half a century.

(transcription from microfilm of the original by Carole Nash; microfilm print supplied by the Museum of American Frontier Culture).

SPRP is a non-profit organization All members are invited to meet the third Monday of each month, 7:00 p.m. at the Museum. I enclose \$25 for membership 2006 through 2008. _____ or, I enclose \$10 for family membership for 2006. _____

I enclose a tax-exempt gift of \$ _____ for the project to save the history of New Haven/the Bateman barn/the Alexander Canning Company.

Name _____ Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

(Make checks payable to SPRP and mail to SPRP, P.O. Box 82, Port Republic, VA 24471)