

Nelson County Historical Society News

February - 2011

www.nelsonhistorical.com



“Boyhood Home of W.A.R. Goodwin” - Historic Highway Marker at Norwood, Nelson County, VA

[May 14th – Saturday – 10:30 AM -unveiling of the marker]

By Dr. Robert Carter
Community Services Director
Virginia Department of Historic Resources

The idea for a historical highway marker for W.A.R. Goodwin in Nelson County originated with Marsha Wilkins. She owned the Cabell-Ribble-Heath House in Norwood from 1978-1995, knew a great deal about Goodwin's connection to Norwood and Colonial Williamsburg and contacted the Society with the proposal that the Society sponsor a highway marker to commemorate Goodwin's achievements and his Nelson roots. The Society's Board unanimously approved her idea last year and agreed to sponsor the marker. As required by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Society Board member Becky Howard with help from Wilkins, Society President Bernard McGinnis, and Marjorie Eggleston conducted the necessary research and completed the successful application, which was approved by the Virginia Historic Resources Board on December 16, 2010.

One mission of the Nelson County Historical Society is to promote greater public understanding and awareness of the history of Nelson County through recognition of the people, places and events that shaped that history. Sponsorship of the Goodwin marker provides a wonderful opportunity for the Society to recognize the Nelson roots of Goodwin's pioneering work in the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg. Goodwin's strong character and work ethic, his strong religious faith, his connection to the church and the ministry, his education and life-long motivation to learn, his strong connection to family, community and history and even his vision of restoring lost places can all be traced to Goodwin's early years in Norwood on the James River in Nelson County. The Society also sees the marker's dedication as a great opportunity to promote the special character of Norwood as a historic place. With the cooperation of the Department of Historic Resources and VDOT, the Society plans to unveil the marker in tandem with a Society-sponsored house tour of Norwood in late Spring. To the unveiling, the Society will invite members of the Goodwin family and dignitaries from all of the major institutions with which Goodwin was associated, including the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Roanoke College, and the Virginia Theological Seminary.

Here are some historical highlights of Goodwin's life in Nelson County. Nearly all of the facts below are documented in Dennis Montgomery's excellent biography of W.A.R. Goodwin, [A Link Among the Days: The Life and Times of the Reverend Doctor W.A.R. Goodwin, the Father of Colonial Williamsburg](#) (1998), supplemented by information on Norwood's historic buildings in the files of the Nelson County Historical Society and in the archives of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

- In 1871, Goodwin and his parents came by packet boat from Richmond to live in Norwood, then called New Market. Goodwin was not yet two years old. He caught measles on the journey.
- Goodwin's father John Francis Goodwin was born in Nelson in 1843 and served as a lieutenant in the Confederate Army from 1863 to Lee's surrender at Appomattox. His father left military service in poor

health and came to Norwood in order to live next door to country physician William H. Ribble, his brother in law by marriage to his sister, Fanny Goodwin Ribble.

- The Goodwins at first lived with the Ribble family in a house known today as the Cabell-Ribble-Heath House, located on the north side of Norwood Road overlooking Christ Episcopal Church.
- The Goodwins soon moved into a Gothic style house known as Altavista, located just to the north of the Ribbles' house. W.A. R. Goodwin lived in Altavista with his parents and three surviving sisters until 1885, when he left Norwood with his cousin Frank Ribble to attend Roanoke College.
- In his 1924 autobiography Goodwin recalled the strong influence of religion on his life in Norwood, especially the influence of his mother Letitia Moore Rutherford Goodwin. His mother served as organist and superintendent of Sunday School at Christ Episcopal Church in Norwood, located just down the hill from where the Goodwins lived. Five of the boys in his mother's Sunday school class became Episcopal ministers, including Goodwin and three of his Ribble cousins. Goodwin's grandfather, Frederick Deane Goodwin, and his uncles Edward, Robert and Frederick Goodwin all served as Episcopal priests.
- In 1876, Goodwin's parents with a gift from Goodwin's maternal grandfather bought a 563-acre farm on bottom land on the James River a mile east of the Goodwin house. The farm land previously belonged to the Montezuma plantation. Goodwin later inherited the Nelson farm and leased it to tenants during his years in Williamsburg working on the colonial city's restoration.
- As a boy Will Goodwin took care of his family's horse, cows and garden and helped his father with the milking. His hardest job was lugging buckets of water up the hill to his house from a spring.
- Goodwin learned to read and write in Norwood. His first teacher was Molly Roberts, who conducted school directly across the road from Altavista in a log building that served as house of the Matthews family and the Matthews shoe shop. From Molly Roberts Goodwin learned penmanship and his distinctive cursive writing style. At age 11 or 12 Goodwin entered a private school taught by Miss Kemp Kinckle at Montezuma in Norwood and soon won a prize for spelling. Today, the Mathews house and shoe shop is overgrown with vines. Montezuma survives in an excellent state of preservation and is officially designated as a Virginia Historic Landmark on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.
- During summers Will Goodwin enjoyed swimming and fishing in the canal or James River, or playing baseball and marbles. He and his cousins loved to skate on the Tye River in winter time. The Goodwins and the Ribbles took an annual trip across the James in a rowboat to pick blackberries in Buckingham County. In 1880 the two families took an excursion to visit grandparents in Wytheville beginning with a trip by packetboat from Norwood to Lynchburg. The rate of travel was less than four miles an hour. The short distance from Norwood to Lynchburg required a full night and parts of two days.
- Goodwin's family lacked the means to send Will to Dr. Cabell's private high school in Norwood. Goodwin completed his secondary education in a public school that operated in a vacant church building on the site of what is today known as the Grover Carter Store in Norwood. Goodwin's high school teacher was a learned scholar from Ohio named Mr. Talbott. The school was replaced in 1910. The 1910 school survives in the village through adaptive use as a residence.
- In 1885, Goodwin purchased his first book with money he himself earned in Norwood working for four days at 50 cents a day pulling down fodder in a cornfield. The book was by Frank S. De Hass and entitled Buried Cities Recovered or Explorations of Bible Lands, Giving the Results of Recent Researches in the Orient and Recovery of Many Places in Sacred and Profane History Long Considered Lost.(1884). Goodwin treasured the book, glimpsing in it a vision of his pioneering work as the father of Colonial Williamsburg. Formed by his reading and early years in Nelson, Goodwin came to see Williamsburg as a missionary field for education and historic preservation, a city full of places sacred and profane, considered by many to be lost, that could be recovered through exploration and research.

Goodwin's boyhood home, Altavista, still stands in Norwood but is uninhabitable condition, the prey of years of extended vacancy and neglect.

(Text for the historic highway marker inscription)



Christ Episcopal Church - Norwood

The historic highway marker will be placed near Christ Episcopal Church on Norwood Road, down the hill from the boyhood home of W.A.R. Goodwin.

Plans are being made for an unveiling of the marker on Saturday, May 14th. A tour of some of the historic properties in the Norwood and Wingina area will also be held on that day. More information will be announced in the spring newsletter.

**Boyhood Home of Rev. Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin (1869-1939)—
“Father of Colonial Williamsburg”**

Born in Richmond in 1869, William Archer Rutherford Goodwin lived in Norwood from 1871 until he entered Roanoke College in 1885. Goodwin’s childhood education and strong religious background helped shape his adult endeavors. While he was an Episcopal Rector at Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg, his vision of restoring the colonial capital captured the interest of philanthropist John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Their friendship and mutual respect inspired Rockefeller to begin the city’s restoration in 1927 and to invest millions in Colonial Williamsburg. Goodwin was credited with the persistence, wisdom, and enthusiasm to preserve a Virginia historic treasure.

Sponsor: Nelson County Historical Society

Proposed Location: Intersection of Norwood Rd (Rt. 626) and
Capel Lane (Rt. 727) in Norwood

The Legacy of the Reverend Dr. W.A.R. Goodwin

The Reverend Dr. **William Archer Rutherford Goodwin** (June 18, 1869 – September 7, 1939)
He is known as "the Father of Colonial Williamsburg."

W.A.R. Goodwin graduated from Roanoke College in 1889 and Virginia Theological Seminary in 1893 with a divinity degree. He served a number of years in Petersburg, and become pastor of historic Bruton Parish Church in Williamsburg in 1903. Dr. Goodwin was inspired by his historic parish with its many still-standing 18th century buildings. He assumed fund-raising, preservation and restoration of the aged and historic church building begun by his predecessor, using information gathered from town and church records. He successfully led completion of the church’s restoration in 1907. He left to serve another church in Rochester, New York and did not return until 1923, when he was recruited as a department head at the College of William & Mary. Dr. Goodwin also resumed serving as rector of Bruton Parish Church.

Upon returning to the old colonial capital, he was shocked at the changes and additional deterioration and loss of 17th century structures during the years he had been away. In 1924, fearing that the other many historic buildings in the area would be destroyed as time went on, he started a movement to preserve the buildings in the district.

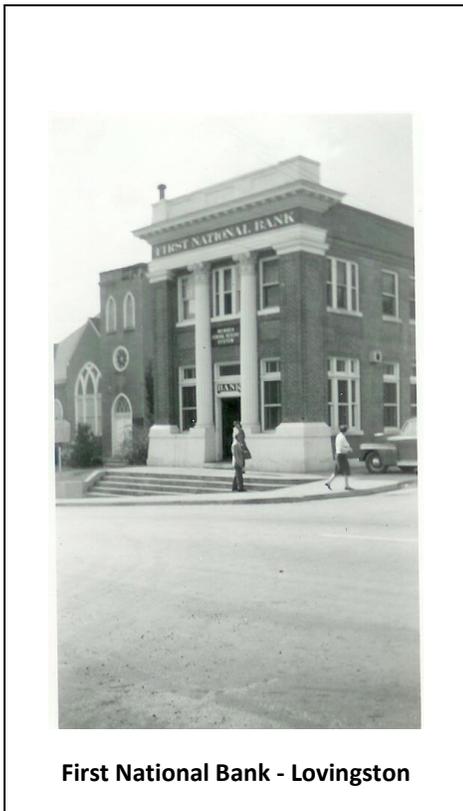
As his primary source of funding, Dr. Goodwin was fortunate in this effort to sign on John D. Rockefeller, the wealthy son of the founder of Standard Oil, and his wife, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. He stimulated their interest in the old city and helped that bloom into the incredible generosity that financed the restoration. Working with a small group of confidants, Dr. Goodwin acted as Rockefeller's silent partners and acquired dozens of properties located in and near in what would become the restored area.

The New York-based Rockefellers made Dr. Goodwin's remarkable dream of restoring the old colonial capital come true, creating what grew to become Colonial Williamsburg, with a public announcement finally revealing the Rockefeller's role at two town meetings in the historic city held in June 1928.

Today Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Area occupies 173 acres and includes 88 original buildings and more than 50 major reconstructions. Virginia's Historic Triangle (Williamsburg, Jamestown and Yorktown) area is one of the world's greatest tourist attractions, with Dr. Goodwin's Bruton Parish Church and Colonial Williamsburg as the centerpiece.

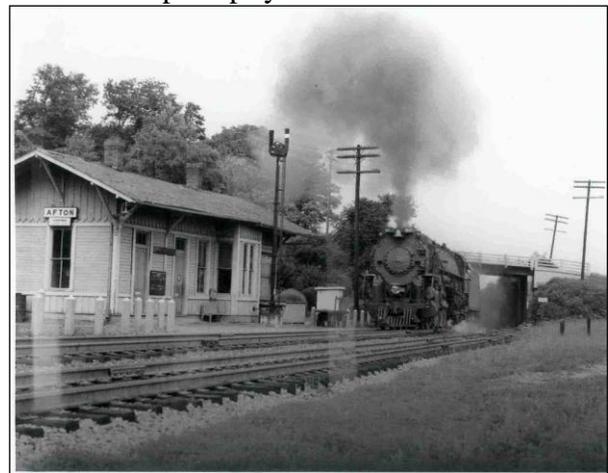
Source: *A Link Among the Days* by Dennis Montgomery and Nelson County Historical Society files

Vintage Nelson County Pictures Needed



Do you have interesting Nelson County photographs of events, churches, community centers, post offices, country stores, railroad depots, schools, homes or other pictures that depict life from the past in Nelson County?

An Arcadian Publication – *Images of America* pictorial history about Nelson County will be published by the Historical Society in 2011. The pictures/images must be glossy photographs and can be scanned by the research committee and returned promptly.



Afton Depot

The Research Committee will be in the Nelson Memorial Library on Wednesday afternoons or email information to info@nelsonhistorical.com.

Oakland Open House – December 2010



Tavern Room at Oakland



St. Mary's Catholic Church members lead the singing of carols



REA Exhibit Room window



Lynn and Billy Coffey talk with Joan Rothgeb and Granddaughter, Katie Powell

The Society sponsored **Oakland Open House** drew a large crowd for the Sunday afternoon event. Otis and Jean Brent chaired the tavern decoration committee and had help from Dorothy Giles, Katharine Townsend and Bernard McGinnis to create a festive holiday addition to the museum.

The St. John's Baptist Church choir from Norwood and the St. Mary's Catholic Church members from Lovingston lead the singing of traditional Christmas carols throughout the afternoon. Lynn Coffey from Love, VA brought her recently published **Backroads I and II** books for sale. Many Society members added cookies to the refreshment table along with hot cider and cranberry juice to make the afternoon enjoyable for the guests.

Thanks go to the many people who helped to make the afternoon a success.
Bernard McGinnis, Society President

Oakland Museum 2011 Updates

Oakland Museum Board Officers for 2011

President – Dick Whitehead

Vice-President – Woody Greenberg

Secretary – Samantha Embrey

Treasurer – Bob Carter

Members of the 2011 Oakland Museum Board are: Peter Agelasto, Jean Brent, Otis Brent, Bob Carter, Doug Coleman, Samantha Embrey, Audrey Diane Evans, Beth Goodwin, Woody Greenberg, Greg Kelly, Michael Lachance, Bernard McGinnis, Hughes Swain, Carroll Turner, Dick Whitehead, David Wooldridge.

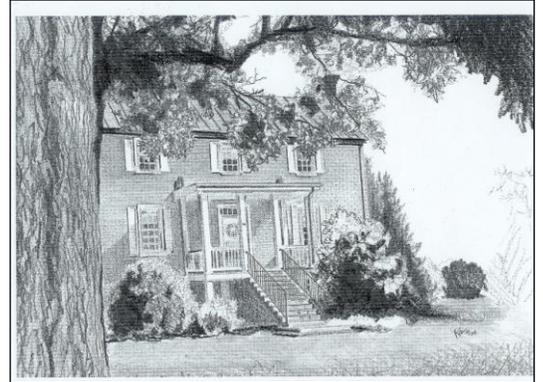
Newly appointed to the Oakland Museum Board from the Nelson County Historical Society are: Otis and Jean Brent, Carroll Turner and Doug Coleman. These members have accepted a three year term to the Oakland Museum Board.

Retiring from the Oakland Board (Dec. 2010) were: Carolyn Albritton, Becky Howard, Kate McGinnis, Russ Reid, Paul Saunders, Jane Raup, Barbara Wheless, Andy Wright.

Camille Exhibit Enhancements – Plans have begun to refurbish the Camille room walls to include plastering and painting. Adjustments will be made to lighting and electrical outlets to allow the redesigned room to be more efficient when installing the new exhibit. Thayer Design in Madison Heights has been employed to design new wall panels and restructure the room for visitors to listen to taped interviews, view pictures and film footage and access the computer data base of Camille archives. Completion of the new exhibit will be in the spring.

New website for the Oakland Museum. Samantha Embrey has completely created a new website: www.oakland-museum.org. The information is current and the site is easy to navigate.

The Nelson Music Project, organized by the Oakland Music Committee has a mission of preserving the musical heritage of Nelson County musicians by showcasing their talents through musical programs, workshops, interviews, and exhibits.



A Tribute to Curtis Matthews- featuring Curtis, Jimmy Fortune & Others

Saturday, March 19, 2011 ~ 7:30 pm ~ Nelson County High School Auditorium

Please join us for this special tribute to Curtis Matthews, one of Nelson County's stellar musicians. Performing old time and bluegrass music on the program will be many of the musicians who were influenced by Curtis and have played with him, including [Jimmy Fortune](#) (formerly with the Statler Brothers), Eddie Witt, David Matthews, Jimbo Cary, Bobby Jennings, the Country Ramblers, the Little Mountain Boys, the Allen Family and Ral Satterwhite.

Admission: **\$15 at the door/ \$10 prior purchase**. Tickets are available at the Nelson County Visitor Center (downstairs from the Library, on Route 29, south of Lovingston). Or mail a check payable to "Oakland Museum" to Visitor Center, PO Box 636, Lovingston, VA 22949 and pick up your tickets at the door.

Co-sponsors: [Hancock, Engel & Associates of Ameriprise Financial Advisors](#), Charlottesville, VA (434-220-4671) and [Tiger Fuel Company](#) (434-263-5792) This concert is to benefit the [Nelson Musc Project](#) of Oakland Museum and [Rapunzel's Further Ado Foundation](#). Contact 434-263-5940 for more details.

Recent Additions to the Society Files

Remembering Roseland by James A. Hight, Jr. - Lynchburg, VA

Crabtree Falls pictures (ca.1920) given by Janice Rogers - Richmond, VA

Nelson County Cemetery information from several sources to be included in the second printing of the Nelson County Cemetery Book

New Members to the Society (November 2010 – February 2011)

Margaret, Bradley & Douglas Haney –
Charlottesville, VA

Carroll & Jennifer Turner – Shipman, VA
Archer Minardi – Richmond, VA

Robert & Margaret Sanford – Beverly Hills, CA

Nelson County Cemetery Book – Second Printing

The second addition of the Nelson County Cemetery Book will be printed soon. Elodie Thompson, editor of the book, will be collecting additions and corrections until March 15th and will get the book to the publisher by April 1st.

Please send any cemetery information to the Society Research Committee by the deadline (March 15th). Mail to: Nelson County Historical Society P.O. Box 474, Lovingston, VA 22949 or email info@nelsonhistorical.com.

Membership Dues and By-law Changes for the Society

The membership of the Nelson County Historical Society will receive a letter concerning the by-law changes that the Society Board has approved subject to the membership approval. A notice of your dues renewal will also be included. A slate of officers for the Society for 2011 will be presented for a vote at the April meeting of the Society.

It is important that you read the letter and respond to the Society Board with your vote concerning the by-laws.

NCHS Officers and Board

Recently published books of Local Interest

In the Shadow of Tobacco Row Mountain, Elon, Monroe, and other Villages by Florence Foster Nixon

Contact: hfnixon@verizon.net or 434-384-2853

Amherst from Taverns to a Town by Robert C. Wimer & Leah Settle Gibbs – available at the Nelson County Visitor Center and Amherst County Museum

Remembering Roseland by James A. Hight, Jr. – available at the Oakland Museum

A Note from Lynn Coffey – Author of *Backroads I and II*.

Lynn is nearing the completion of a set of Backroads newspapers for the 25 years that it was published. She is planning to present the copies to the Nelson County Historical Society to be used for research at the Nelson Memorial Library. **She is missing only one edition: March 1984.** She would be grateful if someone had the missing copy and would give it to her to complete the set.

Lynn Coffey Phone: 540-949-0329
1461 Love Road
Lyndhurst, VA 22952

Check out Lynn's new website: www.backroadsbooks.com. Copies of her books may be purchased through her website.

NCHS Newsletter Editor – Becky Howard

Dates to Remember

March 13th – Society meeting –
The Nelson Center 2:00 PM

March 19th -
Tribute to Curtis Matthews
7:30 PM at Nelson Co. H.S.

May 14th – Unveiling of the
W.A.R. Goodwin marker
Norwood, VA



Membership Information

Single Membership - \$15.00

Family Membership - \$20.00

Life Membership - \$200.00
(Individual)

Mail to:
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P.O. Box 474
Lovingson, VA 22f1f1949

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