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Nelson County Homes Tour

On Saturday, May 2, the biennial Historical Homes and Properties Tour sponsored by the Nelson County Historical Society will feature five properties in the Piney River, Roseland, Massies Mill and Tyro communities, some for the first time on the tour.

Block Tickets for \$25.00 are available prior to May 2nd at Oakland Museum or online at: <https://nelsonhomestour.eventbrite.com>

On the day of the tour, block tickets will be sold at Tye Brook, Flat Farm, Pharsalia, and a Bryant Family Farm by CASH or CHECK only. No individual property tickets will be sold for this tour. A brochure with a map is available with ticket purchase.

Lunches will be available for a suggested donation of \$15.00 from 12:00pm to 2:00pm at Oak Hill Baptist Church. The menu is fried chicken or BBQ sandwich, pasta salad, fruit, dessert and beverage.

A special thank you is extended to the Nelson County Garden Club for the beautiful flower arrangements at the tour sites.

Tye Brook

Pat and Robert Saunders
2480 Tye Brook Hwy, Piney River



The property was purchased from Nicholas Cabell by Edmund Wilcox in 1772. His grandson James L. Hubbard and his wife Isaetta Randolph, great-granddaughter of Thomas Jefferson, began construction of Tye Brook in 1859. Tye Brook originally was a square, two-story house with two rooms and a large hallway on each floor. Each room had fireplaces and high ceilings that were typical of that period. The house was made from bricks fired on the property. Shortly after the Civil War, an addition was added to the north end of the home consisting of two rooms, a large open staircase, and a formal entrance.

In 1916, the home and surrounding farm was purchased from the Hubbard estate by Saunders Brothers and eventually became the residence of the Sam E. Saunders family. It operated as a tourist home for passing travelers in the 1930s and 40s. Over the years, Tye Brook has undergone multiple renovations to the house and gardens. Tye Brook is surrounded by an extensive

Meet Rachel Deddens

President, Nelson County Historical Society

Assumed office March 15, 2026



Rachel Deddens brings a lifetime of resilience, curiosity, and love of history to her new role as president of the Nelson County Historical Society.

Early Roots in Virginia

Rachel grew up in Amherst County, Virginia, on a farm in Mount Pleasant as one of eight children in the Campbell family. After losing both parents at age seven, she and her siblings were raised by her oldest sister, moving between Nebraska and Kansas before Rachel returned home to Virginia for good in 1973. Throughout the transitions, her heart never left the Blue Ridge.

A major influence in her life was her Aunt Vernell—her “surrogate mother,” best friend, and the person who instilled in her a love of family, respect for others, and a deep appreciation for history, gardening, cooking, and farm life.

Education and Early Career

After graduating from high school in Lynchburg, Rachel earned a certificate in Respiratory Therapy while working at Virginia Baptist Hospital. When she and her husband John began raising a family, she shifted her focus to her children and launched a house-cleaning business for flexible income.

Her volunteer work at the Lynchburg Museum System opened the door to a decades-long career in museums. She served in roles ranging from docent and volunteer supervisor to curatorial assistant and exhibit coordinator. Encouraged by her mentor, Tom Ledford, she returned to school and earned a B.A. in History with a Concentration in Religion from Randolph Macon Woman’s College.

A Passion for Food History

Rachel developed a special interest in hearth cooking and foodways, demonstrating her skills at historic sites including Point of Honor, Patrick Henry’s Red Hill, James Monroe’s Ashlawn, Bon Aire, and Pharsalia. Her work blended scholarship with hands-on interpretation, transporting visitors back in time to experience firsthand the domesticity of early America.

A New Chapter in Nelson County

After nearly 40 years in Lynchburg, Rachel and her husband retired to Nellysford. Retirement for Rachel didn’t last long—feeling restless, she reached out to Becky Howard at the Historical Society and quickly found herself immersed again in museum work.

Over the past three years, she has served as the Society’s Archivist, and for the past two years she has chaired both the Collections & Exhibits Committee and the Programs & Events Committee. She describes the Society as a community of people who deeply love Nelson County—its people, culture, and history.

Looking Ahead

As president, Rachel hopes to bring together her decades of museum experience, her lifelong love of history, and her commitment to community service. She sees this role not simply as something to do, but as something she genuinely loves.

2026 Calendar of Events

Visit nelsonhistorical.org and our Facebook page to stay current with Events.

Saturday, April 18: **Soapstone and the Schuyler Soapstone Quarry** by Mark McQuarry, Oakland Museum, 2pm to 4pm.

Saturday, May 2: **Historic Homes Tours**, 10am to 4pm (see article on page 1).

Saturday, May 16: **Genealogy with AI** by Debbie Harvey, CG, Nelson Center, Lovington; 1pm. Ten-month course, meets every 3rd Saturday, FREE.

Saturday, June 20: **Genealogy with AI** by Debbie Harvey, CG, Nelson Center, Lovington; 1pm. Ten-month course, meets every 3rd Saturday, FREE.

Saturday, June 27: **The Natural History of Nelson County** by Susan McSwain, Oakland Museum, 2pm to 4pm.

Soapstone and the Schuyler Soapstone Quarry

Mark D. McQuarry, who works with soapstone mined in Nelson County, will give a presentation on his sculpture and the history of the soapstone quarry at Oakland Museum on Saturday, April 18, at 2 p.m. Oakland Museum is located at 5365 Thomas Nelson Highway across from Tye River Elementary School. The event is free. Donations are always welcome.

McQuarry began working with Virginia soapstone in 2000, working as a stone mason and creating stone art to sell at local farmers markets. He has created walkways, steps, art for gardens and interior of homes, using this lovely, local stone.



In 2008 he began working at the Alberene Soapstone Co., in Schulyer, Va., one of the oldest names in Virginia soapstone.

"I worked there for four years and reached the position of manager. We provided slab and finished items from swimming pool surround in California to acid storage room furnishings in schools in New York City," McQuarry says.

"I then left and began working for a local firm that fabricated and installed the soapstone in and around the Nelson County court building renovations. However, my desire to create art and utilize my training in fabrication of gravestones, led me to become an entrepreneurial artist, working mainly with Virginia soapstone. With gravestones and memorial benches now in place from Lynchburg to Charlottesville and soapstone art work all over the country, that started from natural stone found right here in Virginia."



The Nelson County Historical Society has received a large bequest from the Estate of Joseph F. Glover, Jr. Joe was a real estate agent in Augusta County and a longtime member of the Society. He attended many Society programs and always enjoyed coming to the historical home tours.

Most notably, Joe was a photographer and a friend of Brower York, photographer with the *Waynesboro News Virginian* at the time of Hurricane Camille. Joe encouraged Mr. York to give his large collection of colored slides of Camille's destruction to the Society. Soon after Oakland Museum opened, these photos were added to the collection and remain as some of the best photographs in the Camille collection. Many of them are published in the 2019 book, *Commemorating Camille: Never Forget*.

landscape featuring a broad array of boxwood, flowering shrubs, perennials, and a vegetable garden, as well as breathtaking views of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The home is currently owned by Robert E. Saunders, grandson of Sam E. Saunders, and his wife Pat.

Tye Brook Studio, located in the yard, features original art work by Pat Saunders. The studio will also be open to visitors.

Flat Farm

Debbie and Carl Coffey
1855 Dickie Road, Massies Mill



With a spectacular view of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Flat Farm is on a large expanse of flatland, accented by a peaceful spring fed pond. Numerous barns and outbuildings support the work of the farm.

The original home, built circa 1820 was a basic “two over two”. Over the years, architecturally appropriate additions have expanded the home as ownership has changed. Thoughtful updates, beautifully styled by the owners, honor the home’s heritage while adding modern comforts. Interesting collections enhance the rooms, with one room having a Civil War theme.

Near the main house is a distinctive log guesthouse. During the late 1970s the old logs were taken from a barn on the farm to build the log house. The interior displays a collection of many early American tools and kitchen items along with a comfortable setting for overnight guests. Artwork throughout the guesthouse and house showcase many local artists featuring historic buildings in the area.

The house and log guesthouse will be open for the tour.

Oak Hill Baptist Church

382 Level Green Road, Massies Mill



Rich in history and spirit, Oak Hill Baptist Church was founded in 1869 by African American members who separated from nearby Jonesboro Baptist Church. Located on a hill surrounded by beautiful oak trees, the original church was built of hewed logs. After twelve years of service a framed church was built. By the twentieth century, Oak Hill’s membership had increased tremendously, and a larger church was built in 1923 by Fulton Ligon, a local businessman. Under the leadership of Othello Wilson, a talented musician, a choir was organized and traveled extensively.

In 1970 after the devastation of Hurricane Camille, the Concerned Members of Oak Hill was formed and organized in Washington, D.C. to provide financial aid and help to improve the facilities of the church.

The Oak Hill Memorial Library/Museum opened in 2008 exhibiting many artifacts and memorabilia to showcase the rich history of the church and its members.

For over 150 years with dedicated pastors and an active congregation the church continues to thrive under the leadership of Pastor Edward Hendricks, Jr.

Continued on page 5

a Bryant Family Farm

Rebecca and Bruce Moyer
141 Bryant Lane, Roseland



About 1890, A.G. Bryant inherited about 140 acres of mountain and farmland from his father, Nelson Bryant. Since then, it has been known as “a Bryant Family Farm.” A.G. built the family home that has been owned by four generations, A.G. Bryant, Frank G. Bryant, Frank “Tinker” G. Bryant, Jr. and today Rebecca Bryant Moyer and her husband, Bruce. Six generations have lived, played, and worked on the farm while enjoying the beauty of their homeplace and the mountains.

Early to the mid-1900s, the farm provided additional income through the production of apples and corn. As these crops waned in need and production, Tinker added Black Angus cattle. Today, the working farm raises cattle, chickens for farm fresh eggs and Rebecca’s small batch jams and jellies.

The Victorian home is located on a beautiful hilltop with sweeping views of the valley in the community of Bryant. An outdoor kitchen, now connected to the house, has been preserved along with cherished antiques that have been passed down through generations of the family.

Pharsalia

Foxie and Dick Morgan
2333 Pharsalia Road, Tyro



Pharsalia, the historic home of the Massie family, was built in 1814 for William Massie, the youngest son of Major Thomas Massie, a distinguished veteran of the American Revolution. In 1795, Major Massie purchased more than 3,000 acres in what was then Amherst County from Col. John Rose. Major Massie’s home, Level Green, still stands today.

Pharsalia—named for the Battle of Pharsalus on August 9, 49 BCE, when Julius Caesar defeated Pompey the Great—was built as a wedding gift from Major Massie to William and his first wife, Sarah Tate Steptoe. It began as a 1,000-acre plantation with 21 slaves. Situated in the Tye River Valley at the base of dePriest Mountain, the original single-story house was expanded in 1841 with a two-story rear wing. The one-hundred-foot-long front section contains two rooms on either side of a large entrance hall, with 12-foot ceilings, wide random-width oak floors, and fireplaces with hand-carved mantels in each room. The distinctive hinged doors are tapered to close automatically, and each room has an outside entrance where several bells can still be seen—bells once used to summon slaves for various needs.

Before his death in 1862, William increased his holdings to roughly 11,000 acres, encompassing five plantations and 170 slaves. His principal cash crops included wheat, hops, tobacco, potatoes, and apples. His fourth wife, Maria Effinger, kept

Donations

Society Level

Brad and Libby Carmines

Lucy Ewing Martin

In memory of Olivia Booker Ewing and
George Malcolm Ewing

Karen Paulsen

In memory of Margaret Clemens

Allan M. Smith

Governor Level

Cordelia and James Gelly

Welcome New Members

Frances Van Lear – Lovington, VA

In Memoriam

Cathy Wright Massie – Madison Heights, VA

Nelson County Homes Tour *(continued)*

Pharsalia was sold out of the family in 1892, but in 1952 Florence Massie Morton purchased the home for her daughter, Perkins Morton Flippin. Today, the house is owned by Florence Flippin Morgan, a fifth-generation descendant of William Massie, and her husband Richard. Their goal is to preserve the past and share the property's unique history by opening Pharsalia and its original outbuildings—now listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places—to the public.

NCHS Officers

Elected on March 15, 2026

Rachel Deddens, President

Woody Greenberg, Vice-president

Jeannette Kinde, Secretary

Becky Howard, Treasurer

NCHS Board of Directors

And Committee Chairmen

Chris Baker (2023-2026)

Galen Creekmore (2024-2027)

Rachel Deddens (2023-2026)

Archivist, Exhibits & Collections Committee Chairman, Programs & Events Committee Chairman

Bar Delk (2023-2026)

Buildings & Grounds Committee Co-Chairman

Christian Giles (2023-2026)

David Giles (2024-2027)

Development & Planning Committee Co-Chairman

Woody Greenberg (2025-2028)

Becky Howard (2024-2027)

Finance Committee Chairman, Research Committee Chairman

Jeannette Kinde (2024-2027)

Robert McSwain (2024-2027)

Heather Riser (2024-2027)

Website Committee Chairman

Bennett Saunders (2024-2027)

Dick Whitehead (2023-2026)

Buildings & Grounds Committee Co-Chairman



Join us on Facebook

The Nelson County Historical Society
and Oakland Museum



Oakland Clean-Up Day

On Saturday, March 7, volunteers gathered at Oakland Museum to clean up the grounds in anticipation of reopening for the spring.



Nine board members pitched in to trim boxwoods, rake and remove leaves, remove branches, and plant flowers plus some indoor clean-up chores.

The weather was cool and the sky was overcast but, with the activity, we soon warmed up.



A big thank you to **Bar Delk, David Giles, Woody Greenberg, Becky Howard, Jeannette Kinde, Heather Riser, Bennett Saunders, and Dick Whitehead.**

And the biggest thank you to **Rachel Deddens** who had the idea, organized the day, and led the charge!

Nelson County Historical Society
P.O. Box 474
Lovington, VA 22949

Website: nelsonhistorical.org
Email: info@nelsonhistorical.org

Oakland Museum
5365 Thomas Nelson Highway
Arrington, VA 22922
Phone: 434-263-8400

Oakland Museum
Wednesday 1 pm to 4 pm
Saturday 10 am to 4 pm

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Annual Membership to the Nelson County Historical Society

Name _____

Email _____

Address _____

_____ Individual @ \$25

_____ Family (spouses) @ \$40

_____ Business Sponsorship @ \$200

Life Memberships are no longer offered but current

Life Memberships will be honored.

Donations (in addition to Dues)

Society Level  \$100-\$249

Oakland Level  \$250-\$499

Lt. Governor Level  \$500-\$999

Governor Level  \$1000 and above

Make checks payable to:
Nelson County Historical Society
P.O. Box 474, Lovington, VA 22949

Consider a gift of membership to your family and friends