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Editor

Heather Riser



Houses Floated and Moved - B York _ Old Roseland

Flood of 1969

Written by a Nelson County resident as a college freshman about his memories of Camille at age 11.

It started out like any other dusky, almost-dark August evening. The frogs had started their chorus in the creek. I looked toward the sky, feeling several minute droplets blowing on the wafting breeze. "Well", I thought, "we're in for another storm." (Having had many cloudbursts over the summer, this raised no concern at all of the deluge to come.) The sky didn't look out of the norm for our usual electric storms. The trees on the mountains around my house bared the "bellies" of their leaves on the breeze. I yawned, thinking nothing more than an 11-year-old should think on a dusky, storm-threatening afternoon, and went to bed.

I nestled under the covers, idly wondering why sleep wouldn't come. Suddenly, I realized why. All of the nocturnal noisemakers had stopped. No crickets. No frogs. Only the sound of the wind in three maple trees in the front yard. Sleep came.

I awoke to the sound of a dull roar. Completely stupefied as to the sound, I shook off the last vestiges of sleep and hobbled over to the window which overlooks the valley. In the bottom of the valley peaceful, placid Hickory Creek, 12 feet or so wide normally meandered lazily through the wide expanse of a lush, flat hayfield below my house and disappeared half a mile or so away. In its place was a rampaging, tree-cluttered, waterfall-strewn, angry, brown swollen river. There was no trace of the two acre garden once flanking the creekbanks. I stood here, awestruck. I moved my mouth, but no noise would come. I rushed to the front windows, peering between the maple trees, I looked down the valley. Once, beautiful tall, green hay was obliterated. In its place were several brown sand/mud bars with shallow muddy water flowing around them.

I hurriedly threw on some clothes and rushed downstairs. Grabbing my binoculars, I raced down the hill. I gazed about randomly at the debris. I looked up at the mountain opposite the hill my house is built upon. A slide of gigantic proportion had exposed the stone beneath the mountain and had deposited at its mouth a boulder the size of a small house. I was overcome as indescribable feelings coursed through me.

I was broken from my trance by the arrival of our neighbors from their farms up the road. My father and I joined them. We instinctively walked toward the highway, three miles down the road. The conversation was mostly about estimated farm and equipment damage. But mostly there was silence.

Continued on page 4



THOMAS LIGON'S PACKARD MASSIES MILL

Thomas Ligon's Packard - WNW collection _ Lea Store in Massies Mill



Hwy embankment breach threatens lives near Macs - V Wood _ Lane Ford

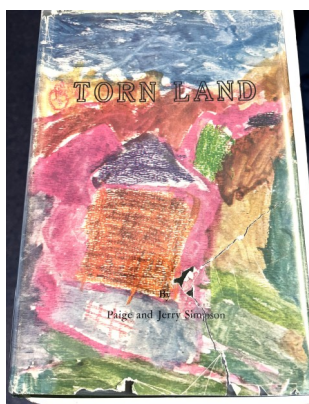
Camille Remembrance Day

The annual Hurricane Camille Remembrance Day will take place on Saturday, Aug. 15, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Oakland Museum, sponsored by the Nelson County Historical Society. Presentations of each of the following will be made in the morning and afternoon.

Camille Room: Brenda Oakcrum and Jennifer Oakcrum Thomasson will present a preview of a documentary they are making about the impact of Hurricane Camille on the Massies Mill community. The focus of the documentary is to engage with the community and interpret personal stories that have been told but not previously recorded.

Tavern Room: Lynn Giles McClain and David Hight will discuss their experiences during Camille. They will be joined by Anne Witt (VA Dept of Geology and Mineral Resources). Lynn will share photographs she took mid-day on the morning after the flood. Anne will demonstrate how 1969 aerial images can be integrated into Google Earth imagery. If members of the audience have property of interest along a major highway or stream, the society's data base may have an image that can be shown.

Oakland Museum is located at 5365 Thomas Nelson Highway across from Tye River Elementary School. Admission is free.



Special Fundraiser Book Sale

Camille Commemoration Day at Oakland Museum on Saturday, August 15

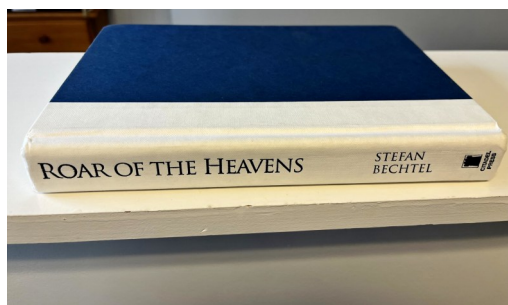
Torn Land by Jerry & Paige Simpson bids start at \$250

Roar of the Heavens by Stephan Bechtel bids start at \$50

Copies of these two books were recently given by a donor who requested that they be sold to benefit the Nelson County Historical Society.

Torn Land is considered a scarce regional history book that is difficult to find on the secondary market. Though less scarce, *Roar of the Heavens* is out of print. Both copies are in good condition.

Bids will be accepted beginning at 11am on Saturday, August 15. Each book will be sold to the highest bidder at 3pm. You must be present to make purchase.



2026 Calendar of Events

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

Saturday, August 15: **Camille Commemoration Day**, Oakland Museum, 11am to 3pm.

Saturday, September 19: **Genealogy Class--Organization & Citations**, Debbie Harvey, Nelson Center, Lovington; 1pm.

Sunday, September 20: **"Out of Virginia"** with author Joe Stinnett, Nelson Heritage Center, Arrington; 2pm.

Central Virginia slaves and freed persons left Virginia for Liberia both before and after the Civil War. Some Nelson County families were among the colonization group.

Sunday, October 4: **History & Tour of Woodson's Mill**, Lowesville; 2pm.

Bennett Saunders and Steve Dryden will share the new interpretative panels and recent renovations at the mill.

Saturday, October 17: **Earl Hamner Day**, 11am to 3pm.

Kami Cotler of "The Waltons" will honor the show's creator Earl Hamner, Jr.

Thursday, October 22-Saturday, October 24: **VA250 Mobile Museum**, Oakland Museum, times TBA

American Revolution in Virginia hands-on interactive museum on wheels.

A Selection of
NELSON COUNTY
Revolutionary War Veterans
And Widows
Pension Applications

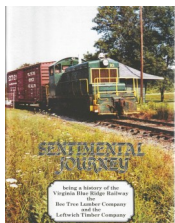


New in the Oakland bookstore

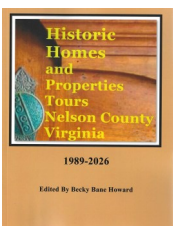
Several Nelson County Historical Society volunteers--Liz Wilbur, Doris Delk, Mary Anne Stevens, and Rosemary North--have been working over the past year to transcribe and compile testimonies of 31 Revolutionary War veterans from current-day Nelson County.

Between 1818 and 1836, Congress passed several acts designed to assist Revolutionary veterans and their families. In order to apply for and be awarded a pension, veterans were required to appear in court to explain their service. These testimonies showcase the dedication and heroism of the Nelson soldiers. Additionally, eleven widows gave testimonies about their husbands' service.

A booklet with transcriptions of these fascinating accounts can now be purchased at Oakland for \$20.



Sentimental Journey, being a History of the Blue Ridge Railroad... by Carl M. Lathrop is available for \$20.



Historic Homes and Properties Tours in Nelson County, Virginia by Becky Bane Howard has been updated to include the properties from the May 2026 homes tour and is available at Oakland for \$25.

Veterans		Widows
William Allen	William Jordan	Dolly Allen
William Bridgewater	James Kidd	Lucy Cheatham
Henry Campbell	Hudson Martin	Sally Demasters
William Campbell	Joseph Matthews	Maskey Fitzgerald
Hawes Coleman	Alexander McAlexander	Elizabeth Gordon
Bartlett H. Fitzgerald	Micajah Pendleton	Catherine Jones
Thomas Goodwin	John Pugh	Molly Jopling
Leonard Hale	George Purvis	Patsy Martin
Hezekiah Hargrove	James Rosson	Patsy McAlexander
John C. Harris	Phillip Ryan	Elizabeth Peters
William Harris	Augustine Smith	Elizabeth Spitham
Henry Harper	Henry Smith	
Barlett Hawkins	Bransford West	
Matthew Hight	Micajah Wheeler	
Thomas Jones	Benjamin Woody	

We reached a point where the road ended abruptly. The mountains flanked the road on one side and the creek on the other. What the water didn't wash away of the road the mountain slides buried under 75- and 100-foot mounds of twisted, mud-covered trees, boulders, and mud. Everyone in the valley was hopelessly trapped except for one road. A steep, tortuous road that wound up and sometimes almost straight down in some of the roughest terrain in Nelson County. Some of the curves featured 300-foot sheer drops. A great uneasiness crept over me as fear welled up in my bowels. A cold, sick fear that only a young kid can feel. We traveled onward about 75 yards. One man stepped on a deceptively solid-looking mixture of water, mud and small stones. He exclaimed involuntarily as the ground sucked him in above his waist. It took all five of us to extricate him. We turned back.

My father discussed our only route out – the mountain road. He would use his crawler to try to clear the road. An hour later, he topped the first grade on his Caterpillar tractor and disappeared from sight. Another neighbor, spotting him, clanked along not far behind. I watched him disappear also. I returned home, wandering about aimlessly. The full impact of the situation hit me. No drinkable water. Not much food. No electricity. No communication. Oh God, help us.

I ventured up the mountain road several hours later. Sure enough, not 50 yards from where I saw him disappear, he had stopped. The 'dozer mired in mud to the top of the cleats, was straining backward, trying to grab hold on some makeshift traction material my father had found and constructed. The other tractor was pulling from solid ground with heavy chains. After a dozen attempts extending over a three hour period, the operation was successful, but the original mission was doomed. At this point, we retired for the night. A night fraught with wonder, fear and hope.

On the third day after the flood, the water had receded enough for me to attempt a trip to my friend Peter's house. I walked up the road, and climbed down into an 8-foot deep, 16-foot wide, rock-studded chasm where a small tributary of Hickory Creek once flowed freely, but feebly now. Being well-coordinated and agile as most country 11-year-old boys are, I bounded in and out of there without much difficulty and at last arrived at Peter's. The whole family was listening to a battery powered radio. Nelson County had been declared a disaster area, and help was coming from all over the state in road building and body-recovery operations. I fled home with the news.

It was about 2:30pm on the fifth day. I walked aimlessly about the sand bars and tree-mounds, flushing out an occasional snake with my stick. The smell—that God-awful smell of that mud. It must have clogged the nostrils of the drowned before they died. It was a heavy, thick smell of tree sap mingled with age-old layers of earth, laid down millions of years before. I walked toward home.

A methodical, clacking sound was barely discernible. I shook it off, thinking it was my imagination. It grew louder, taking on a bass, thunderous note. I looked up. From behind a mountain peak appeared a dull green helicopter with a white star on the fuselage, rotors dancing in the sunlight against a robin-egg blue sky. Joy flooded over me. I took off at a dead run.

It circled the valley twice and landed on a hill adjacent to that on which my house sat. My father, reaching the scene before me was in deep conversation with several men. Presently a crew of Army recruits unloaded enough food for the five families scattered around the valley. Being appointed official messenger, I raced off, running tirelessly. I leaped broad washes and scaled lumber-rock piles until all our neighbors left for the scene. I trudged back & my prayer of thanks winged toward the clouds.



On May 2, 2026, the Nelson County Historical Society sponsored its biannual Historic Homes and Properties Tour. Over 200 attendees visited the five properties that day making this 27th Homes Tour one of the most successful in recent years.

We want to thank many people for making this Homes Tour a success, especially the homeowners for opening their homes and surroundings to visitors.

- Pat and Robert Saunders at Tye Brook
- Debbie and Carol Coffey at Flat Farm
- Foxie and Dick Morgan at Pharsalia
- Rebecca and Bruce Moyer at a Bryant Family Farm

The Oak Hill Baptist Church graciously invited visitors into their museum, sanctuary, and provided a delicious lunch in their fellowship hall.

Over 100 docents, parking and ticket attendants, and house captains at each location gave their time and knowledge to make the day go smoothly.

Each location was enhanced by the many beautiful flower arrangements provided by the Nelson County Garden Club and Pharsalia.

Becky Howard - Chairperson



Photographs: Flat Farm, top left; Robert & Pat Saunders at Tye Brook, top right; Brenda Barnett & Barbara Loving at Oak Hill Baptist Church; bottom left; Foxie Morgan at Pharsalia, bottom right.

Donations

Society Level

Jennifer & Jay Mills

Oakland Level

Teresa Stevens Harris

Governor Level

Beth Goodwin

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

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)

Chairman Programs & Events Committee Chairman

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

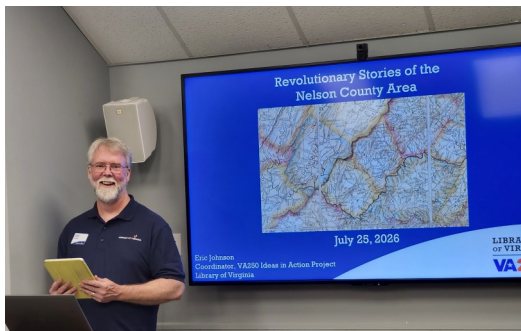
Welcome New Members

Todd Lonaberger - Robeson, PA

Karen Robins - Afton, VA

Nicholas Roland - Lovington, VA

Library of Virginia Historian Speaks in Nelson



On Saturday, July 25, about 50 attendees came to Nelson Memorial Library to hear “Revolutionary Stories of the Nelson County Area” from Eric Johnson, Library of Virginia historian.

Eric currently serves as coordinator of "Ideas in Action: Virginians Petition Their Government, 1776–1786," a collaborative project with the VA250 Commission to engage Virginians with Revolutionary-era documents through indexing, transcription and text correction and to provide related access and tools to educators, students, and researchers.

In his talk, Eric spoke about how area residents in the Revolutionary period navigated the wartime experience at home and in the service, argued for religious liberty, and managed shifting county boundaries during a time of profound change.



Join us on Facebook

The Nelson County Historical Society
and Oakland Museum



New Acquisitions

Earlier this year, the Nelson County Historical Society received a gift of some unusual artifacts from historic Glenthorne in Nelson County. Charles Dull gave the Society a group of items including a prosthesis made by Hanger or “Hanger limb,” a wooden pegleg, and a crutch.

Both the prosthesis and the pegleg belonged to Henry Judson Rittenhouse of Glenthorne. Rittenhouse was Dull’s great-great grandfather.

Rittenhouse lost his leg at the Battle of Fisher’s Hill in September 1864 while fighting with the 51st Regiment, Virginia Infantry, Company E. The Hanger leg was made of wood with metal braces, complete with foot (hinged at ankle and for all toes). The wooden pegleg (with leather straps and padded platform and metal buckles) was made by Rittenhouse himself to replace the Hanger prosthesis.



James Edward Hanger was a Confederate veteran and engineering student who designed a revolutionary articulated prosthetic limb after losing his leg in the Battle of Phillippi in 1861. Later that same year, he established his business in Staunton, Virginia, to design better artificial limbs.

The crutch belonged to Zachariah David Phillips, Dull’s great-great grandfather on his other side. Phillips also lost his leg during the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864.

Photographs: Above left, photograph of Phillips’ crutch, Rittenhouse’s pegleg and Hanger leg; above right, black & white framed photograph of Zachariah David Phillips with his crutch; and below right, black & white framed photograph of Henry Judson Rittenhouse with children Ruby Phillips (left) and Annie Phillips. Taken at Glenthorne.

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 for your family and friends