

Times in Toano



Volume 3 Issue 1

Spring 2022

Newsletter
of the
Toano
Historical
Society

A Letter from Jack Wray THS President



I was talking to one of my cousins about coming up with something to write about in our quarterly newsletter. She suggested I write about the famous jumping pit in Toano and said we always had a blast down there on the railroad tracks behind Sheldon Lumber Company. I'm not sure how many generations of Toano kids enjoyed this phenomenon, but my Uncle Tom Martin dedicated a full page about it in his book

From Toano to Germany and Back. He describes the experience during his preteen years which would have been in the late 30s or early 1940s. Most kids who grew up here in Toano will remember the jumping pit. This is my recollection in 1950s and 60s.

On foot you would walk down to the railroad tracks on Depot Street, turn right past the old depot and continue walking down the C&O right-of-way until you could see the sawdust piles on the Sheldon Lumber company property above. There was a cliff of clean, soft sandy dirt that was not too steep to climb up, probably 45 feet or so. You could take a few pretty good leaps in the soft material without getting hurt. This was repeated over and over until you were too tired to climb. I guess a similar experience would be the sand dunes at Nags Head NC.

Before climbing up we would place coins on the tracks and grab a pocket full of rocks to throw at the train cars as they went by. The goal was to hit the "O" in the C&O logo.

If you dug back into the bank with your hand far enough you could find some soft clay. We would bring this material home sometimes and make small pieces of primitive pottery.

After collecting the nice flattened coins we would start the walk back home. Right across from Jo and James Smith's house on Depot Street there was a small stream down in a ravine. You could lie down next to it and get a cool drink of water.

Sweet memories!



Toanohistoricalsociety.org

Contact us at:

info@toanohistoricalsociety.org

(757) 741-5010

PO Box 433
Toano, Virginia 23168

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Toano Open Air Market Now Open!

Saturdays, 9:00 am–1:00 pm

On Saturday March 5, the Toano Open Air Market celebrated its season opener. It was a beautiful day, and over 30 vendors were on site offering a wide variety of items for sale. Joe's Day Off provided the music. Come check it out on Saturday mornings on the Toano Station Green. THS will be there with Toano merchandise and information on how it is working to preserve the history and character of our special town. Come out and support family farms and local agriculture and business!



THS Spring Members Event

Martin Store, April 28, 2022, 6:30 pm

On April 28, THS will be hosting a special event for members and invited guests. The featured speakers will be THS president Jack Wray and Australian businessman Chris Starke. Chris is the operator of hohl, the new bakery opening in Toano this spring. Jack and Chris will be discussing the restoration of the Historic Travers House, and Chris will provide some of his culinary delights. Watch for more details!



Historic Toano

3rd Annual Toano Christmas Tree Lighting



A big crowd turned out for the 3rd Annual Toano Christmas Tree Lighting on November 27, 2021. It was an event to kick off the Christmas season with food, a variety of holiday activities, and a beautiful tree. Santa made an appearance, and kids enjoyed a face-painting station and a craft table. TOAM vendors gave it the feel of a Christmas market. It was a joy to see our community come together to celebrate!

Thank you to all the volunteers who made this community event happen!

CHCA Donates Chili Cookoff Proceeds to THS

During the Toano Christmas Tree Lighting event, the Chickahominy Haven Citizens Association presented a generous donation of \$1,252 to THS. The group donated the proceeds of its annual Chili Cookoff. The chili cookoff winner was "Not Yo Mamma's Chili." Congratulations to the winner and thank you to CHCA!

**Toano History Spotlight:
St. John Baptist Church
2588 Forge Road
By Fred Boelt, THS Historian**

Around 1871, some members of Chickahominy Baptist Church decided that they would like to have a church closer to their homes along Forge Road. Although the date is not certain,



a small log church was erected on an acre of the Lombardy farm tract. At this time, Lombardy was owned by the Waller family until Elizabeth and Fanny Waller sold the farm to the Timberlakes in 1874.

On May 4, 1878, John C. and Missouri A. Timberlake deeded one acre to George A. Allen, Samuel A. Jones and Daniel Brown, Trustees of the Second Baptist Church who had been appointed by the congregation. Since the church was already erected on this acre of ground, perhaps there had been an agreement with the Wallers or the Timberlakes to use the land before the title was actually passed.

The name, Second Baptist Church, may have derived from the fact that it was an offshoot of Chickahominy or the “first church” in this neighborhood. The church became known as “Sandy Bottom” or the “Little Indian Trap by the Road.” The families of James Allen, Sam Jones, Washington Page, and D. E. Walker were among the earliest members, and the Rev. John Smith of Hampton was the first pastor of the Sandy Bottom Baptist Church.

In 1883, a decision was made to erect a new church building. The congregation had grown to a hundred members, and the log church could no longer accommodate them.

The men of the congregation constructed the sanctuary, and the women provided them with food while they worked. The first sermon was preached in the new church in the spring of 1884. The

church was renamed St. John Baptist Church in 1913. The frame church building was enlarged in the 1940s, and a new brick church replaced that structure in 1966.

There was a one room school for African-American children located next door to St. John Church. Early schools were often associated with churches and lodge halls.

In his lifetime, Enoch T. Martin [died 1920] sold two acres of Lombardy to Washington White and Zack Jones, trustees of the St. John School League, but a deed was not recorded for this transaction. On June 18, 1921, Enoch’s son and his wife, Branch and Minnie Martin, deeded these two acres to the trustees of the School League, and in turn, on May 1, 1924, the trustees deeded the school site to the James City County School Board.

In an oral history, the Rev. Junius H. Moody offered the following: “I came to James City County in 1928, and started teaching. I taught at St. John School on Old Forge Road. It was a one room school and I taught all the grades for about four years. Then they consolidated the schools in the upper end of the county and moved us down to Chickahominy to the five-room school... I had around twenty students in that one room school.”

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St. John Baptist Church

(continued from page 3)

Eventually the School Board sold the disbanded school site to C. F. Davis and M. H. Stewart in 1954.

Today, the church has a vibrant congregation of over two hundred members. They provide regular church services and other activities for the community. St. John Baptist Church has come a long way from its earliest days of worshiping in a log church!



Eagle Scout Recognition Ceremony

Dylan Tarrant

On February 5, 2022, the Toano Historical Society had a recognition ceremony for Dylan Tarrant. Dylan made two picnic tables for THS as his Eagle Scout project. He was joined by his parents at the February meeting of the THS Board and gave a short speech about his experience in Scouts BSA. It was an honor for the board to be a part of this important milestone for Dylan, and his beautiful tables will be a part of community events for years to come.



Follow us on Facebook

Follow the Toano Historical Society on Facebook to get information and updates about upcoming events. You can also find interesting historical photos and stories.

Thank You to our Volunteers!

THS would like to thank the volunteers who have helped with our events and programs.

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Misty Bailey | Michael Krapf |
| Odell & Sheila Bartlett | Cecil Lyon |
| Heather Brown | Lanny & Betty Smith |
| Ned Christian | Bob Stanzione |
| Russell Dabney | Monica Thomas |
| Randy Garner | Lindsey Wagner-Jones |
| Chris Hinton | Jenna Weinstein |
| Malachi Hinton | Ellie Wray |
| Emily Krapf | John Wray |

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Our community events would not be possible without your help! If we have missed any names, please contact us so we can acknowledge them in a future issue.

Become a Member of THS

Online signup now available!

If you would like to support the work of the Toano Historical Society, please consider becoming a member. As of February 28, THS has 55 memberships. These are a combination of individuals, families, and businesses. We are grateful for the support of these members. They make our work to preserve and promote the history of Toano possible!

Annual Membership Cost:

\$25 Individual, \$35 Family, \$55 Business

How to join:

- Go to the [Membership Page](#) of the THS website to sign up and pay online
- Sign up at the THS table at the Toano Open Air Market

Meet the THS Board Members

Rena Wray, Board Member-At-Large.



Rena Wray is a native of Radian, a small community in Madison County, Virginia. She grew up on a farm there, where she and her family raised horses and cattle. Rena attended Madison County Public Schools and Piedmont Virginia Community College in Charlottesville.

Rena moved to Charlottesville in 1990 and worked for Health Services Foundation, a non-profit physician billing service for the University of Virginia. While working for HSF Rena held several different positions in the departments of Education, Training, and Human Resources.

It was during these years that she accepted her first Board position with ASTD (American Society for Training & Development) as Newsletter Chair. Rena went on to serve on other boards including the Charlottesville Chamber of Commerce as Chair of their annual Women's Conference in 2011. In looking back on these opportunities she considers it a privilege to be involved in an organization at this level and notes that dedication and hard work are the key to success. This is what Rena enjoys about Toano Historical Society. Everyone is working hard together to revitalize the community and bring more awareness to Toano!

Rena is a lifelong horse lover and enjoys being in the barn doing chores and grooming just as much as she does getting out on the trails with her mom and friends!

Rena and Jack Wray married in 1998 and have two children, John and Ellie. John is a 2021 graduate of the University of Mary Washington with a degree in Historic Preservation. Ellie is a 2021 graduate of Francis Marion University with a degree in Biology and a minor in Psychology. She is

staying on at FMU, enrolled in their MBA program and playing soccer, until the Spring of 2023. Jack and Rena are very proud parents!

Jack and Rena share a love of history and saving old buildings. When Rena was twelve, she and her parents dismantled an old log farmhouse, and they re-used all salvageable materials to re-purpose into their new home on the family farm. Since then Jack and Rena have gone on to dismantle two other houses and have stored the architectural salvage to use in various building projects including a one room cottage in their backyard in Charlottesville. Some of it has even been repurposed at the Toano Bakery!

Rena has been working in the family business for a number of years and enjoys seeing the progress being made in Toano. She has been coming here with Jack since the mid-1990's. She and the Wray family have a great time entertaining lots of cousins and friends that drop by the Martin House on Chesapeake Avenue.

Rena is excited about the revitalization that has been taking place and looks forward to seeing the community and THS work together building momentum for the future of the Village!



THS to Sponsor Food Drive

Toano Open Air Market

April 16, 2022, 9 am–1 pm

During the TOAM on April 16, the community is invited to participate in a food drive to benefit the food pantry at St. Olaf Catholic Church. Please bring non-perishable food items (no expired or open items) to the THS table at the market. This is a way to help our neighbors who are experiencing food insecurity. Share this with your friends!

Also, watch for more info on fun Easter activities coming up at the TOAM!



Toano Historical Society Board of Directors

President, Jack Wray

Secretary, Richard Krapf

Treasurer, Susan Kohlman

Historian, Fred Boelt

Newsletter and Website, Tim and Patte Martin

Volunteer and Programs & Events Coordinator, Deidre McAuley-Hayes

Social Media Chair, Emmalyn Carter

Board Member-At-Large, Rena Wray