

Times in Toano



Volume 1 Issue 1

Spring 2020

Newsletter
of the
Toano
Historical
Society

COVID-19 Announcement: In spite of the extraordinary situation with the Coronavirus, we decided to move forward to publish our first THS newsletter and hope that it helps in some small way to strengthen the bond we have with each other. Please stay safe and resilient in this time of extreme care and social distancing.



The Inaugural THS Newsletter

A Letter from Jack Wray, THS President

I have often said that growing up in Toano back in the 1950s and 60s was like a scene out of a Norman Rockwell painting. My family's small ranch house on School Lane afforded me the luxury of living close to stores, shops, automobile garages, diners and the fire station that were just a short walk to a fairly bustling main street. Ice cream cones, milk shakes, and Coca Colas were always conveniently attainable! Many of our neighbors were the proprietors that owned the businesses downtown.

I always felt safe and part of a larger community of caring people that watched over all us children. My mother wouldn't hesitate to send me out the door to borrow sugar, eggs or butter if we happened to be a little short.

Venturing a little further out on foot or on my bicycle I saw the beauty of the very best farmland in James City County. All of these memories combined with a community occupied by Godly, spirited and proud people best describes Toano, Virginia, a place I'm proud to be from.

I have been feeling a renewed sense of spirit and pride for our village, and it gives me great pleasure to introduce the first issue of the "Times in Toano"...THS 's official quarterly Newsletter!

We will be reporting on the latest revitalization efforts, upcoming events, and sharing stories about our history, the people, the businesses, the historic buildings and homes of Toano.

I acknowledge that we all have been impacted by the unprecedented effects of the horrible COVID-19 virus. Many businesses and even our churches are temporarily closed. Our Toano Community needs to remain optimistic about the future, stay strong and overcome these challenges together. To all readers, we pray you and your families stay healthy and safe, and we look forward to celebrating with you soon!

Best wishes to all,
Jack Wray



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Upcoming THS Events

THS Membership Interest Meeting
Thursday, May 7, 7:00pm

Martin Store

Jack Wray will give a Toano revitalization update and provide details about how to become a member of the Toano Historical Society. Come hear about the exciting plans for our community!

Summer Music, Beer & Wine Festival
Saturday, June 20

Watch for more information on this fun summer event!

Note: Out of concern for the health of our community members we have cancelled the Toano Spring Celebration and Food Drive, originally scheduled for April 11. We will notify you on Facebook if future events also need to be rescheduled.

Toano Historical Society Updates

James City County

During its meeting on February 11, 2020, the JCC Board of Supervisors heard a presentation on Toano's application to the Virginia Main Street Program. This program helps communities with the revitalization of their downtown commercial areas. The JCC Board voted unanimously to approve support for the application.

You can read more about this meeting and the Virginia Main Street Program in [this article from the WY Daily](#).

As of March 16, 2020, Toano is officially a DHCD Commercial District Affiliate. This is an important milestone, and we look forward to the resources available to us through this designation.

HGTV Application

In February, the Toano Historical Society submitted an application to the HGTV Hometown Takeover. Members of our community came together to express what this town means to them. Thanks to Brandon Share for creating the video that captured those sentiments.

You can watch the HGTV video application on the [Toano Historical Society website](#).

2019 Highlights

1st Annual

Toano Christmas Tree Lighting

Our first annual Christmas tree lighting event was a huge success! Over 1000 people attended and enjoyed carriage rides, visiting with Santa, delicious food from Two Drummers Smokehouse, and the lighting of the Toano Christmas Tree. THS thanks all the donors, planners, and volunteers who helped make this happen!



Chickahominy Haven Citizens Association Presents Donation to THS

As a part of the Christmas Tree Lighting event, representatives of the Chickahominy Haven Citizens Association presented a check for \$455 to the Toano Historical Society. The funds were the proceeds from their Chili Cook-Off. Thank you CHCA for supporting the work of our organization!



Community Spotlight

Historic Travers Home

The Historic Travers Home in Toano (formerly the Toano Gun Shop at the corner of Church St and Rt. 60) was built by C.P. Slater in 1900. It was sold to the Travers family in 1943, and in 1949 they built an addition doubling the size. The Travers family members are very happy and excited that their homeplace will be saved and repurposed.

In a recent conversation with Jack Wray, five of the Travers sisters told Jack a little of the family history. There were six sisters in the family, and two of them were born in the house. They shared memories of their lives and upbringing in Toano. Their grandfather, a first-rate mechanic, operated a garage in front of the house for many years.



Travers family members visit the former family home

The Travers home will have its next life as The Virginia Bread Company, a bakery, coffee, and sandwich shop. The new store will keep the features that make this building special. For example, the old hardwood floor boards were 6” wide in the original 1900 home and 4” wide in the 1949 addition. Both eras will be preserved in the restoration of the house. In addition, artifacts found in and around the building will be displayed in the bakery. Watch for more details on this new business coming to town.



Historic Travers Home

Toano Station - A Vision for the Future

A Move to Preserve Their Hometown



Realizing that a number of distressed properties in the heart of the historic village held the key to a revitalized Toano, brothers Jack and Jeff Wray purchased them in 2012 and 2013. The site of these buildings was the former location of a number of Toano historic buildings that were lost in 1966 when Rt. 60 was widened to four lanes. Sadly, a total of 14 historic buildings in Toano were removed during the road widening project

The map on the left shows the location of the property and the four buildings that had cropped up after the road expansion project. In September 2019, the Wrays had these buildings demolished and the land cleared to prepare the site for the eventual Toano Station project. This was a huge visible step forward in showing the potential for Toano's revitalization.



Removing nonconforming buildings and preparing for Toano Station.

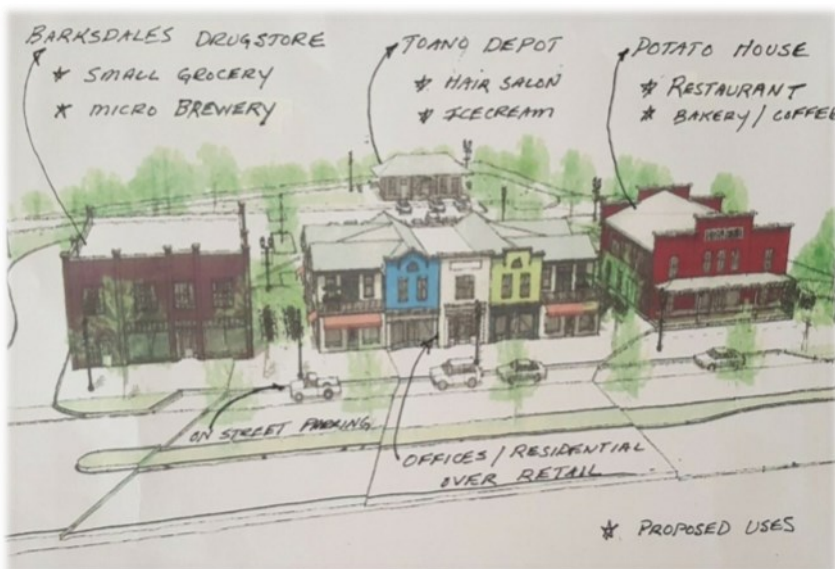


Our new Toano Station Grounds. She cleaned up pretty nice, didn't she?

Using old photos of the 19th and 20th century buildings previously located on this site, the Wrays teamed up with Architect John Hopke to create a new concept for TOANO STATION, the same name this site was referred to 140 years ago when the C&O Railroad built Toano's first depot here in 1881.



These proposed buildings will match the scale and architecture of the historic buildings across the street in the NEW Toano Commercial Historic District.



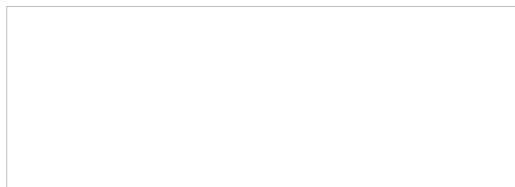
The old depot will be recreated close to its original site.

In the illustration,, a likeness of Barksdale's Drugstore (left) and the old Potato House (right) will anchor the corners.

The middle block will consist of apartments or offices on the second floor and retail on the ground floor. On street parking is also proposed.

To view moving images of these proposed buildings go to www.toanostation.com.

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