

Major A. M. Chappell's War Journal, 1862-63

Among the Civil War items at the Amelia County Historical Society are artifacts pertaining to the life and service of rebel officer A. M. Chappell, a native of Amelia. These include a "sword bayonet" said "to have been presented to him by the citizens of Amelia County" when he was a captain in the Confederate Army, an 1860 *New Testament* given him by Mr. J. J. Hood, "a teacher who had been imprisoned at Johnson's Island," and a small 1862 leather journal which Chappell picked up from a Yankee haversack after the Battle of Seven Pines. The two books, bayonet, and his ceremonial scabbard and blade, along with several handwritten orders from the rebel army and government ordering Chappell's final mustering out, are primary war artifacts on hand at the Society.

Chappell served with Company A, 14th Virginia Infantry "Paineville Rifles." He carried the unknown Yankee's journal with him for the duration of his later active wartime service, which ended at the very "high tide of the Confederacy," with his wounding in Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg on 3 July 1863. Chappell went down on the field across from the Union redoubt on Cemetery Ridge, not far from where Colonel Armistead fell. He also was thus within sight of where Color Sergeant Barnett A. Seay, also of Amelia, "was seen to plant the colors of the 14th Va. Inf. on the stone wall...when he was taken prisoner." Chappell's war service ended with his wounds. He was promoted to major in the aftermath of his bravery.

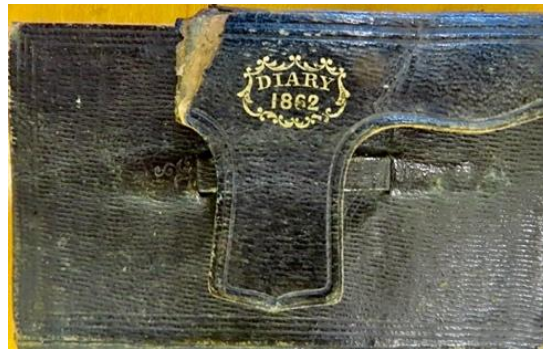
Society members recently transcribed the entries in "Chappell's journal." His dating of events was somewhat murky, as more than one handwriting is seen in the diary. Furthermore, the events that he recorded in 1863 used the book's preset 1862 month-date-day format; sometimes Chappell clarified the dates through mark-overs of the former year, but most often he did not.

His entries include firsthand observations in Virginia's Peninsula and in the Tidewater/Hampton Roads areas, the December 1862 Battle of Fredericksburg, and his 1863 movements through Maryland and into Pennsylvania. However, for the critical days in and around Gettysburg, his daily and routine annotations ceased, yet summarizations in the major's handwriting are included. He may have inserted these entries as late as the early

20th century to resupply his personal record in retrospect. However, his original notes on his movements home in the wake of his wounding on the Gettysburg battlefield appear to be authentic.

Many of Chappell's entries are records of in-camp purchases, item costs, loans from fellow soldiers, and payments made, both in Confederate money and U.S. specie. Most daily notes point to long marches, picket duty, monotonous camps, "more of the same," and the mundane daily pursuits of wartime soldiers in the many hours between their relatively rare exposures to battle. However, on occasion, such as his several furloughs when in the Richmond area and thus relatively accessible to his wife, his first brush with death near Norfolk, his observation once of Yankee balloons off in the

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Amelia County Historical Society

16501 Church Street
Post Office Box 113
Amelia Court House, VA 23002
804-561-3180

ameliahistoricalociety@tds.net

Amelia Facebook Page

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Sharon Barden Garber, Editor

sgarber410@verizon.net

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President's Message

"Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire."

– Gustav Mahler, 1860-1911

Austrian composer and conductor

This year so far has shaped up as rather busy. Society fundraisers racked up good successes at the April Namozine Church Open House and at Amelia Day. Our first-ever efforts at the community Juneteenth celebration netted fewer proceeds than either of those outings, but our presence added to the day's activities and helped get the word out about our operations. Society volunteers proved indispensable to each of these efforts and many donors came through like champs. I cannot thank each of you enough (see the list on page 8). The funds that we earned will go toward the reprinting of our *Historical Notes on Amelia County, Virginia*—last reissued in 1991—and will jumpstart the replacement of our communications suite. Each of those projects is long overdue.

I also am pleased with the lectures that we have sponsored each quarter since last fall. The most recent was April's Mannboro-Ammon history recitation by James M. P. Coleman on his ancestors since the late 17th century in that end of Amelia and in adjacent counties. The unusual Saturday afternoon event at the County Administration Building was well attended and streamed live using county resources. I thank County Administrator Taylor Harvie, and especially his assistant Ashley Gunn, as well as Mr. Coleman, for their generous support. We intend to arrange continuing lectures for the open membership and the general public. Cyndi Ashman, Julia Dawson, Lillian Atkins, and Ann Clarke also contributed stoutly to the success of the event.

Forecasting late-year activities during our current "summer break" seems a little precarious, but I have already committed to the return of our annual Veterans' Reception at the Amelia County Veterans Center on the first Sunday in November. The theme will mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War. We also hope to integrate future and ongoing Amelia County American Revolution 250 research and activities into this newsletter. Seven Society members serve on that committee. Furthermore, the Board is discussing several possible social activities that hopefully will affably engage our members as comrades of Amelia History, without putting on too many "airs." That's not as countercultural as one might think these days, but we shall see.

Meanwhile, I wish each of you a relaxing, happy, and yet productive and prosperous summer.

Sincerely,

Michael F. Whitaker, President

VDHR Launches New Website

The Virginia Department of Historical Resources, in its mission "to foster, encourage, and support the stewardship of Virginia's historic architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources," has updated access to its public resources at:

<https://www.dhr.virginia.gov>

Its focus areas include **"Research & Identify"** and **"Preserve & Protect."** The site also has Forms Download, Press Releases, and Landmarks and Projects sections, interactive admin maps, a bulletin board, etc. Virginia citizens and communities should find it beneficial for numerous economic, educational, social, and cultural purposes.

Chula Female Mathematician Was an Early “Computer”

Chula-born Lelia Jefferson Harvie Barnett, 1873-1956, served as a “computer,” that is, a human math calculator, at the U.S. Naval Observatory in Washington, D.C., 1901-02, and with the Coastal and Geodetic Survey the following year. She was an early American female pioneer in academic math and science.

Ms. Harvie attended the State Normal School of Virginia, Farmville division, now Longwood University. She afterwards served there as an associate faculty member in Math, 1893-1900. She graduated from Cornell University in 1901 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Harvie was an Associate Alumnae Scholar of Arts and a member of the scientific honorary society, Sigma Xi. She later completed graduate studies in math, physics, and English at Chicago University and Stanford.

Mary Custis Lee (1835-1918), eldest daughter of General Robert E. Lee, funded part of Lelia’s university education through a small endowment. The money came from Mary’s share of the Arlington House sale by her brother G. W. Custis Lee to the Federal Government after the U.S. Supreme Court in 1882 ruled that the estate had been illegally confiscated from Mary’s mother.

Ms. Harvie married Dr. Samuel Jackson Barnett, PhD (Cornell), a theoretician and professor of physics, at Mattoax Presbyterian Church in Amelia in July 1904. As a mathematician and scientist, she collaborated professionally in Professor Barnett’s work, which focused acutely in gyromagnetism, experimental

electricity, and geodesy. Their research and his teaching assignments took them to Ohio State, Tulane, Stanford, the Carnegie Institute in Washington, D.C., UCLA, and Cal Tech.

The Barnetts’ efforts yielded valuable findings related to magnetism generated at the atomic level by rotating bodies. The work led to eventual proof by others that electrons possess both spin momentum and magnetism momentum.

According to a Naval Observatory brief on this early female mathematician’s contributions, Ms. Barnett shared authorship on several important papers with her husband. The husband-wife team also co-authored several papers circa 1915 with Albert Einstein. Dr. Barnett, who is remembered for the Barnett Effect (namely, the magnetism of an uncharged body when spun on its axis), received several nominations for the Nobel Prize for his and his wife’s work.

Expanding on his work in 2019, scientists at New York University showed that his proofs of electron magnetism from rapid spinning also apply to protons at a much lower measurable level, which they named the “nuclear Barnett Effect.” Practical applications include use in magnetic resonance imaging. Recent laser-induced spin magnetism has also led to the so-called “optical Barnett Effect.”

The Barnetts, along with their adopted daughter Ann Harvie Barnett, are buried in the Harvie family plot at the Amelia Presbyterian Cemetery on Dunn Street in the courthouse village.

Old Time Religion



Amelia Black Families Attend a Baptism
Near Dykeland, Summer 1910

-Photo courtesy of the Taylor-Hadley Collection

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distance, or exposure to cannonading and gunfire, Chappell's jottings give life (or death) to the exigencies of an Amelia officer in the greatest conflict in American history.

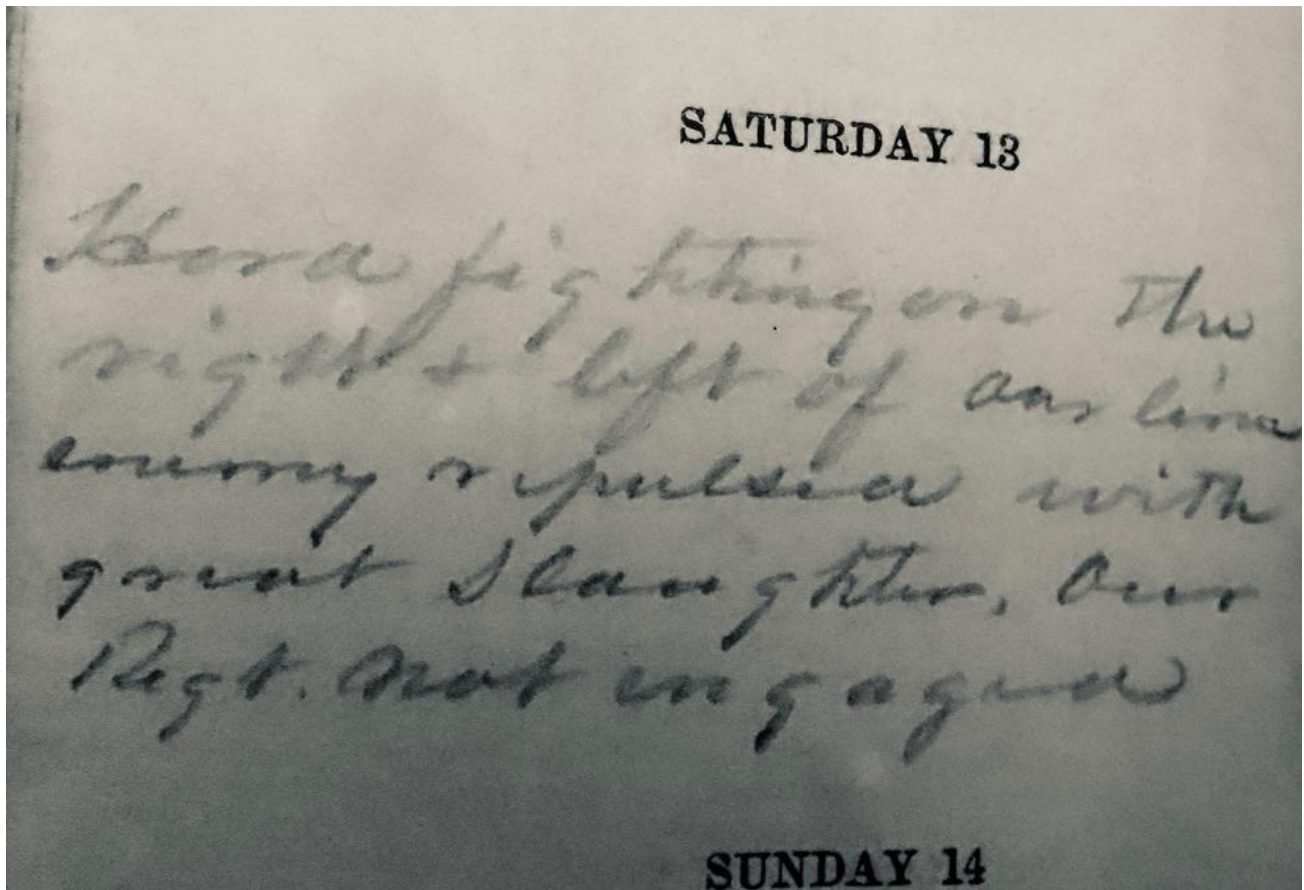
For example, an illuminating sequence at the Battle of Fredericksburg (11-15 December 1862) brings history to light:

- THURSDAY 11: "Commenced the fight at Fredericksburg set the town on fire. Heavy shelling gave many wounded [?] on our side & great many of the enemy killed."
- FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1862: "Not Much doing, our Regt in the pines all

day on their Arms, moved off on the out lines after night."

- SATURDAY 13: "Hard fighting on the right & left of our lines enemy repulsed with great Slaughter. Our Regt. not engaged."
- SUNDAY 14: "Went out at day on picket, laid in the trenches all day."

While untangling the journal's several handwritings and unclear timelines remains a work in progress, the document adds much interest to the holdings of the Jackson Memorial Library and Museum.



Journal Excerpt – Then Captain A. M. Chappell wrote on 13 December 1862 at Fredericksburg: "Hard fighting on the right & left of our lines enemy repulsed with great Slaughter. Our Regt. not engaged." It is unclear whether or not he personally eye witnessed the day's brutal killings on Marye's Hill in the city, but he surely heard the clamor. Seven and a half months later, he would be wounded in a similar suicidal charge with Pickett's Division at Gettysburg.

Amelia WWII Flyboys

Colonel Ben Rowlett, U.S. Air Force

Some two dozen Amelia men served in military aviation in World War II. Most of them worked or flew for the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF). Of these, several remained in the service for full careers. One, Allen Benjamin (“Ben”) Rowlett of Chula, retired to Amelia as a USAF colonel in 1968.

Rowlett was born in October 1914. He attended Amelia High School during the Great Depression. When Congress passed the Selective Service Act of 1940, he received a very low draft number. Knowing his strong likelihood for induction into the infantry, he applied for, was accepted, and reported for his USAAF flight physical at Langley Field, Virginia, in March 1941. At 5’6” and 140 pounds, Ben just barely squeaked through the aviation minimum measurements. Shortly thereafter, he received two sets of orders: one to report for Army induction at Fort Lee, Virginia, and the other for flight training at Arcadia, Florida, starting ten days later.

Taking the Greyhound Bus, along with 15-20 other Amelia “boys,” he reported to Fort Lee, carrying his Florida flight orders. He presented them at an early opportunity, which landed him on “kitchen patrol” (KP) duty until his case was resolved. After a couple of weeks, the War Department affirmed that his flight training would take precedence. He thus reported south to a series of AAF aviation training bases that found him at Eglin Field, Florida, living in tents and shivering in the rain in his cotton summer uniform as his advanced training (aerial gunnery phase) neared conclusion in late November 1941.

On completion, Aviation Cadet Rowlett took an offer for inactive duty with Pan American Airlines to fly U.S.-built P-40 pursuit planes from Marrakech, Morocco, to Cairo, Egypt, in order to replenish British aircraft lost in fighting the Germans in North Africa. In Ben’s words, “This was the real ‘tooth fairy.’” His pay was to be \$500 a month plus per diem. After he was accepted, he went into reserve status at Mitchell Field, New York, in early December.

On his first weekend at the post, he and a pilot buddy toured the sights in nearby New York City. It was there on the afternoon of Sunday, 7 December 1941, that a policeman stopped them in their civilian clothes to suggest that they should report back to post, as “Japan has just attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.” The two

returned to Mitchell Field just in time to hear President Roosevelt address the nation on radio. The Pan Am job was gone. Ben had just become an instantaneous Second Lieutenant in the USAAF.

Within days he and his comrades reported by train to Tallahassee, Florida, for acclimation to wartime aviation service (uniforms, dog tags, shots, flight gear, flight pay, small arms, etc.) and to form a new fighter unit. On Christmas Eve, the group moved out again by rail to Charleston, South Carolina. They arrived the next day with duffle bags in hand to transfer into a ship for destinations unknown, but ever southward.

When their vessel arrived at the Panama Canal, all were sure that they were on their way to Australia and the South Pacific. But it was not to be. Instead, Lt. Rowlett and his fellow aviators received assignment to the P-40 pursuit squadron stationed at France Field on the Atlantic side of the Canal Zone.

As there were no formal P-40 flight instructors for the new pilots, they learned to fly it by the seat of their pants. Ben’s first, check-out solo was almost a disaster as oil covered his windscreen on takeoff,

blocking his vision. He performed a remarkable open cockpit landing that “he had seen in the movies,” and his wartime flying career, which soon settled into wet boredom in rainy Panama, had begun.

Indeed, the tenor of the early war seemed “catch as catch can.” But the Panama assignment gave its new pilots daily over-water flight experience that would become invaluable in the Pacific as planned American operations unfolded. Rowlett flew several obsolescent pursuit planes and made runs to Nicaragua and Guatemala. His varied navigation, flight emergency, and weather-relevant episodes honed his skills. In March 1942, when veteran bomber crews of the 40th Bomb Group from Borinquen Field in Puerto Rico deployed to the Canal Zone with their B-18 bombers for anti-submarine patrols, Rowlett and his mates signed on as co-pilots in a period of heavy German U-boat forays into the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. It was the first time that experienced pilots showed the “newbies” the ropes of combat flying.

By summer 1943 Rowlett’s flight skills led the AAF to recall him and others to the States to fly the new,

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Society Open Membership Lecture



End of Discussion

James Michael Paschal Coleman III of Bogalusa, Louisiana (left), meets with an audience member at the conclusion of his April 29th presentation of "Families and Houses of Mannboro: A Genealogical Look into the Families of Amelia County and Surrounding Counties," which was held in the County Administration Building. The author and historian spoke of his line of Amelia and other ancestors in the context of local structures and the geography of eastern Amelia County. County staffers streamed the event live for the Historical Society.



Selections from the President's AmRev250 Reading List

As the Amelia County Committee for the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution is underway this year, it aims to keep a comprehensive bibliographic record of its research findings and publications. Committee members, including Baylee Hughes of the Hamner Public Library, plan to direct public attention to the multiyear AmRev250 observance via relevant book purchases, shelf exhibits, and suggested reading lists. As the committee investigates hundreds of resources for the Revolution and its ideals in Amelia and Nottoway Counties, it from time to time also will offer refined reading lists for the public. The following volumes are an initial recommendation by Society President and Amelia AmRev250 Chairman Michael Whitaker for general background reading. The books recap part of the broad history from before the English settlement at Jamestown through the founding of Amelia County to 250 years ago this year (1773).

Prelude to Revolution, 1607-1773 (Part One)

- American Heritage (Ed., Richard M. Ketchum), *The American Heritage History of The American Revolution*, American Heritage Publishing Company, Inc., New York, 1958.
- Barnes & Noble, *The Constitution of the United States of America and Selected Writings of the Founding Fathers*, Barnes & Noble, New York, 2012.
- Burns, James McGregor, *Fire and Light: How the Enlightenment Transformed Our World*, Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Griffin, New York, 2013.
- McWhiney, Grady, *Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South*, University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, Alabama/London, 1988.
- Thomas, Hugh, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870*, A Touchstone Book, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1997.



Flyboys —from page 5

“hush-hush,” B-29/*Superfortress* bomber. The very heavy, high altitude, pressurized aircraft was designed explicitly for the long-range, strategic bombing campaigns envisaged against Japan, first from the China Burma India (CBI) Theater of war, and eventually from captured islands in the western Pacific. Rowlett, then a full pilot, transferred from Panama to Kansas to test and deliver the bomber to newly activated units. He also trained in his new bombing mission over ranges in the western U.S.

The Air Force next sent Rowlett to India, the staging point for the construction of long-range bomber bases in Chinese areas controlled by America’s ally, Chiang Kai-shek. Fifteen-man crews flew their B-29’s from the States with “spare engines, personal luggage, spare parts, and an extra tank of fuel loaded in the planes’ twin bomb bays.” The route took them to Marrakech, Cairo, and Karachi before touching down at Piardoba, India. “Flying the Hump,” or hauling materiel in cargo planes and bombers temporarily converted to transport aircraft over the Himalayas to build new air bases, was the mission.

Major Rowlett soon was “upgraded to squadron Operations Officer.” His responsibilities included “scheduling crews for combat missions, flying orientation missions with new crews, flying sometimes as a formation commander, filling in for a pilot or co-pilot who was sick, and supervising squadron admin work.” He flew out of India and China, sometimes experiencing dangerous or interesting encounters. He once evaded five Japanese aerial attackers over Taiwan. He also flew the first photoreconnaissance mission over the Philippine Islands in preparation for General Douglas MacArthur’s famous “return.”

Rowlett’s unit next deployed to Tinian in the Pacific for the bombing campaign against Japan. By early May

1945, he “had flown three or four missions against industrial targets in the Japanese homeland.” His group soon joined the American firebombing armada over large Japanese cities, including Tokyo and Yokohama. Over time, the targeted cities became smaller and less numerous.

Meanwhile, a new B-29 outfit, the 509th Composite Group, showed up at Tinian with no clearly assigned combat role. It spent several weeks flying “practice missions.” But, “on the bright morning” of 6 August 1945, “coming off a fire raid on a city about 75 miles north of Tokyo,” Rowlett heard a Guam radio broadcast that reported “the catastrophic damage—the wiping out—of the city of Hiroshima by a special weapon released by the crew of the Enola Gay.” It was the work of the 509th. Three days later, a second atomic bomb detonated over the city of Nagasaki. On 14 August, the Japanese Emperor reported to his people that Japan would surrender on American terms.

Rowlett’s USAF career lasted until 1968. Its post-war highlights included his 1946 piloting of a B-29 that photographed the huge radioactive cloud of the aerial atomic test over Bikini Atoll. In 1950, he was a squadron commander, again with the 40th Bomb Group, when several of its B-50 aircraft nonstop circumnavigated the Earth from Roswell Air Force Base, New Mexico, using in-flight refueling. He also flew combat missions in the Korean War. He ended his bomber career in the States as a colonel, flying B-52/*Stratofortresses* for the Strategic Air Command. He served twice as a wing commander.

Colonel Rowlett wrote his service story for the Historical Society at Pinehurst, North Carolina, at the age of 87. He died there in December 2005.

Right: B-29 and other aircrews in their mission pre-brief on the morning of 1 July 1946 for *Test Shot Able*, the aerial detonation of an atomic bomb over Bikini Atoll. Rowlett, who flew a photo-recon sortie, very likely is in this picture.

—From “*The Pictorial History of Operation Crossroads*”



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