

Amelia's Historic County Seat

The Society often comments formally on historical events tied to proposed, publicly-funded, development sites. It has profiled histories for the construction of local cellular and broadcast towers, as well as for an Amelia C.H. Historic District to support a county grant request. The following historical summaries typify past inputs and specifically list events relevant to the site of the 300-foot tower (green marker in photo below) erected last month at the Amelia Emergency Operations Center on Dunn Street.

Amelia Court House Square (#1 in photo below)

This site, bounded by Virginia, Church, Court, and Washington Streets, dates to 1850 and the construction of the Richmond and Danville Railroad (R&DRR). Today's courthouse dates to 1924. It replaced the 1851 structure. The square is two blocks from the proposed tower site (see green marker in photo).

a) Amelia cavalry and infantry militia units mustered on the square by the late 1850s. The field was an induction, drill, and marshalling ground during the Civil War. Small armories were situated nearby. In 1862, the courthouse briefly served as a rebel hospital, until smallpox cases there threatened to spread. On April 3-5, 1865, four drastically reduced rebel corps of the Army of Northern Virginia, plus an intermittent stream of Southern stragglers, rendezvoused in Amelia County. Two corps camped in or near the county seat, centered around Amelia Court House Depot. Commanding General Robert E. Lee located his tent one block north of the square. His army expected to find rations for its famished troops. Instead, a train parked at the depot contained caissons, ammunition, saddles, and bridals. Lee sent foragers to the countryside to ask for sustenance, but they returned largely empty-handed. The day's delay in the rebel strategic movement proved instrumental to General Ulysses S. Grant's Union forces that cut off the Southern escape route along the railroad at Jetersville, seven miles west of the square. The development altered Lee's retreat route westward to Farmville and led ultimately to Appomattox Court House.

b) After noon on April 4, 1865, from near or on the courthouse square, General Lee instructed 1st Corps commander General James P.

Longstreet to pursue Federal cavalry raiders near Amelia's Five Forks, about ten blocks to the south. Engaging troops likely passed adjacent to or very near the proposed tower site. The following afternoon, the rebels detonated the ammo supply from the train, also within several blocks of the proposed tower. That evening, on leaving Amelia Court House, rebel troops filed past the proposed site on what today is Virginia Street. They likely crossed the churchyard of Amelia Presbyterian Church and Cemetery, on today's Dunn Street. On April 6-7, 1865, Union infantrymen probed northeast up the R&DRR from Jetersville to Amelia



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County Seat –from page 1

Court House. The courthouse green has yielded numerous projectiles, fuses, and other war artifacts. A rebel Coehorn mortar from Lampkin's Battery (and used at the 1864 Battle of the Crater in Petersburg) remains on the square.

c) The square's statue honoring Amelia's Confederate Dead is said to have a roster of all county rebel veterans (some of whom were black) placed inside the cornerstone. The stone was set in place by the local Masonic Lodge Worshipful Master on September 20, 1904. The monument features an inscription by local poet John Bannister Tabb.

d) Other notable occurrences at or on the courthouse square included the seizing and hanging by a white mob of an un-convicted (after two mistrials) African-American prisoner, Jesse Mitchell, in the early morning hours of September 14, 1893, as he awaited a third trial in the Amelia jail; the 1905 dedication of the Confederate War Memorial Statue; two brief civil rights demonstrations in the mid-1960s; the 250th Anniversary celebration of Amelia County in May 1985 (and every year since); and the recent placements of U.S. war veterans' monuments in front of the 1907 Clerk of the Court Annex Building.

Amelia Presbyterian Church and Cemetery (#2 in photo, page 1)

Facing Dunn Street and bounded to the west by Virginia Street, this church was organized in 1847 with a wooden structure built soon thereafter on the site across from the proposed tower. The present brick church was built in 1914 with subsequent additions. Its adjacent cemetery, only thirty yards from the proposed tower site, dates to antebellum times. Buried therein are numerous U.S. veterans, including in a Confederate section with one general, a U.S. Congressman (who also served in the Virginia legislature, and as a state circuit court judge; he was the Amelia Commonwealth's Attorney who in 1893 prosecuted Jesse Mitchell), and one Nobel Prize nominee and his "computer" wife who assisted his work.

Christ Episcopal Church (#3 in photo, page 1)

Bounded by Amelia Avenue and Court Street, and some 100 yards south of Goode's Bridge Road, the church formed in 1881. Clergy consecrated the finished chapel in 1888. The church is congregationally tied to the original 1760 Grub Hill Church (of Raleigh Parish) in the outlying countryside, with its earlier county antecedents dating to the 1729 Anglican "Numaseen" Church that once briefly stood in what at the time was Prince George County. Virginia Fourth Judicial Circuit Court Judge and two-term U.S. Congressman Robert G. Southall was a warden and lay reader of the church, from which he was buried in May 1924.

Imperial Tobacco Company (Today's DC Tire & Auto) (#4 in photo, page 1)

Bounded by Factory Street and Five Forks Road, the prominent stone building dates to the last quarter of the 19th century and originally housed the Imperial Tobacco Company. Later businesses therein included the *Amelia Gazette* newspaper, a tomato and vegetable canning operation, a mid-1940s dairy processing plant, and more recently, automotive repair operations. The grounds include, or are adjacent to, the 1893 lynching site of Jesse Mitchell, seized from the Amelia jail, hung on a pine tree, and shot several times by an angry and anonymous white mob.

a) Factory Street Abandoned House near DC Tire & Auto – The 1893 hanging tree was said to be in the vicinity of this structure.

Five Forks Road (#5 on map, page 3)

Passing the old Imperial Tobacco Company building, this road dates to colonial times. North and South mounted and unmounted soldiers skirmished along it on April 4, 1865, some of the rebels coming from the courthouse square at Lee's direction. The route then was called the Petersburg Road.

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County Seat *—from page 2*

Goodes Bridge Road (#6 on map below)

This is one of the three original colonial roads in Raleigh Parish, the old church jurisdiction spatially coincident with today's Amelia County. The road entered the Virginia Highway System before 1920 as VA-20, and the U.S. Highway system in 1938 as US-360. It traverses where General Robert E. Lee's tent stood on April 4-5, 1865, then under a massive oak tree. The Old Amelia Hotel, 1850s-1928, would have been perpendicular to today's road in this area. Its archeological remains are covered by the roadway.

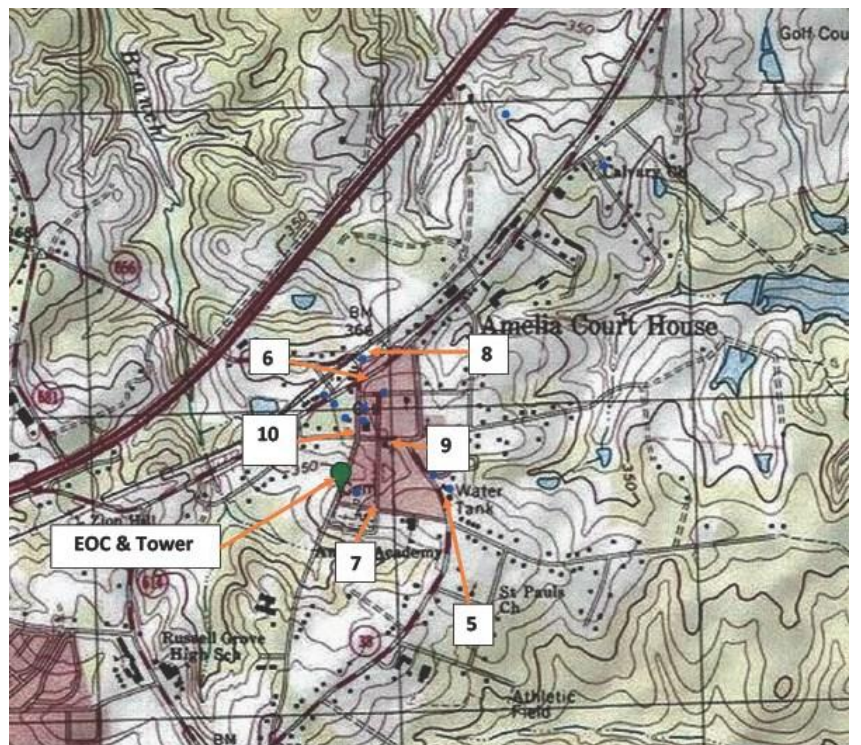
Hindle Building/Amelia County Administration Building (#7 on map below)

Bounded by Washington and Dunn Streets, these two sites, facing each other, formed the first centralized county (white) school complex. They are 100+ yards from the proposed tower site. The Hindle Building rose in 1909-10. It first held classes in September 1910. It featured one of the largest public school auditoriums in the state when it opened. In 1911, using African-American teamsters, the school started one of the only rural horse-drawn "school bus" systems in Virginia. The Amelia County Administration Building, initially known as Amelia High School, was built in 1925 to relocate the high schoolers from the elementary and lower divisions. It opened in January 1926. Its outdoor sports area, shown as "Hindle Field" on the proposal's map, was called "The Big Bottom" and was the site of baseball, outdoor basketball, and football until 1962. Today it is an active soccer field. The school added an ag and shop building—today's Clothes Cottage (also within view of the proposed tower site)—in 1939. An elementary wing was built in 1950. The World War I and World War II "War Memorial Gym" (today's Parks & Recreation Building on Dunn Street) was completed in 1955. The first African-American graduated from Amelia High School in 1965. Full integration occurred as of July 1969 when the school's name changed to Amelia County High School. The Hindle Building housed high school students again from 1968-early 1980s. For two years, 1966-68, a cafeteria added in 1965 was used by Amelia Academy, a private school, also on the school grounds off Dunn Street. It reverted to public school use in fall 1968. The tower location, next to the 100+ year old oak tree recently removed, is at the site of the original 1940-50s era cafeteria, once affectionately known as "The Slop Shop." Also within

view of the proposed tower site and near this former public school complex (south, across from its former farthest playground) on Five Forks Road is the 1881 two-room school building for white children, "The Pink Cottage," now a private residence.

Norfolk Southern Railroad (#8 on map below)

Parallel to Goode's Bridge Road (today's Business US-360), this line resides on the original bed of the Richmond and Danville Railroad, constructed in Amelia County in 1850-51 using enslaved labor. The first president of the railroad, Lewis E. Harvie, lived at Dykeland, an outlying plantation in Amelia County. He also owned and sold real estate lots across some 1,800 acres that encompassed the county seat from before and during the Civil War. It was his proposition that exchanged the old, nearby 1793 courthouse site for the current one, as the former location included his desired depot construction siting. Under his leadership, the R&DRR expanded a trunk line from Danville into North Carolina during the exigencies of the Civil War. The R&DRR was the last open rail link to the lower South from Richmond as the capital city fell to Union forces. Confederate President Jefferson Davis, his cabinet members, much of the rebel treasury, a few legislators, and the president's escort passed on the line through Amelia Court House around midnight on April 2, 1865.



See County Seat, page 8

MEET THE AUTHOR

Book signing John Harrison Meyer, author of 'Silver'



3:30 to 6:30 p.m. Thursday, July 25, 2024

James L. Hamner Public Library

16351 Dunn Street

Amelia Court House, Virginia

HamnerLibrary.org

804-561-4559

Silver is a historical novel set in Amelia County, Virginia during the last year of the Civil War and the first years of Reconstruction.

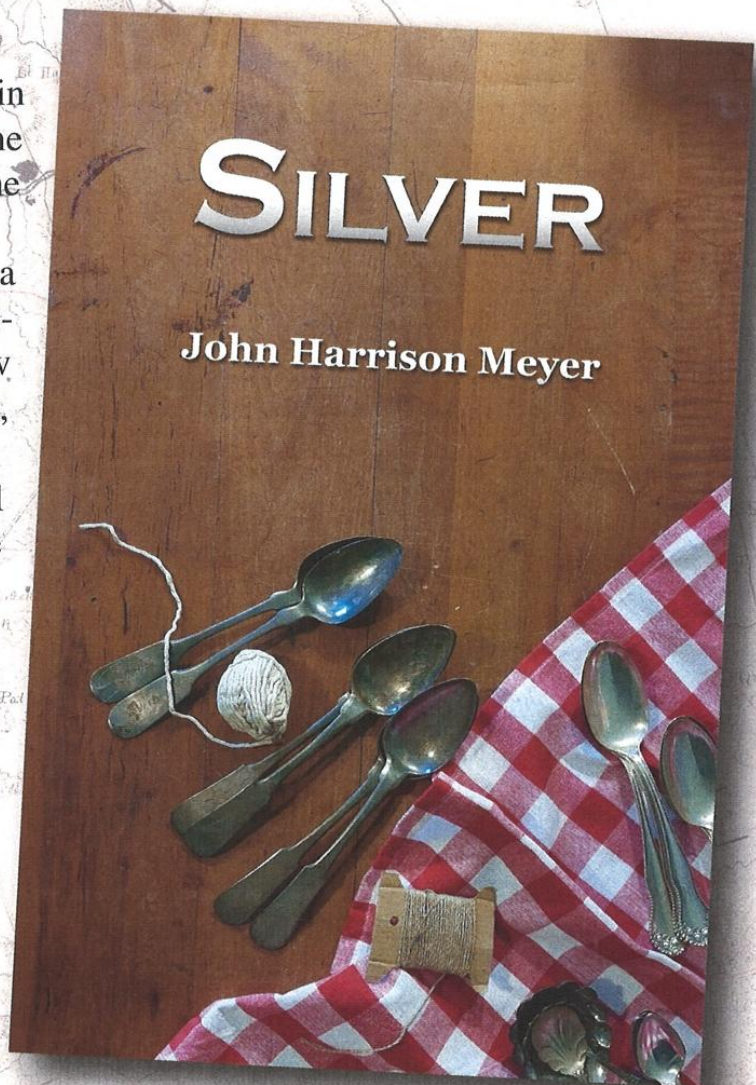
It tells the story of two teenagers: a White boy and a Black girl, who together must figure out how to grow up and find their way in the strange, challenging aftermath of slavery.

Many of the characters are actual historical figures, ranging from the infamous to the anonymous.

Silver's protagonist, young Eddy Harrison, is based on the author's grandfather; his adventures are based on his family's oral history.

Copies of *Silver* are available for sale at Amelia County Historical Society, 16501 Church Street, and online at Amazon.com.

www.CapeFearPublishers.com



Eggleston-Grub Hill Sign Unveiling

Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), June 2, 2024



1.



2.



3.



4.

Photos Above:

1. Amelia VFW Veterans Present a Wreath 2. Virginia SAR Ceremonial Grenadier 3. The SAR Color Guard Moves Forward from Grub Hill Churchyard 4. Nell & Philip Barnard Unveil the Highway Marker

Photos Below:

1. SAR Musket Detail Fires the Second Volley of a 21-Gun Salute 2. Christ Church Rector Michael Stone Delivers the Benediction 3. The Unveiled Sign on Route 609 with Virginia Society of the SAR Flags



1.



2.



3.

Marker Dedicated to Amelia-Born Black Educator

Society Vice President for Archives, Emanuel Hyde, III, in his capacity as the Director of Emanuel Productions, led a two-hour memorial event to honor the life of Amelia native and black educator Rosa Dixon Bowser, at the Amelia County Veterans Center on July 14. Virginia Department of Historic Resources marine archeologist Brendan Burke, of Amelia, spoke on behalf of his organization, which funded the marker. The service also recognized Amelia County public school teacher Hilda T. Foster. Historical Society President Michael Whitaker offered brief remarks.

Ms. Bowser was born into slavery at or near Clay Hill Plantation in 1855 and rose to prominence as Richmond's first African-American woman teacher. She founded what became the Virginia State Teachers Association and later was a president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in Virginia.

Ms. Foster was the first African-American student in Amelia County to conduct her full high school career (1965-1970) in the previously all-white Amelia High School as racial integration went forward in the South. She was a leader in the first fully integrated graduating class (Class of '70) at Amelia County High School. A 1974 graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University and a retired non-commissioned officer in the United States Marines Reserve, she has taught in public education, mostly in Amelia County, since 1976.

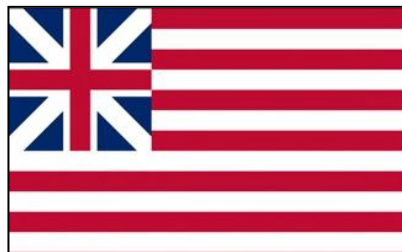
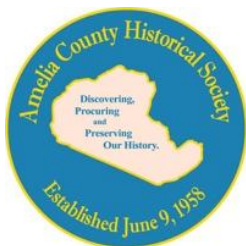
AmRev 250 Projects in the Works, Part II

As part of the Virginia American Revolution 250th Commemoration call for local histories, the Amelia AmRev250 Committee asked the Historical Society for input to the Commonwealth's mobile museum kiosks. The following two lists conclude the category summaries reported in our last spring's newsletter. Readers are invited to comment via email to ameliahistoricalociety@tds.net. Reference "Amelia AmRev250 Kiosk Submissions" in your subject line.

Famous Amelia Personages

(American Revolutionary Figures in Bold)

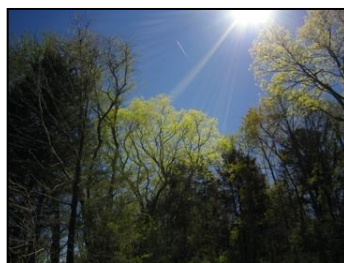
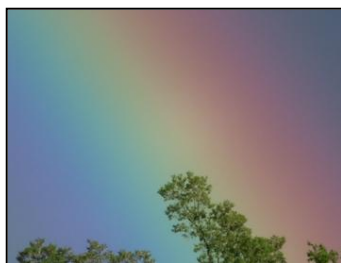
1. **Archer Family: Col W^m Archer; and Lts. John, Joseph, and Peter Archer**
2. Archer, Senator William Segar (of Virginia)
3. Barnett, Lelia Harvie
4. Booker, Thomas Hobbes & Miller, Polk
5. Bragg, Jessie
6. **Brunskill, The Reverend John**
7. Cobbs, Samuel
8. Collyer, Captain Charles
9. Couch, Sharon
10. Delaney, McDowell
11. Eggleston, George Cary
12. **Eggleston, Major Joseph**
13. Farrar, Judge Fernando Richard (Ricardo)
14. **Francisco, Peter**
15. **Giles, Governor William Branch**
16. Hardaway, Sallie Gaines
17. Harland, Marion (Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune)
18. Harvie, Lewis Edwin, Sr.
19. **Indentured & Enslaved Amelians**
20. Johnson, Herbert Clark
21. Kennedy, Montia
22. Latrobe, Benjamin Henry
23. Marshall, Colonel Robert Bradford, USA/USGS
24. **Meade, General Everard**
25. Moton, Robert Russa
26. Neil, Samantha Jane Travis
27. **Peachy, Thomas Griffin**
28. **Pride, John, Jr.**
29. Rowlett, Colonel Benjamin, USAF
30. Ruffin, Edmund
31. Southall, Congressman Robert Goode
32. **Tabb Family: Colonel Thomas, John, Mary Marshall Tabb Bolling**
33. **Tabb, Frances Cook Peyton**
34. Tabb, Father John Bannister
35. Thomas, Dr. John, and Campbell, Alexander
36. Veterans of All Wars
37. Ward, Maria (Mrs. Peyton Randolph)
38. **Walton, George**
39. Walker, Senator John William (of Alabama)
40. Walker, Pastor Jeremiah
41. Wilkinson, Captain John (CSA)
42. Wing, Toby (Martha Wing Merrill), and the Paul Wing Family
43. **Winn, John**



Projects *—from page 6*

Other Topics of Amelia History & Tourism Interest

1. Amelia County Agricultural & Forestry Heritage
2. Amelia County as a Center of Virginia Slavery
3. Bicycle Route 1
4. Dykes on Flat Creek
5. Edmund Harrison-Frankie Miles Story
6. Field Day of the Past
7. Fly-in Neighborhood
8. Lost Mills
9. Namozine Road in the Civil War
10. National Champion Sourwood Tree
11. Novel – *Silver* by John Harrison Meyers (2023)
12. Old Resorts in Amelia
13. Pre-Contact Indigenous Presence
14. Tobacco Culture in the Virginia Piedmont
15. World Famous Rocks & Minerals



AMELIA COUNTY THROUGH THE SEASONS AND THROUGH THE YEARS

County Seat *—from page 3*

After the war, the J. P. Morgan Holding Company briefly owned the railroad, along with several others in the state, to form a combine that eventually became the Southern Railway System. Jeff Davis's body, disinterred at New Orleans for reburial in Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery in 1893, moved through Amelia again on the route to his final resting place. The last regularly scheduled passenger trains ran through Amelia in 1957. The depot was torn down around 1975.

Trinity United Methodist Church (#9 on map, page 3)

At the corner of Washington and Church Streets, today's brick church rests on a site once known as "Church Hill." Its two predecessor wooden churches were built there, in the early-to-mid 1840s, and in 1860. The chapel of the current building dates to 1911, with later additions. From the formerly adjacent parsonage (now the CB&T bank site) in 1893, the church's Methodist pastor in his nightclothes tried to dissuade the

Amelia jail lynch mob from its infamous actions against Jesse Mitchell to no avail.

Virginia Street (#10 on map, page 3)

The road that is today's Virginia Street featured rebel troops leaving Amelia Court House on the evening of April 5, 1865, destined toward Rice, the High Bridge, and Farmville. The Amelia County Historical Society, on the corner of Church and Virginia Streets just north of the proposed tower site, contains the Jackson Memorial Library and Museum. It possesses numerous artifacts and documents pertaining to Amelia County history from 1685 to the present day. Its Old Log Cabin, the earliest known structure surviving in the Court House village, resides in the adjacent public park. Dating to 1810-30, it first was likely a domicile for enslaved persons. It contains historical artifacts and farm implements. The cabin housed freed blacks from around 1870 to about 1916. It briefly served as a Christian youth center (for whites) in 1923.



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