

Black History Month

Amelia's Robert Russa Moton

August 26, 1867 – May 31, 1940

Robert Russa Moton was born in Amelia County on August 26, 1867, to former slaves Booker and Emily Brown Moton on the Hillsman Plantation owned by Dr. Craddock. His parents lived on two separate plantations. However, during Robert's youth, his family moved to Pleasant Shade farm in Nottoway County where his father lived. The farm was owned by Mr. Samuel Vaughan. There, his mother Emily secretly taught Robert to read and write. While at Pleasant Shade, Robert worked in the big house as a key holder and house servant.

Leaving home, Robert moved to Surry County to work at a lumber camp with the hopes of earning money to pay his way through school. Soon afterwards, he was hired at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute where he was admitted to law school in 1885. He worked at the lumber yard by day and attended classes at night.

Moton eventually began teaching at an all-black school in Cumberland County, where he again worked as a farm laborer. In 1891, he returned to Hampton and was appointed by the school's founder, Samuel Armstrong, as commandant of the male cadet corps, where he served for 25 years. He was affectionally called "Major" by

the Hampton students, who all revered him as their leader.



In 1900, Robert was elected President of the National Negro Business League. That year, he married Elizabeth Hunt. Unfortunately, she died the following year. He later married Jennie Dee Booth. This second union produced five children. Robert also was made trustee of the Anna T. Jeanes Fund, which provided financial support for rural black schools. In 1912, Robert also saw need to found the Negro Organization Society of Virginia.

During his lifetime, Robert served under several mentors whose examples helped him eventually to become a nationally recognized leader. Chief among his teacher-advisers was the author and great pioneer of black education, Booker T. Washington, a fellow Southside Virginian. Washington served as the first principal of Alabama's Tuskegee Institute. For several years Robert toured the South with Washington to promote black education and raise funds for black institutions.

After the death of Booker T. Washington in 1915, Robert Russa Moton became the second principal of Tuskegee Institute.

See Moton, page 3

Amelia County Historical Society

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

ameliahistoricalociety@tds.net

Members: If we do not have your email address on file, please provide it to us so that you may stay quickly up-to-date on our proceedings.

We are temporarily without a website, sorry!

Facebook

Office Hours
Monday and Friday
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Sylvia Gray, Librarian

Board of Directors

Michael F. Whitaker, President
 Open, First Vice President
 The Reverend Emanuel Hyde, III, Vice President – Archives
 Lillian Atkins, Vice President – Fundraising and Membership
 M. Glen Henkle, Vice President – Property
 Michael F. Whitaker, Acting Secretary
 Ann Clarke, Treasurer
 Peyton Anderson, III
 Julia M. Dawson
 Margaret Hillsman Lam
 Debbie Orr
 Robert Smith
 Kathleen Stuart, Director *Emerita*

Newsletter

Sharon Barden Garber, Editor
sgarber410@verizon.net
Published Quarterly

Membership Dues

Individual.....\$20
 Family.....\$25

Congratulations to Our New Directors:

R. Peyton Anderson, III
Julia M. Dawson

If you are interested in serving as a Society Director, or know a person who is qualified and potentially interested in serving on the Board, please notify, or refer them to, one of our Board members or officers.



The Society expresses its sadness at the loss of its longtime member, former Treasurer, and strong supporter, Nora Louisa Wilkins Barden, who passed away on January 14, 2022. We extend our sincerest condolences to her family, including her daughter, Sharon B. Garber, editor of this newsletter.

President's Message

"Here's looking at you, kid!"

-Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca*, 1942

I thank each of you for the Society's successes last year. The Board plans an ambitious 2022 and will continue to rely on all of our members and patrons. Please persevere in your support for our work in the Amelia community, and keep the faith as we move forward in these unsettled times.

I also welcome our new Directors, Peyton Anderson and Julia Dawson, as well as our many new members. Again, such "human capital" will ably propel our actions, and we have some interesting things on our plate. Among these are plans to actively improve the structural integrity of Namozine Church. We also will need to keep sight of the accounting of any (non-governmental) funds that we have agreed to control through the Society on behalf of the Save the Hindle Building Committee. Further, the Society should remain aware of, and possibly aid, other organizations' work at historical county sites, such as Grub Hill Church or Clay Hill. Finally, as part of our central mission, we must expand, improve, and promote our archives and databases housed in the Jackson Building.

As to the latter, the Board has approved the offer by member and state archeologist Brendan Burke to donate for outdoors display a millstone from Amelia's Clementown Mill, a colonial-era structure that operated well into the last century. Brendan, who gave the excellent lecture at our December open meeting, has asked us to erect an appropriate support structure, with plaque, at the Society to inform the public about the stone that he desires to buy and repatriate to the county.

Meanwhile, another of our goals is to bring the Society's operational accounts into surplus in 2022. This will take hard work and your generosity, both in cash and kind. I have advised that we intensify our membership recruitment in the coming year, kick our fundraising activities back into high gear with at least four major events, and that we directly solicit fiscal assistance from all sources through a commitment to academic and service excellence in fulfilling our mission of "procuring, preserving, developing, and disseminating salient and multi-varied aspects of Amelia County history." The Board cannot do it alone. Thus—to wrap up this missive's theme—I beseech our readers to do their parts. Success largely will be a collaborative effort.

With that in mind, I wish each of you a prosperous new year!

-Michael F. Whitaker, President

Moton —from page 1

In 1918, President Woodrow Wilson called upon Robert to travel to Europe to investigate the conditions of blacks in the World War. Two years later, he wrote his first autobiography, *Finding a Way Out*, published in 1921.

Moton made United States history on May 30, 1922, when he delivered an address at the opening dedication of the Lincoln Memorial. Sadly, because of racial prejudice he was strongly encouraged to modify his speech. In his lifetime he received numerous threats by the Ku Klux Klan and other hate groups as he tried to provide better education for blacks in America.



Commandant R. R. Moton, c. 1914

His second book, *What the Negro Thinks*, came out in 1929. His influence was national and he became a trustee at many colleges in the United States. He retired from Tuskegee in 1935 after serving 20 years as

principal. He returned to Virginia and lived in Capahosic, Gloucester County.

Robert never forgot his family and friends in the Rice community of Amelia – Prince Edward. In *Finding a Way Out*, he mentioned visiting family and attending worship services with them at Macedonia Baptist Church. In 1939, in advanced age and nearing the end of his life, he was honored by the people of Prince Edward County when they named an African American school in his honor, Robert Russa Moton High School, later of *Brown v. Board of Education* fame.

Robert Russa Moton died on May 31, 1940, at his home in Capahosic.

Today the site is a Virginia landmark, and the old high school in Farmville is now the Robert R. Moton Museum.

-Biography by Emanuel Hyde, III

R. R. Moton's Undelivered Words at the Lincoln Memorial

President Warren G. Harding, Supreme Court Chief Justice (and former President) Howard Taft, and Robert Lincoln—the sole remaining child of the assassinated President—were the leading luminaries among whom sat Amelia's R. R. Moton at the Lincoln Memorial dedication ceremonies 100 years ago this May 30th. Moton, called by some historians an “accommodationist” in his day over race relations in America, had submitted his draft speech to Taft's oversight committee in advance and was asked to rewrite its last three pages, which he essentially cut out. His “toned down” remarks from the Memorial's huge landing came on a day when the blacks in the audience were herded to the rear by Army soldiers for the ceremonies. The manuscript of his original remarks remained largely hidden until 2009, when they appeared in *The Lincoln Anthology: Great Writers on His Legacy, 1860 to Now*, Harold Holtzer, Ed., Library of America/Literary Classics of the U.S., 2009, pp. 428-434. The below excerpts from his speech, including the excised portion, lend insight to Moton's mind, remain germane to this day, presaged subsequent American civil rights history, and call into question the “accommodationist” characterization of him:

“...But Lincoln died, not for the Negro alone, but to vindicate the honor of a nation pledged to the sacred cause of human freedom... So long as any group within our nation is denied the full protection of the law, that task is still unfinished. So long as any group within the nation is denied an equal opportunity for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, that task is still unfinished...”

“...More than sixty years ago [Lincoln] said in prophetic warning: ‘This nation cannot endure half slave and half free: it will become all one thing or all the other.’ With equal truth, it can be said today: no more can the nation endure half privileged and half repressed; half educated and half uneducated; half protected and half unprotected; half prosperous and half in poverty; half in health and half in sickness; half content and half discontent; yes half free and half yet in bondage...”

“My fellow citizens, in the great name which we honor here today, I say unto you that this memorial which we erect in token of our veneration is but a hollow mockery, a symbol of hypocrisy, unless we together can make real in our national life, in every state and in every section, the things for which he died...”

State Archeologist Discusses Work at Clay Hill

Brendan Burke, Amelia native and Underwater Archeologist with the Virginia Department of Historical Resources, discussed his recent work and findings at Clay Hill, near Lodore, with members and friends of the Amelia County Historical Society at its December 5th open meeting. Clay Hill was the ancestral home of Colonel Thomas Tabb and his descendants. The Clay Hill manor, which according to Mr. Burke was larger and more lavish than the Governor's Mansion in Williamsburg, burned down in January 1861.

In his presentation, Mr. Burke also discussed the known history and the geographic and economic importance of the nearby 18th century Amelia location known as "Tabbs," which comprised a village larger

than present day Amelia Court House. Brendan explained his use of LIDAR (laser imaging, detection, and ranging) images to uncover terrain anomalies indicative on the 1,600-acre site of previous habitation and enterprise, and how its use uncovered potentially fruitful areas for investigation. The archeologist further indicated other clues detailing the nature and history of the scant remaining above-ground artifacts, and described a few of the underground retrievals from the Clay Hill basement and nearby icehouses and brick-making sites. Brendan ended his talk with his deductions on findings at the current stage of his project, a mention of the prospects for preserving the tract's historical forests and cemeteries, and by taking questions.



Archeologist Brendan Burke

Thomas Tabb was living in the county in 1735 when it separated from Prince George County. He served variously in his life as an officer of the Virginia colonial militia, Amelia County "justice" and "high sheriff" (see also next page), and House of Burgess delegate. Significantly, in his lifetime he was perhaps the richest and most

powerful merchant in Virginia, with strong economic influence elsewhere. According to *Historical Notes on Amelia County* (1982, Amelia Historical Society), as "a member of the firm of Rumbold, Walker and Tabb (in London)," from the New World "he handled tobacco on consignment, imported slaves, helped to build and charter (bateaus and) ships, and carried on extensive trade with England." River-borne goods made their way all the way up Flat Creek and nearby Haw

Branch to the Clay Hill property from London and ports in between. Tabb ran a number of stores to the west and southwest of Amelia as the frontier continued to open to settlement.

In his talk, Mr. Burke noted that Colonel Tabb and his son, John, who replaced him in his endeavors, along with John Tabb's wives, Marianna Mayo and, later, Frances Cook Peyton Tabb, and his infant son, are buried within the walls of the family cemetery at Clay Hill. A very large African-American cemetery is nearby. With one or two prominent exceptions—of note for enslaved persons—the sites contain no tombstones.

Save the Hindle Building

Members of the *Save the Hindle Building Committee* ask that persons interested in preserving the 1910 public school structure speak or stand in its support at the Amelia County Board of Supervisors meeting on **February 16, 2022, at 7:00 P.M.**, in the Amelia County High School auditorium. The committee will ask for county help through shared capital improvement funding. The Amelia County Historical Society Board of Directors supports this effort.

“Justice” Thomas Tabb - Typical Local Duties

The genealogical source Rootsweb states that Thomas Tabb was born on February 3, 1719. If that is accurate, he was 16 years old and already living at Clay Hill when Amelia County formed from Prince George. Rootsweb also notes that on April 10, 1736, Thomas married Rebecca G. L. Booker, daughter of Edward Booker, one of Amelia County's original magistrates and at that time a county delegate to the House of Burgesses. The couple's first child, John (who in 1769 inherited his father's lands and businesses), was born in August that year. Daughter Mary Marshall Tabb, who later married Robert Bolling of Dinwiddie, "scion of another wealthy merchant family," was born a year later. The Bollings and the Tabbs were Amelia's two largest land (and slave) holders of their era. Thomas Tabb married his second wife, 17-year-old Elizabeth Mayo, in 1746. She died 13 years later.

As noted in the article on page 4, Tabb held many offices in his life. He served as a county delegate to the colonial legislature in a number of terms: 1748-49, 1752-55, 1758-61, and 1766-68. His last term began in 1769, when he died in office.

Tabb's "county justice," or justice of the peace, terms were in 1735, the year the county formed, 1737-41, 1744-47, and 1750-68. The latter period coincided with his colonial legislative service, suggesting that his county duties became intermittent. Overall, as Amelia was then still on the frontier, and governmental duties (which were mixed with established church duties) were the part time purview of mostly wealthy gentlemen, Tabb likely served as much out of the obligations of his "station" to the citizenry as to his own economic interests. Other than the High Sheriff and coroner, the justices in those days were not paid. (Tabb did serve as Amelia's High Sheriff, paid in tobacco, in 1741).

Accounts of early Virginia "county courts" suggest that, in addition to judicial oversight of petty cases, these local administrative bodies were somewhat analogous to today's boards of supervisors, via their powers to formulate local "by-laws." Yes, the courts could levy "securities for good behavior" (bonds) from "persons not of good fame." However, as the justices also were tied to parish vestries, and could enforce actions through their

sheriffs and constables, they further exercised what would be termed today as executive powers. In general, "the county court was the principal and almost sole administrative power in the county."

Thus, Tabb and Amelia's early justices supervised a surprising range of responsibilities. These included, among other things, control over the (minimal) county roads, bridges, road signs, and ferries (such as at Bevil's crossing on the Appomattox); oversight of the placement, construction, and maintenance of tobacco storage sites and warehouses; the provision of other county structures, such as jails and clerks' offices; the assessment and collection of annual "tithable" church payments, as well as property taxes, from freeholders and planters; and local oversight of formal weights and measures, including for the posting of excise stamps on tobacco hogsheads and barrels.

Farther afield from today's local regulatory norms, the county justices also "punished those who did not plant sufficient corn for their own and their family's support," supervised the poor house, gave relief to orphans, issued licenses for "ordinaries (or taverns), as well as "hawkers, peddlers, merchants and builders," "sold or rented land held for the benefit of the poor," set up sites to quarantine victims of smallpox and other epidemics, and hired animal and agricultural inspectors, surveyors, and road maintenance persons and crews. These last included plantation owners, with their slaves, who lived adjacent to the main thoroughfares, i.e., the Richmond, Pridesville, and Namozine Roads.

Finally, the county court also executed legal requirements that today are the purview of the Clerk of the Court and her staffs. The justices exercised "comprehensive powers" in the "proof of" (probating) wills, the appointment of "estate administrators, executors, and guardians, the naming of curators and other fiduciaries," and the supervision of estate accounting and transactions. By the late eighteenth century, and before the advent of circuit courts, the county bodies expanded from petty trial cases to trials by jury and the convening of grand juries for major offenses.

Recognition – 2021

Our Sincere Thanks to Our Last Year's Donors & Volunteers

Anonymous	Christine Anderson	Peyton Anderson, III
Frank Archer	Karen Arrington	Lillian Atkins
The Beach Ladies	Gary Bennett	Brendan Burke
Linda G. Claiborne	Ann Clarke	Hilda O. Clarke
Pearl F. Clifton	Carole-Lynn Daniel	Julia M. Dawson
Greg Eanes	Peggy Figlar	Sharon Garber
Sylvia Gray	Sharon Green	Jeanette Hamner
A. Taylor Harvie, III	Carol Haynes	M. Glen Henkel
Emanuel Hyde III	Mary Ann Jones	Margaret H. Lam
Carolyn Lewis	Danny Lindsey	Sarah McMillion
Gail Moore	Kevin Naylor	Betty Jo Simmons
Robert & Diane Smith	Dawn Smith	Frances Tabias
Holly Steele	Kathy Stuart	Valentine W. Southall, Jr.
Joyce Svendson	Ben Sydnor	Estate of Helen Cody Wright
Terry & Hunter Trice	Michael F. Whitaker	
Robin Gary	Debbie & Wayne Orr & Jack	

And a bid for forgiveness for anyone inadvertently left off this list.



Amelia County Historical Society
16501 Court Street
Post Office Box 113
Amelia Court House, VA 23002