



# Farmville - Prince Edward Historical Society

P.O. Box 546

Farmville, Virginia 23901

June, 2008



<http://www.historynet.com/burning-high-bridge-the-souths-last-hope.htm>

## History of High Bridge

Slide Show By  
Jo D. Smith

Tuesday, June 17, 2008  
7:00 p.m.  
Farmville Train Station

*History of High Bridge*  
will be available for signing

Guests Always Welcomed

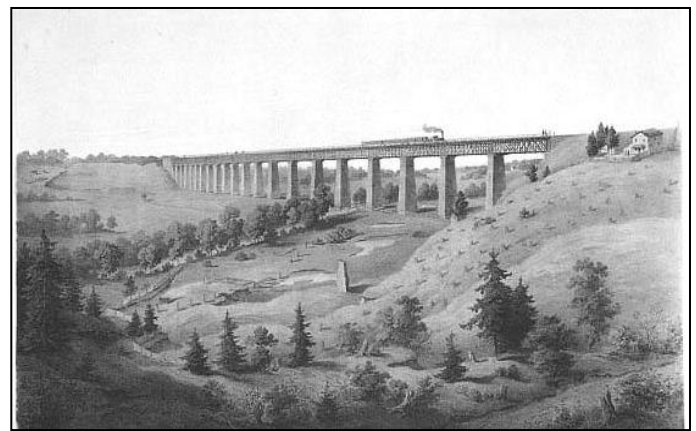
Board Meets at 6:00 p.m.

### History of High Bridge at a glance

In the 1850's, the South Side Railroad laid track between Petersburg and Lynchburg and built a line through Farmville between Burkeville and Pamplin City. This route, which was subsidized by a contribution from Farmville, required an expensive crossing of the Appomattox River valley and flood plain slightly downstream from Farmville. This crossing became known as the High Bridge. The bridge's twenty piers contained almost four million bricks, and supported a wooden superstructure. It was believed to be the longest in the world when completed in 1852. The South Side Railroad itself was completed in 1854.

High Bridge played a key role during Confederate General Robert E. Lee's final retreat from Petersburg in the last days of the Civil War. The Battle of High Bridge took place there on April 6-7, 1865. Fleeing from the Union troops, the Confederates set fire to the bridge after crossing it, but failed to destroy it. Union troops were able to continue the chase, which ended at nearby Appomattox Courthouse.

After the Civil War, under the leadership of William "Billy" Mahone, the South Side Railroad was rebuilt, and combined with the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad and the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad to form the Atlantic, Mississippi and Ohio Railroad (AM&O), which stretched 400 miles across the southern tier of Virginia. After the Financial Panic of 1873, the AM&O was purchased in the early 1880's by



new owners who renamed it the Norfolk and Western (N&W). In 1982, it became part of the current Norfolk Southern Railway system.

Partially due to the high cost of maintaining the High Bridge over the Appomattox River valley, the Norfolk Southern railroad line through Farmville was downgraded and eventually abandoned, in favor of the "low-grade line" between Burkeville and Pamplin. The low-grade line, completed in 1916, contained more favorable grades for westbound trains. The South Side Railroad had originally envisioned using the low-grade route until persuaded by the citizens of Farmville to bring the line through their town.

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### J. Eric Houglund, Park Manager of High Bridge Trail State Park will speak on July 15

High Bridge Trail State Park will connect Pamplin to Burkeville and run through Prospect, Farmville and Rice, each of which has unique history and assets. The property is in the process of undergoing a rail-to-trail conversion. The trail will be opened for a number of non-motorized activities – hiking, bicycling and horseback riding – with High Bridge being the focal point.

## **This Day in June in Prince Edward County History**

- 6-1-2001** Telephone Area Code changes from 804 to 434
- 6-2-1959** Board of Supervisors announces its intention to cease funding of public school system in Prince Edward until further notice
- 6-4-1894** Hampden-Sydney College trustees vote unanimously to oppose "by any legal and moral means" Union Seminary's possible move elsewhere
- 6-5-1788** Prince Edward delegate to Virginia Convention, Patrick Henry, argues against ratifying U.S. Constitution due to centralized power and no bill of rights
- 6-5-1905** Crosses of Honor presented to many Farmville Confederates
- 6-5-1836** Dr. Peter Winston, Surgeon Confederate Hospital, mayor, delegate, born
- 6-6-1749** License issued for Anderson's Ordinary in Worsham area as condition for establishing the new Prince Edward County court there
- 6-6-1907** Charles Bugg, grocer and postmaster, died
- 6-6-1923** Farmville Lions Club chartered
- 6-6-1944** Farmville veterans participate in Normandy invasion (D-Day).
- 6-7-1905** Gov. Montague addressed the graduating class of the Normal School.
- 6-7-1905** Narrow-gauge Farmville and Powhatan Railroad sold and renamed Tidewater and Western, but nicknamed "Tired and Weary"
- 6-8-1791** George Washington crossed the Appomattox River at Rutledge's bridge near end of Bridge Street and spent night in Prince Edward Court House village
- 6-9-1761** Petition sent to Cumberland Court to allow a bridge into Prince Edward
- 6-9-1798** John Woodson surveys the town's first lots
- 6-9-1924** Work starts on Hotel Weyanoke
- 6-10-1926** Confederate Veteran State Convention in Farmville
- 6-10-1943** Cannery opened in the basement of Farmville High School
- 6-11-1926** Confederate veterans go to Appomattox Court House
- 6-12-1926** S. W. Paulett elected State Commander at UCV Convention
- 6-12-1820** R. S. Paulett, Farmville tobacconist, born
- 6-12-1861** The Randolph Guard mustered into service
- 6-12-1934** Council requests a state liquor store be opened in Farmville
- 6-12-1943** Farmville's Lt. Robert L. Gilbert shoots down three Japanese planes during Solomon Islands campaign
- 6-13-1854** Hampden-Sydney trustees reluctantly acquiesce to actions of Virginia General Assembly assuming governance of the college's Medical Department (now MCV)
- 6-15-1898** Spreading rails causes wreck on Farmville & Powhatan Railroad
- 6-17-1903** Farmville Guard ordered to Richmond to quell labor riots
- 6-17-1942** First darkness to dawn blackout. Air raid preparation
- 6-19-1775** Prince Edward committeemen pass resolutions condemning action of Royal Governor Dunmore in moving gunpowder from Williamsburg
- 6-19-1916** Farmville Guard receive orders to prepare for duty in Mexico
- 6-19-1922** Farmville Creamery began operations
- 6-21-1972** Hurricane Agnes brings Farmville's worst flood.
- 6-22-1914** Rail traffic diverted to the new steel High Bridge which replace the wooden one
- 6-22-1916** Farmville Guard ordered to military duty along U.S.-Mexican border
- 6-23-1918** Robert B. Berkeley, Dr., lawyer, newspaper editor, died
- 6-24-1906** The last services were held in the Methodist Church before the old structure was torn down
- 6-26-1796** Benjamin H. Latrobe arrives at Bizarre
- 6-26-1909** Dr. James L. White, founder White Drug Company, died
- 6-26-1908** Socialist J. L. Fitts, addressed local farmers
- 6-26-1918** Birth of noted Prince Edward entrepreneur-philanthropist J. B. Fuqua
- 6-28-1783** County's eight-year-old Hampden-Sydney College finally officially chartered by Virginia General Assembly
- 6-28-1929** E. H. Irby scores Farmville Golf Club's first hole-in-one
- 6-29-1897** Daughters of the Confederacy gave basket picnic at Lithia Springs.

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### **Change in program date and time for Sunday, August 17, 2:30 p.m.**

Gerald T. Gilliam, long-time editor of *The SouthSider: Local History and Genealogy of Southside Virginia*, will present a slide show featuring his private photo collection of old homes of Prince Edward County. Here is a chance to see and learn about some of the homes that have disappeared from our countryside in the last half century. Be sure to note the date and time change for the August meeting--Sunday, August 17, at 2:30 p.m. in the Farmville Train Station.