



Farmville - Prince Edward Historical Society

P.O. Box 546

Farmville, Virginia 23901

October, 2009



John A. Robertson and Debra White Beasley unveiled the Israel Hill marker at Layne and West Third Street.

Free Blacks of Israel Hill, Virginia Historical Highway Marker I 14-a, unveiled

The low, gray rain clouds of early Sunday morning cleared away to reveal a high, bright blue fall sky over those attending the unveiling of the Virginia historical highway marker at the foot of Israel Hill in Farmville. A year ago the seeds were planted at a Farmville-Prince Edward Historical Society board meeting for the erection of a marker commemorating the citizens and location of Israel Hill. Within weeks, forms were being submitted to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Jo D. Smith, representing the historical society, went before the Farmville Town Council and the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors seeking their equal financial partnership with the society in the recognition of Israel Hill. On Sunday, September 27, the Virginia Highway Historical Marker I 14-a Free Blacks of Israel Hill, which bloomed from those seeds, was unveiled.

Israel Hill was settled in 1810-1811 by approximately 90 freed blacks who had received their freedom and 350 acres of land from Judith Randolph, the widow of Richard Randolph who had so directed this emancipation in his will. The Randolphs of Cumberland County owned Bizarre plantation from which Israel Hill and the town of Farmville grew.

Dr. Melvin P. Ely, author of *Israel on the Appomattox* and speaker for the unveiling, said that Israel Hill is remarkable for three reasons. First, this community was the promised land, given to these former slaves by a wealthy planter who believed that slavery was a monstrous tyranny and by freeing these people and giving them a home and a place to make a living he was making remunerations for the sins of slavery. Secondly, these people became successful citizens who were the major bateaux men of the Appomattox River, who dealt in real estate, who entered into business contracts with whites and other blacks, who brought suits in court, and who married and lived with their white neighbors. Thirdly, all of this success was against the background of an unfair society that by law did not allow these freed people to be counted as citizens, to enjoy the freedoms guaranteed to them as citizens, but that required them to carry identification papers to prove their freedom.

Hercules White, one of the prominent citizens of Israel Hill, joined with white citizens of Farmville to help found the town's first Baptist church in 1836. Debra White Beasley and John A. Robertson, descendants of White, pulled the cords to unveil the marker in honor of those who lived on Israel Hill and worked with the people of Farmville, of Prince Edward County, and of the surrounding counties.

Other speakers at the ceremony were The Reverend James P. Ashton, pastor of First Baptist Church of Farmville and The Reverend Michael Cheuk, pastor of Farmville Baptist Church. Both churches grew from the first Baptist church that White and others had founded.

Farmville Vice Mayor A. D. "Chuckie" Reid and Wade Barlett, Prince Edward County administrator, spoke to the significance of the erection of the marker to enrich present and future generations to the cultural diversity of our population and history.

Following the unveiling, the Farmville-Prince Edward Historical Society hosted a reception at the Farmville Train Station.

Send Me a Pair of Old Boots and Kiss My Little Girls

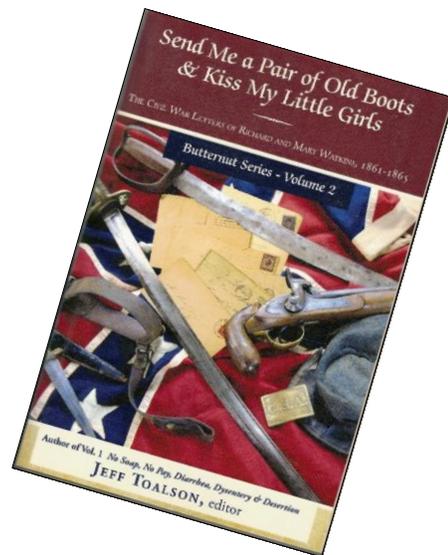
Civil War letters of Prince Edward County residents
Richard and Mary Watkins

presentation by
Jeff Toalson

**Tuesday, October 20, 2009
7:00 p.m.**

**PE Co Agricultural Center
Hwy 15 South to 100 Dominion Drive
Farmville, VA**

Board meets at 6:00 p.m.



This Day in October in Prince Edward County History

- 10-1-1928** President Eggleston restores spelling "Sydney" in college's name to match 1783 Charter
- 10-2-1892** Colored Baptist Church dedicated
- 10-3-1933** County citizens vote in favor (461 - 436) of retaining Prohibition
- 10-4-1798** First sale of lots in newly surveyed town of Farmville; purchasers agreed to build within 7 years
- 10-8-1890** John O. Collins, local inventor, receives gold medal from Paris World's Fair for his railroad car coupler
- 10-9-1898** Dr. John Atkinson Cunningham, second president of the State Female Normal school, dies in Farmville
- 10-10-1910** Buck Fuqua, black restaurateur, died
- 10-11-1900** Confederate Monument unveiled, honoring county's eight military companies
- 10-11-1918** Farmville native, Wiltshire C. Davis, 116th Infantry, receives distinguished Service Cross and the Croix de Guerre for bravery in battle exhibited near Verdun.
- 10-11-1979** Pepsi Cola commercial filmed at the Farmville train station.
- 10-12-1909** Remains of Gov. Beverly Randolph re-interred at West View cemetery
- 10-15-1902** O. T. Wicker, postmaster, mayor, councilman, died
- 10-15-1954** Hurricane Hazel comes through Farmville
- 10-15-1909** Andrew Reid Venable, Inspector General for J.E.B. Stuart, commission merchant, died
- 10-16-1859** John Brown's Harper's Ferry raid produces many enlistments for Prince Edward militia
- 10-19-1781** British surrender at Yorktown assures free county government
- 10-20-1871** Cornerstone laid for Prince Edward Courthouse in Farmville
- 10-20-1884** State Female Normal School opened with 110 students
- 10-20-1925** Hotel Weyanoke opens
- 10-21-1948** Farmville Sesquicentennial celebrated
- 10-21-1998** Farmville epicenter for an earthquake 1:57 a.m., 3.3 Richter scale
- 10-23-1897** Kappa Delta Sorority organized at the Normal School
- 10-24-1845** S.W. Paulette, Farmville's "old Reb," born
- 10-24-1946** Dabney S. Lancaster inaugurated president of State Teachers College
- 10-27-1859** Hampden-Sydney alumnus and future Confederate Brig. Gen. Roger Proyer is elected U.S. Congressman from this district
- 10-27-1901** Fire destroyed the dog pound of Farmville
- 10-29-1907** Several citizens witnessed the falling of a dazzling meteor