



Farmville - Prince Edward Historical Society

P.O. Box 546

Farmville, Virginia 23901

February, 2011

Show & Tell

Bring something to share

Tuesday, February 15, 2011

7:00 p.m.

Farmville Train Station

Board meets at 6:00 p.m.



Cast-iron toy train

Middle or Farmville Warehouse makes way for a municipal parking lot and farmers' market

The end of January, 2011, saw another end to an era in Farmville-Prince Edward County history as the Town of Farmville began the demolition of the Middle or Farmville Warehouse, long a destination for tobacco farmers from the area and buyers from across the country and the world.

The present Middle or Farmville Warehouse was built by Jim Nat Carter in 1924. An earlier Farmville Warehouse had been built in 1818 on lands then owned by William Venable, Edward Redford, Nathaniel Venable, and Thomas Morton.

Old timers may remember the layout of the warehouse. After waiting for hours parked along the edges of North, Mill, and Third streets, farmers would move their vehicles loaded with tobacco bundles in through the doors next to the present Presbyterian parking lot. Warehouse workers would bring tobacco floor carts and baskets to the farmer. With loving care the farmer would pick up several well pressed bundles in both hands and give them to the workers. Usually two men would pack the basket, layer by layer, changing directions of the bundle heads with each layer.

These workers often "lived" at the warehouse during the busiest times of the season, sleeping in the bunkrooms.



Back in the day, farmers could keep their horses and mules in the adjoining stalls while they were in town for the sale. Mules were even sold from a lot next to these stalls.

At one time all three town warehouses (Old or Randolph, Middle, and Planters) had sales on the same day. The warehouses would alternate the order of the sale each day. Many farmers wanted to use the warehouse with the first sale of the day thinking that they could get the best prices before the buyers had filled their daily orders.

Some of the buyers on the floor were from Dunnington, Beech-Nut, Stalling, Export, and Imperial. They would gather in the warehouse office before the sale and swap stories while the farmers and workers were out on the cold warehouse floor uncovering the rows of baskets of tobacco. Federal tobacco inspectors would examine each basket of tobacco and place a government supported grade on each one.

When the sale began, the warehouse man, Jim Nat Carter (in photo at right end of Agrico sign) and later his son Charles Carter, would lead the auctioneer and the line of buyers up each row of the brown leaf.

"60, 60, 62, 63, 64.50, 65, 70. Sold to Dunnington," was a familiar cry across the floor as the interested farmers followed the buyers.

Once the loads had been sold, the farmers and often their wives would gather in the office waiting room to raise yet another crop in their conversations while they waited for the processing of the floor papers and the writing of the checks. A bench lined the wall along North street and other straight back chairs were scattered about the room.

It never failed that sale days were the coldest of the month. Folks stood close to the pot-bellied coal stove as they warmed first one side and then the other and finally backed away gradually.

In those days, reporters from *The Farmville Herald* would be on the floor to get a picture of the sale and the names of the highest sellers. WFLO would carry the market report on their noon news. Leggetts Department Store would send J.B. Morris to the floor to give away wool socks to the farmers.



The auctioneer's cry fell silent in 1974 when the three downtown Farmville warehouses closed and consolidated into the New Randolph Tobacco Warehouse. The infamous tobacco buyout of 2004 put an end to tobacco allotments and federally-supported auction sales of tobacco and foretold the end of an era in southside Virginia and the American tobacco industry.

According to *The Farmville Herald*, the design of the new farmers' market will incorporate the warehouse sign, which was taken down piece by piece during the first week of February.

This Day in February in Prince Edward County History

- 2-1-1775** At Slate Hill plantation Hanover Presbytery plans "an Academy in Prince Edward," soon named Hampden-Sydney
- 2-1-1806** Virginia General Assembly appointed commissioners to survey a canal from the Buffalo River to the Roanoke River
- 2-2-1775** Presbytery accepts Peter Johnston's offer of 100 acres of land for the new college, Hampden-Sydney
- 2-2-1924** Tobacco prizery owned by W.P. Gilliam burned
- 2-3-1775** Presbytery appoints Samuel Stanhope Smith rector of the new college, Hampden-Sydney
- 2-3-1803** Gen. Joseph Eggleston Johnston (USA and CSA) born at Longwood plantation
- 2-3-1942** Company G mobilized for service in World War II
- 2-4-1861** John T. Thornton elected county representative to state secession convention
- 2-7-1797** Gov. Beverly Randolph died
- 2-7-1870** Charles Edward Burrell, county historian, born
- 2-8-1825** Virginia General Assembly incorporates Junction Canal Company to build a canal from the Buffalo to the Roanoke River
- 2-8-1845** Virginia General Assembly creates Appomattox County from parts of Prince Edward and three other counties
- 2-8-1944** Charles Edward Burrell, county historian, died
- 2-9-1762** First court record of a passable bridge at Rutledge's Ford--later the site of Farmville
- 2-9-1892** George Richardson appointed postmaster
- 2-10-1918** H.E. Barrow, former mayor, died
- 2-11-1824** Birth of W. H. Ruffner, first president of Farmville State Normal School
- 2-11-1994** State Theater collapses
- 2-12-1871** Decision made to move county seat from Worsham to Farmville
- 2-12-1872** County seat moves from Worsham to Farmville
- 2-13-1786** Patrick Henry refuses membership in U.S. Constitutional Convention
- 2-13-1901** Legislature passes act establishing the Farmville Dispensary
- 2-15-1907** Farmville had Virginia's last execution by hanging before electrocution adopted. Jesse Ruffin and Massey Hill were the condemned
- 2-16-1781** Prince Edward militiamen leave old court house to reinforce Gen. Greene at Dan River
- 2-19-1945** Farmville livestock market conducts first sale
- 2-23-1934** Prince Edward Mills commences operation on site of earlier mill
- 2-25-1952** Oliver Hill argues NAACP's Prince Edward case before U.S. District Court
- 2-26-1900** Farmville Town Council votes against licensing the private sales of intoxicants; all sales to be through an officially sanctioned Dispensary Board
- 2-27-1833** Virginia General Assembly incorporates Farmville as a town
- 2-27-1942** Parking meters came to Main Street
- 2-28-1820** Birth of W. W. H. Thackston, Farmville mayor and dentist, who founded the Virginia Dental Association