



## Farmville - Prince Edward Historical Society

P.O. Box 546  
Farmville, Virginia 23901

April, 2011

### Prince Edward County, 1830-1870 Slavery, War, Abolition

Presenter

**The Rev. Dr. William Thompson**

**Tuesday, April 19, 2011  
7:00 p.m.**

**Farmville Train Station**

**Board meets at 6:00 p.m.**

### “The Worst Kind of Slavery”

Were you aware that Briery Presbyterian Church, as well as some others in Prince Edward County, owned slaves and auctioned out their services? The Rev. Dr. William Thompson will shed light on this controversial topic at our April meeting.

Jennifer Oast published the article “The Worst Kind of Slavery”: Slave-Owning Presbyterian Churches in Prince Edward County, Virginia” in *The Journal of Southern History* in November, 2010. Thompson has done further research on the topic and will add to Oast’s observations.

His presentation will cover several points. 1) In 1831, the Virginia legislature almost voted to make slavery illegal in Virginia. 2) Prince Edward County had a chapter of the American Colonization Society that existed for the purpose

to free slaves and send them back to Liberia in Africa. 3) The Cumberland Presbyterian pastor/College Church pastor tried very hard to set an example for his church members by freeing his slaves and sending them back to Africa. 4) College Church was still scandalously drawing from a special slave rental fund even up to ten years after slavery itself was illegal.

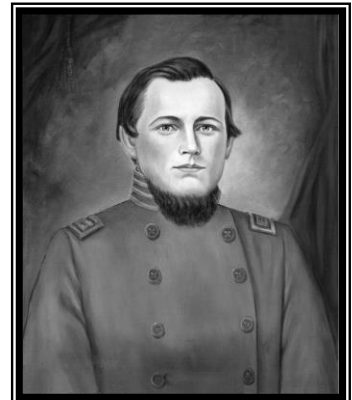
The Rev. Dr. Thompson is doing this program “in the traditional ‘Confederate Remembrance Month’ because our Virginia Governor forgot to mention slavery as a factor in the war when he commemorated ‘Confederate Month’ in April of 2010.”

\*\*\*\*\*

### Portrait of James Moses Overton Hillsman at Hillsman House

The Hillsman Family Heritage recently donated a portrait of James Moses Overton Hillsman to the Hillsman House to hang over the mantel for visitors to view. The original is owned by Robert H. Coulter, III, who graciously allowed us to use it in this society newsletter.

“If he could speak to us today, James Moses Overton Hillsman might describe his life as follows: ‘I was born 15 October 1835 at “Glenwood Estate,” near Deatonville, Amelia County, and married Lucy Jane Blanton 5 October 1858. Although I never received a degree, I studied medicine at Emory and Henry and Roanoke colleges and later read all the medical books belonging to my brother, Dr. John Albert Hillsman. The 1860 census counted me and Lucy, ages 24 and 19, with four-month-old Richard. I was then a farmer with personal property, mostly slaves, worth \$5,900. We had another on the way when Virginia succeeded from the Union. Two weeks later I enlisted in the Confederate Army, serving under “Stonewall” Jackson. Although wounded 3 times, I never left the field. A captain when they captured me at Spotsylvania and confined to the end of the war, I was among The Immortal 600, Confederate prisoners of war intentionally starved and brutalized by the Federal government. Discharged from prison 20 June 1865, I returned home to serve as a “practical doctor,” ministering to our neighbors. I cared for people who were too poor to pay for traditional medical help and delivered babies until I retired at age 75. Our cook, Emily Brown, married Mr. Moton, one of John Crowder’s former slaves, in our home in 1866. Since Moton worked for Samuel W. Vaughan, their son Robert Russa Moton grew up in his household in Prince Edward County. I was still living in 1915 when Robert succeeded Booker T. Washington at Tuskegee Institute. Lucy died 17 May 1917, and I, a year later, on 20 November 1918 at “Rocky Hill Farm.” Our bodies rest today in the Bethel Methodist Church Cemetery. ”



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

- 4-2-1905** The first black Baptist Church freed itself of indebtedness
- 4-3-1944** Gov. Darden attends banquet honoring the local company of Virginia State Guard
- 4-4-1902** "The Gladiator" opens at the Opera House
- 4-6-1865** Confederate forces are defeated in several battles along Saylor's Creek
- 4-6-1865** Gen. Robert E. Lee spends the night at Farmville's Randolph House hotel
- 4-7-1865** High Bridge partially burned; skirmish at Worsham; Federals occupy Hampden-Sydney; battles at Cumberland Church and Plank Road, Farmville occupied
- 4-7-1865** Gen. U. S. Grant, staying at Randolph House hotel, sends a note to Lee encouraging surrender
- 4-8-1865** U.S. Army segments consolidate at Prospect depot en route to Appomattox Court House
- 4-8-1896** Odd Fellows Lodge organized
- 4-9-1865** Army of Northern Virginia surrenders to Gen. Grant at Appomattox Court House
- 4-10-1865** Gen. Grant spends night near Prospect United Methodist Church
- 4-10-1922** First motorized fire truck acquired
- 4-12-1861** Regional Congressman Roger Pryor helps to open fire on Fort Sumter
- 4-12-1892** Farmville Populist Party organized
- 4-12-1917** Farmville Guard dispatched to St. Paul, Virginia, to guard bridges and tunnels
- 4-13-1803** Initial meeting of board of Buffalo Circulating Library
- 4-13-1920** Mrs. Martha E. Forrester holds first meeting of her Council of Negro Women
- 4-14-1938** Asa Dickinson Watkins, sheriff, judge, commonwealth attorney, died
- 4-14-1974** Coronary Intensive Care Unit opens at Southside Community Hospital
- 4-15-1895** Thornton-Pickett Camp of United Confederate Veterans organized
- 4-15-1933** Roy Clark born nearby in Meherrin
- 4-15-1987** Farmville-Prince Edward Community Library opens; formed by merger of Reading Room and Public Library
- 4-16-1865** Memorial service for President Lincoln is held in Farmville Presbyterian Church
- 4-17-1924** B. M. Cox, sheriff, postmaster, Normal School business manager, died
- 4-21-1861** County representative J. T. Thornton votes for Virginia secession (vote: 88-55)
- 4-21-1936** Farmville High School burns
- 4-22-1866** Henry Watkins Allen dies in exile in Mexico City
- 4-22-1892** Birth of civil rights leader, Dr. Vernon Johns, near Darlington Heights
- 4-22-1901** Constitutionality of the Dispensary argued before Judge George Hundley
- 4-23-1919** Carter Glass trophy train came to Farmville displaying captured World War I weapons and material
- 4-23-1951** 450 Moton High School students stage strike, protesting inadequate facilities
- 4-24-2001** The Rotunda and Ruffner East and West destroyed by fire; Grainger Hall destroyed beyond repair
- 4-25-1946** Thomas Hardy Graham VFW Post organized.
- 4-25-1953** Robert Morris Chapter Order of the Eastern Star initiated
- 4-26-1924** Taylor Manufacturing Company located end of Buffalo Street burned
- 4-27-1905** Lodge No. 200 Odd Fellows organized here
- 4-27-1951** Farmville Herald dismisses Moton student strike as a "lack of discipline"
- 4-29-1820** Henry Watkins Allen, Brigadier General, CSA, and governor of Louisiana born near Farmville
- 4-29-1895** Philanthropist Lewis Ginter offers Richmond site for relocating Union Seminary
- 4-29-1901** All saloons in Farmville closed by liquor Dispensary law
- 4-29-1903** Farmville N&W Passenger Station opened
- 4-29-1916** Farmville Dispensary closes
- 4-30-1904** Colonel Richard A. Booker, Captain of Farmville Guard, tobacconist and proprietor of Randolph House, died

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Programs set for May, June, and July**

Be sure to mark your calendar for May 17, to hear author Ruth Doumlele speak about her recent book *The Randolph Women and Their Men*. A book sale and signing will follow her presentation.

On June 21, Linda Lipscomb, future director of the Museum of the Confederacy in Appomattox, will speak about the progress on the museum and period events related to Prince Edward County.

Bob Gillette will speak on July 19 about Hyde Farm, a World War II Jewish refuge camp just south of Burkeville. He will have his new book *The Virginia Plan: William B. Thalhimer and a Rescue from Nazi Germany* available for sale and signing.