

# The Time Keeper

Essex County Museum & Historical Society Newsletter

December 2015

## Mysterious Tappahannock Bible comes to Museum

In April of this year, a large 1865 Bible, bound in tooled leather and believed to have belonged to the Rev. John Peyton McGuire, was given to the Museum and Historical Society by Mr. and Mrs. McGuire Boyd of Richmond. Mr. Boyd is a descendant of the Rev. McGuire, who founded St. John's Episcopal Church, Tappahannock.

This rector came to be known as the "Apostle of the Rappahannock" for his twenty-six years of service to the Episcopal churches of Essex County, breathing new life into them after their post-Revolutionary decline.

However, a mystery began to unfold when the signature in the front of Bible was examined closely. The first initial was clearly a "J" but the second was definitely not a "P". It looked like an "N" and the notation following it: "July 15, 1878, Tappahannock" did not add up, since Rev. John Peyton McGuire died in 1869.

Census records for Essex were searched to determine if other McGuires who fit the signature may have been living here in the 1870s, but no matches were found. Could the the middle initial that looked like an "N" be a "W" instead? Meanwhile we learned from an essay that Rev. McGuire's wife Judith signed "J. W. McGuire", referring to her middle name, White, not her maiden name Brockenbrough. From the Virginia Historical Society we ordered a copy of a letter written by Mrs. McGuire. The handwriting was a match and the letter was signed "Cousin J.W. McGuire".

Things began to fall into place when we learned that Mrs. McGuire remained in Tappahannock after the death of her husband. Homeless and destitute after the Civil

War, the couple came to live here in the home of her aunt, Frances Blake Brockenbrough. Rev. McGuire opened a school in the Brockenbrough House which is now on the campus of St. Margaret's School. From this house in 1867, Judith McGuire published anonymously her *Dairy of A Southern Refugee during the War, by a Lady of Virginia* which became a best seller in the South and has gone through many editions over the

years. In later years she resided with her stepson, John Peyton McGuire, Jr. in Richmond where she died in 1897.

Her Bible apparently was well used by Mrs. McGuire. The front and back covers and several pages were detached and the leather on the spine badly deteriorated. With funding provided by the Boyds, the

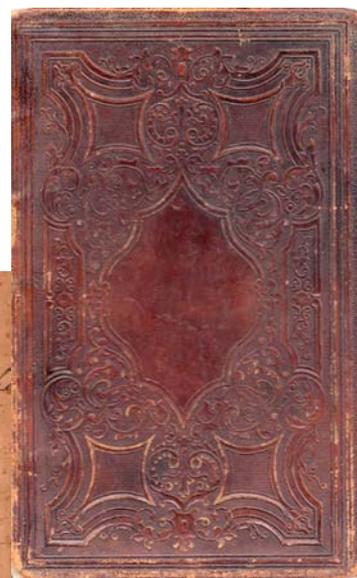
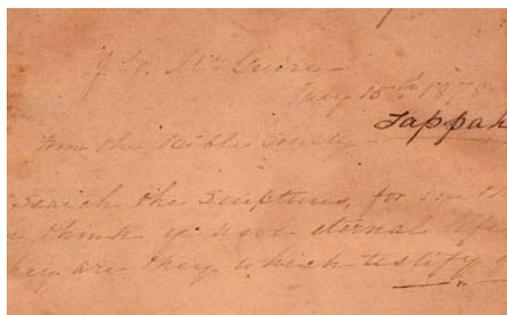
Bible is currently being restored by book conservator, Michael Pyron of Richmond, and the work is scheduled to be completed in December. We are excited for the opportunity to preserve and share an artifact that recalls this extraordinary Virginia Lady with deep Essex connections whose *Diary* has been called "one of the most valuable contributions to the history of life in Virginia during the Civil War which has ever been written."

David Jett, Curator



Judith White Brockenbrough McGuire

Mrs. McGuire's signature on the Bible's fly leaf, shown below, identified her as the owner



The beautifully embossed leather cover of the McGuire Bible

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The Essex County Museum and Historical Society gratefully acknowledges this generous gift of Mr. & Mrs. McGuire Boyd. We thank the Virginia Historical Society for the photograph of Judith White Brockenbrough McGuire and for their assistance in verifying her signature. We also thank book conservator, Michael Pyron, for providing the images of the Bible's cover and signature page.

## Docents are Who We Are



### ECMHS Current Docents

Front row left to right: Carole Croxton, Suzi Maggard, Betty Jo Butler, Priscilla Vaughan, Penny Geiger, Diane Sisson, Patricia Haile.  
 Second row left to right: Howard Reisinger, Patti Rowley, Anita Harrower, Helen Ware, Joan Moore, Ron Geiger, Barbara Sethmann, Jane Schreiber.  
 Back row left to right: Bill Croxton, Tommy Blackwell, Van VanArsdale, C. Norman Wood, Gordon Harrower, Carl Strock, Rick Stott, Joe Johnston, Fred Woodard, Peyton Guest, Luther Derby. Not pictured: Sally Acree, Emily Brazell, Sarah Croxton, Jessica Davis, Elizabeth Ellis, Keren Ellis, Hilda Fletcher, Barbara and John Frazier, Bill and Lorraine Jester, Linda Lumpkin, Barry Robertson, Lewis Shephard, Cora Sue Spruill, Sandy Tate, Cacky Taylor, Lois Vaughan, JoAnn Ware, and Kia Ware.

Since 2010, our docents have greeted more than 5,000 visitors.

Where do all those visitors come from? Surprisingly, only 1 out of 4 are from Essex County. About half of the visitors came from elsewhere in Virginia. The remaining 26% of our visitors came from outside the Commonwealth.

While most non-Virginia visitors are from Maryland and North Carolina, we had visitors from 42 of the other 47 states including Alaska, Washington, Oregon, and California. The number of visitors from California led all the other 47 states, except Pennsylvania. Our visitors also came from outside the U.S. People from 13 other countries visited our museum. While most of them came from England and Europe, we also hosted visitors from Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, Korea, and Mexico.

Our visitors appreciated the docents. Visitors' comments not only admired our exhibits and artifacts, they also complimented the docents who helped them. A visitor from Frankfurt, Germany, said, "Very helpful staff – great museum."

Of the more than 50 people who donate their time and talents to serve as ECMHS Board members, officers, and docents, the docents are the ones who represent the museum. They keep the museum open five hours every day except Sundays, Wednesdays, and major holidays and greet every visitor. The docents answer questions and refer visitors to historical reference materials and historical research specialists with a smile.

A docent is a host who has the privilege of representing our museum and meeting interesting people from all around the world. And the docent can have fun doing it. A delightful comment came from an Essex County resident who said, "Very good!! Van is funny!!" Anyone associated with ECMHS knows who "Van" is.

*Penny Geiger, Docent Coordinator  
 [Statistics provided by Ron Geiger and  
 the visitor database]*

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**SAVE THE DATE!!!**  
**SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 2016**  
**WHAT: OUR POPULAR TEA FUNCTION**  
**WHERE: ST. MARGARET'S DINING HALL**  
**TIME: 12:00 NOON TIL 2:30 P.M.**  
**CATERED AND ENTERTAINED BY THE**  
**TALENTED RAPPAHANNOCK COLONIAL**  
**HERITAGE SOCIETY GROUP FROM**  
**FREDERICKSBURG.**  
**MORE DETAILS TO FOLLOW**

## ECMHS Educational Overview

The content, audience, (both adults and children) and geographic area have drastically changed the focus and scope of the educational activities provided by the museum. Since 2007 the revised content provides information relative to the 18th century colonial life, which includes Fashions, Life style, Work life, Agriculture, John Smith's exploration, the Indians, Archaeology, Early Tappahannock, and the River with its impact on the trades and very importantly the Steamboat Era. These programs focus on all grades, particularly grades 3 through 5. Most lessons provide hands-on opportunities. The schools canvassed are all the public and private schools in Essex, the Northern Neck, and some in Middlesex and Fredericksburg.

The Essex Museum partners with 12 other museums and historic sites to provide outreach educational programs to the Elementary and Middle Schools within the Northern Neck Region and beyond. Additionally we have expanded our presence to home-schools by collectively hosting the first Northern Neck History and Cultural Day, May 2, 2014. The site for this event was Belle Isle State Park, Lancaster County. Over 200 students and parents attended. The second event was held at Historic Menokin, September 25, 2015. The area represented by attendees covers from Northern Virginia, Fredericksburg area, Richmond, Middle Peninsula, and the Northern Neck

A teacher's half-day educational activity focused on the importance of the river has been developed. It is open to teachers with grades 4 through High School responsibilities. The activity is a river excursion



Joan reviews comment sheets for the 2015 Northern Neck History and Culture Day at Menokin

on the Rappahannock where the culture, landscape, and the people who made this region so vital are highlighted.

**Future plans:** To expand the river activity to the general public at specific times. In the interim we will be holding educational programs in partnership with St. Margaret's and other museums to present programs depicting the overall importance of the river. The initial group was the 4th and 5th graders from Tappahannock public schools. This first adventure was held October 14, 2015 with over 200 students attending along with their teachers and volunteers. Another activity in the planning process is to expand availability of the Historic District walking tours.

We have measured our success not only by the many positive responses, but the numbers and expanding geography. Since 2007 through November 2015 we have presented programs to more than 8800 students and adults, of which over 7700 were outreach programs. This equated to 74 activities or about 9 per year. Many thanks to our loyal volunteers, partners, and audience.

Please visit our web-site [www.essexmuseum.org](http://www.essexmuseum.org) or [info@ecmhs.org](mailto:info@ecmhs.org). For scheduling information or inquiries on a particular activity contact the Education Director on [education@essexmuseum.org](mailto:education@essexmuseum.org)

**Joan M. Moore**  
Director of Education

## The Multi-Media Committee is working for YOU

One of the most important roles of the Multi-Media Committee is to document events held at the Museum, or sponsored by the Museum and held elsewhere. Not only does this record the history of Museum activities for posterity; viewing these still photos and videos can provide an enjoyable re-living of the event. In addition to a recapitulation of presentations, awards, etc., those of you who attended the event likely will find photos of yourself and friends engaged in pleasurable conversations. If you were unable to attend a Museum meeting, a presentation, or a training event, these photos will give you an opportunity to "be there" in absentia. Be sure to visit the Museum web site and take a look at the many photos and videos that have been added.

The Multi-Media Committee also has been busy with some internal refinements to simplify operation of the Museum Theater equipment and make it more reliable ... with the goal to create a better experience for you, the visitor. We have begun to develop a catalogue of films and multi-media slide shows that visitors can select to view in the Museum Theater. Just ask the docent to share this listing with you, and let him or her know which one or ones you would like to see. Four are available now:

1. *A Brief Introduction to the History of Essex County* (multi-media slideshow - 28 minutes): A number of local narrators introduce you to the major events that have shaped the history of Essex County and the Town of Tappahannock since 1608, followed by a brief history of some of the historic 18th and 19th century buildings in the heart of Tappahannock. We highly recommend you view this slideshow as your introduction to our local history and the Museum;

2. *The War of 1812* (video - 10 minutes): Narrated by our own Anita Harrower, this video describes the shelling of the Town of Tappahannock in 1814 by British troops that followed on the heels of the Revolutionary War;
3. *The Stamp Act Rebellion* (video - 12 minutes): A video reenactment of an incident in Tappahannock following the signing of the "Leedstown Resolutions and Westmoreland Resolves." Four hundred people gathered in the streets of Tappahannock to confront a recalcitrant local merchant, Archibald Ritchie, who insisted on using the hated British stamps, and to demand that Archibald McCall destroy the British stamp papers that he held in his home (the McCall-Brockenbrough House);
4. *The Dragon Run* (video - 25 minutes): The Dragon Run is a unique and pristine 35 mile stream abounding in local flora and fauna that meanders its way through Essex, King & Queen, Middlesex and Gloucester counties to where it becomes the headwaters of the Piankatank River.

How many of these have you seen? Next time you stop by the Museum, take a few moments to watch one or more of these productions in the Museum Theater.

**Howard Reisinger**  
Director, Multi-Media Committee

## Rappahannock River Gift Shop

The gift shop is open for shopping whenever the Museum is open whether it is a regularly scheduled day or a special event. Many thanks to the Docents on duty for their support to the gift shop as shoppers and clerks. The new shopping policy for docents which gives them an additional 10% discount on their duty day each month has contributed to increased docent shopping!

2015 sales as of September 30 are \$ 7,292 and are projected to reach \$9,000 by the end of the year. Less the cost of goods sold the gift shop will net a profit of approximately \$4,500.

The holiday shopping season begins with restocked favorites such as Whitley Peanuts, pewter oyster shells, Bolick pottery pinch pitchers,

Freinmarck pottery selection, Local Honey, hand carved walking sticks, Rappahannock River DVD's and travel purses. New items that have been added include Pewter bracelets with Cape Cod designs, handcrafted trivets, children's stocking stuffers and fluffy animals. The gift shop continues to provide local author books, note cards and maps.

During the winter months the gift shop will host local author (s) for a special event. Once these plans are finalized you will receive an email notice via the media group and a news article will be in the Rappahannock Times. SO STAY TUNED!

*Priscilla Vaughan, Gift Shop Manager*

**FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER –  
THE 2015 WHITE HOUSE CHRISTMAS ORNAMENT  
IS NOW AT THE MUSEUM GIFT SHOP**

**The ornament is offered at \$24.95.  
There are a limited number available.**



The 2015 Official White House Christmas Ornament honors the administration of President Calvin Coolidge, president of the United States from 1923-1929. President Coolidge initiated a Christmas tradition that has continued to this very day. On Christmas Eve 1923, the Coolidges participated in a series of celebrations. At 5:05pm the President pressed the button that illuminated the 3,000 light bulbs on the first National Community Christmas Tree on the Ellipse. With a fanfare of trumpets, this symbol of the spirit of Christmas was converted into a national emblem signifying that the celebration of Christmas had begun.

*\* Important: The 2015 Official White House Ornament features a double sided Christmas tree with ornaments hanging from it representing many facets of our 30th president. The unique feature of this ornament is an attempt to combine technology with the design. The ornament was created to light up from the inside with a light bulb and small battery that is estimated to last many hours, but is not guaranteed by the American manufacturer, ChemArt. Neither the bulb nor the battery is replaceable and we cannot replace.*

## Docent 2015 Appreciation Gift

Once again the gift shop is joining with the docent coordinator to award a \$10.00 gift certificate to be redeemed in the Rappahannock River Gift Shop. A special "Thank You" to the docents for their continuing service and support!

The gift certificates were given out at the recent event or mailed to each docent. If you have not received yours, there will be a few copies at the museum. Don't forget to sign your coupon when you redeem it.

Thank you and Merry Christmas!



## Those Who Choose to Make a Difference

### Van and Judy VanArsdale Honored for Their Generous Support

The Essex County Museum and Historical Society is excited to recognize Harold and Judy VanArsdale for their recent donation to the Capital Campaign. Their continuous generous support to the Museum was exemplified by their gift of \$6,000 to secure the naming of the visitors entrance area. This area along with the Rappahannock River Gift Shop was funded in honor of their children Andrea and Dean.

Van and Judy have been staunch supports of the museum since the first exhibits were opened in 1996. They both have served in various offices on the Board and each has filled the lead role as President. They have volunteered as docents since the museum opened for the first visitor.

Their vision for the museum guided the board through the early years of organization and helped navigate the growth stages necessary for the Museum to gain financial support, credibility and fulfill its mission. Their insight and leadership helped pave the way for the merger of the Historical Society and the Museum, two organizations of near identical missions.

As provided in the financial policy, Capital Campaign donations given to secure designated space in the museum are allocated 50% toward principle payments and 50% toward facility improvements. Currently, the outstanding principle on the museum mortgage is \$90,373. The cost to purchase the museum was \$420,000. This incredible progress has been made through not only the generosity of many such as Van and Judy but the willingness of that original leadership team to reach out to foundations, trusts, and individuals

to share the passion and importance of having an Essex County Museum.

To Van and Judy, the Essex County Community and future generations are eternally grateful for what you have accomplished.

*Priscilla Vaughan, Treasurer*



*President Ron Geiger, right, and Treasurer Priscilla Vaughan thank Van VanArsdale for his recent Capital Campaign donation.*



*ECMHS Education Director, Joan Moore, center, receiving the resolution outlining her many accomplishment and contributions to the Museum from President Ron Geiger and Secretary Helen Ware.*

### Joan Moore – Outstanding Volunteer

Joan Moore received the ECMHS Board of Directors resolution for outstanding volunteerism at its special meeting November 18, 2015. The resolution needed 345 words to fully state her accomplishments on behalf the organization since joining its Board in 2007. A portion of the resolution stated “Joan Moore has been an active and valuable member of the Essex County Museum and Historical Society, contributing, guiding and leading many of our programs and serving both the organization and our community in many ways.”

“We wanted to end the opening paragraph by saying ‘in countless ways,’ but we have been counting,” said Helen Ware, Board Secretary, and Joe Wolfinger, Board Director, who together drafted the resolution.

The resolution counts the ways by continuing, “... her strong leadership, enabled her to assume the coordinating role for area museums and to initiate, lead and coordinate a variety of programs conveying information about the rich history of Essex County and the nearby area to over 8,000 residents and visitors, including 6,276 students and 1,159 adults .”

The resolution closed with its resolve, “... that the Board of Directors of the Essex County Museum and Historical Society, Tappahannock, Virginia, hereby bestows upon Joan Moore its thanks for her outstanding service.”

At the conclusion of the presentation, all the docents and directors present stood and applauded Joan to show their concurrence with the resolution.

## Dominion Power, County, and Town Support Museum's Equipment Upgrade

Officials of Dominion Power, Essex County, and the Town of Tappahannock recently presented their grants to Essex County Museum and Historical Society representatives to pay for an important upgrade to the museum's interior environmental control.



Officials from Old Dominion Power, Essex County, and the Town of Tappahannock presented their grants to Essex County Museum and Historical Society representatives to pay for an important upgrade to the museum's interior environmental control." Left to right: Reese Peck, Roy M. "Monte" Gladding, Ron Geiger, David Jett, and James Beasley representing Essex County Government, Town of Tappahannock, ECMHS president, museum curator, and Old Dominion Power, respectively.

The upgrade is a humidity control system designed to maintain constant humidity levels in the museum to protect its artifacts and documents from deterioration caused by improper humidity.

Museum curator, David Jett, is pleased that the new system is finally installed. "We have relied on small household dehumidifiers for several years in an attempt to maintain humidity within tolerable levels and, frankly, we were only marginally successful. The new system greatly contributes to our mission to preserve our growing collections of historic artifacts, photographs and documents."

In 2009 a "Conservation Assessment Program" consultant study of the Essex County Museum and Historical Society funded by Heritage Preservation identified the need for the museum to provide "environment control for its collection and exhibit" areas. Each year we have tried to fund the project, but other financial commitments got in the way. Last fall, Joe Wolfinger, who had accepted our grants funding responsibility, was asked to find grants to make it happen. Dominion Power made its first contribution last year and its second contribution this year. Essex County government and the Town of Tappahannock added to their annual support to ECMHS this year to fully fund the upgrade. It is a wonderful example of local businesses and government working together to help fund non-profit organizations' worthwhile projects."

## Photo Highlights

2016 ECMHS Officers left to right: Ron Geiger, Finance Officer; Barbara Sethmann, Secretary; Helen Ware, Treasurer; Tommy Blackwell, President; Carl Strock, 1st Vice President and Bill Croxton, 2nd Vice President



Outgoing President Ron Geiger passes the gavel to President Elect Tommy Blackwell



Northern Neck History & Culture Day at Menokin. Above: Children board the shallow for a first-hand look. Right: Corn display.



Right: ECMHS members and friends enjoyed an excursion to Montpelier, historic home of James and Dolley Madison.



Photos in this issue, unless otherwise noted, are courtesy of David Broad and Howard Reisinger

## Change of Guard

Time goes by quickly when you are having fun, and the museum's past two years broke speed records!

All the volunteers supporting the Essex County Museum & Historical Society have contributed thousands of hours to make ECMHS very successful in carrying out its mission of researching, presenting, and teaching the history of Tappahannock and Essex County.

Education programs were among the top activities. Our tireless education director, Joan Moore, led 30 ECMHS volunteers and joined 35 leaders of 13 historical organizations of the Middlesex and Northern Neck peninsulas to present 12 education programs to 929 young people and their parents. Be sure to read Joan's article on page 3. It truly represents what ECMHS is all about.

Our curator, David Jett, impressed our visitors with his exhibits and programs. His "Standing in the Gap – Rappahannock Industrial Academy" and "Rappahannock Voyage: The Story of Essex and the River" exhibits received many complimentary comments from visitors. Howard Reisinger, multimedia director, and David Broad, website management, supported David's displays with audio and video displays and website updates.

Anne Jackson, our Research Director continued to answer historical queries of Essex County families and places that frequently extend to surrounding counties. The queries ran the gamut from requests from Virginia Living Magazine about the Zeuglodon bones of Essex County to the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley which recently requested information for its education department about Colonel James Wood of Essex County who founded Winchester, Virginia. Anne also worked with David Jett and museum volunteers to research and document our community's extensive local history.

Other members of the Executive Committee of our Board of Directors managed the building facility and its security, ran the small but profitable gift shop, promoted our events, published historical articles, campaigned for new members, grants, and financial contributions, coordinated our 43 docents' schedules, kept track of our finances, and made sure ECMHS was a responsible non-profit organization.

Be sure to read the other articles in this *Time Keeper* which fully explain the many diverse activities provided almost entirely by volunteers.



*The ECMHS Board of Directors elected Tommy Blackwell, Gordon Harrower, and Madeline Lawson\* to join it in 2016 and reelected Ron Geiger, Barbara Sethmann, Carl Strock, Helen Ware, and C. Norman Wood who continue to serve with current directors David Broad, Stanley Clarke\*, Bill Croxton, Patricia Haile, Lloyd Huckstep, David Jett (ex-officio), Anne Jackson, Joe Johnston, Richard Lewis\*, Howard Reisinger, Bryan Taliaferro, Priscilla Vaughan, and Joe Wolfinger.*

*Joan Moore resigned from the Board for personal reasons but she will continue to lead the ECMHS education program, volunteer as docent, and serve other activities.*

*\*not present for photo.*

We head into 2016 with three new directors, Tommy Blackwell, Gordon Harrower, and Madeline Lawson, and new officers, Tommy Blackwell as president, Carl Strock as 1st vice-president, Barbara Sethmann as secretary, and Helen Ware as treasurer. Bill Croxton and I will continue our positions as 2nd vice president and financial officer, respectively. It is a strong team that will continue to lead ECMHS forward in pursuit of its mission.

I sincerely appreciate the support I have received from everyone during my two years as president.

**Ron Geiger, President**

### In Memoriam

**David Gaddy**

**1932–2015**

The Essex County Museum & Historical Society lost a long-time friend and supporter with the passing of David Gaddy on November 22. A long-time member of the Essex County Historical Society, David was a founding member of the Museum.

### Museum Docents

Sally Acree	Elizabeth Ellis	Bill Jester	Barbara Sethmann	Priscilla Vaughan
Tommy Blackwell	Hilda Fletcher	Lorraine Jester	Lewis Shephard	Helen Ware
Emily Brazell	Barbara Frazier	Joe Johnston	Diane Sisson	JoAnn Ware
Betty Jo Butler	John Frazier	Linda Lumpkin	Cora Sue Spruill	Kia Ware
Bill Croxton	Penny Geiger, <i>Docent Coordinator</i>	Suzi Maggard	Rick Stott	Fred Woodard
Carole Croxton	Ron Geiger	Joan Moore	Carl Strock	C. Norman Wood
Sarah Croxton	Peyton Guest	Howard Reisinger	Sandy Tate	
Jessica Davis	Patricia Haile	Barry Robertson	Cacky Taylor	
Luther Derby	Anita Harrower	Patti Rowley	Van Van Arsdale	
Keren Ellis	Gordon Harrower	Jane Schreiber	Lois Vaughan	

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### Board of Directors 2016

Tommy Blackwell, <i>President</i>	Lloyd Huckstep	Carl Strock, <i>First Vice President</i>
David Broad	Anne Jackson, <i>Research</i>	Brian Taliaferro
Stanley Clarke	Madeline Lawson	Priscilla Vaughan, <i>Gift Shop Manager</i>
Bill Croxton, <i>Second Vice-President</i>	Dr. Richard Lewis	Helen Ware, <i>Treasurer</i>
Ron Geiger, <i>Financial Officer</i>	Howard Reisinger, <i>Multi-Media</i>	Joe Wolfinger, <i>Grants</i>
Patricia Haile	Barbara Sethmann, <i>Secretary/Publications</i>	C. Norman Wood

*(Titles are Executive Committee positions)*

### Museum Staff

<i>Curator/Collections Management</i>	David Jett
<i>Administrative Assistant</i>	Milly Cavin

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visit [www.ecmhs.org](http://www.ecmhs.org) for the latest news and calendar of events

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