



SMYTH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESERVING and PROTECTING LOCAL HISTORY

IN THIS ISSUE:

News and Updates
PAGE 1-2

100 years of the 19th
Amendment
PAGE 2

Historical Society T-Shirts
& Membership
PAGE 3

Getting to Know the Collection
(John Montgomery Preston
Civil War Coat)
PAGE 4

Smyth County Centennial
Celebration 1932 Photograph
Collection
PAGE 5

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News and Updates



Due to concerns and current regulations regarding the Covid-19 virus, our annual membership meeting and opening day that is typically held at the end of April was obviously postponed. We do not presently have a plan as to our 2019 opening date. As soon as we are able to plan effectively, we will announce when the museum will be open to the public as well as a schedule of monthly programs. Members will be sent a special invitation to the opening event.

This year we have set an ambitious, but necessary, fundraising goal to be raised over the course of the whole year. Funds raised go towards insuring we are able to keep our current hours of operation for our museum, facility upkeep, cataloging collections, artifact preservation, developing displays and exhibits, planning events, and other activities that align with our mission. Contributions through membership, admission donations, general donations, and gift shop sales will go towards meeting our goal. We would also like to...

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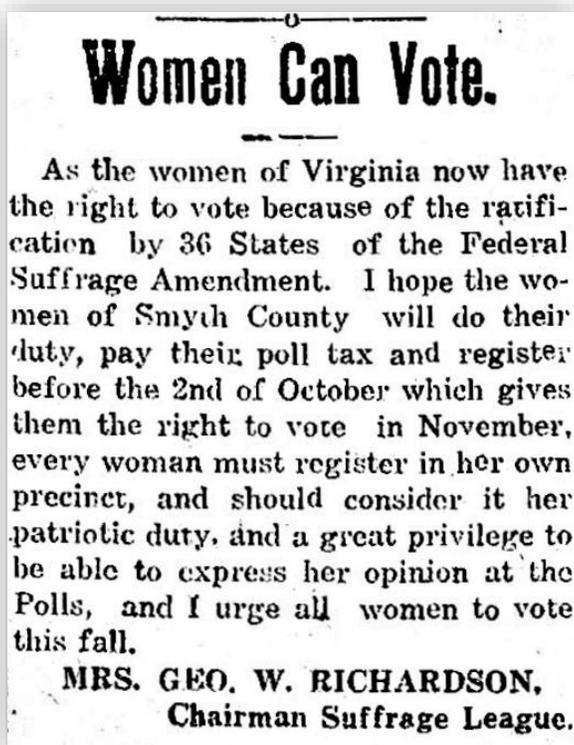
News and Updates (continued...)

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...acquire a collections management software this year to help us achieve and maintain better collection organization.

Although we plan to have a couple of fundraising events throughout the year, we will need your help in meeting this goal. The number one and easiest way to contribute is to help promote our organization. Getting people through the door and seeing our museum would greatly increase our chances of achieving the goal. In addition, we could definitely use more members to help support the society. Over the years our membership has been steadily declining and is very low compared to historical societies in neighboring counties. If you know of someone who would be interested in becoming a member, please let them know how to become one. We will also need help setting up and working information tables at community events and will be asking for volunteers to assist during those events.

100 Years of Women's Suffrage



On August 26, 1920 the United States officially adopted the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution stating that *"the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."* The newspaper clipping to the left was found in the **September 2nd, 1920 issue of the Marion News**, less than a month after the ratification of the amendment, is encouraging women to register to vote under the new law of the land. It reads, *"As the women of Virginia now have the right to vote because of the ratification by 36 States of the Federal Suffrage Amendment. I hope the women of Smyth County will do their duty, pay their poll tax and register before the 2nd of October which gives them the right to vote in November, every woman must register in her own precinct, and should consider it her patriotic duty, and a great privilege to be able to express her opinion at the Polls, and I urge all women to vote this fall. MRS. GEO. W. RICHARDSON, Chairman Suffrage League."* This year marks the 100th Anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment and Women's Suffrage.

Smyth County Historical Society T-shirts

The Smyth County Historical Society now has t-shirts! Interested in supporting the historical society's efforts to preserve and protect our local history and also promoting our wonderful county? Our new t-shirts are a great way to do just that! Currently the shirts come in sizes Medium through 2XLarge and come in two colors, dark gray and light blue (alternative size requests will be

considered in future orders). The design features the outline of Smyth County, Virginia with photographs from all of our wonderful communities. T-shirts may be purchased at the museum during our operating hours or can be ordered through email. They are **\$23.17** including tax plus extra should you choose to have it shipped. Full color images can be found on our Facebook page.

Email:

smythcountymuseum@gmail.com

Facebook Page:

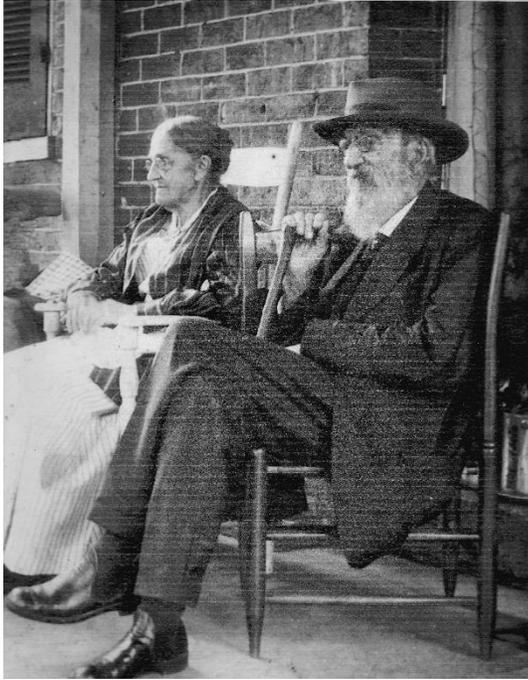
[facebook.com/SmythCountyMuseum](https://www.facebook.com/SmythCountyMuseum)



In Memory of Jim Peterson

Our condolences go out to the family of Jim Peterson, a valued member of our society who passed away on March 30th earlier this year. Jim did so much for our society. He managed our website completely for free and headed the initiative behind our newspaper digitization project. Jim and his wife Mary became active in our society after visiting the area on a genealogy trip to see the home place of their ancestors, the McDonald/McDaniel family of Chatham Hill. Jim's contributions to our society will be sorely missed.

Getting to Know the Collection (Army of Virginia Coat C.S.A.)



This Army of Virginia coat belonged to Captain John Montgomery Preston II (October 14, 1838-September 27th, 1928) of Abingdon, Virginia and later Seven Mile Ford, Virginia. In the spring of 1860, Preston enlisted in the Confederate Army under Captain James S. Greever (Company B 48th Virginia Infantry) in Seven Mile Ford where he and his brother had inherited a large estate. During the war, Preston was twice wounded – once grazed by a ball through his coat collar (marked with a white piece of card in the photo), and twice by a piece of mortar shrapnel into his thigh. According to a bio written by his daughter Nelly around 1963, Preston lay on the battlefield all night due to his shrapnel wound, survived, and eventually made his way to Charlottesville where his aunt lived.

After marrying his fiancé and cousin Mary Lewis Cochran of Charlottesville, Preston returned to Seven Mile Ford finding his inherited estate, the big tavern, “mutilated beyond use” except for one room that had been used by Union officers. Preston, crippled, and his bride began work to restore the house having no money, credit, or farm stock. The house, known locally as the Preston-Crockett house, still stands today to the right of the northbound side of I-81. Pictured top left are Preston and his wife sitting on the porch of their house. Preston is buried in the Preston Family Cemetery in Aspenvale at Seven Mile Ford.

One of our goals in the next couple of years is to have this coat professionally conserved so that its preservation can be insured for the long term as well have a better way to display it. We have begun preliminary steps in this process and have reached out to a conservator who specializes in historic textiles and clothing. As soon as possible we hope to have a conservation plan and cost estimate so that we can begin fundraising and hopefully make the project a reality.



Smyth County Centennial Celebration, 1932



County school children parade down Marion Main Street for Centennial Celebration.

At the time of writing this, Smyth County will be 200 years old in just 12 short years. As we have been conducting the long and tedious process of organizing our collections better, we recently came across a selection of photographs documenting our county's 100th birthday celebration in 1932 some 88 years ago. The celebration was a two day long occasion on May 26th-27th, 1932, and special events, parades, and programs were held all across the county. Each community in the county held its own celebration.

Celebration activities began on the 26th with the dedication of a memorial bridge at Seven Mile Ford and had presentations following at the town of Chilhowie and at

Saltville. A Miss Smyth County contest was held and Eleanor Fairman Sheffey, granddaughter of Capt. John Preston Sheffey, was chosen amongst her nominated peers to be Miss Smyth County. A county wide parade was held on May 27th in Marion featuring a float contest with entries by businesses and communities from across the county (Bonham's Apples out of Chilhowie took first place in the contest, Rich Valley's "log cabin" float took second, and Marion Rotary Club took third). The parade ended at the Smyth County Fairgrounds where several speakers gave presentations. The centennial celebration concluded with a pageant written by Laura Lu Scherer Copenhaver that chronicled the history of Smyth County from the time of its first settlers to the present date, 1932.

These photographs and records of the celebration show just how much the people of Smyth County value their local history. The full collection of photographs includes floats, speakers, and gatherings from the celebration and can be viewed by going to our Facebook page at facebook.com/SmythCountyMuseum



Rich Valley's "Log Cabin" Centennial Parade Float (Second Place Float)



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Historical Society & Museum
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VISIT OUR WEBSITE!
smythcountymuseum.org