

Historic Shepherdstown

& Museum

Letter From the President

This is an exciting fall for Historic Shepherdstown. Our organization was deeply involved in the 250th Anniversary celebrations of the Bee Line March, and our wonderful exhibit of Kentucky Rifles continues at the Historic Museum through October. And Wallace Gusler, Colonial Williamsburg's first master gunsmith and an expert on Shenandoah Valley longrifles, will present a workshop on Kentucky rifles at the Byrd Center on Saturday, September 13 (see article below).

This summer, we were proud to be awarded a \$35,000 grant from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation (see article below). This grant will enable HSC to complete several important projects for the Historic Museum and the Shepherdstown Historic District. One project is the conservation and mounting of an 1863 35-Star American flag, created when the State of West Virginia joined the Union.

We have a wonderful group of five nominees to be presented at our Annual Membership Meeting on Wednesday, September 3, at the Byrd Center Auditorium (see article below). I hope all of you can attend. Our presenter that evening for the fourth Speaker Series of the year is a local author Lynn Pecheukonis on "*Beyond the Storer College Campus, 1867-1917: The Early Roots of Black Community in Harpers Ferry.*" Our final Speaker Series of 2025 will be held on Wednesday, October 15 with Maryland State Park Ranger Robert Ambrose discussing "*Fort Frederick, MD: In their own words, why we say what we say, 1756-1759.*"

Thank you for the opportunity to have served as HSC Board President the past two years. With your ongoing support, our organization will keep growing and continue to be a key player in the preservation and promotion of the incredible history of Shepherdstown.

Jerry Bock, HSC President

Changes on the Historic Shepherdstown Board

This fall will mark numerous changes on the HSC Board of Directors. Completing terms on the Board are Jerry Bock, President; Wendy Beckner, Treasurer; Al Levitan, Entler Building Committee chair; and Anne D'Alauro, Events Committee chair. We thank all these folks for excellent work and they truly will be missed on the Board. However, the good news is that all plan to remain active members of HSC and will still be assisting on numerous projects.

We are very excited about the five nominees to come onto the Board this fall. They are, in alphabetical order:

Keith Alexander - History Professor, Shepherd University. He has been involved with HSC in various ways over many years, including providing interns and working with us on historic gravestone restoration. Keith has also been a Speaker Series presenter. He is the current Chair of the Shepherdstown Historic Landmarks Commission.

Richard "Butch" Deal - Butch's most recent work was with Geostellar, where he was responsible for IT, solar estimates & designs, and managing/processing one of the largest private LiDAR holdings at the time. He has worked to restore the stone part of the Stone River House near Pack Horse Ford. Butch also serves on the Board of Directors for the Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association.

Patrick Fuller - Administrator and Program Assistant at the Robert C. Byrd Center for Congressional History and Education. Patrick is a 2021 graduate of Shepherd University, holding a B.A. in History. Before joining the staff of the Byrd Center in April 2025, Patrick served as an AmeriCorps Member with the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission, a NCP intern with the National Park Service's Interpretive Design Center, and an ACE fellow with the National Park Service's Museum Management Program.

Jennifer Murray - New Director of the George Tyler Moore Center for the Study of the Civil War. Jen is a Civil War historian specializing in military history. She received her Ph.D. in 19th Century American History at Auburn University and her Master's degree from James Madison University. Prior to being appointed the Director of the George Tyler Moore Center, Jen taught at Oklahoma State University.

Doug Perks - Doug recently retired as the Historian of the Jefferson County Museum. He serves as Historian for the Elmwood Cemetery Association and is a Director of the Jefferson County Historical Society. In 2023, he published *The Civil War Years in Jefferson County, VA*. He was named a West Virginia History Hero in 2017 and in 2022, he was named the Historian Laureate of Shepherdstown.

Historic Shepherdstown Receives \$35,000 Grant from the Benedum Foundation

Historic Shepherdstown and Museum is pleased to announce that it has received a \$35,000 grant from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation. The funds will be used for a variety of projects inside the Historic Shepherdstown Museum and to promote the historic nature of Shepherdstown.

“We are very excited to receive this grant and work with the Benedum Foundation on several projects that will enhance the Historic Shepherdstown Museum,” said Jerry Bock, President of the Historic Shepherdstown Board of Directors. “This work will not only benefit the Museum but the Shepherdstown Historic District as well, providing informative historic markers on homes and businesses in the Historic District.”

“The Benedum Foundation is pleased to partner with Historic Shepherdstown on this notable project. Preserving the history of West Virginia through museums and artifacts such as the 35-Star United States flag, allows for the sharing of cultural stories that are critical to the preservation of our heritage,” said Kim Tieman, Benedum Foundation Vice President and Program Officer.

The grant will allow Historic Shepherdstown to fund several long-planned projects. The organization will use at least \$15,000 of the grant to conserve and encase a 35-star flag that it purchased in 2024. The flag is significant because West Virginia was the 35th state admitted to the Union. It was followed just over a year later by Nevada as the 36th state, so very few 35-star flags were produced.



The flag will be displayed in the Historic Shepherdstown Museum as part of a plan to enhance the visitor experience. Display panels with a timeline of Shepherdstown history will be updated in addition to improved signage throughout the museum. A new museum guide will feature a brief history of the historic Entler Hotel and important artifacts displayed in the museum.

The grant will also assist Historic Shepherdstown to initiate a program that will provide local property owners an opportunity to place markers on their homes and businesses that will highlight the historic significance of their property.

Other plans for the funds include improving the local history section of the Historic Shepherdstown website and developing an educational traveling trunk that can be taken to local schools to help students learn the history of the town.

The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation has served West Virginia and Southwestern Pennsylvania since it was established in 1944 by Michael and Sarah Benedum. The Foundation makes grants to support specific initiatives in such areas as education, economic development, health, and community development.

Fun Historical Fact

Andrew Jackson's parrot was kicked out of his funeral for swearing.

It's odd enough that President Andrew Jackson had an African grey parrot named Poll, and stranger still that the bird was kicked out of Jackson's funeral for foul language. As one attendee observed, "Before the sermon and while the crowd was gathering, a wicked parrot that was a household pet got excited and commenced swearing so loud and long as to disturb the people and had to be carried from the house."

Historic Shepherdstown & Museum Building Maintenance

As most homeowners know, maintaining a house is a never-ending task. When that home or structure is historic, the task becomes more difficult as the old building materials become degraded from environmental wear and structural degradation. As is the case with the Entler Hotel building and adjacent museum, the task is further complicated by the need to balance preservation of the historic building form and material with the preservation needs of the museum collection and with the needs and expectations of current building occupants used to the comforts of contemporary life.

The Historic Shepherdstown Commission has attempted to provide that balanced approach to the Entler building complex since it took over responsibility for its restoration and maintenance in the 1970's. The work is performed by both HSC volunteers and contractors, depending on the scope of the project as well as the number and skill level of the available volunteers.

The building complex consists of at least four adjoining structures, all of which have been altered over time. It has been used as a private home, hotel, tavern, college dorm, faculty apartments, and storage. It is full of unusual nooks and crannies created when walls were blocked off or added and when separate structures were connected. One can be surprised when opening a closet to discover a truncated stairway suspended from the ceiling. There are still many questions as to how and why certain changes were made.

The exterior walls of the complex are constructed of brick, which varies quite a bit in quality and appearance. The foundations are constructed of local limestone. A good deal of the brick is quite soft, making it more susceptible to erosion by wind, rain and the freeze thaw cycle. HSC volunteers regularly inspect the brickwork for signs of spalling and mortar loss. Occasionally problems with the brick walls become apparent from the interior, with discoloration of the plaster walls. Over the years, HSC has worked with historic masonry contractors to repoint problem areas and to replace brick where needed. A soft lime mortar is specified for the repointing work because the preservation community is now aware that hard cement mortars accelerate the deterioration and spalling of brick. Unfortunately, we do have a number of examples of that phenomenon on the Entler walls.

As a rule, HSC attempts to preserve as much of the original, historic material as possible. In the case of wooden elements that means patching deteriorated or lost wooden elements with similar wood or, in some cases, consolidating and filling partially rotted areas with epoxy or similar resin. Occasionally, total replacement is required, in which case we try to replicate the original elements as closely as possible. That was the case with the main door on the Princess Street elevation, which was significantly warped and exhibited extensive rot on the bottom rail. Another issue causing the instability was the fact that the door had been cut down in height to accommodate a ramp, which greatly weakened the mortise and tenon joint. An experienced preservation carpenter precisely replicated the door, and it now hangs securely in place.

A good environment for museum objects includes control of temperature, relative humidity, and light. Controlling artificial light levels in the museum is not a major issue due to the limited amount of time the museum is open. Sunlight is controlled with solar shades that limit the amount of light that penetrates into the museum as well as film that eliminates ultraviolet radiation, the most damaging part of the light spectrum. For most museums in modern structures, this is a fairly straightforward process. In historic structures such as the Entler, which has wooden sash windows that contain up to 12 panes each and often vary in size, the process becomes more complex, time consuming, and expensive. Application of the UV film is a specialized process and there are few available contractors. In one of the larger maintenance projects of the past few years, new UV film was applied to all the window sashes in the museum building by contractors working with HSC volunteers who replaced and reglazed glass panes where needed.

These are just a few examples of the preservation maintenance needs of the Entler Hotel and Museum, a significant cultural resource for the Shepherdstown community. Some of the tasks are quite mundane and some specialized. The organization welcomes volunteers and donations to help with the effort to ensure the buildings will stand for another couple of centuries.

Worth Saving: Return from Brooklyn Leads Jefferson County Natives to 1790's Pump House

Monthly Column In Shepherdstown Chronicle

Historic Shepherdstown was invited several months ago by the Shepherdstown Chronicle to create a monthly column about a historic home in town, its history and the people who live there now. The most recent from August 8, 2025 is included here. Look for upcoming columns in the Chronicle on the second Friday of each month, with longer versions of current and previous columns available at <https://www.shepherdstownchronicle.com/opinions/columns/>. Board member Greg Coble wrote this column, with research and editorial assistance of fellow board members Terry Fulton and Marelle Aherne. Suggestions for future columns are welcome at hsc1786@gmail.com.

Since 2021, Emma and Brian Wenner have owned what is known locally as the Pump House (circa 1790) at 107 North Princess Street in Shepherdstown. Friends at Jefferson High School in the early 2000s and as students at West Virginia University, it wasn't until 2013 when Emma was home from New York City, visiting her parents in Harpers Ferry, that she ran into Brian again and a closer relationship blossomed. Brian moved to New York to be with her where, for seven years, they lived in Brooklyn.

Emma worked for Publishers Weekly as an editor and Brian managed a creative team for a marketing firm. When the pandemic prompted their employers to move to a virtual working environment, they used it as motivation to return to their Jefferson County roots.

"Growing up in a place like Harpers Ferry, surrounded by a beautiful green environment, is a part of my life that I value," noted Emma. Brian added, *"we recognized that growing up in a big city comes with challenges and we want our children to have the benefits and memories we did living in a small friendly community."*

They continue their New York careers from their new home: Emma on a freelance basis and Brian at a desk in one of three upstairs bedrooms. When visiting them, their three children – Vera Beth (7), Willem (5) and Mavis (2) – were playing vigorously in an enclosed second floor sleeping porch that runs the entire length of the 1830s addition. That Emma and Brian decided to purchase one of the most historic residences in Shepherdstown seems right, given their earlier lives in two of the most historic towns in the region. An added bonus to their choice in home is that Brian grew up right around the corner on High Street, where his parents have lived since 1973.

While the Wenners eventually plan to update features in the house — such as the kitchen — to-date, their approach to their home (part of which is 226-years-old and the *"newer"* part is 186-years-old) has been to stabilize it — replacing corroded pipes, adding HVAC and removing exterior parts of two of the house's three chimneys, to stop water infiltration. Emma was quick to point out the latter was accomplished in a way that the two chimneys could be replaced in the future. A structural engineer who reviewed the visible bowing of the floor in their principal bedroom, in the oldest part of the house, concluded that as long as the floor support is not disrupted, their bedroom should remain stable.

Assuming the Wenners continue to view their home as a long-term place to raise their family, it will be in keeping with the home's history. Generations of the Show (1905 – 1997) and Barnhart families (1835 – 1905) owned the house for a combined 162 years. The property was purchased from Thomas Shepherd by Peter Bedinger in 1764. His brother, Henry, purchased the adjacent lot. The Bedingers were German and among the earliest settlers of Shepherdstown. Henry Bedinger was a part of the Beeline March from Shepherdstown to Boston in the summer of 1775, to join the Continental Army; excerpts from his journal, of the march and aftermath, can be found in Danske Dandridge's *"Historic Shepherdstown."*

We have not been able to review the deed recordings from the latter 1700s, but we know that John Lyne sold it to Adam Heyser for \$500 in 1803, and given the price, we assume it included the original log structure that fronts Princess Street (later weatherboarded) believed to have been constructed circa 1790. A Shepherdstown Register article confirmed that the well for the pump, which still stands in front of the house, was sunk when Heyser purchased the home in the early 1800s, to operate a hat factory at the property. This became a source of cool, clear water for generations of town residents and provided a social gathering place to interact with others.

The property was purchased by Samuel Barnhart in 1835 for \$725. Barnhart, a local contractor of some note, constructed the substantial rear brick addition of the house in the late 1830s. The west side of the addition along the side garden somewhat resembles a Charleston, S.C. single house with long porches — the difference being that the formal entrance of this house fronts Princess Street. There are several historic homes around town with this style. Barnhart's woodworking and design skills can be seen throughout the house. The rich details of the main staircase extend into the attic level, though with descending ceiling heights that challenge 6'4" Brian.

Samuel Barnhart was described over the years in the Shepherdstown Register as a contractor and skilled architect. He is credited as the contractor for Trinity Episcopal Church's steeple, Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church, the *"old college building"* (McMurrin Hall) and the old cement mill along the Potomac River. Barnhart's son, Henry, worked with his father in construction and later commanded Company B of the Confederate Army Second Virginia Regiment, Stonewall Brigade. Two of Samuel Barnhart's sons who served in the Confederate Army perished in the war.

Descendants of the Show family have visited the Wenners to share memories, such as pigs transported from a nearby farm to the brick smokehouse still handsomely standing in the side garden. It was also learned that the ground level fountain, near the front of the property, is what remains of a previously existing swimming pool.

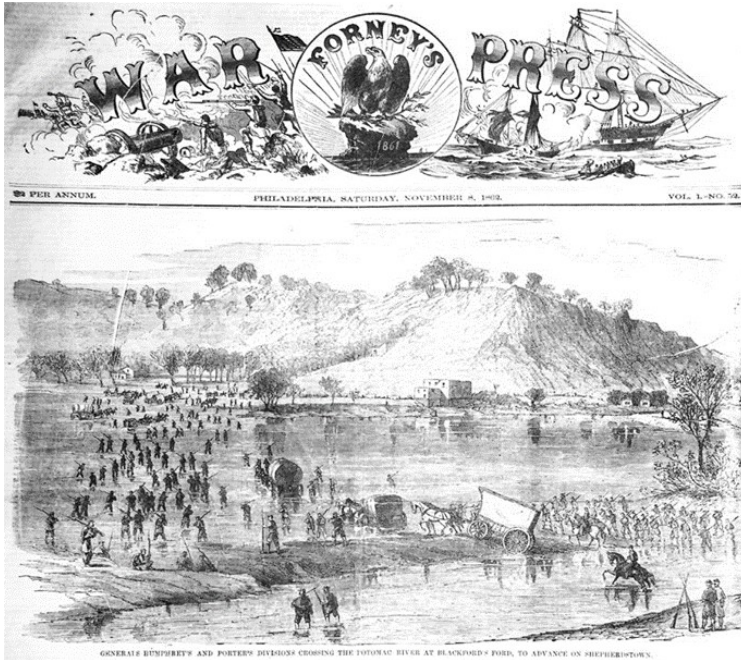
The Wenners appreciate the social benefits of living in a small town. Their neighbors, Beth and Simon Ayling, greeted them with an apple pie and later hosted a welcome party for them and their other neighbors. They constructed a gate between their two yards, so the three children could run around and the Aylings could tend a vegetable garden in the rear of the Wenner property. This is precisely the sense of community Emma and Brian were seeking, when they left Brooklyn to raise their family in their historic Shepherdstown home.



Brian and Emma Wenner stand with their children, Vera Beth, Willem and Mavis, in front of the 1790s Pump House.

Forney's War Press Newspaper: Battle of Shepherdstown

Mr. Carlos Niederhauser recently donated to the Museum a copy of *Forney's War Press* newspaper, dated November 8, 1862. The front page offers a drawing of Union troops crossing the Potomac at Pack Horse Ford, one of the few illustrations of the Battle of Shepherdstown, which took place some six weeks before. The caption reads: "General Humphrey's and Porter's Divisions Cross the Potomac at Blackford's Ford to Advance on Shepherdstown."



Forney's War Press was a newspaper dedicated to carrying Civil War news. Issues were published weekly in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and contained engravings, news from war correspondents, casualty reports, poetry, and humor.

The newspaper was published by John W. Forney, who was born in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1817. He was Clerk of the United States House of Representatives 1851-1856 and 1860-1861, and Secretary of the United States Senate 1861-1868.

A copy of the newspaper is also available on the Shepherdstown Battlefield Preservation Association's website, <https://shepherdstownbattlefield.org/>.

Line Up!

Jacob Isaac Line (1796 -1863) was a prominent businessman in Shepherdstown in the middle of the 19th century. One of the town's "oldest, wealthiest, and respected citizens," according to the *Shepherdstown Register*, Line was owner of several properties including a tanning yard and a slaughterhouse in town and several hundred acres of land in the surrounding area. Line was on Town Council from the late 1830's, through the mid 1850's and served as Mayor in 1855. He was an Election Commissioner for the Shepherdstown District and served as Overseer of the Poor, in charge of administering and distributing relief to people in poverty.

Recently, his descendant donated a portrait of Mr. Line to the Museum. The portrait was likely painted in the late 1830's. Once cleaned and framed, the portrait will be hung in the Museum.



BooFest at the Museum

Halloween is coming and that means it's time for Shepherdstown's BooFest and the Historic Shepherdstown Museum's Ghost Tours.

Here, at the most haunted building in the most haunted town in America, you will hear about some of our most prominent spirits — the lady in white, the amorous Frenchman, Civil War soldiers, and the unlucky duelist. Don't miss the Traveler's Room that, according to some, is the most haunted room in the building.

Join us for a free ghost tour of the Museum on Saturday, October 25, and Sunday, October 26, every half hour from 1 to 3:30 p.m. (Donations are always welcomed.)

On Friday, October 24th and Saturday, October 25th, from 7 to 9 p.m., follow local paranormal investigators Patricia Marin and Meredith Moore, along with psychic medium Angel Wells and dowser Les Johnson, as they explore the three floors of the museum. Tickets for these evening events are \$15 per person and can be purchased on our website. Preregistration is required and participation is limited. All proceeds benefit the Museum.

Beginners to paranormal experts are welcome. Bring your own equipment or use ours.

Don't be scared. Our ghosts are known to be friendly, but curious. At least up to now.

Tickets for the Ghost Tour are available here:

<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/paranormal-events-at-the-museum-friday-october-24--2025>

<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/paranormal-events-at-the-museum-saturday-october-25--2025>



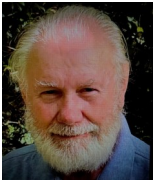
Upcoming September & October Talks Sponsored by Historic Shepherdstown

Each of these talks, sponsored by Historic Shepherdstown, is free and open to the public, and will be held at the Robert C. Byrd Center on the Shepherd University campus.

Wednesday, September 3, 7 p.m.: This talk continues the 2025 Historic Shepherdstown Speaker Series. Author and Historian Lynn Pechuekonis will present "Beyond the Storer College Campus: The Early Roots of Black Community in Harpers Ferry, 1867-1917." Her talk will be preceded by a short Historic Shepherdstown Annual Meeting at 6:45 p.m.



Saturday, September 13, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.: Wallace Gusler, former master gunsmith at Colonial Williamsburg, will give a seminar on "Longrifles Made by the Sheetz Family and Others", in conjunction with the exhibit of Kentucky Longrifles at the Historic Shepherdstown Museum. The talk and exhibit are co-sponsored with the Kentucky Rifle Foundation.



Wednesday, October 15, 7 p.m.: For the final 2025 Historic Shepherdstown Speaker Series talk, Maryland State Park Ranger-Historian Robert Ambrose will talk about the French and Indian War story at nearby Fort Frederick (Washington County, MD), the only stone fort built (1756) by a British colony during the war.



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Thank You For Your Support!

Colonial Williamsburg Master Gunsmith Seminar

Wallace Gusler, the first master gunsmith at Colonial Williamsburg and a well-known expert on rifles from Virginia and West Virginia, will talk about Longrifles Made by the Sheetz Family and Others on Saturday, September 13, in the auditorium at the Robert C. Byrd Center for the Study of Congressional History. The talk will run from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and is free and open to the public.

During the talk, Gusler will show examples of Shenandoah Valley rifles and discuss the origins and members of the Sheetz family, who made rifles in Shepherdstown and then spread out to other areas of the valley.



The talk is being given in conjunction with Historic Shepherdstown Museum's exhibit "Longrifles by the Sheetz Family and other Gunsmiths of Jefferson and Berkeley Counties." Both are co-sponsored by Historic Shepherdstown Commission and the Kentucky Rifle Foundation. The exhibit will be open after the talk.

"Historic Shepherdstown is very excited to host Wallace Gusler," said Donna Bertazzoni, a Historic Shepherdstown board member who helped organize the longrifle exhibit. "He has been studying and building flintlock rifles, rifle makers, and the gunsmith craft since he was a teenager. His knowledge comes from both hands-on experience and deep research. He is one of the most skilled craftsmen of the era and his rifles are highly prized."

Gusler is the first person in modern times to recreate all the traditional processes of making long rifles by hand, including forging the barrel. He made Colonial Williamsburg's first hand-forged rifle barrel, and in 1965, he made its first rifle fabricated entirely of hand-made parts from 18th century-style tools, which he also made. The 1969 film "Gunsmith of Williamsburg," produced by Colonial Williamsburg and available on YouTube, features Gusler making his second rifle.

A Virginia native, Gusler made his first flintlock pistol at 14. He joined Colonial Williamsburg in 1962 as an interpreter in the crafts department. During his career, Gusler held positions related to arms, furniture, and conservation. Since retiring in 2004, Gusler has continued to make custom flintlock rifles and tomahawks, present seminars to organizations such as the Kentucky Rifle Association and the Contemporary Longrifle Association, and teach gunsmithing techniques.