

THE SLHS NEWSLETTER

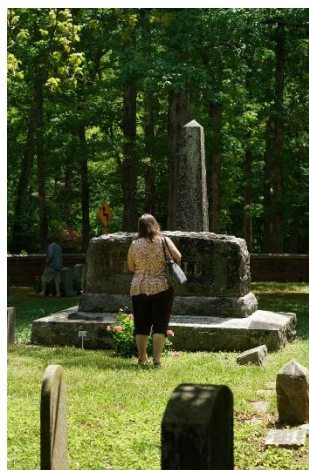
Issue No. 3 / May 2022

WALKING THE GROUNDS AT ST. LUKE'S

There is a serenity in walking the grounds at St. Luke's. We feel the past as we walk, yet know what is to come is not in our hands but God's. We would simply like to remind you of several covenants in regard to the cemetery. St. Luke's is not a perpetual care cemetery but the church is responsible for general maintenance. That entails grading, seeding and mowing.



Fresh flowers and wreaths and potted plants may be laid at a marker and may be removed by the church after an appropriate time at the discretion of the church. No plantings, artificial flowers, breakable containers, or other objects may be set out in the cemetery or around any lot or marker. Monuments for those buried in a casket must reflect and



mirror those already located in the cemetery. This is not meant to be restrictive, rather a small reminder that when we walk, we are still with those who came before us and we are also with those yet to come.

By Peter Boone

Featured person of interest

WILLIAM WOOD FINNEY 1829 -1910

Born in 1829 in Chesterfield County, William Wood Finney was the second child of William Wood and Elizabeth Crichton Finney.

After graduating at the bottom of his class of 24 from Lexington Academy (VMI), Finney taught at Warrenton Male Academy in North Carolina. Citing inadequate wages, he left for the gold fields of California in 1850. Later, in Mexico, he served as a field engineer surveying the rail route from Vera Cruz to Mexico City.

(Continues on page 2...)



UPCOMING EVENTS
Memorial Day Service (p. 4)
Gravestone Cleaning Day (p. 4)

Our Mission Statement

To research, discover, promote, and share the significance of St. Luke's Episcopal Church and its Cemetery - within the broader community.

(Continued from page 1)

Returning cross country to Virginia in 1859 with his friend and fellow VMI alumnus, Benjamin Ficklin, they observed Army dispatch riders coming and going, connecting far flung outposts with various headquarters. The idea of the Overland Express was born, financed by Finney's mother, Majors Waddell and Russell and others. Ficklin operated the eastern terminal at St Joseph, MO and Finney the western operations at Sacramento, CA.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Finney signed on as a Captain and served under Generals Johnston and Jackson. As a Colonel, he headed west to serve under Gen. Heth. Captured at the Battle of Lewisburg, imprisoned and exchanged 3 months later, Finney returned to Richmond to receive his promised designation as Brig. General only to find that the Army, thinking him dead, had dropped him from its rolls.

Finney's next escapade was aboard the blockade runner "Robert E. Lee" as the Disbursing Officer making 19 trips to England and France. In 1864 Finney and Ficklin purchased from the Confederate Navy the blockade running steamship "Coquette" which they operated until the war's end.

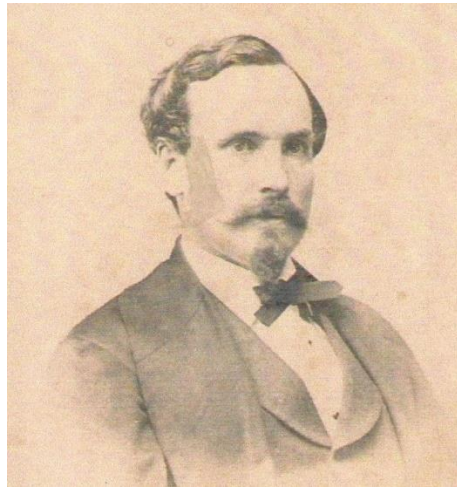


Photo of Wm. W. Finney

At the close of the war the ship was dispatched to a location which would enable her to participate in resupplying Confederate forces west of the Mississippi. Unfortunately, the captain hired to take her there was an undercover agent for the North and sailed her straight to Baltimore, turning her over to the US. It is called "Finney luck" in our family.

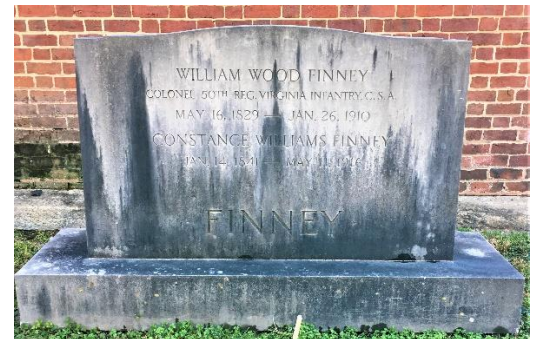


Painting of the "Coquette"

In 1865, Finney married Constance Williams of Society Hill, SC, who he had met in Paris. They moved from SC to "Elioch", a home in Powhatan County which his father had purchased in 1836 from the Martain family, a Huguenot grant of 1,000 acres. Constance, using her inheritance, purchased the home from Finney's brothers, taking title in her name alone, as an un-pardoned officer of the Confederacy under terms of Reconstruction, could not own real estate.

Constance and William had one son and eight daughters, the eldest marrying The Rev. Martin Johnson, rector of St. Luke's from 1886-1915. One of their daughters, my grandmother Helen, married Charles Randolph Kennon, II, who lived across the road at "Norwood".

Col. Finney died in 1910 in Petersburg, VA at the home of one of his daughters. He, his wife, his son, and six of his daughters are buried in the cemetery at St. Luke's Church.



Historical data contributed by Connie Harriss, descendant of William Wood Finney

COMING HOME TO ST. LUKE'S

By David Purdy

In the summer of 1976, I was invited by the Rev. Lawrence Mason to audition for the position of organist/choir director for the Manakin - St. Luke's Cure. The interim organist, Joyce Evans, was a member of the search team, and I remember being asked to play one of the more challenging hymns in the hymnal ("I bind unto myself today"), which I had never seen before! Despite stumbling through it, I was offered the position, with the understanding that I would stay for two years (until I finished my graduate program in industrial psychology at the University of Richmond). Well, I ended up staying for ten years! The people of St. Luke's Church were very welcoming to this 22-year old grad student, and I frequently got invited for lunch

(Continues on page 3...)

after the service – or for dinner prior to choir rehearsals – or for Bloody Mary’s any old time! They invited me to their parties and included me in their family events. I was quickly incorporated into the community and got to know a wide range of interesting, lively people of all ages. Joyce Evans even found an old house close by (Terre Haute Farm) for me to rent (along with another St. Luke’s member, Wayne Ambler.) The people of St. Luke’s became an extended family for me.

If you want a good Christian education, listen to sermons by Lawrence Mason. These concise eight-minute homilies formed the foundation of my understanding of the gospel. And if I missed something on the first hearing at Manakin, I got a second chance at St. Luke’s later that morning! Even to this day, I still remember the details from many of his sermons, and the themes of loving God, loving neighbor, and living life abundantly.

In 1978, Lawrence put me in charge of finding a new organ for St. Luke’s. (A parishioner had loaned her home theatre organ to the church and was hoping to get it back again.) We looked at electronic instruments, reed organs, historic pipe organs, and custom-made pipe organs. Space limitations were a major constraining factor. After several years of searching, we found a small 3-rank pipe organ (*M.P. Möller, 1950*) that was a perfect fit for the space available. The sound was warm, yet bold enough to lead the enthusiastic singing of the St. Luke’s congregation. The new instrument enabled the organist to play a wide range of organ repertoire and accompany the choir in major choral works. The only problem was that mice soon discovered the wonders of living in a pipe organ, and over time, they damaged the inner workings. Sometimes notes would stick during the service, and I would have to stop playing, remove the front of the pipe case, find the offending pipe, blow it out, and drop it back in its slot, hoping it wouldn’t happen again that morning!

The St. Luke’s choir comprised some talented singers who were keen to learn big, challenging choral masterpieces. Over the years, we presented works by Handel (the Christmas section of “Messiah,” the “Hallelujah Chorus,” “Worthy is the Lamb”), Bach and so much more. Each Advent, we presented (along with the Manakin choir) a service of Lessons and Carols. We had a faithful group of about 10-15 choristers who were committed to weekly rehearsals (and studying vocal parts at home). Sometimes the challenge was to find enough seats for everyone in the church Sunday morning!

When I started bringing my new girlfriend, Lynn Christopher, to church in the spring of 1981, the people of St. Luke’s also embraced her very warmly. Apparently, everyone had quickly concluded that she was the right one for me, and they just couldn’t figure out why it was taking me so long to propose. When I “finally” got around to it in October, Marjorie Mason admitted that she was planning to give me until the end of the year, and if I was still dawdling, she was going to find someone else for Lynn! Well, four months later we were married - in the midst of a 10-inch snowstorm – and all the choir was there to sing! Soon thereafter, Lynn and I were confirmed at St. Luke’s and became active members. Our son Christopher was baptized there in 1984 and our daughter Catherine in 1986 (wearing an heirloom baptism dress given to her by Mary Barden).

As our family grew, and my career started to involve more frequent travel, including trips overseas, I had to make the difficult decision to give up my job as organist/choir director. Nevertheless, our family remained active at St. Luke’s for another five years. I served on the vestry, and Lynn taught Sunday school and helped make the boxwood Christmas trees with the Women of the Church. Later we moved into town and started attending a church closer to home.

Next thing you know, thirty years had passed! I met Betsy Brandt at a meeting of the American Guild of Organists and discovered our St. Luke’s connection. I explained that I had retired and was relearning to play the organ, after letting it go for many years. When she reached out later to see if I could substitute for her at St. Luke’s, I felt very honored and was delighted to say yes! During the weeks leading up to the service, I enjoyed coming out to practice in the church – and roaming the cemetery, remembering so many of the wonderful people that I had known across the years.

When I arrived for the Sunday service, I was greeted by so many warm and friendly people. Before starting the prelude, I looked out into the congregation and spotted several former choir members, including Joyce Evans, the first person I met at St. Luke’s (during my audition in 1976). As the congregation started singing the processional hymn with their legendary enthusiasm, wonderful memories of many years of exuberant singing came flooding back, and it felt really good to be back home again! The Rev. Dale Custer must have read my mind, because during the announcements, he introduced me and said, “Welcome home, David!”



Front row: Peggy Jones, David Purdy. Second row: Joyce Evans, Debbie Upson, Ellen Hauser, Sally Silvey. Third Row: Ashton Mitchell, Harry Upson, Mark Scott. Fourth Row: Carroll Barr, Wayne Ambler, Betty Handy

SPRING CLEANUP DAY

On Saturday, April 2, eighteen members of St. Luke's met at 8 o'clock in the morning to beautify the Church and Parish Hall grounds. Young and old alike worked side by side to remove fall and winter debris. Leaves were blown and raked (lots of leaves!), bushes trimmed, tree limbs and branches were gathered and disposed of. The end result was a cleaned and trimmed property with the extra bonus of good fellowship, fresh air and great exercise.



Top left: David Stinnett, Maureen Moslow-Benway, Erica Stinnett, Susan Dunlap.
Top Middle: Debbie Upson.
Top Right: Thom Estes, Erica Stinnett, Juliet.
Bottom Left: Dolores Gennari, Heinrich Gideons.
Bottom Right: Dan Jones, Betty Handy, Billy Boykin.



UPCOMING EVENTS

GRAVESTONE CLEANING DAY

St. Luke's Historical Society is planning another gravestone cleaning day. Please join us on Saturday, May 21, 2022 at 9 AM. We will supply the cleaning solution, brushes and instructions, you bring a bucket and rubber gloves. We encourage family members who have loved ones interred in the cemetery to join us.

MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE SUNDAY, MAY 29, 2022 at 3PM



A Memorial Day service will be held at St. Luke's Episcopal Church on Sunday, May 29, 2022 at 3pm. Please join us as we remember our brave men and women who gave their lives for our freedoms.

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A SLHS MEMBER?

To become a member of SLHS, please make a check payable to *St. Luke's Historical Society* with "Membership" on the memo line and mail to the church (SLHS, 2245 Huguenot Trail, Powhatan, VA 23139). Membership fee is \$100.

For more information please contact:

Connie Harriss

harrissconstance@gmail.com

804-794-5642

or

Betty Handy

handybetty@msn.com

804-794-6472

