

Monroe County Historical Society

MCHS Quarterly Meeting

Sunday, July 9, 2017

1:00 p.m.

The Beirne Dransfield Store



This meeting will be on location at the The Beirne Dransfield store, a Great Depression era Store at the Steve Dransfield farm near the old community of Centennial. The small white frame structure sits quietly on the north side of WV Rt. 3, about three miles east of Gap Mills and half a mile west of the Great Eastern Divide. Surrounded by the rolling farm fields of the Greater Sweet Springs Valley, its unassuming appearance leaves most passing motorists oblivious to the building's past history.

In 1933 Beirne and his wife, Annie were operating a 500 acre farm along with selling V.C. Fertilizers, IHC Farm Equipment, Wayne Feeds and Amoco Gasoline. Beirne reasoned that building a store by the new road would be the next logical step to his growing number of ventures. He kept a set of journals where he meticulously wrote down each transaction. The faded entries give a rare look into

the daily lives of Gap Valley residents during the Great Depression and War Years that followed.

In 1999 the Dransfields decided to return the store to its 1930's appearance and use it as a family museum. Using a 1936 photo as a guide, a search was launched for period advertising signs and the picket fence was rebuilt. The counters and display cases were moved back to their former positions and period items were stocked on the shelves. An original Glascock Bros. pop cooler was found and is filled with vintage style soda and ice for special occasions, Several sets of old harnesses found on the farm were oiled and repaired and now hang on the wall as a reminder of an era of farming long since past. The walls are also lined with vintage family photos and advertising posters from the early 1900's. Despite all the years that have past the store still retains that faint odor of feed and fertilizer noticeable when you first walk through the door.

The Dransfield Store was first opened to the public this year for the Historical Society Spring House Tour and is now reopened by popular demand for our Quarterly Meeting. Everyone is invited for a barbeque at 1:00 p.m. and this will be a fundraiser organized by Don Dransfield for the Four-H Club (a donation of \$5.00 is suggested). After the lunch, about 2:00, Steve Dransfield will talk about the vintage store displays and show us the artifacts. The general public is cordially invited!

Endowment

The Historical Society Endowment, begun just last year, was propelled forward with a very generous legacy gift from the James Heavener estate. By now it stands at well over \$65,000, and we realize all the improvements we could make by growing this fund even more. (1) We could replace the belfry and steeple on the Old First Baptist Church which were destroyed in the Downburst of 2006. (2) We are now exploring the possibility of upgrading the cabinets in the Caperton Museum which has been receiving local artifacts for over 25 years and is groaning at the seams. (3) We should develop a booking service for Ames Clair Hall which has been upgraded recently but is really underutilized. And finally, (4) we need to professionalize the Society office because we have grown to such an extent that the volunteer members of the Board are hard pressed to deal with organizational and financial matters. Accordingly, we will be seeking further legacy gifts from the membership in our Fall Fund Drive Campaign.

