

Herndon's Gossip Column

By Barbara Glakas

Early Herndon residents would often see each other at the post office, at the general store, at church and at club meetings. It was there that they would talk and share information about the goings on in the community. But there was another key way that neighbors would find out about the happenings in the community. Long before there were land lines, cell phones, or social media, there were the local newspapers.

Two key newspapers that covered Herndon news was the *Fairfax Herald* (dating back to the 1880s) and various forms of *Herndon Observer* (sometimes called *The News-Observer*, dating back to the early 1900s). These newspapers covered national, state and local news. But they also had sections that might today be described as a gossip column of sorts. They were not actually called gossip columns, however. These sections of the newspapers had subheadings that were entitled "Local News" and "Social and Personal."

Frequently, club, business or church meetings were announced or reported in these sections. For example: "The Fortnightly Club met on Saturday last, with Miss Maria Bready," and, "Cottage prayer meeting at the M.E. parsonage Friday evening at 7:30."

But often times, the activities that these columns reported were short briefs on the personal lives of local residents. For example: "Mr. and Mrs. A.T. Walker spent Christmas with Mrs. Walker's parents in Washington, where there was a large family fathering," and "Mrs. H.E. Hanes has as her guests this week, Miss Grayson and Miss Cameron Fitzhugh, of Culpeper," and, "Mrs. W.H. Beavers, who is quite sick, is slowly convalescing."

There were innumerable entries that listed who was visiting whom, who was hosting parties, who was sick, and who was out of town on vacation or away visiting relatives. However, there were also many other interesting, and sometimes quirky entries that showed a snapshot of life in Herndon.

We hope you will enjoy a few excerpts from these local newspaper columns from the early 1900s that are listed below:

- "A. H. Kirk shipped two of his best Buff Rocks on Monday to a Norfolk customer. One of the birds, a fine cockerel, sold for \$10."
- "Mrs. Furr L. White was hostess at a prettily appointed luncheon on Tuesday."
- "Joseph Orrison has returned from Washington, his eyes much improved by treatment at the Episcopal Eye and Ear Hospital."
- "A.H. Reed, proprietor of the Reed shows, who was wintering a number of wild animals on his farm in Herndon, was badly bitten on the hand recently by an ape."

- “There are displayed in front of Mr. Cooper’s store some fine looking peanuts raised on Frank Ballou’s farm. He grew about a bushel and their appearance indicates that they could be made a good crop on light soils thereabouts.”
- “Capt. Robert Sherman has returned from a hunting trip in the Shenandoah Valley, in which he bagged 210 birds.”
- “Asa Cook, the boy who was taken from Herndon to Richmond for trial on a charge of taking letters from a mailbox, was released not long ago, the judge saying that he had been punished enough. Asa was given a new suit of clothes and some good advice and sent home.”
- “A man named Washer, who has been living alone in one of the William’s houses, and making a living as a huckster, was adjudged insane by a lunacy commission last week and taken to Fairfax for detention until he can be sent to Staunton. The commission was composed of Justice Williams and Drs. Detwiler and W.I. Robey. Washer was suffering from a form of religious dementia and was possessed of various hallucinations.”
- “Each little pupil in Miss Groh’s kindergarten was given a beautiful and rare specimen of Dahlia last Sunday morning.”
- “Some of the Halloween pranks about Herndon were disgraceful enough to get participants in trouble if caught. Among the worst was the removal of an out building from the school house grounds to one of the railroad parks.”
- “Mr. M.A. Kenfield has sold his place near the cemetery to a western man who is coming at once to Herndon.”
- “Frank W. Huddleson has been confined to his home for a week with a wound in his right foot near the big toe, caused by stepping on a nail at the new building on his farm near the Town.”
- “The following letters remain unclaimed at the Herndon post office: Mrs. Emma Lawrence, Mr. W.T. Slaughter, Harry G. Laycock.”
- “T.W. Grimes has a new automobile.”
- “Dr. and W.I. Robey is having his house papered and painted, preparatory to bringing home his bride on the sixteenth of this month.”
- “The drug store is making a fine display of Christmas goods.”
- “A team belonging to A.S. Harrison, employed in the new road construction, ran away Monday evening, breaking wagon and harness, but not injuring themselves further than such fright usually damage the temper of the a horse.”
- “Mr. Max Wiehle has the misfortune to lose a large Percheron horse, which he recently purchased from Mr. G.A. Bannister.”
- “Cards are out for the wedding of Mr. D.C. Mahoney and Miss Edna M. Gillette, at the Episcopal Church October 21.”
- “The wedding bells have been ringing in our midst lately. Last week two of our young men, Mr. Carl Ryon and Mr. Nathaniel Jenkins, took unto themselves brides in the

persons of Miss Mattie Blincoe and Miss Fannie Havener respectively, which events were solemnized in Washington, D.C.”

- “Miss Lottie Dyer, who was taken sick on the eve of her marriage to Mr. Robert Schneider, is now rapidly convalescing.”
- “J.A. Bushing has bought a new drill.”
- “Arthur Buell has added a wing to his cattle barn so that there is shelter from the wind on three side of his yard.”
- “On November 4th, a party of our young folks went on a straw ride and spent the evening with Mr. Simms of Floris. In spite of the rain coming home, all had a fine time.”
- “Mr. William Brown has been shipping baled hay from Herndon.”
- “Messrs. H.B. and Clarence Hutchison went hunting Saturday and shot twenty quail and thirteen rabbits.”
- “Mr. Walter Thrift, on his way to Washington Saturday evening, decided he could not pass Herndon without stopping to bid the girls goodbye, so he stopped and spent Sunday with them.”
- “There has been quite an epidemic of fence-row clearing on the Frying Pan Road.”
- “The movement to lynch those who sang ‘Larboard Watch’ at a recent entertainment has been abandoned.”
- “Mr. Isaac C. Bradway has had the misfortune to lose a large number of his fowls lately; the invading culprits were, presumably, minks, one of these small pests having been captured.”
- Mr. Herbert Heflin, who was quite seriously injured by his horse falling on him in the high jump, during the second day of the Horse and Colt show, was very slowly improving at last accounts. Mr. E.W. Wells was run over by a horse during the second race on Thursday and injured, but not seriously. ”
- “The young ladies of Herndon gave a Leap Year dance in Central Hall last Saturday night. It was well attended and pronounced a great success.”
- “The young people of Herndon have been enjoying skating in the Wiehle pond this week.”
- “J. Frank Stotts, H.H, Simms, and a number of other colored men, left on Monday for work in the woods on the Patuxent River in Maryland.”
- “Every young lady who wishes to attend the “Candy Contest” on January 29th should procure candy boxes at the post office.”
- “Miss Lelia Fitzhugh’s hens are winning the record for laying.”
- “The beautiful and rare poinsettia plant, so universally admired at the Congregational Church last Sunday morning, was loaned by Mrs. James Cockerille.”
- “The machinery for the gas plant has arrived and is being installed.”
- “Fifteen new voters have been added to the list in the Herndon district, ten by transfer and five by registration.”

- “In the storm of last week, the barn on J.W. Bauckman’s farm, formerly the Van Horn place, was stick by lightning and totally destroyed.”
- “Make some more sidewalks! The Town will pay one half, if the location is approved and the funds available.”
- “The young people have been making use of the snow for sleighing and coasting parties.”
- “We are sorry to miss Mr. Amos Crouse from among the merry makers on account of his being confined to the house by trouble with his limbs.”
- “Before the new sidewalk was fairly dry, someone ran a loaded wheelbarrow over it. A Town official is an authority for the statement that this will not be permitted.”
- “Through a little ad in The Observer, M.K. Stroud sold 300 bushels of Leap’s prolific wheat, and could have disposed of as much more if he had had it. The incident only shows the value of advertising but also appreciation by farmers hereabouts of good seed.”
- “The Observer erroneously stated last week that the marriage of Willis McGlincy and Miss Elizabeth Cockerille was performed in Washington. A license was procured, but the marriage was prevented by the young lady’s parents.”

**The above quotes do not reflect the views of the Herndon Historical Society.*

About this column: “Remembering Herndon’s History” is a regular Herndon Patch feature offering stories and anecdotes about Herndon’s past. The articles are written by members of the Herndon Historical Society. Barbara Glakas is a member. A complete list of “Remembering Herndon’s History” columns is available on the Historical Society website at www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org.

The Herndon Historical Society operates a small museum that focuses on local history. It is housed in the Herndon Depot in downtown Herndon on Lynn Street and is open every Sunday from noon until 3:00. Visit the Society’s website at www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org, and the Historical Society’s Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/HerndonHistory> for more information.

Note: The Historical Society is seeking volunteers to help keep the museum open each Sunday. If you have an interest in local history and would like to help, contact HerndonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com.