



# STONE MOUNTAIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## Greetings!

We have our feet firmly planted in 2021! We thank all of you for renewing your memberships and helping out with the 1871 Club. We couldn't accomplish our mission without your support. 2020 was a tough customer but we are looking for a productive year ahead. We welcome Pauline T. Myer, Treasurer, to the Board and thank Joe Joseph for his past service. We are delighted that Melanie Florence has signed up to be House Manager this year. During the pandemic, we successfully applied and were approved for a DeKalb County tax exemption for the Marks lot for 2020 and beyond. Good news there. Still wary of the virus, we are sadly not scheduling any events this spring but with fingers crossed, we are planning a rollicking Christmas party at year end when we can meet safely.

This newsletter contains two essays, both thought provoking. The first is another excerpt from a historical account of growing up in Stone Mountain written by resident Sam Nuckolls in the 1990s for a Remember When Program. Mr. Nuckolls (1920-1996) lived in Stone Mountain for most of his life, making a living early on as a window dresser for Davisons on Peachtree Street. He married Gisela Vera Preu of Switzerland in 1956 and they resided on Gordon Street. In this excerpt, Mr. Nuckolls takes us to Pete's Restaurant, Shermantown's baseball field, and Black religious services in the village where we meet Preacher Woodson. With his heartfelt language and great memory, Mr. Nuckolls transports us to when segregation was the way it was and speaks to his feelings as a boy and as an adult later in life about this period.

*(continues)*

Educator and Board member Rusty Hamby submitted the second essay after a spirited Board meeting on Stone Mountain Park's future and what role we as a Society need to play in that development. We all know change is ahead but how do we meet the challenge? Mr. Hamby writes thoughtfully about the value of learning from history and has some good advice for all involved. We appreciate his timely submission to the newsletter.

Many of you have been using your time in isolation to clean out, reorganize, and reduce your "footprints". And the Historical Society has benefited greatly. Tug Tuggle has donated a terrific and wide-ranging collection of family pieces including portraits, furniture, uniforms, china, documents and photographs. The donation included a yardstick from Tuggle Hardware Store as well as Mrs. Bertie Tuggles' sable fur pelt stole with her initials embroidered on it. We now have a great collection of Tuggle memorabilia that tells the story of this family who had such deep roots in the village and its history. A 1918 letter printed in this issue was especially timely.

George Coletti is sorting out the historical materials he has amassed over the years as he chronicled the village history and has donated boxes of items including historic photographs and films. We have already sent 3 films shot by John Fred Maddox to be digitized and look forward to sharing them with you. We also thank George for an Oriental rug! Gary Peet brought a number of documents over for scanning including the photo of his mother as bride in a Tom Thumb wedding. He has advised me that more are coming. Finally, the Society received a letter from the Jennings Family of Ballston Spa, NY which included a donation of nickels – wooden nickels! Great start to 2021!

In June, we are working with the City to celebrate Juneteenth. We are mounting another Main Street banner program honoring African Americans who have made a difference in our community. See below for more information on how you can participate. We need nominations and sponsors!

Finally, we lost our historic oak tree in our front yard on February 18<sup>th</sup>. After several days of rain, it simply laid down stretching into our neighbor's yard. We are thankful that there was no loss of life and we appreciate the responders who came to our aid and our neighbors who lived through the incident. It is always heartstopping when a tree of that size falls and this was no exception. No damage to the Wells-Brown House but our ADA ramp was upended and our historic fence damaged. Unfortunately, the Higgins property next door suffered damages as well. We are still working through the repairs.

Tug Tuggle donated a historic letter from his Great Grandmother Martha Brantley Hodo to his mother, Bertie Britt Tuggle. It was written in 1918 as the Spanish flu made its way through Georgia. Reading her description of the times during the epidemic is so familiar yet different. Closings and loss of family togetherness are noted. While we relied on the internet the past

year, however, the Tuggle family relied on letters to share family news while in isolation. Martha Hodo, a mother of 11 children, worries greatly about her daughter Lena's health after having her eighth child. This letter full of information about 1918 connects well with our experience in 2021. We are fortunate it has been preserved by family members and are delighted to share it with the membership.

Enjoy the newsletter!

*Mary Beth Reed*



Tug Tuggle donated this letter from his Great Grandmother Martha Brantley Hodo to his mother, Bertie Britt Tuggle. It was written in 1918 as the Spanish flu made its way through Georgia. The letter has been preserved by the Tuggle Family and is now part of the Historical Society collection.

## A Heartful of Love... Grandma Hodo to Bertie Tuggle

Hendersonville NC

October 16, 1918

Dear Bertie,

*I was so glad to get your letter, will certainly forgive you this time you told me so much I wanted to know. I study about my dear child night and day, do hope she will take care of herself & tell her when she gets able to go around be sure and not do too much for her strength, also tell her if the Babie frets at night to give it Paregoric. It won't hurt to give it in reason. There is no sense in her losing sleep and not resting and make her feel bad next day.*

*I am not well of my cold yet - seems that I take fresh cold every day though have been getting around some as our time is short now we are to leave for Augusta Saturday. Mr. Norris can't get off to come for us but Mr. Watson will help us and he knows just what to do.*

*Martha knows him- he and Miss Ramsey are going with us. Also, Miss Emly Mc C\*\*\*. there will be five of us in our Party and we expect to land in Augusta Saturday night, if nothing prevents, the Influenza is raging here as well as there - There is cases on both sides of us. I have just written Stella Holmes to meet me as I will stop with her and when I see her & Carrie in a few days my intention is to go up to Sallie Johnson's[her sister in Boneville,GA]. I feel like I want to get in the country and Rubie writes me to come. A Transfer Co that has been bringing so many people to Fannie's gave us a trip to "Horse Shoe" yesterday and I had never been there. It is beautiful out that way and we all enjoyed it very much but I tell them it gave me more cold but I am thankful to be able to keep up. Tell Martha Miss Ramsey sends her good wishes and love also tell her we hear from Mr. Peters and Mr. Zekros occasionally, and they never forget Grandma.*

*We are having beautiful weather here now and a big frost this morning we are sitting by a big wood fire. The Schools are all closed here and in Augusta. No services in the churches, no moveing pictures, no public gatherings at all. Bertie if I live and keep up my strength I'm coming to see you all after awhile. Tell Lena I just want to see her and the children so bad but feel like I had better go to the Country now. [It] is why I'm going to Sallie's. I will be glad for Martha or Lena will to write me to 814 Hollock Rd Augusta- want to hear as soon as I get there from you all.*

*And I will write you when I get there. The Chinkapine and chestnuts crop is a failure up here this year. I have been trying everywhere to get some to send you all but there is none this year. Give each child a kiss for Grandma. Regards and best wishes to Mr. Hill, love to the boys, All good wishes to you and Charles from Grandma Hodo*

*Again, tell dear Lena to take good care of herself also a heartfelt of love to her.*



## **Memoirs of the Years 1927-1937: The Places and People of Stone Mountain as Seen by a Boy Continued – Sam Nuckolls**

This excerpt from a historical account of growing up in Stone Mountain was written by resident Sam Nuckolls in the 1990s for a Remember When Program. Mr. Nuckolls (1920-1996) lived in Stone Mountain for most of his life, making a living early on as a

*Sam Nuckolls, August 15, 1949,*

*Source: The Atlanta Constitution*

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window dresser for Davisons on Peachtree Street. He married Gisela Vera Preu of Switzerland in 1956 and they resided on Gordon Street. I was lucky enough to hear Mr. Nuckolls give this talk in the 1990s at ART Station.

It was in Pete's Place, as a young white boy, I first was made aware of the inequities that Blacks suffer. I realized it, but accepted it as most folks did, as just how things were. I would be sitting on a stool, drinking my RC Cola, while an elderly black man was back against the wall, standing, to have his. Pete didn't make those rules, it was the way things were everywhere.

Several months ago, I wrote of a couple episodes having to do with race relations in Stone Mtn. back then. I had written these as ad-ins for letters to friends who had not gone through similar experiences. I'll throw those episodes in with these other memoirs for whatever history they may reveal. But they are rather personal, and from my own vintage, my own thoughts as a boy. Others may have had the same thoughts or not, I have no way of knowing. But I definitely think that someone from the Black Community, maybe Gloria Brown, should be on this Committee and get a better report on these important citizens of our Town.

So the next pages were written for another reason and at another time. I could rewrite parts of them to fit better to this endeavor, but to tell the truth, I'm not wanting to type that much more...

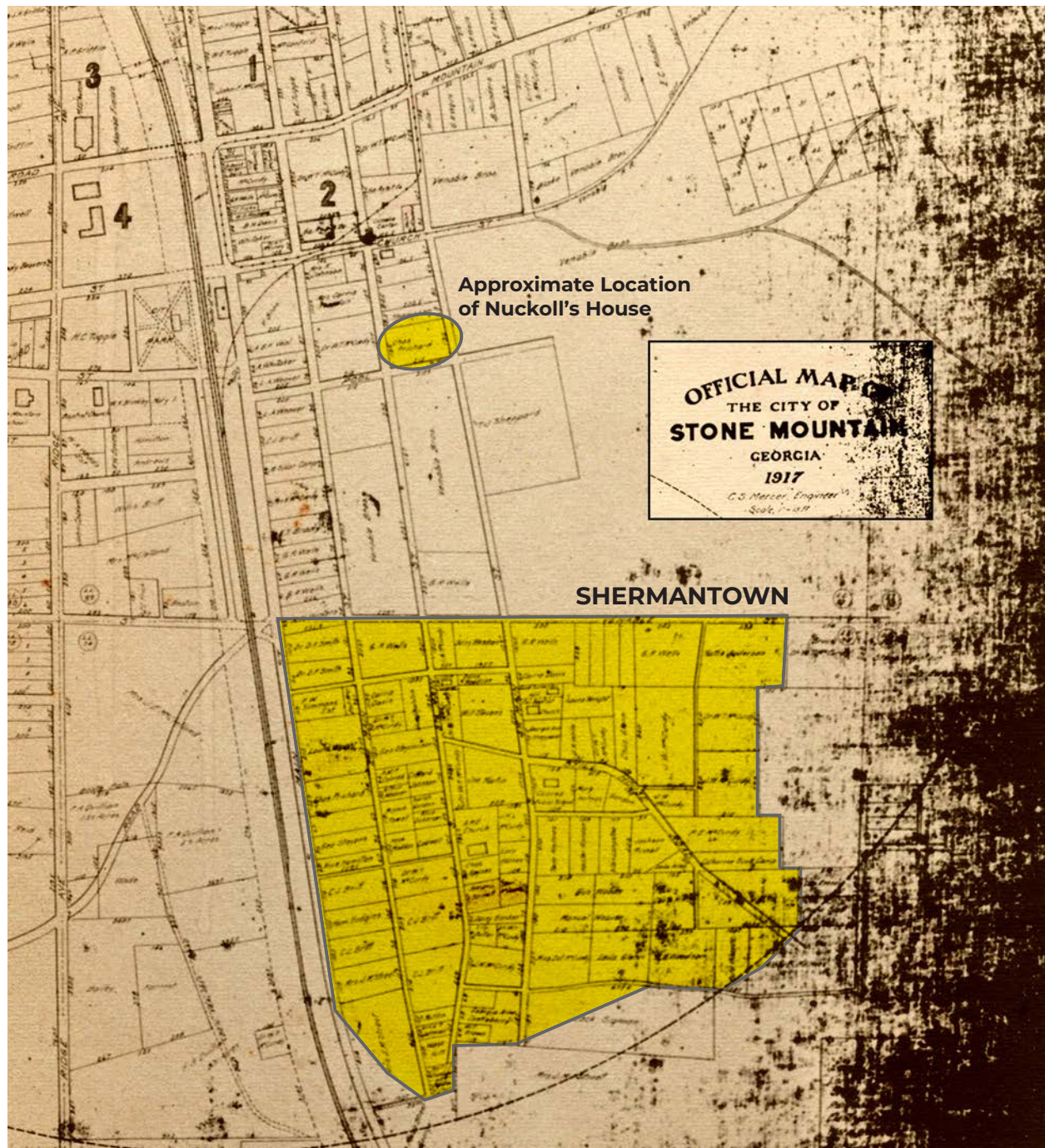
The other day, I was telling Gisela about some particular experiences that I had in my youth that she seemed to enjoy listening to, and I enjoyed recalling. These instances were unique because of the time and the place. On this cold, rainy afternoon, I think I'll excuse myself from other endeavors and just write this down, as I told it to her. We were discussing the fact that some people have a natural happy outlook, and others don't. And I got sidetracked onto this little episode.

It's a pity that some people take everything so serious, that it makes life a burden. I think our religion even sometimes calls on us to suffer now in order to enjoy the next life. I am more in favor of the happy atmosphere of the Southern Black Church, especially of yesteryear. Their music especially affects me in a more positive manner than all of the hymns of our more sophisticated churches. I was exposed to this as a very small boy, about five to not over seven. As in all small towns in Georgia at the time, there was a section of town that all of the negroes lived. It's still that way to some extent, but back then it was definite, as if a line were drawn on the map and you knew where that section started and ended.

The little town of Stone Mountain had two such sections, separated by several blocks, in which a corner of the white folks part of town was located. We lived on a dirt road that connected these two sections of blacks, and there always was a lot of foot traffic back and



forth in front of our house. My Grandmother lived with us, Daddy brought her in when he married and bought the house. And even though as a child, her Father had some slaves on their farm, somehow Grandma had a whole lot of close friends in the negro communities. One of these friends, of mutual respect was Preacher Woodson. He lived in one section and walked by our house to his church in the other. I can still see him in my mind, a tall gray-haired man, always in a black suit, coat a little longer than most men wore. He had a stiff white collar and high-topped black shoes, very distinguished looking.



Grandma would be sitting in her rocking chair on the front porch and Preacher Woodson would see her, come over, lifting his hat, sort of a homburg or derby, and speak to her. "Miss Nannie", that's what everyone called her, "We're gonna have a good service this evening. Do you want to come along?" She would say, "Let me get my shawl", and the three of us would tattle on down that dirt road about three country blocks to his church. Woodson would, very politely guide Grandma and me to the front row on the right side. The front couple benches on the left side was where the Deacons sat and was called the A-MEN corner.

We were the only white folks there, though I imagine at times there were other whites of the community attending. In our town there was a natural, honest closeness, even though segregated in schools, public transportation etc. Well, Preacher Woodson would give a strong, what we would call, "fire and brimstone" sermon. But the congregation, instead of getting a beat-down, guilty complex, they really enjoyed it. hey even egged him on with their clapping and A-mens. So the more he preached of their sins and where they were headed, if they didn't change, the more they agreed and the happier they seemed to be. It's as if they were on his side, and together everything was fine. And though later I realized that few, if any, did make those changes he was calling for, they were there next Sunday to cheer him on and praise him for the best sermon he ever preached...every time.

For me, the events were always pleasant, the people-watching that I did out of the corner of my eye. When up to age seven, I would see if I could spot some of my buddies who played baseball in the pasture between our house and theirs. When the collection plate was passed around, I made a big to-do about dropping my nickel into the center of the other change. And in receiving some of the greetings graciously meant for my Grandma as we left, I probably was boosting my own ego.

All this, but one thing surpassed all other, and that was the music. To an old upright piano, at an angle about ten feet in front of us, they really put everything into their songs. There was no choir, the whole congregation was a choir. And each song got a little better, louder, more joyful. Until, sort of a letdown, the last number was softer to accompany the invitation to join the church. Not as bad as white revival services though, sometimes in a tent, they'd sing all 27 verses of an invitation hymn. But I still get goose bumps when I hear some of those negro spirituals and gospel singing. Somehow, that sound soaked into my genes, there to stay. I wish I could tell Grandma and Preacher Woodson, too, how much I have enjoyed those sounds over the years.

A highlight, during this past Christmas season, was the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra's presentation, "Gospel Christmas" It was really a sight to see and a treat to hear a choir of about a hundred, drawn from half a dozen Atlanta churches, in harmony with a full and fine orchestra. I got a special kick out of watching guest conductor, Leslie Dunner, keep the

orchestra in tow while some of the sopranos played around with a high note, extending it several beats. You know what I mean.

Any time of the year, I deeply enjoy Gisela's tapes of Jessie Norman and Kathleen Battle. Both of them are masters of the music. But in spite of this art brought to high acclaim, the special sound and rhythm of a Spiritual takes me back to Preacher Woodson's church. And though I don't even remember what songs they sang, I'm sure that the "feel" was there and I'm glad that I had a chance to experience it at that time.

I'll tell you more about Preacher Woodson and my "colored" friends that I remember from my youth. I probably was in my early teens, Grandma had died and I didn't go down to Preacher Woodson's church anymore. But we boys played "cow pasture" baseball with some black boys our age. As was the custom, we called them, "colored", at the time. And they called us, "white boys". There was a small pasture of Sheppard Dairy across the road from our house, and a larger one over the hill towards Sherman Town, the previously mentioned area in which the blacks lived. About five or six of us white boys would start up a game of Rotation. If not enough players to make up two teams, there was this game called "Rotation", that only required that one person be in home, the batter, at a time. Others were (in order of rotation to become batter) a catcher, a pitcher, left field, center field, and right field. With only a first base, the object was to hit the ball and run to first base and back home. Not being strike-out pitchers, the batter would usually get two or three hits before he popped fly out or didn't make it back to home plate. The batter's goal was to make the fielders run, chase his long hits and to stay in home as long as possible. For after he was out, he would go to right field and chase balls, himself for a while.

About half the times we would start a game of Rotation, a couple more white boys would show up, and half a dozen colored fellows. So we would switch into a regular game, us against them. That was just how it was, no hard feelings, in fact we admired their baseball abilities. Also, as custom would have it, they always allowed us to be in home first. Which, as it turned out would be our only turn. We would be in for about 5 or 6 hits before our 3 outs. Then once they got in, they would run our legs off and the only way we could end the game was to suddenly remember certain chores we had to do at home before sundown.

The Sherman Town community had a semi-pro ball team and their field was adjoining, just beyond the big Sheppard pasture. The players worked all week and played on Saturday, sometimes on Sunday too. They had uniforms, charged admission and had the reputation of a fine team. They always beat the Black Crackers from Atlanta, and played teams from as far as Miami. I would go down and sit under a tree in Sheppard's pasture to watch the game. Even now, I well remember the better players' names and their style. A batter on the visiting team hit a high fly over center field. James Howard, on seeing that it was going over the six-foot fence separating the ball field from Sheppard's pasture, jumped the fence, took





Undated Photograph, Hard Rocks, Shermantown.

two more running steps, and nabbed that fly ball! That was nearly sixty years ago. Most of the players went by their nick-names. A short fellow called "Midnight", played right field. In a loud, sing-song way, he kept the whole team alert and in a happy mood. He would yell, "Hey Ho, watch this guy, he's a sneaky one." Then when the batter struck out, he'd hollow, "Yea man, you can't hit it if you can't see it!" or "He muster got that bat with a hole in it."

Their manager was a one-armed man named Brown and they had a heavy hitter nick-named Black-Jack. He was good, the best batter we had (notice I say we had). He'd aim for that tree that I usually sat under in the pasture. One time, I'd paid my fare and was in the stands, when he put one smack in the middle of that tree. One of the little free watchers had to get it and throw it over the fence to the fielder. No one kept the ball back then. I really enjoyed those games, much more than any since. It was such a shame that the team disbanded for some reason or other and the field was abandoned. Later it became the site for their first decent school building. I'm sure that a lot of locals my age, both black and white, still carry fond memories of those ball games.

Now I'll tell you more about Preacher Woodson. They told that he had a certain sermon that he always gave on Tithe Sunday every year. I never heard him preach it, but somehow we

heard about it. Tithe Sunday is the day that all of the congregation is asked to promise to give a tithe (understood to be one tenth of their income) to the church the following year. So on Tithe Sunday, Preacher Woodson had a part of his sermon all planned in the form of a tale he would tell. It went this way, "There was this old preacher who was always telling his flock how easy it was to get religion. He'd say it's free, yes free, all you gotta do is open up and let it in. It's as free as the air in the skies, just you open up and breathe it in. Religion is as free as the waters that run over the rocks and into the rivers."

After repeating all this, the old preacher would say it's time to pass the collection plate. During the collection, when the plate was about half way back, an old brother raised his hand and sorta stood up. He 'cused himself and humbly asked the preacher how come he ranted about religion being as free as the waters, and then he asks for money. The preacher cleared his throat, thanked the brother in back for his interest and answered, "Religion is free, but like the water, you gotta pay for piping it in." They say Preacher Woodson would tell this in his slow deliberate manner, and the congregation waited patiently 'till the punch line, then they all had a good laugh.

Looking back on those days, sixty or so, years ago, it still puzzles me how we regarded the blacks. I never had any feeling of animosity, in fact I really liked, even admired many. My parents, the same way, we would never take advantage of the fact that whites were considered on a higher social plain.

I didn't even think on these issues, and though we were in different schools, and segregated in all sorts of ways, we just took it all for granted. It's hard to explain to an outsider how we went along with all these unfair customs, never questioning them. To this day, I have never had hard feelings toward a black person. It is the low educated white, referred to as red-neck that foster the hate that gives southerners a bad name. But I do take blame for not even realizing at the time, that part of God's children were being cheated and were being denied rights called for in our Constitution. I'm sorry.

## **Do We All Have To Touch The Stove To Know It Is HOT?**

**Submitted by Rusty Hamby**

When it comes to the possibilities of 'learning from history' there are doubtless many things we could aspire to learn. I hope one of those would be contributing to the normal and decent functioning of a well-meaning society in general. Winston Churchill said, "Those that fail to learn from history, are doomed to repeat it." Yet those who do study history and try to learn from it seem destined to stand by helplessly as everyone else repeats it. Our nation will be

facing many challenges in the coming months. Can we take instruction from History? Can we draw future wisdom from the past by studying the errors and the infirmities of mankind? I believe we can! Here are a few of those ideas from our SHARED past:

*"We can learn from history, but we can also deceive ourselves when we selectively take evidence from the past to justify what we have already made up our minds to do."*

**Margaret MacMillan**

*"Human nature will not change. In any future great national trial, compared with the men of this, we shall have as weak and as strong, as silly and as wise, as bad and as good. Let us therefore study the incidents in this as philosophy to learn wisdom from and none of them as wrongs to be avenged."*

**Abraham Lincoln** (in the context of The American Civil War of 1861 to 1865) That may be a big one very soon!

*"History is for human self-knowledge ... the only clue to what man can do is what man has done. The value of history, then, is that it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is."*

**R. G. Collingwood**

*"Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular. Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature."*

**David Hume**

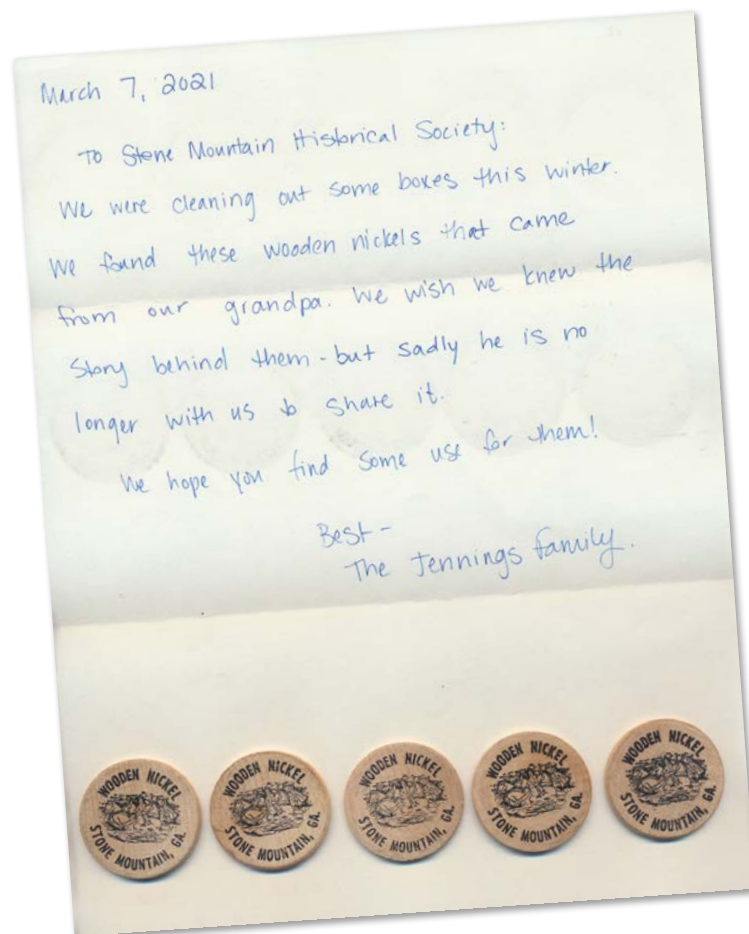
Our overview of this learning from history may not so much explicitly focus importance on the range of past mistakes of history, of which there are many, as learning useful lessons about the Human Condition AND Social Change. If we can look at our past as cautionary examples, how past mistakes and serious misjudgments have arisen from time to time disrupting the normal and decent functioning of well-meaning societies, we will truly understand the reason we study History.

**IF THE STOVE IS RED, IT IS HOT!**

# JUNETEENTH Banner Program

The City of Stone Mountain is planning a Juneteenth celebration this year and SMHS is partnering with the City on a Main Street Banner Program that honors members of the Black community that have made a difference. The holiday, which honors the emancipation of those who had been enslaved in our country, will be the focus of a number of events this June so keep an eye on the City calendar.

For the banner program, we are asking for nominations from the community and then will look for sponsorships for each banner. We have a list started but would love to hear from our members via email individuals you think should be honored and why. Our email is [stonemtnhistoricsociety@gmail.com](mailto:stonemtnhistoricsociety@gmail.com). We look forward to hearing from you!



Thanks to the Jennings Family for their whimsical donation! Maybe we should sponsor an essay contest on the story behind Grandpa Jennings wooden nickles?