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Moncure Conway Foundation
P.O. Box 9042
Falmouth, Virginia 22403

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THE SOUTHERN EMANCIPATIONIST

**Newsletter of the
Moncure Conway Foundation**

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Defying Convention: Women, Race, and Class in the Civil War South

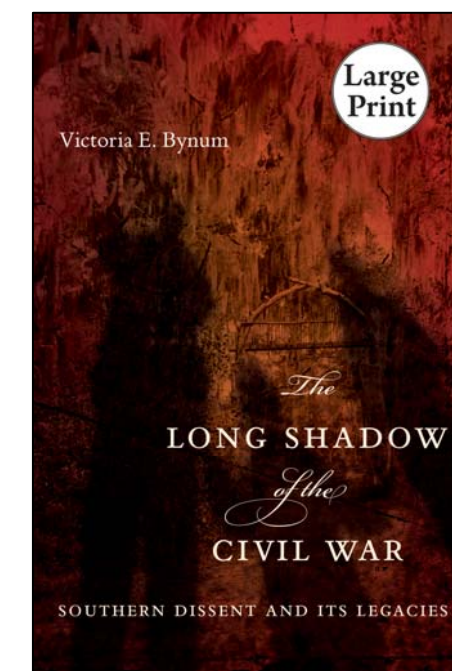
Lecture by Victoria Bynum
Professor of History at Texas State University, San Marcos

Sunday, March 21, 2010, 2:00pm

The Pavilion at Gari Melchers Home and Studio at Belmont
224 Washington Street, Falmouth

The Moncure Conway Foundation is thrilled to announce our third annual spring lecture. On Sunday, March 21st, Professor Victoria Bynum will be presenting her talk *Defying Convention: Women, Race, and Class in the Civil War South* at The Pavilion at Belmont. From her first book, *Unruly Women* (Chapel Hill, 1992), to her most recent publication, *The Long Shadow of the Civil War South* (Chapel Hill, 2010), Dr. Bynum has continued to stimulate the public with her close look at Southern dissenters: women who did not behave like "ladies"; whites who crossed the color line socially and sexually; African Americans who did not follow Jim Crow rules; and families that opposed secession and the Confederacy. Her lecture will focus on these Southern dissenters living in the American South—a subject of great interest to Moncure Conway himself and directly related to many individuals living in Falmouth and Stafford during the Antebellum period and throughout the Civil War.

Following the lecture, attendees will have the opportunity to talk to Dr. Bynum at a wine and cheese reception hosted by the Moncure Conway Foundation at Belmont. Please join us for an enjoyable and engaging afternoon!



REMEMBER TO RENEW YOUR MONCURE CONWAY FOUNDATION MEMBERSHIP!

Several current members have not renewed for 2010. Renew now to continue to receive newsletters and email notifications on upcoming events!



P.O. Box 9042
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From the Chair:

The holidays are behind us and winter is on its way out, we hope! I trust everyone had a pleasant holiday season and managed to cope with our unusually snowy December and January. The weather was a factor affecting our fall event. Rain kept us from conducting the archaeological investigation of the Magistrate's Office in Falmouth as planned. We are rescheduling this event for October of this year. Look for more detailed information in our next newsletter.

The Moncure Conway Foundation is hard at work planning our third annual lecture. This year we are looking forward to an exciting and informative lecture by Victoria Bynum. Dr. Bynum comes to us from Texas where she is a history professor at Texas State University.

The title of Dr. Bynum's lecture is "Defying Convention: Women Raised in Class in the Civil War South." She will be speaking to us about Southern women's roles during the Civil War and their reactions to the turmoil around them. Dr. Bynum's research and knowledge of southern communities coping with, arguably, one of the most complex periods of our history, will certainly bring forward new perspectives to be considered. As always, the March 21st lecture is free. For further information about Victoria Bynum, her books and some of her thoughts on Moncure Conway, you may visit her blog on line; just search her name.

Our board members wear many hats. One such board member is Al Conner, a local historian and author, who is involved with several history-minded organizations. Al has written an article for the upcoming Journal of Fredericksburg History published by the Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc. (HFFI). Al's article is entitled "'Watch for the Morning': Moncure Daniel Conway, Falmouth's Southern Emancipationist". The Journal will be available in April at the HFFI's downtown Fredericksburg office. Check it out for more insight concerning our favorite Falmouth resident.

Speaking of our board, we are looking for individuals to fill several vacant spots. We encourage our membership to become involved with their organization and would love to hear from anyone interested in becoming a board member. If you would like to know more about how you can become a board member, or volunteer for a specific task, please contact me by phone: 540-752-9339 or email: a.dodd@dishmail.net

I would like to thank you all for your support and invite you to attend our lecture in March. I look forward to seeing you there.

Anita Dodd

Anita Dodd, Chair

HFFI Hosting Journal Launch; Open to Moncure Conway Members and Friends

Many people ask us how they can learn more about Moncure Conway. For those who may not have time to read one of the several biographies currently on the shelves, Moncure Conway Foundation board member Al Conner has recently authored an interesting synopsis of the man and his times. The article will be published by the Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc. in Volume 12 of their *Journal of Fredericksburg History*. To celebrate the publication of this annual Journal, HFFI is hosting a Journal Launch at Fall Hill Plantation on April 18th at 2pm. Details are available by calling HFFI at 540-371-4504. All Moncure Conway Foundation members and friends who are interested are welcome!



You think it has been cold this winter? In 1918, Falmouth and Fredericksburg experienced one of the coldest winters on record. This photo, taken on Feb. 13, 1918, shows a member of the Boutchyard family standing on ice formed over the Rappahannock River. The photo captures a moment just two years after Gari Melchers moved to Falmouth and made his home at Belmont. (Photo courtesy of Norman Schools)

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BELMONT

As part of our mission, the Moncure Conway Foundation helps to promote the history of not only Moncure Conway, the man, but also the community where he grew up—Falmouth, Virginia. One of the most notable properties on the Falmouth landscape is Belmont. "Belmont" is today best known as the home of American painter Gari Melchers who lived and painted on the estate from 1916 until his death in 1932. But the house at Gari Melchers Home and Studio possesses a rich history that predates Gari Melchers. Because the original deed of ownership is lost, the year in which the Georgian-style frame house was built and the identity of its first owner is not precisely known. But based on the existing physical evidence, the possibilities can be narrowed down. The original plan of the house consisted of a first and second floor side passage and four rooms to the north (the present dining room, library and two bedrooms) dating to the 1790s. Since surviving documents tell us that the Horner and Vass families owned the property between 1785 and 1804, one of those two families must have been responsible for the earliest section of the existing home.

In 1807, Thomas Knox bought the house for his mother, Susannah Fitzhugh Knox. He purchased the first insurance policy on the house through the Mutual Assurance Company of Virginia. Nearly two hundred years later, that policy is still in effect. When Susannah Knox died in 1823, a public notice announcing the sale of the property is the first known reference to the name "Belmont." The buyer was Joseph B. Ficklen, an ambitious young businessman. By 1860 Ficklen was a wealthy miller and banker, owner of sizable real estate, and holder of 27 slaves, most of whom were employed at his mills.

At Belmont, Ficklen was responsible for most of the house's subsequent structural evolution. He raised a family of six children, which might explain the sudden growth of the house sometime prior to 1850. Two first floor parlors (now one large room) were added south of the main hall and two bedrooms constitute the second floor of the addition. Further improvements followed; windows were enlarged and the east and west porches were constructed. Eventually a kitchen and other rooms were added to the north end of the house. During the Civil War years of 1862 and 1863, the Army of the Potomac occupied much of Falmouth. Ficklen, a Union sympathizer, and his family continuously occupied the property, benefiting from the protection of U.S. Army General John Gibbon, whom they befriended while the brigade-commander was stationed in Falmouth. Although batteries were placed on either side of the house in December of 1862, it is unlikely that fighting ever occurred on the property.

When in 1916, after ninety-three years, the property passed from the Ficklens to Gari and Corinne Melchers, the house and its surrounding twenty-five acres were considerably run-down. The couple took great pride and pleasure in the improvements made to their "country house." They added modern conveniences and outbuildings to house the horses, cows, chickens and farm equipment used on the small farm they developed. They also expanded the gardens with statuary, walls, gates and the Summer House situated at the southern end of the formal lawn. The house, studio, gardens and woodland trails are a popular destination for art, nature and history lovers alike. Gari Melchers Home and Studio is open every day 10-5 except Wednesdays and major holidays. For more information visit www.garimelchers.org or call 540-654-1015.