

***Henry County Historical Society***  
***Membership Meeting September 17, 2012***

**Tour and Music at the Historic Thompson House**

**TIME:** 6:30 – 8:00 PM

**LOCATION:** 2614 Ballardsville Rd., on Hwy 22 Just west of Perry's Hardware. The entrance to the property is on the north side of Hwy. Watch for HCHS sign.

September's membership meeting will be held at the historic Thompson House now called The Russet Ridge Farm in Eminence.

This beautiful historic home was built circa 1850. William Thompson received the original land grant in 1790. It has been restored by the current owners; Maggie Brandt, her husband, Bert Lyons and their two daughters.

You are invited to tour the home, gardens and their unique hen house and stables for their Icelandic ponies. Or you may go straight to the summer house and enjoy music by the "Barefoot Best Friends" and partake of refreshments that include ice cream and desserts.

Please RSVP by September 14<sup>th</sup> by calling the History Center at 845-0999.

**The Thompson House**

Prominently situated on a high hill between Eminence and Smithfield, the Thompson House (circa 1850) commands a lovely view of rolling Henry County farmland.

Successful local farmer Lemuel Thompson built an elegant architecturally unusual clapboard farmhouse combining elements of the Greek Revival and Italianate styles of architecture. The house gives an illusion of great height and size, with an emphasis on symmetry typical of the Greek Revival style. The interior is also Greek Revival in its gracious and simple decoration. The rooms have twelve foot ceilings and unusual nine foot tall doors. In the front hall there is a spiral staircase that leads up to an octagonal cupola. This architecturally significant farmhouse was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.

In addition to being of architectural interest the house also has a rich history. The Thompson farm was first settled as a land grant in the 1790's by William Thompson of Virginia and his wife Ruhemah Boone, a cousin of Daniel and Squire Boone. When William died in 1816 legal documents record that Squire Boone came to help his cousin settle the estate, which at that time consisted of the land, a log structure and many farm implements and kitchen tools. William's son Lemuel and his wife Sophia Watkins took over the running of the farm and had four daughters. Lemuel operated the farm until his death in 1865. In his will he mentions the house among his property, which confirms it had been built before that date. Our best guess is that the family may have had a windfall, when they sold some of the back of the original property to the Louisville and Frankfort Railroad in the 1840's for the new line through Eminence, and used the money to build the house. The house remained in the family until the turn of the century, when Lemuel's unmarried daughter Prudence died after years of legal battles among family members over the title to the land. During the next 75 years the property changed hands often with over 17 owners and numerous renters until Maggie Brandt and Bert Lyons purchased the farm in 1984 and began restoration.

Restoration took over two years to complete. First the house was raised by house movers and a new foundation was laid. As the house lifted several tools lost during the original construction of the walls dropped out and we were also able to see the huge poplar hand hewn beams that support the house. As we redid the roof and built-in gutters two foot wide poplar sheathing was exposed. We also added an addition at the back of the house that followed the lines of the original kitchen wing that had been removed. We are still waiting to find more pictures to help us reconstruct the original porches on the front of the house.

We've had many visitors from across the country and here in Henry County stop by and tell us their memories about living in the house in the first half of the last century. Some of you may remember Hattie Ellis Allen of Eminence whose grandmother Reuhemah Moody was one of the daughters of Lemuel Thompson. When we first moved out to Henry County Hattie shared family stories of visiting Prudence Thompson at the farm. There are stories about the graveyard on the farm and how the stones were removed many years ago to increase the value of the property. We've also discovered the foundations of the slave cabins behind the house. If you have a chance, ask G.W. Perry about his memories of growing up in the house and greasing the linoleum on the kitchen floor to make a good sliding surface for some mischievous boys! G.W. also shared wonderful pictures of the gardens around the house when he was growing up.

Every year we discover more about the Thompson farm and add our own stories to the history.