

---

## Historical Tidbits: The 1870 Hendrick House

### We Have a Present-Day Connection to the Original Owners

Good Afternoon! I know you've heard me mention previously Al Fleming's outstanding quote about what makes Warren County special, "We **live** in the **originals**..." referring of course to our more than 300 historic homes and buildings in the County.

Interestingly, in researching our history, I've also found that in Warren County we have a number of people who are **descendants** of the **original residents** who made history locally and throughout North Carolina. This continuity of family gives us a special insight into our history.



I found that particularly true this past week as I had time to talk with Portia Hawes, a founding member of **Heritage Quilters**, about the Historic **Hendrick House** behind the Courthouse on Front Street. You've seen it...yellow with white trim...a porch across the entire front...and a "**Heritage Quilters**" sign hanging out front. I expected to get a lot of new information about the house and original owners from our talk; I did...however, I also ended up getting a wonderful family story that spans nearly 150

years.

This historic building's story begins in about 1870, built by the Fain family on a much different Front Street than we know today. According to a later 1885 town map there was a paint shop, an ice house, a carriage workshop, a livery next to the Courthouse and Mr. Hendrick's two livery stables behind his house by that time...a much more commercial area even in 1870. But, we're getting ahead of the story.

Aaron Hendrick was born a free African-American in 1856 in southern Virginia. He moved south of the Roanoke River after the Civil War and married the Fain's daughter, Alice. They lived in this house and began to raise a family. They had two sons, Ed & Will and a daughter, Mary Fearing. More about them in just a minute.

Now I had seen a number of sources document that Mr. Hendrick owned a livery stable behind his house. Ms. Hawes asked if I knew what a livery stable was... (drawing on my great amount of knowledge about the care of horses gained from watching Westerns for 50 years), of course I did ☺. When you came to a town you boarded your horse at the livery stable and they fed and cared for it. That's correct to a point, she said, but the really important part of his livery business went beyond that.

Aaron Hendrick owned a carriage and each day he met the train at the depot. Tradesmen & sellers coming to Warren County depended on Mr. Hendrick to not only carry them to their destination, but more importantly, to know where things were in the county. Then, as today, most of our residents lived outside the towns. With no detailed maps, visitors depended on Aaron Hendrick to know how to get to potential customers.

This business expertise made Aaron Hendrick a financially well-off man. His wife employed a full-time maid, Mrs. Somerville, and we know from **The Warren Record**, 5 March 1897 that Mr. Hendrick and a Mr. Branch left Warrenton for Washington, D.C. to attend William McKinley's Inauguration.

The Hendrick's children also did very well as the 20<sup>th</sup> century dawned. The oldest, Ed, became the first certified electrician in Warren County. He remained here and took over the historic Hendrick House after his Mother's passing in 1943. Their 2<sup>nd</sup> son, Will, chose the Navy as a career while their daughter, Mary Fearing Hendrick, met and married well known New York City insurance and real estate magnate, James E. Poe. They were married in the house here in Warrenton on Saturday, July 23, 1921.

As our talk was nearing the end, Ms. Hawes mentioned that she actually knew Alice Fain Hendrick when she was younger. That is really interesting! She said that Mrs. Hendrick always had a great garden behind the house and that she would go over to "Aunt Alice's" to pick butterbeans. So, it seems that Alice Fain Hendrick was a sister to her Grandfather!

Now how's this for a historic connection to our current-day...Portia Hawes, niece of Alice Fain Hendrick, grows up in Warrenton – leaves for a lengthy career as a teacher in New York City – returns home to Warren County – joins with others to form Heritage Quilters in 2001 (with a focus on the traditions of quilting locally and other important history) – and in 2014 the group moves into her Aunt's home, now a historic part of Warren County. Talking with Ms. Hawes was almost like having a connection to her Aunt across 130 years.

I'm finding out that we have many resources better than any book to learn about our history living right here in Warren County!

Wherever you turn in Warren County we have a jewel...