

the Mechanicsville LOCAL

Foundation presents program on Rev. Sam Davies

Contributed Report

Historic Polegreen Church Foundation presented Dan Roberts, host and producer of the popular public radio show *A Moment in Time*, in a program about the life and significance of Reverend Samuel Davies on Nov. 5 at the church site on Rural Point Road in Hanover County.

Roberts, with his unique style and enthusiasm for making history interesting interpreted Rev. Samuel Davies.

"The coolness of the weather was compensated for by the warmth of Professor Roberts' presentation. We thought that he did a great job and greatly enjoyed it! I hope that you all will continue to have presentations like that, from time to time," said one attendee from Beaverdam.

Approximately 85 Hanoverians and metro area history buffs attended this family-friendly event.

In colonial Virginia the state church was Anglican or the Church of England. At the request of dissenting Hanover County residents a newly ordained 23-year-old Presbyterian minister from Pennsylvania arrived in 1747 to pastor four congregations recently licensed by the government. Their minister was Rev. Samuel Davies,

at that time the first non-Anglican minister licensed to preach in Virginia.

With a reputation for having no peer as a pulpit orator in Virginia, or perhaps in all the colonies, during his lifetime, Rev. Davies made a remarkable contribution to the religious and political climate of the colony.

Among his achievements was his pioneering effort in the education of black slaves. Moreover young Patrick Henry worshipped at Polegreen with his mother, a Hanover dissenter, during the twelve years Davies was in Virginia.

The fact the Henrys worshipped at Polegreen is noteworthy since Patrick's namesake and Uncle was the Anglican priest for St. Paul's parish which included Hanover County. Before his death Henry credited Davies with "teaching me what an orator should be." Scholars also attribute much of Henry's political philosophy to Davies' freedom-loving Scottish roots.

In 1990 the Historic Polegreen Church Foundation, under the leadership of Dr. Bob Bluford, began its work to preserve the site now marked by the well-known steel skeleton that outlines the original dimensions of the meetinghouse.

Due to the enthusiasm of the local residents as well as the state

historical community, the mission of this non-profit has grown to interpret Davies and the dissenter's role in the evolution of our 1st amendment religious and civil freedoms. Enhanced programming is in store for 2007.

Polegreen is currently looking to partner with other Metro Richmond organizations to cultivate discussions about freedom's future, tourism and opportunities for regional economic development.

"Polegreen Church is more than just a historic site in Hanover County. I encourage everyone to come and learn and see where the human struggle for true religious freedom, tolerance and liberty began," said Christopher Peace.

The Foundation announced Peace as its new Executive Director on Sunday. When Peace is not working for Polegreen, he is committed to serving the people of Hanover, Caroline, King William, King and Queen, Henrico, Spotsylvania Counties and all of New Kent County in the Virginia House of Delegates.

For more information visit: www.historicpolegreen.org

