



Virginia Highlands Festival
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High-resolution photos may be downloaded from the
website www.VaHighlandsFestival.org

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**“CREATE” YOUR PLACE IN LOCAL HISTORY
AT THE 71st ANNUAL VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS FESTIVAL
“CREATE”
TEN DAYS OF ARTS AND CULTURE
FESTIVAL DATES: July 26 - August 4**

ABINGDON, Va./June 17, 2019/ – The history of Abingdon and southwest Virginia has always been one of the central focuses of the Virginia Highlands Festival. For over 200 years, Abingdon has been the cultural, political, and sometimes the economic center of the entire region, and that history draws people to Abingdon.

CIVIL WAR ERA

Civil War Weekend - July 27 from 9 AM - 6 PM and July 28 from 10 AM - 3 PM : A highlight of the Festival’s local history programming for the past eight years has been the Civil War encampment at the Abingdon Muster Grounds. Bring the family for an immersive weekend among infantry, cavalry, cannons, and sutlers. The encampment is open on Saturday, July 27, from 9 AM - 6 PM and Sunday, July 28, from 10 AM - 3 PM. Battle reenactments take place at 2 PM each day. The Muster Grounds are located along Colonial Road at 1780 Muster Place in Abingdon.

Lecture: The Civil War in Appalachia - Friday, August 2 from 7 - 8 PM: The Civil War in Appalachia did not have the great battles of Eastern Virginia, but it did have many skirmishes and fierce divisions within communities between Union loyalists and Confederate sympathizers. The citizens suffered daily deprivations for the full four years of the war. Brian McKnight, professor of history at the University of Virginia’s College at Wise, talks about the realities of

daily life during the four years of the Civil War in Appalachia. He is the author of several books including *Contested Borderland: The Civil War in Appalachian Kentucky and Virginia*.

COLONIAL ERA

Colonial Trade Faire - daily from 10 AM - 6 PM: Learn about Colonial life from crafters camped on the grounds of the Fields-Penn House. These sutlers and demonstrators showcase wood carving, metal working, fabric dying, and leather working, among many other trades. Many of these items are available for sale direct from the makers.

Performance Storytelling: “We Were There: On the March to Kings Mountain” - July 30 from 7 - 8 PM: Three renowned interpreters and storytellers, dressed in period costumes, will perform their first-person reenactments of the mustering of the patriot militia in the Appalachian Mountains and their march to Kings Mountain during the Revolutionary War. Hear “firsthand” what it was like to march from Southwest Virginia, over the mountains to Kings Mountain, South Carolina, to fight the British in the battle that Thomas Jefferson described as the turning point of the war. This event takes place in the Executive Auditorium of the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center.

Telling the Stories: The Battle of Kings Mountain and Life in the Backcountry, 1780 - August 1-3 from 11 AM - 4 PM: Through reenactments and exhibits, experience the two-week campaign of the Overmountain Men and the historic Battle of Kings Mountain. The Virginia militia gathered at the Abingdon Muster Grounds, then marched over the mountains with other militias and defeated the British army. This battle is considered a major turning point of the American Revolution.

Also hear stories about the women in the Backcountry in 1780-- their survival skills, their cooking techniques, their dress, their herbal medicines, and more. Learn about the lives of children and especially children’s games from this period in American History.

This event is presented at the Abingdon Muster Grounds by the General William Campbell Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution and the Virginia Chapter of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Barter Theatre: History and Backstage Tour July 26, 27 and August 2, 3 from 11 AM - Noon: Learn the history of the State Theatre of Virginia and take a tour of the backstage areas, and the dressing rooms--even get to see the mysterious “Barter Tunnel,” a Civil War-era underground tunnel that once connected Barter to the Martha Washington College (now the Inn) across the street. Tickets are \$10 each and available at Barter Theatre’s box office.

Downtown Abingdon Walking Tours on July 28, 30 and August 1 from 7 - 8:30 PM: Stroll along the streets of downtown Abingdon for about four blocks, learning about the town’s history from the 1770s to the present. The tour guide will be Garrett Jackson, whose ancestors were among the earliest settlers into the region. The tour will begin on the front steps of the Washington County Courthouse, 189 E. Main St. These tours are free.

Finding Community Through Fifty Years of Making Art: An Illustrated Lecture - Thursday, August 1 from 7 - 8 PM: Watercolorist and muralist Ellen Elmes, creator of Abingdon’s

downtown mural, “Celebrate! A Social History of Abingdon”, will give an illustrated lecture at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center Auditorium. Since coming to the area in the 1960s, Elmes has evolved as an artist, although always keeping Appalachian culture and history central to her work. The lecture is connected to the publication of a book about her career, *An Appalachian Labyrinth: Painting to the Center*.

Historic Homes Tour on Saturday, August 3 from 10 AM - 4 PM: The annual Abingdon Historic Homes Tour will take place this year from 10 AM - 4 PM on Saturday, August 3. Visitors can tour several of Abingdon's most historic homes, all within walking distance downtown. Homes include The Bank which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Visit www.vahighlandsfestival.org for a full tour roster. Tickets are \$20 and available at the event or online at www.vahighlandsfestival.org/tickets. Tickets may also be purchased at Shady Business, located at 180 E. Main St. in Abingdon.

SPIRITED & SPOOKY TOURS

Abingdon Spirit Tours nightly from 7:30 - 9:30 PM: Join Abingdon's “Haint Mistress” Donnamarie Emmert as she guides participants on her Abingdon Spirit Tour, now in its 23rd year. Walk along historic Main Street delighting in the town's history and the ghost stories of businesses and homes along the way. Tickets are \$20, cash only. Tours depart from the “Barter Fountain” on the corner of Main St. and Partington Pl. across from Barter Theatre.

Living History Tour of Sinking Spring Cemetery on Saturday, July 27 from 5 - 7:15 PM: Visitors will join members of the Historical Society of Washington County for a stroll through this picturesque burying ground to meet residents from the area's past. You might meet Henry Creswell, the first person buried in the cemetery in 1776, who was killed in an Indian raid. You might meet Confederate Brigadier General John B. Floyd and his wife Sarah Buchanan Floyd, whose father built the house which today is the Martha Washington Inn. Or you might meet William King, one of Abingdon's founding fathers, who left a bequest to establish a male academy in Abingdon—today that building is the William King Museum of Art. Tickets are \$5, cash only at the gate. Enter at Russell Rd. and Valley St.

AND MUCH MORE!

For a complete listing of over 200 Festival activities, including more local history events happening from July 26-August 4, with registration requirements, advance ticket purchases, parking and trolley info, and more, visit www.vahighlandsfestival.org or pick up a program guide at Food City locations near you.

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About the Virginia Highlands Festival: Founded in 1948, the Virginia Highlands Festival is an annual, ten-day event devoted to the celebration of Southwest Virginia heritage and rich Appalachian tradition. Held in historic Abingdon, Virginia, in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Festival attracts thousands of visitors each year. The Festival was selected as the “Best Art Event” by the readers of *Virginia Living* magazine in 2019, recognized as a Top 20 Event by the Southeastern Tourism Society and was named as Blue Ridge Country's Best Non-Music Festival in 2018. The 70th Virginia Highlands Festival will run from July 26-August 4 (Antiques Market July 27-August 4) and feature live concerts, a juried arts and crafts show, and an antique market, as well as workshops, lectures and tours. To learn more about the Virginia

Highlands Festival and this year's events, please visit <http://www.vahighlandsfestival.org>