

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Amherst County Museum and Historical Society in VAM's TOP TEN**

Amherst County Museum and Historical Society was selected as one of Virginia's Top 10 Endangered Artifacts Honorees by the Virginia Association of Museums (VAM). This program is proudly supported by the Virginia Museum of History & Culture (VMHC) in partnership with VAM. The generous support from the VMHC allows VAM the opportunity to more meaningfully support member institutions and their submitted, endangered artifacts for conservation. The public can vote for their choice of artifact daily until February 20th at <https://www.vamuseums.org/vote-for-vas-top-10-endangered-artifacts>

The artifact that the Museum submitted in the hope of obtaining conservation funding is a Midwife Medical Bag. A symbol of professional medical care, the midwifery bag had room for only the most basic of supplies to assist with childbirth. Through the 19th and early 20th centuries, doctors and hospitals would have been virtually inaccessible to the newest members of the US population. But a midwife, speaking the native language of an immigrant community, would have provided not just medical support but also the comfort of a familiar voice during the childbirth process.

This midwife medical bag belonged to Minnie Timm. Born Wilhelmina Ernestine Timm in East Prussia in 1869, Minnie was part of the large German immigrant population that arrived in the US in the late 1800s. Minnie married German born Johann Emil Schmidt in 1899. By 1905, Minnie had earned a diploma from the Columbia School of Midwifery in New York. She served other German speaking women in her community and later, women in Central and Southwest Virginia where Minnie and John moved for his work with the railroad.

At an estimated 120 years old, the midwife medical bag is in need of deep cleaning and specialized care to preserve the outer material that is beginning to separate from a fabric backing. The leather handles are showing signs of decay with some flaking of the leather. The metal hardware is rusted and no longer functional.

For more information on the program and to vote for the Museum's Midwife Bag visit: <https://www.vamuseums.org/vote-for-vas-top-10-endangered-artifacts>

The midwife medical bag will be a centerpiece in a future exhibit of medical care in Amherst County and similar communities throughout the United States since colonial times with special focus on the changes in rural healthcare.

This medical bag as well as Minnie's diploma was gifted to the Museum by Nancy Hanson of Amherst County.

The Amherst County Museum and Historical Society is a nonprofit educational organization whose mission is to discover, collect and preserve objects related to the history and genealogy of Amherst County. The society exhibits, interprets and offers its collections to provide educational experiences for people of all ages.

For additional information contact Octavia Starbuck, Director, Amherst County Museum and Historical Society at 434-946-9068 or by the website email: [staff@amherstcountymuseum.org](mailto:staff@amherstcountymuseum.org).



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