

IW: pictures in time

By **Diana McFarland**
News editor

In the 1930s, a nationally recognized photographer came to Isle of Wight and Surry County to photograph historic buildings.

And the photographer was one of the earliest women in the field — Frances Benjamin Johnston.

Johnston's photos of Tynes Plantation, The Grove and the 1750 Courthouse are included in the Carnegie Survey of the Architecture of the South. The photos, taken throughout the south during the 1930s, are available for viewing on the Library of Congress website.

She also photographed several locations in Surry County, including Point Pleasant, Brandon Plantation and the Rolfe House.

The newest owners of Tynes Plantation, Joel Wilson and Valerie Schmidt-Wilson, are in the process of restoring the old smokehouse. The Wilsons also plan to restore what was once thought to be the summer kitchen. All that remains today is the old chimney.

Johnston took portraits of Susan B. Anthony, Mark Twain and Booker T. Washington. She also snapped photos of the Roosevelt children playing with their pet pony at the White House. Johnston traveled throughout the country photographing coal miners, iron workers and sailors, as well as society commissions.

Johnston also wrote for publications such as "Cosmopolitan," "Harper's Weekly" and the "Ladies' Home Journal."

Born in Grafton, West Virginia in 1864, Johnston was given her first camera by George Eastman, who was a friend of the family and inventor of the Kodak camera. She went on to study in Paris and learned photography and darkroom techniques from George Smillie with the Smithsonian.

She gained early recognition for photographing the students and the buildings of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Hampton in 1899 to show its success. It was displayed at the Expose negre in Paris. She died in New Orleans at age 88 in 1952.

Today she is known as one of the first women to attain prominence as a photographer.

To see more of the Carnegie collection, visit www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/csas/.



Titled "Smithfield Farm" in the Carnegie Survey of Architecture of the South, this photograph of the former Tynes plantation was taken in 1935 by Frances Benjamin Johnston. The Tynes house, built in 1750, which still stands today, is located along Courthouse Highway in Isle of Wight County. Note the wagon ruts and hoof prints in the road.



This photograph of the 1750 Courthouse was taken by Frances Benjamin Johnston between 1933-35. It shows the courthouse as a residence and before it was restored in 1960 to its original appearance.