

Newsletter

Orange County Historical Society

Fall 2005

www.orangecovahist.org

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Message from the President

Lynne Lewis

What a wonderful membership we have!

As 2005 passed and it became clear that we would incur a budget short-fall this year, the Board decided to appeal to our membership for the necessary help. So, in October our first-ever appeal letter went out, and the response was tremendous! Our goal of \$5,000 was exceeded, with more than 80 members (just over 25% of our membership) contributing. It's an affirmation of our mission and our members' love for Orange County history. Our heartfelt thanks go out to each and every one of you for your generosity.

On a less cheerful note, Warren Dunn, our excellent Executive Director, resigned in July, in order to attend to pressing personal business. He did a wonderful job for us during his two-year tenure. Although we could certainly use the help, we do not plan to fill the position in the near future, as part of the economies we have instituted. The good news is that Warren remains a good friend of the Historical Society, and we hope to see more of him in the coming year.

The Research Center continues to operate smoothly thanks to Jean McGann, who has been with us for 7 years now, and to Marianne Hurd, who joined us in May. Dividing the duties between them, Jean and Marianne insure that the Center is staffed during our open hours (1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday), answer research inquiries by telephone, e-mail and letter, keep track of membership and incoming bills and many more things that fall in that famous position description category "and all other duties."

The collection assessment was completed (see *Collections Committee Update* on this page) and two of our steadfast volunteers, Ted and Carolyn Scott, transferred all the family files to archivally stable folders. The Collections Committee, ably led by Joyce Clark, has begun to formulate a collections policy for the Society, and is putting together the forms necessary for the acceptance of gifts.

The board has taken on many duties, with Everette Tucker assuming responsibility for the building and grounds. Thanks to his good offices, the roof has been inspected (it should be good for another 10 to 20 years) and pesky leaks

See *President* on next page.

Antebellum Orange

Ann Miller's wonderful book on the pre-Civil War buildings and sites of Orange County, *Antebellum Orange*, has been out of print since July 2005. Knowing that this was going to happen, Ann has been working diligently for the past year to update the information and prepare for a second edition of the book. Recently, a flurry of new information has come to Ann, and incorporating this has caused us to revise our plans. We are now aiming for publication in the late Spring of 2006. In order to do this though, we must establish a cut-off date for new information: January 31, 2006. Of course we are always glad to receive knowledge that we did not previously have, but anything coming in after January 31 will have to wait until the third edition.

Collections Committee Update

Joyce Clark

The Society's collection of books, documents and other materials has grown considerably over the years. The increasing number and scope of our collections have created storage and preservation issues. To address these problems, we recently have had our collection reviewed by Mary Parke Johnson, a specialist in the conservation of archival materials. We asked Ms. Johnson to categorize, conduct a condition assessment, and make recommendations for filing, storing and preserving our collections. This part of the project has been completed, and the report is on file at the Society.

We are now in the process of acquiring specialty archival supplies to continue the project by properly preserving and storing the items. Several contributors to our current year-end appeal have earmarked their contributions for the purchase of archival supplies. Additional funds raised through our members' generous response to the appeal will provide for further materials. These supplies include such items as special document boxes, oversize folders, storage envelopes, tissue (for wrapping and padding delicate items), storage boxes for artifacts, library tape, mylar, and more. All are of archival quality and acid-free material to protect the collection items and provide stable long-term storage.

President (continued)

have been located and corrected. Roof drainage has been inspected, and corrective measures identified. The furnace has been repaired twice this year, although we have been assured that it is good for several more years too.

We had three very successful picnics this summer, and an off-site meeting at the new Courthouse, which proved to be quite a draw. We hope to have one or two other off-site programs (in addition to the picnics) in 2006.

We also initiated the Orange County Heritage Tours this year, with two successful tours in September and October. Frank Walker was our intrepid guide, and although the tours were not well attended, we continue to think this is a good service and will be working on tours, perhaps slightly modified in format, for the coming year.

Perhaps the most important thing we did this year was to take a look at our goals and our mission. We determined that our mission as stated in our Articles of Incorporation:

to preserve the history of Orange County, Virginia, through the acquisition of source materials, objects and articles reflecting the County's past, and sites and buildings of historical significance; to make available by appropriate publications the history of the County; and to engage in such other educational activities as are reasonably related to the foregoing

was just fine as formulated, and that one of the most important things facing the society and Orange County is the preservation of our heritage, not just the photographs and documents, but the the sites and buildings that are such visible manifestations of that heritage. Growth is coming to Orange County and we felt it important to help educate ourselves and reach out to others with the message that growth does not have to destroy our heritage and that when properly considered and regulated, growth and heritage can go hand in hand. I think we all realized how little it takes to destroy the ambience of our built environment when a legitimate, but totally incompatible, building was allowed right in the midst of a Town of Orange Historic District. At its most basic, suffice it to say that there are good ways to grow, and bad ways to grow, and we'd like to be among those who help our citizens understand the good ways.

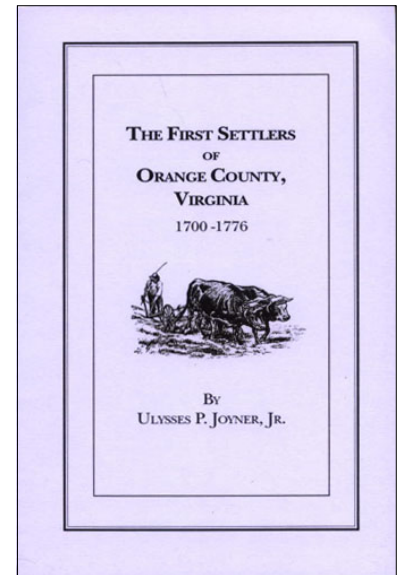
This has only begun to touch the surface of our activities: each member of our Board has made valuable contributions during the past year, and those I haven't thanked by name should know that they are greatly appreciated. When I agreed to serve as President, I really didn't have any idea how much work was involved, and how much would not get done if it were not for the excellence of our Board and Staff.

I'd like to wish everyone a happy, healthy holiday season - and a glorious New Year!

Holiday Shopping?

With the holidays fast approaching, please don't forget that the Historical Society has a wide range of books that would make wonderful gifts. In addition to *Remembering* by Frank Walker (\$30), there are the 1861 and 1862 Fannie Hume diaries, the story of the Octonia Grant, *First Settlers* by Pete Joyner, and many more. You can order these by mail through our website (www.orangecovahist.org) or by coming in to the Research Center any weekday afternoon between 1 and 5 p.m.

And remember, Society members receive a 10% discount on all purchases!



OCHS Board

Lynne Lewis, President
 Clara Colby, Vice-President
 Jack Miller, Treasurer
 Frank Walker, Secretary
 Joyce Clark
 Carolyn French
 Gail Marshall
 Chuck Mason
 David Perdue
 Laura Thompson
 Everette Tucker

Remember to Renew

The OCHS membership year is from January through December. Our annual membership levels include:

Individual \$20
 Student (college or high school) \$12.50
 Family \$30
 Sustaining \$100
 Patron \$200
 Sponsor \$300

Native American Notes

Frank S. Walker, Jr.

1. By the beginning of the 17th century, the dynamic Algonquian leader Powhatan, with the help of family members, had formed a powerful confederation of tribes in what are today the Tidewater regions of Maryland and Virginia. By 1618, however, Powhatan was dead, and his brother, Opechancanough, had succeeded him as chief. Opechancanough had become alarmed by the growing occupation of his tribal lands by the English settlers, and in 1622, he orchestrated a massacre that on Good Friday that year killed between a third and a quarter of the entire population of the Virginia colony. Recently, a writer reflecting on that incident reported on some reactions that were repeated soon after the terrorist attacks of September 11. Author Philip Levy writes, "Opechancanough's attack killed many colonists, but the near total surprise of the assault, and the vulnerability it exposed and exploited literally added insult to injury. In the attack's wake, officials on both sides of the Atlantic began to rethink the colony's discredited defenses and plan for the future. But first backers and governors took to pointing fingers and shifting blame for the colony's weakness."¹

2. On May 5, 1864, Confederate General A. P. Hill led his troops out of Orange County and into the Wilderness on the Orange Plank Road (Route 621). At a clearing in the Wilderness known as the "Widow Tapp Farm," Hill and his troops encountered strong Federal resistance, and desperate fighting ensued.

An interesting sidebar note to the Civil War history created on the Widow Tapp Farm was the Native American connection to this land that had become the final resting place for many a Confederate and Federal soldier. Catherine Dempsey Tapp, almost universally remembered only as the "Widow Tapp," had been married to Vincent Tapp. Vincent could trace his ancestry to King William Taptico, the last Chief of the Wicomico tribe to be elected in the ancient tribal tradition. The remaining few chiefs were appointed by non-Wicomico authorities. The Wicomico spoke the Algonquian language and were a part of the powerful Powhatan confederation.²

3. When Captain John Smith explored up the Rappahannock River in 1608, his ship could go only as far as the first set of falls (rapids) in the river, the present-day location of Fredericksburg. A delegation of Indians from the Rapidan River area, however, came east and met with Smith. Based on their statements, Smith drew a map of the upstream area, and in the process identified a Manahoac

village on the Rapidan that he called "Shackaconia," the name of its chief.

In 1714, when Governor Alexander Spotswood was establishing Fort Germanna in what is today's eastern Orange County, an abandoned Indian village site was pointed out to him and identified as old Shackaconia. That site was west of Germanna and just across Fox Neck, a narrow point of land created by meander of the Rapidan. The Saponi Indians that Spotswood brought to the Germanna area settled on that site for the short time that they were in Orange County. After the Saponis left, European settlers began to occupy the site. Today it is known as the settlement of "Indiantown." Very fittingly named.³

4. In the western end of Orange County, there is an Indian burial mound that has been identified as Monacan/Manahoac, related tribes that spoke the Siouan language and were connected with the Sioux of the American Great Plains. Thirteen such mounds have been identified in this part of Virginia, with the "Rapidan Mound," as it is known, being the largest by far. It has been estimated that the Rapidan Mound could contain as many as two thousand burials. The mound also contains a variety of artifacts.

Unfortunately, the Rapidan Mound was established right on a bank of the Rapidan River, and the river has shifted enough to where the entire mound is likely to be washed away over time. There have been several archaeological studies of the mound, however, and a significant body of information about it will exist even after the mound itself is gone. One such study was reported in 1982 in Occasional Paper #2, "The Rapidan Mound Revisited," by Sandra D. Speiden and others, with copies of the same available at the Orange County Historical Society's Research Center.⁴

Major Sources:

1. Levy, Philip. "A New Look at an Old Wall," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 112:3 (2004): 238.

2. Byrd, Al and Charlie Tapp. "The Willie Tapp Book," an unpublished manuscript based on Willie Tapp's diary of 1905-1906.

3. Numerous sources combined, including oral traditions.

4. Dunham, Gary, Debra Gold, and Jeffrey Hantman "Collective Burials in Late Prehistoric Virginia: Excavation and Analysis of the Rapidan Mound." *American Antiquity* 68:1 (2003): 109-128.

Past and Future Programs

Lynne Lewis



Mount Sharon Picnic

On August 29, the Historical Society was graciously hosted by Charlie and Mary Lou Seilheimer, owners of the beautiful Mount Sharon. Despite the threat of thunderstorms, more than 50 hearty picnickers arrived to enjoy hearing about the history of the estate and the development of the garden. Afterward, virtually everyone took advantage of the offer and spent the rest of the evening strolling through the glorious gardens. Our thanks go out to the Seilheimers for making this an event we won't soon forget!

Oakley & the Wreck at Fat Nancy's Trestle

Ironically, our first-ever September picnic, scheduled to be held at Ridge and DeLane Porter's Oakley, was rained out. However, a delightful indoor picnic was held at the Historical Society's Research Center, where members and their guests were treated to the story of the "Wreck at Fat Nancy's Trestle" as told by Duff Green. The wreck occurred on July 12, 1888, about 300 yards from the house at Oakley. At the time, the wreck was the worst in Virginia's railroad history. We plan to accept the Porters' kind invitation to reschedule a picnic at Oakley next summer.

"The Landscape of Slavery at Montpelier"

At our October meeting Dr. Matthew B. Reeves, Director of Archaeology at Montpelier, provided a most interesting and informative presentation on the recent archaeological work at Montpelier. A fitting companion piece to our June picnic, which focused on the restoration of the mansion, the archaeology accompanying this work has illuminated much about the interactions between Montpelier's owners and their enslaved African Americans. An intrepid audience of about 50 braved a rainy, chilly night to learn more about this aspect of Orange County's history.

Traditions: The Spirit of Holidays Past

See article on the next page.

Upcoming Programs

REMINDER: No programs are held in December (2005) or February (2006).

Annual Meeting January 22, 2006

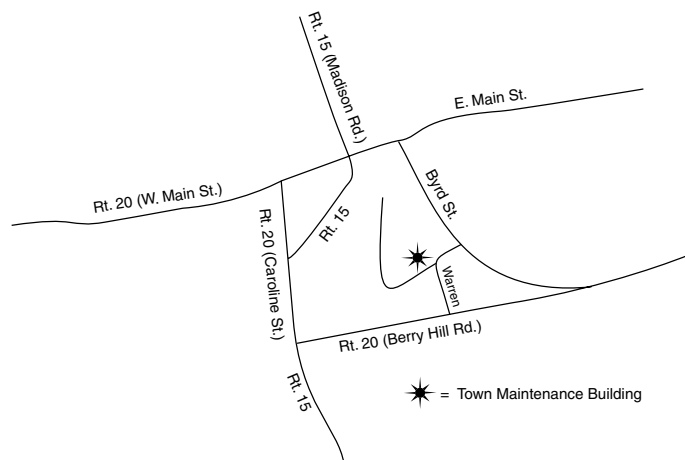
We will hold our Annual Meeting and Election of new board members at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 22, at Orange's new Town Maintenance Building. This will be a social gathering and members are strongly encouraged to bring a guest or two who might be interested in joining.

As you can imagine, our Board works hard at providing interesting and informative programs 10 times a year. While we have our 2006 summer picnic sites selected, and ideas are in the works for our other seven programs, we always welcome suggestions for topics, and even ideas for places that we could practically visit as a group, as we did with the new Courthouse last April. Please feel free to call us (540.672.5366) or e-mail us (info@orangecovahist.org) with any ideas. While we can't promise to use every one, we will be happy to hear from you.

Directions to the Town Maintenance Building:

Approaching Orange from the northeast on Route 20, just before reaching town turn right onto Byrd Street (Business 20), turn left onto Warren Street just before Cape Porpoise Restaurant. The Town Maintenance Building is straight ahead and brand new. Please use the side door.

Coming from the Town of Orange, turn onto Byrd Street (at the 7-11); turn right onto Warren Street just past the Cape Porpoise Restaurant.

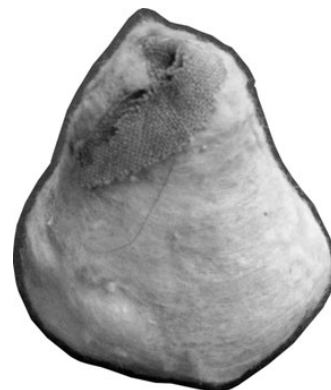
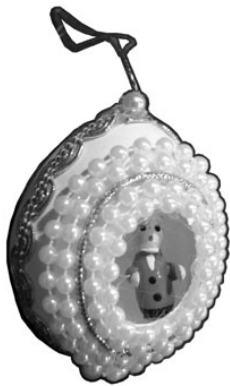




Traditions: The Spirit of Holidays Past

On November 28, in keeping with the holiday season, the Historical Society hosted a social/show-and-tell about favorite holiday traditions and experiences. Paul Donohue, who has played Santa in this area for more than 25 years, recounted the history of Mr. Claus from his beginnings as Saint Nicholas, a Turkish bishop, to the different Santas, North and South, during the Civil War. Several members brought heirloom ornaments or ornaments that will become heirlooms. Others brought ornaments from other cultures, and told the stories behind them. Traditional refreshments, such as gingerbread and spiced cider, were enjoyed by all.

Joyce Clark shared the paper and tinsel angels and Santa, which are probably about 100 years old. The tasselled Hmong fairy perch adopted as a Christmas ornament and the Danish paper heart were shared by John Floyd. Ray Lonick brought the glass Santa and felt pear. Caroline Merrick brought the ornaments crafted from eggs by Orange County artist Margaret Hill. We thank these members and all those who shared stories about their holiday traditions.



Orange County Historical Society
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Dollins of Virginia

Donald Brown

The Dollins family was in Orange County, Virginia, by 1738 when Sara Dollins witnessed two deeds there. This Sarah was surely the same Sarah Dollins who was the widow of John Dollins, who died in Northumberland County, Virginia about 1724. Parish registers in Northumberland County verify that John Dollins was the father of six children born between 1709 and 1724: William, John, Sarah, Richard, Ann and Presley. There is nothing to indicate that Sara was not the mother of all of these children.

It seems that William possibly died young and that John remained in Northumberland County. In Orange County, Richard first appeared in a record in 1744, with the earliest record for Presley in 1750. In both records the surname was spelled as Dollings, as it sometimes was in later records. The deeds that Sarah witnessed mentioned a branch of the "Pormunkey" River called Beaver Dam Run in St. Mark's Parish, which probably indicates that the Dollins family lived in that area.

Richard, who was born on March 26, 1716 (Old Style), was married to Elizabeth Mallory, the daughter of John and Anne Mallory of Orange County, about the late 1730s. Anne was the daughter of Mrs. Elizabeth Coyne, widow of Edward Coyne, who was probably Anne's father. John Mallory was the alleged son of Thomas Mallory and the alleged grandson of Captain Roger Mallory. He died in 1774, mentioning daughter "Elizabeth Dollins" in his will.

Richard and Elizabeth (Mallory) Dollins were the parents of Ann; John, born in 1740; William, born about the 1740s; and Presley, born on July 9, 1751, in Orange County, with Presley stating his birth date and birthplace on his Revolutionary War papers.

In 1761 Richard Dollins purchased land in Albemarle County, Virginia, on the headwaters of Mechum's River at a time when Thomas Jefferson, a native and resident of Albemarle County, was in his late teens. In 1773 Richard purchased land on the Virgin Spring Branch of Mechum's River. Richard died in 1774 in Albemarle County. Elizabeth Dollins was still living in 1784 when she made a deed to "my son Presley Dollings."

Presley Dollins, brother of Richard, was also married to a woman named Elizabeth. He owned land in both Orange and Albemarle Counties. He died intestate in Orange County in 1779.

Presley Dollins, native of Orange County, son of Richard and Elizabeth, was married to Ruth Alexander, daughter of Hugh and Jane Alexander, surely in Albemarle County in the 1770s. The couple became the parents of about five sons and several daughters. Presley was a private in the Revolutionary War. General George Washington signed his discharge on about September 28, 1781, Presley stated on his application for a Revolutionary War pension in 1832.

Presley sold 190 acres of land on Mechum's River in 1802, when Thomas Jefferson was President. About 1812 he moved to Lincoln County, Tennessee, where in 1814 he purchased 425 acres of land on Norris Creek. He died in Lincoln County between 1836 and 1840.

David Brown is a resident of Toledo, Ohio and kindly submitted this article to the Historical Society for publication. We thank him for sharing the fruits of his efforts.