

# Newsletter

## Orange County Historical Society

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### Octonia Revisited

*Frank S. Walker, Jr.*

**T**HE LATE RANDY Grymes' documented history of the 1722 Octonia Patent of 24,000 acres is not only a classic blend of thorough research and careful writing, it is also a darned good story. Its most dramatic scene is the one where Randy finally finds the Octonia Stone, which a 1721 survey showed as being at the northeast corner of the patent. He is driving along the South River in Greene County, asking people if they know anything about a stone carved with the figure "8" surmounted by a Christian cross. He knows that if the stone still exists, it is nearby.

"One Sunday in 1963, [I] saw a young man by the name of Shelton, washing a pickup truck at the river. Upon being asked if any of the creeks in the area were called Octonia Creek, Shelton replied that he didn't think a creek was named that, but there was a rock in his grandmother's field called the "Octoney Stone," but he had no idea of its significance. [I] asked if it had a figure eight with a cross marked atop it, and, seeming somewhat astonished, Shelton said it did."<sup>1</sup>

Following Randy's rediscovery, the memory of the stone's existence has remained widespread, but with the passing years, the knowledge of its precise location has again begun to fade. Determined to reverse that trend, a trio of intrepid explorers, assisted by a knowledgeable and interesting guide, set off a few weeks ago to revisit the Octonia Stone.

The trip organizer was Joe Rowe. He invited Tom Pitz and Frank Walker to go along, and they jumped at the opportunity. Guiding and driving was Doug Graves, Madison County historian and tireless champion of the heritage of its Graves' Mill region. Doug had earlier located the stone and had offered to take us there. The ride of Spotswood and the Knights of the Golden Horseshoe it wasn't, but close enough for our purposes.

<sup>1</sup> Grymes, J. Randolph, Jr., *The Octonia Grant*, 1977, Ruckersville VA. The Seminole Press, p17. Changed to have Randy speaking in the first person.



Tom Pitz

In the photo above, Doug Graves points to the symbol on the Octonia Stone. In the photo below, chalking reveals the details of the symbol.



Doug Graves

Our journey to and from the Octonia Stone was somewhat circuitous but informative, as Doug visited and pointed out historic mill sites, property lines, and rights-of-way. Particularly interesting in the latter category were the routes followed by Union cavalry general George Armstrong Custer to and from the 29 February 1864 Battle of Rio Hill and the abandoned roadbed of the Rapidan Railroad. The former was the only Civil War engagement in Albemarle County, and it has been memorialized by the construction of a shopping mall over the battlefield. The latter was the railroad that brought logs from the mountains to the Town of Orange in the early 1920s, unloading them at a station just across Madison Road from today's silk mill building.

In time, Doug pulled up at a small house and asked its occupants for permission to visit the stone. With permission received, Doug drove us to the stone, which turned out to be almost in the yard of the house.

We had all read Randy's book and looked at his photos of the stone and at his drawing of its distinctive symbol. We had all gotten the impression that we would be seeing a quarried and carved item, much like a cemetery marker, that would be fairly obvious to passers-by. Not so. The Octonia symbol is carved on a large, naturally occurring rock outcrop. There is no telling how many feet or miles of that rock lay below us, but the exposed part is almost as big as a small car. The Octonia symbol is faint, but clearly recognizable. Outlining it with chalk (that disappears in the next rain) is about the only way to get a good photo of it.

See **Octonia** on page 2.

## Octonia (continued)

Randy had surmised that the symbol was carved by Col. James Taylor II, or by some member of his party, when Taylor surveyed the 24,000 acres in 1721 as a part of the patenting process. The memory of our standing there and looking at the carving that would soon be three hundred years old, and knowing its history, is something that will stay with us forever. Thank you Doug.



The Research Center on a beautiful spring afternoon. The new roof and exterior paint, as well as the screen of hollies on the left side of the lot, were all made possible through the generosity of our members and other friends of the Society. This year we look forward to interior renovations.

## From the President

Joyce Clark

It is with great pleasure, and a little bit of trepidation that I take on the role of President. I look forward to this year, and feel we are off to a good start with many exciting things going on.

I am very excited about a project that Carol Couch and her committee are working on to record Frank Walker's lectures. We will be applying for a matching grant from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities to do this and we plan to present it to school teachers to enhance their knowledge of our local history. Carol and I have been meeting with the videographer to make the necessary arrangements and test the Research Center for its recording qualities. Thanks to Carol for all her hard work on this project.

We are also pleased that the Structural Engineer's Report shows the building to be sound, so we can get started on our face lift. It is certainly needed and will make us all feel prouder of our research facility.

We will be undertaking many other projects as the year progresses, including our records scanning, and I look forward to working with all of you. I would like to thank everyone for your hard work and cooperation, both past and future. We must work together to accomplish our goals.

## Chronicling America Provides Glimpses of Life a Hundred Years Ago

Clara Colby

Whether you're researching your family's history or working on a dissertation in American history, you can find a wealth of useful information through the Library of Congress' Chronicling America web site at <http://www.loc.gov/chroniclingamerica/>

The site allows you to search and view pages from a selected (but growing) list of newspapers from around the country. The time period currently covered is 1897-1910. Chronicling America also provides brief descriptions of thousands of American newspapers published between 1690 and the present.

Newspapers on the site of most interest for Orange County researchers include three from Richmond, the *Times*, the *Richmond Dispatch*, and the *Times Dispatch*. Orange information can also be gleaned from some of the fourteen Washington, D.C. area papers on the site. General news, society gossip and community boosterism can all be found.

The selections here give some idea of the range of material available. The bank article is from the *Richmond Dispatch*, May 31, 1900; the boarding classifieds are from the *Times Dispatch*, May 24, 1908; the Howard family note is from the *Colored American*, August 1, 1903; the robbery story is from the *Richmond Times*, May 25, 1901; and the Somerset Social News is from the *Times Dispatch*, September 11, 1910.

**TO START A BANK AT ORANGE.**  
Messrs. Lockwood Have Secured a Charter for That Purpose.  
Messrs. J. W. Lockwood, Jr., and Newton Lockwood will, unless their present plans are changed, establish a national bank at Orange Courthouse, Va. This plan has been under consideration for some time. So far has it progressed, in fact, that the Messrs. Lockwood are already in possession of the necessary charter. The bank will be actually established very shortly, it is understood.  
Both promoters of the new bank are well known and stand high in the banking profession. They are sons of Mr. J. W. Lockwood, who has been in the banking business here for more than forty years, and who had had ten years' experience before coming to Richmond.  
Messrs. J. W., Jr., and Newton Lockwood resigned as cashier and teller, respectively, of the American National Bank before announcing their purpose to establish a bank at Orange. Their father remains as vice-president of the American National.

**DAYTON, OHIO.**  
**Boarding.**  
LARGE, SHADY LAWN, PLEASANT rooms and porches; nice bath, two miles from Orange; board unexcelled. Adults, \$20. Apply to Mrs. ALFRED HOUSEWORTH, Orange Courthouse, Va.  
SUBURBAN BOARD, GINTER PARK for two or three adults. Apply, with reference, to C 498, care Times-Dispatch.  
NICE ROOMS, WITH GOOD SERVICE; excellent meals; for transient, \$1.50 per day; one block from all city centers.

terms moderate. No objection to children. Mrs. J. CROSSE-DOUGLAS, Rugby Road, University of Virginia.

**OAKLEY—COUNTRY PRIVILEGES IN** two miles of village; phone, large rooms and lawn; water unsurpassed. Apply, with reference, to Mrs. ROBERT D. BROWNING, R. F. D. Box 78, Orange, Va.

**BOARDERS WANTED, PIEDMONT** section; good table; fine water; shady yard; no mosquitoes; five minutes' walk from Southern depot. Mrs. G. T. MUNDY, Barboursville, Orange County, Va.  
**WANTED, BOARDERS FOR THE SUMMER.**

Rev. W. H. Howard's family is all away for the summer; Mrs. Howard and the others at Barboursville, Miss Annie at Charlottesville, Va. and Miss Bertha is the guest of Rev. Mrs. Henry Creamer, 119 E Eighty-fourth street, New York City.

**Taken to Norfolk.**  
James Dill and Frank Johnson, two prisoners who have been held here by the Federal authorities, were taken to Norfolk yesterday by United States Marshal Treat and Deputy Marshal J. E. West to stand trial on the charge of robbing the postoffice at Orange Courthouse.

## Somerset Social News.

[Special to The Times-Dispatch.]

Somerset, Va., September 10.—Miss Mary Jane Walker, of Barboursville, has been the recent guest of Miss Bessie Walker at her home, Brookside, near here.

Among the guests at Hilton, the home of R. M. Newman, are Miss Florrie Lee Taylor, of Louisville, Ky.; Mrs. Bettie Robertson, Miss Hallie Robertson and Richard Robertson, of Corpus Christi, Tex., and Robert and Frank Whittle, of Petersburg.

Miss Page Waller Newman has been the recent guest of Miss Peachy Gascoyne Lyne at "Willow Grove," her beautiful country home near Orange.

Mr. and Mrs. Barton Haxall Cameron, of Richmond, are spending some time with the former's sister, Mrs. George Zinn.

Miss Kathleen Newman expects to leave Tuesday for Gastonia, N. C., where she has accepted a position to teach in Lynwood College.

Miss Marlane Walker is visiting friends in Alexandria.

Miss Austin Turner has returned home after a delightful touring trip with Mr. and Mrs. Joseph G. Walker. They visited a number of Virginia summer resorts.

Miss Elise Woodruff left Thursday for New York, where she is the guest of her aunt, Mrs. Harriman.

Mrs. Thomas H. Ellis, of Barboursville, is spending some time with her brother, George W. Barbour, near here.

R. Lindsay Coleman and uncle, Mr. Tinsley, of Baltimore, left for Washington Sunday.

Rev. Mr. Williams, of Charlottesville, has been the recent guest of Mr. and Mrs. R. F. Haberton, near here.

John J. Woodruff returned home Saturday from New York.

Miss Eleanor Noble is now at her beautiful country home after spending several months abroad.







