

Orange Oracle

An electronic update from the Orange County Historical Society



New teachers go back to school on local history tour

New Orange County public school teachers were introduced to the county's rich history last month by going on a guided bus tour. The event, led by Orange County Historical Society tour guides, Phil Audibert and Rod Hawkins, was part of an in-service training session for approximately 100 new elementary and secondary school teachers coming into the system this year.

The morning of July 24, after watching a six minute video entitled, "Right Here in Orange County," the new secondary level teachers boarded two school busses and toured from Orange to Gordonsville to Montpelier with detailed commentary by Audibert and Hawkins along the way. In the afternoon, the two tour guides did it all over again for the elementary school teachers. By the end of the day, Hawkins had lost his voice!

The guided tour caps a years-long effort by the Historical Society to engage with the school system. Currently, all history teachers receive complimentary memberships to the Society and all teachers, whether they teach history or not, can access the Society's extensive resources library by



PHOTOS COURTESY JESSICA SARVER

Pictured at top, new elementary and secondary school teachers toured and learned about the unique history of the county.

Bottom photo, tour guides Rod Hawkins and Phil Audibert address a group of new teachers before taking them on a bus tour of the county.

clicking on "Educator Resources" on the menu bar of the Society's web site (www.orangecovahist.org). In a thank you note to the tour guides, School Superintendent Dan Hornick wrote, "We appreciate our partnership with the Historical Society and look forward to more opportunities to work together!"

History-to-Go



Grymes Memorial School



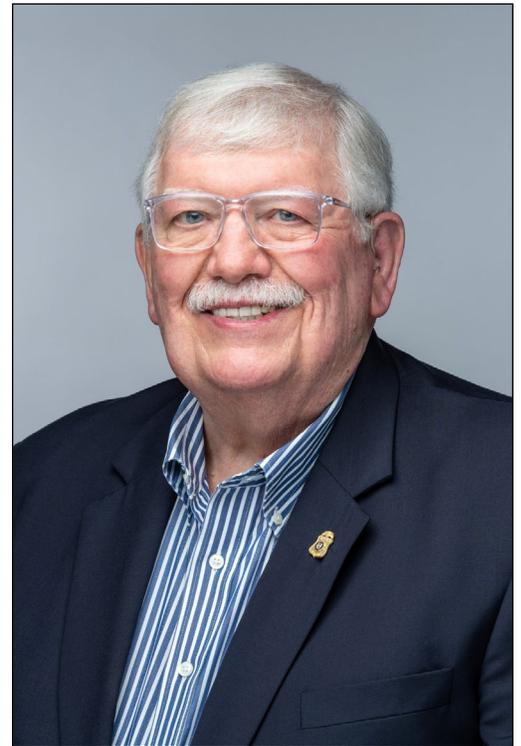
Once again this summer, the weather cooperated, resulting in a pleasant evening outside DuPont Hall at Grymes Memorial School. This year marks the 75th anniversary of this independent school that started in 1947 as a day

care facility in Emily Grymes' kitchen. Former student, teacher, and now school archivist, Margaret Hill presented a comprehensive history of what has grown into a fully accredited K-8 educational facility. To see the whole program, just click on this link: <https://youtu.be/c-qAc7Lfn78>.

OBITUARY

John Walker "Jack" Frazer

The Historical Society is sad to report that John Walker "Jack" Frazer, Jr., passed away Aug. 10, 2023. Jack grew up on his family's farm near Lahore, Va. and received his early education at Unionville Elementary and Orange County High schools. He received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in History from Virginia Military Institute and a Master of Science degree from the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. His 50-year career included a stint as a highly decorated Army officer and combat helicopter pilot (Vietnam). He also spent 25 years as a special agent for the FBI, and he served as an executive for an international insurance company.



Throughout his life, he always retained his ties to the Pamunkey neighborhood through ownership, with his sister and brother, of Great Oak Farm, and his membership at Macedonia Christian Church. His book, *The Pamunkey Neighborhood 1727-2016: The Long History of a Small Place*, was published in 2017. Jack was a long-time member of the Historical Society, and his well-written and well-researched articles on the Pamunkey area were often a welcome part of our newsletter, *Record*. His charming personality and impressive knowledge will be greatly missed by one and all.



POSTCARD COURTESY LYNNE LEWIS

WJMA used to be located at DeVivi's motel/restaurant complex on Rt. 15 south of town, where the Comfort Inn and Suites is today. The tower in question is the taller one in the center of the image.

A Tower Story

From a conversation with Woody Purcell

While writing the WJMA story for the Historical Society's most recent newsletter, Ross Hunter asked Woody Purcell about the location of the radio tower associated with WJMA's first studio at the old DeVivi's. Here's what Woody said:

"My only contribution to the tower story, is when the bulb on the tower's top burned out, I volunteered to replace it for \$25. This would have been in 1959 when my gross pay was either 75-cents or \$1 an hour.

On the chosen day, I strapped on my safety belt, hooked on the replacement bulb and began my climb.

I'm not really afraid of heights so the upward climb was uneventful with several stops to rest and enjoy

the view as the Town of Orange unfolded beneath me. Once I passed the last guy wires, the tower shook, just a bit, but I reached the top with no delay.

Here's where the one problem made itself known. In order to replace the bulb, one would have to unlock the safety belt and stand above the bulb housing and pull the housing up and over in order to expose the old bulb. The housing was heavy cast aluminum. Although I was only 18 at the time, I had enough education to realize that completing this task safely did not have very good odds and so I abandoned the job and began my downward descent.

No \$25!"

Editor's note: there's no word on who actually did replace the bulb.

2023 programs

> **Sunday, Aug. 27, 6 p.m.**
The History of Woodley
 by Steve Sanford

> 13305 Woodley Rd.,
 Orange

Join us for a discussion of the history of Woodley with Steve and Doug Sanford. The Woodley home was built ca. 1787 by Ambrose Madison on a portion of the original Montpelier land grant. The house was expanded by Nelly Conway Willis about 1840. The last Society program held at this significant county landmark was 30 years ago. Bring your lawn chair and a picnic. Parking will be in the field adjacent to the house and we will gather underneath the large tree to the right of the main house. In case of rain, the picnic will be canceled.

> **Sunday, Sept. 24, 3 p.m.**
The History of
Bloomsbury with
 Bethany Sullivan

Bloomsbury Road.
 Bring a picnic.

> **Sunday, Oct. 29, 3 p.m.**
Preservation Virginia
(formerly APVA)
Revolving Loan Fund
 with Gordon Lohr

Meet at the newly renovated OCHS Sandra Speiden auditorium at 130 Caroline St., Orange.

Membership

Interested in Orange County history? Become a member of the historical society. Visit www.orangecovahist.org.

Crittenden Building on Main Street

By Ray Ezell

This picture depicts a familiar building to most people in the county. It is currently known as the Gordon Building, housing Orange County government offices. However, its history is rich and deep.

In March 1903, Dr. William James Crittenden bought this lot on Main Street and built what was known as the Crittenden building in mid-1905 for the Greiner & Shackelford Hardware store. That hardware store seems to have left in 1907 because it then became the home of a grocery store (lower side) and, in November 1908 (after the 1908 fire), the Ware-Watts hardware store (upper side).

By 1909, a small grocery store (Vanderhoff building) had been built between the Crittenden building and the Coleman Hotel to the east, and the Bill Long & Ralph Ashton Grocery then occupied the lower half of the Crittenden Building. (Ralph L. Ashton was the one-armed trumpet player of the Orange Volunteer Fire Company Band.) By 1914-1915, the Vanderhoff building housed the Wolf Wilson pharmacy (the upstairs was used for hotel rooms for the Cole-



man Hotel), and the upper end of the Crittenden building housed the Orange post office.

About 1920, Ashton's Grocery moved out of the lower side of the Crittenden building to the adjacent Vanderhoff building that had earlier been vacated by the Wilson Pharmacy. The next year, a butcher shop was opened in the building by John W. Childs. By 1925, another pharmacy occupied the lower side of the Crittenden building.

After ca. 1930, the building be-

came known as the E. L. Brockman building. In late 1931, the Thompson Brothers, grocers, opened their third location in the Brockman building, and in late 1932, Ashton and Long moved their Piggly-Wiggly grocery store from the Vanderhoff building into the upper end of the Crittenden/Brockman building. In 1933, Hess's Jewelry Store moved into the building but stayed only a few years.

In 1934, an ABC liquor store opened in the building, and Mrs. W. W. Harlow moved the Robert E. Lee Tea Room from its location across Main Street to the Crittenden building, renaming it the Robert E. Lee Café. During WWII, the building housed DeVivi's Orange Restaurant and Evelyn McIntosh's Dress Shop. In 1947, the building housed the Leggett's Department Store before being converted to the county office building many years later.

Call for volunteers

Member benefits discussion! We are looking for volunteers to participate in one live meeting (virtual or in person depending on where volunteers live) and subsequent email feedback on developing a set of specific Orange County Historical Society member benefits to be presented to the Board of Directors for approval/adoption. September – October timeframe. If you are interested, please email Volunteer Coordinator May Saxton at OCHistVolunteers@gmail.com ASAP!