

# Orange Oracle

An electronic bulletin from the Orange County Historical Society

## Historical Society to celebrate 60th anniversary of its founding

By Ray Ezell

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Orange County Historical Society (OCHS). Founded in late 1965 under the leadership of its first president, Angus M. Green, and others, the Society will commemorate this milestone of preserving Orange County history with a celebratory reception. It will be held on Thursday, June 5, at 5:30 p.m. at The Pavilion on Lakeland Farm, just south of the Town of Orange on Route 15. The reception is open to the public and free to attend. Please join us!

If you're interested in attending, you should RSVP as soon as possible by sending an email to



The Historical Society's first President, Angus Green (center) and Col. Howard MacCord (right), State Archaeologist, confer at the Society's first annual organizational meeting at Virginia National Bank, January 21, 1966.

PHOTO FROM THE ORANGE  
REVIEW ARCHIVES AT  
THE ORANGE COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

[jess@orangepaints.com](mailto:jess@orangepaints.com) to save your place and receive important updates about the event. If you know others who would enjoy an evening celebrating with the Society, please forward this announcement to them. We would love to pack the house for this special gala.

At the reception, the Society will present its inaugural Frank Walker Historic Preservation Award to a deserving individual who has made an outstanding contribution to local history/preservation in Orange County. The keynote

See **ANNIVERSARY**, page 4

## Memories of the old Montpelier Supply Co.

Do you remember the old Montpelier Supply Company store, the one with the Esso sign out front, across Rt. 20 from the Montpelier train station? Do you remember the cylindrical steam radiator in the middle of the room; the wheel of cheese on the marble slab? If you do, Montpelier's Archaeology Director Matt Reeves and the Montpelier Oral History Collaboration



Team want to hear from you!

In early May, the old store will become the new home of the Community Archaeology Lab at Montpelier (CALM), with a grand opening slated for Friday May 9. Matt Reeves and the Oral History Collaboration Team want to collect as many stories as they can about the old store; they'll

even have the old radiator set up in the middle of the room. These oral histories will be scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday, May 7 and 8, via Zoom and in person at the store on Friday, May 9.

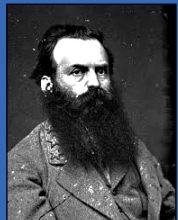
To sign up, please follow this link: <https://forms.gle/FX8fXRR8tH-nZ8nM9>. Or give Matt Reeves a call at 540-406-0443.

That weekend in May is a busy one: first the CALM opening on Friday, May 9 and then the dedication of the Charters of Freedom installation at the James Madison Museum of Orange County Heritage on Saturday, May 10.

## 2025 program schedule

*Dates and times are subject to change.*

### > Sunday April 27, 3:00 PM



Military and Political Career of Gov. General James L. Kemper

### > Sunday, May 11, 3:00 PM

Religious Liberty in the Virginia Piedmont

### > Sunday, June 29, 5:00 PM

Rocklands Farm Museum (picnic)

### > Sunday July 27, 3:00 PM

History of the Montpelier Hunt Races (picnic)

### > Sunday, August 24, 3:00 PM

Virginia Indians in the Piedmont

### > Sunday, September 28, 3:00 PM

Germana Archaeology (picnic)

### > Sunday, October 18, 3:00 PM

Dr. John Leland & Virginia's Baptists

### > Sunday, November 16, 3:00 PM

Virginia Indian Eel Pots

### > No December Program

All programs will be held at the Sandra and William H. Speiden Auditorium, 130 Caroline St., Orange, VA, unless otherwise noted. For programs being held in the auditorium, please be in your seats no later than 2:55 PM. Livestreaming starts promptly at 3:00 PM.

# Historical Society announces "Orange County History Forum"

By Ray Ezell

The Historical Society is proud to announce that part of our 60th anniversary commemoration this year will be the inauguration of the "Orange County History Forum." This local history symposium will be modeled, although on a smaller scale, on the statewide Virginia Forum that has been running successfully over the past few decades.

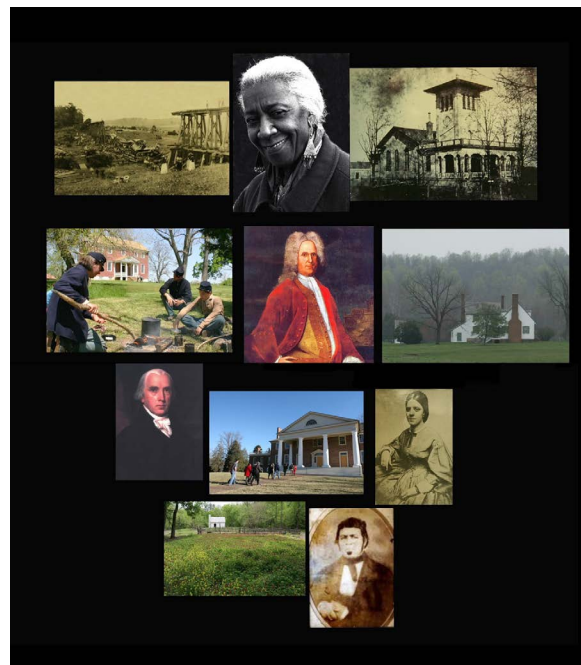
The Orange County History Forum (OCHF) is scheduled for Saturday, October 11, 2025, at the Historical Society's research center. The theme of this year's Forum is: "Orange County's Place in History." Presenters are encouraged to offer papers relating to this theme. Other papers relating to topics for the immediate surrounding region may also be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Officially established in 1734, Orange County is a true crossroads of Virginia and national history. It is the location of one of the Piedmont's earliest European settlements (Lt. Gov. Alexander Spotswood's Germana), the birthplace of two U.S. Presidents (James Madison and Zachary Taylor), and the location of one of the Civil War's

bloodiest battles (Wilderness).

The OCHF encourages presentations in anthropology, archaeology, education, historical geography, and/or history relating to the symposium theme.

The deadline for proposals is June 30, 2025. Paper proposals will be submitted electronically at the following registration link: <https://forms.gle/CbsJiacD-kY7kz2Xn7>. (A Google account is required.)



Submissions should include: a one half-page description of the proposed presentation and a brief resume of the presenter, not to exceed one page in length. Presentations should not exceed 20 minutes in duration.

Questions? Contact Ray Ezell, President, Orange County Historical Society, at [rayezell\\_2000@yahoo.com](mailto:rayezell_2000@yahoo.com).

## Membership

Interested in Orange County history? Become a member of the historical society. Visit [www.orangecovahist.org](http://www.orangecovahist.org).



# Library of Virginia Circuit Court Records Preservation Program

The Library of Virginia's Circuit Court Records Preservation Program (CCRP) has awarded more than \$2 million in grants to localities across the Commonwealth for 2025. The money is earmarked for the preservation of records in Virginia's courthouses. Orange County's portion is about \$17,000.

The CCRP Grant Review Board approved 114 grant projects from 105 circuit courts, with most projects covering professional conservation treatment for hundreds of records that date from the 1690s to the mid-20th century. They include deed books, will

books, land tax books, marriage licenses, order books and plat books that suffered damage from use, age, pests, water, cellulose acetate lamination or previous nonprofessional repairs. Since 1992, the CCRP has awarded 2,282 preservation grants totaling more than \$38 million dollars.

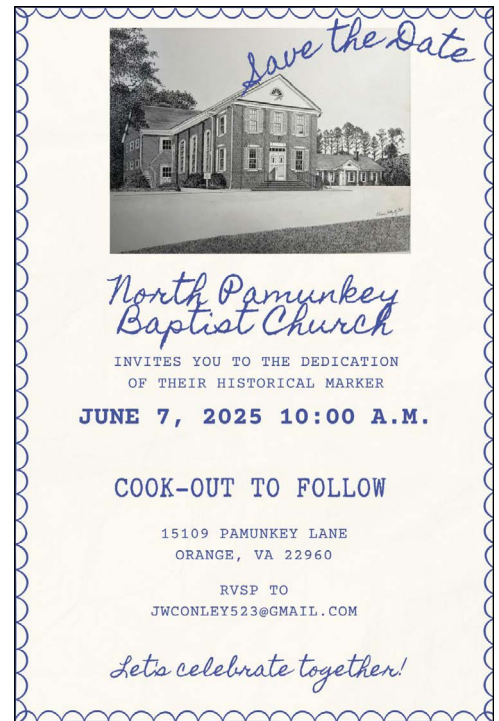
Orange County Circuit Court Clerk Melissa Morris said the Library of Virginia encouraged her to use the funds to scan and protect two land books and a marriage license book dating back to the 1750s. Next year she hopes to use the grant to scan marriage licenses going all the way back to 1775.

## Hands-on history



PHOTO COURTESY ROD HAWKINS

Our own Rod Hawkins was joined by the Cooper family (Cooper's Cookin' and Catering) at the Exchange Hotel recently to speak to 155 4th graders from Locust Grove Elementary School. "We did four 15-minute rotations," writes Hawkins. "In our presentation, I talked about the Civil War in Orange County and the Coopers talked about the Fried Chicken Ladies of Gordonsville. The Coopers served almost 200 pieces of fried chicken to the students and teachers. Meanwhile," he continues, "I let them manipulate, not eat, some hardtack that my wife and I made," adding, "I wasn't ready to pay the dental fees."



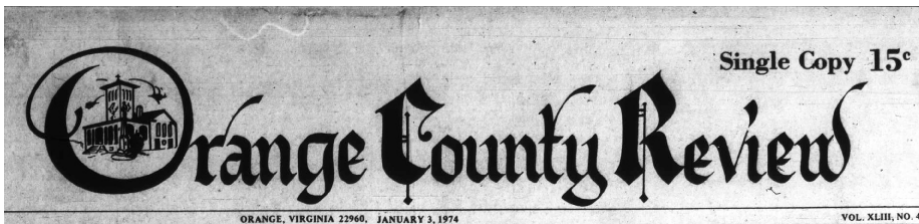
**Pamunkey Baptist Church  
Historical Marker Dedication, June 7**

## Call for Volunteers

Volunteer coordinator May Saxton reports that the volunteer postcard organization project is complete, with many thanks to Marie and Pat! Also, thanks to Jayne for coordinating.

### Next up: Short-term local schools project!

Our next project will be the organization of Society files about the history of Orange County Public Schools. We need several volunteers who are willing to dig into and organize our material. So many of our members have first-hand knowledge of the history of our local schools; they could take this opportunity to share their knowledge and become more involved with our Society! If you are interested in this short-term project, email Volunteer Coordinator May Saxton at [OCHistVolunteers@gmail.com](mailto:OCHistVolunteers@gmail.com).



## 60 years ago:

### Page 1 of the *Orange County Review*

*Editor's Note: For the past year or so, we've brought you a digest of important news items from our local weekly newspaper from 50 years ago. But, because this year marks the 60th anniversary of the Orange County Historical Society, we've decided to look at the 1965 editions of the Review.*

#### April 1, 1965

"Washington Redskins vs. Orange All Stars," reads the teaser. Seriously, a basketball game between real live members of the Washington Redskins professional football team versus a group of local basketball stars will take place in a benefit basketball game. Considering the date of this issue, we're taking a wait-and-see approach to this one.

#### April 8, 1965

The basketball game will happen tonight. In other news, county leaders leaned on the state Highway Commissioner Douglas Fugate to speed up improvements to Rt. 20 in the Locust Grove area. But Fugate indicated, "the full blacktop road will not be open until 1968." Also, an ad promotes Sirloin steaks for 69-cents per pound.

#### April 15, 1965

The Supervisors set a hearing date for a 50-cent increase in the

real estate tax levy to cover a \$1.5 million proposed budget. That includes \$1 million for schools. Today, the county budget is \$155.5 million, of which \$85.5 million goes to schools. Meanwhile the Orange Town Council retired its debt and announced plans to float another bond issue for \$500,000 to build a new water treatment plant. Oddly, not a word on that Redskins vs. Locals basketball game that was played a week ago.

#### April 22, 1965

Horseshows seem to dominate the front page. Famous local rider, Rodney Jenkins, rode a horse named Bronze Star to victory in the Warm-Up class at the Orange Schooling Show. The show featured a record-breaking 90 entries. Meanwhile, the Annual Waverly Schooling Show drew 150 entries; also a record.

#### April 29, 1965

Litterbugs are in the news. A crew is photographed filling two large dump trucks with roadside trash picked up along Rt. 15 every 2-1/2 miles! The caption goes on to say that litterbugs cost county taxpayers \$2400 per year. In other news, our own Frank Walker, Junior, was named state Vice President of our local nine-jurisdiction region of the Junior Chamber of Commerce.

*Orange County  
Historical Society  
60th Anniversary*

Reception & Keynote Speaker:  
Katie Crawford-Lackey  
Introduction and Inaugural Presentation of  
Frank Walker Historic Preservation Award  
In recognition of 60 years of preserving Orange County history.

JUNE **5** 2025 AT 5:30PM

at The Pavilion on Lakeland  
Farm  
Please RSVP to [jess@orangeprints.com](mailto:jess@orangeprints.com)  
by May 15

## Anniversary...

*continued from page 1*

speaker for the evening will be Dr. Katie Crawford-Lackey, Director of the Robert H. Smith Center for the Constitution at James Madison's Montpelier. She is a public historian and scholar known for her research on cultural heritage. She also serves as the host of the *Consider the Constitution* podcast. Dr. Crawford-Lackey will speak on the importance of historic preservation and the telling of local history to a community such as ours.

The reception will provide refreshments, including a selection from local wineries. Participants will also be treated to a short video montage showcasing Orange County's history in pictures, produced by Phil Audibert.

## Oracle items

Do you have a news item for the Oracle? Send to: [Phlodbear@aol.com](mailto:Phlodbear@aol.com). Deadline for the next issue is **May 10**.