

Orange Oracle

An electronic bulletin from the Orange County Historical Society

Gutter fund raiser announced

23% of \$5,500 goal
reached

By Ray Ezell

The Historical Society's Research Center building exterior has held up well. But upkeep is a never-ending responsibility. The building now sports fresh paint, and extensive work on the wooden exterior columns was recently completed. However, two recent inspections of the building's roof and gutters found that, while our roof is serviceable over the next several years, the gutters need significant work, and they need it now.

After comparing bids, the best balance of cost vs. benefit is to replace the front gutters with the same style that is currently there and to repair the rear gutter. To balance urgency and budget, the approach agreed upon by our Board is to fund-raise this summer and execute the work in early 2025, as this expense is outside our normal operating budget.

The project is anticipated to cost \$5,500, including a 40% contingency for materials/labor, inflation, and possible hidden damage around the rear gutter. As of July 10, we've raised \$1,235.00.

We need to ensure that our



Top photo shows a view looking down at the auditorium gutter. The white squares are temporary patches that were installed in November of 2022. In early 2023, a temporary lining was applied over the full length. At left, rust is damaging the gutters at the front of the building.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PATRICK COLBY

building and its contents remain stable. If you would like to assist the Society by making a donation, please click the link here: <https://givebutter.com/ochs-roof-campaign> to make a gift with your credit card. Or you can mail a check (noted as Roof Campaign) to the Society at 130 Caroline Street, Orange, VA 22960. Or stop by in person Mon.-Fri., 1-5 p.m.

Your support is greatly appreciated.

Bloomsbury dendrochronology report

By Ann Miller

Dendrochronology, also known as tree ring dating, is the science of analyzing the pattern of annual growth rings of trees or timbers to date when the tree was grown, including when the tree was felled. This technology has been revolutionizing the dating of many historical structures, including some in central Virginia. Given early building practices, the timber framing of a building was generally constructed within a year of the trees' felling dates.

Recently, dendrochronology analysis was applied to Bloomsbury, the early Taylor family house traditionally cited as Orange County's oldest standing dwelling. A construction date of 1722 for the oldest part of the Bloomsbury house (the 1-1/2 story section) was a traditional one within the Taylor family, based on the year of James Taylor II's 8,500-acre land patent in the area. The property remained in the Taylor family from the 1720s until 1791. Over the next 170 years it passed through several other families and a two-story wing and its gable end addition were added around the beginning of the 19th century. In 1964 the property returned to the Taylor family. Jaquelin and Helen Marie Taylor embarked on a stabilization and restoration of the house as

a private museum. And prior to her death in 2022, Mrs. Taylor provided for the preservation of the property as part of a trust. The Taylor Trust's stewardship of the property has included a detailed structural evaluation and dendrochronology analysis



PHOTO BY PHIL AUDIBERT

of the house.

The results of the dendrochronology revealed that the felling dates for the timber samples in the original portion of the house (traditionally dated to 1722) were 1754-1756, giving a probable beginning construction date in or shortly after 1756. The timber samples of the two-story section (traditionally dated to ca. 1797 to 1800) had felling dates

of 1807-1809, making it probable that this section was under construction by sometime in 1809. Timbers of the east gable end addition to the two-story section had felling dates of 1823-1825. So, a construction date ca. 1825 is logical.

Bloomsbury joins an ever-growing number of structures for which dendrochronology has indicated construction dates that are later than traditional or long-hypothesized dates. A few local examples include: Salubria in Culpeper County (traditional date ca. 1743 /dendrochronology date ca. 1757); and Montpelier in Orange County (previous hypothesized date ca. 1755-1760 /

dendrochronology date ca. 1763-1764

An article with additional information on Bloomsbury building research is planned for our upcoming newsletter in the fall. The Taylor Trust is to be commended for its commitment to preserve this historic property and add to its history. We look forward to future developments at Bloomsbury!

Call for volunteers at the Museum

In the spirit of the collaboration between the Orange County Historical Society and the James Madison Museum, we invite anyone who might wish to be more involved to volunteer at the museum. A variety of opportunities are available, and the insight and support of our community is welcomed. Help is needed cataloging items, organizing, and staffing the desk. If you are interested or would like more information, contact OCHS Volunteer Coordinator May Saxton at OCHistVolunteers@gmail.com.

2024 program schedule

Dates and times are subject to change.

Attendees to auditorium programs, please note: Live streaming starts precisely at 3 pm. Please be in your seats no later than 2:55.

> Sunday, July 28, 5 p.m.

Marshall Farms: An

Automated Dairy Operation

Keith Marshall will conduct a tour of the high-tech Marshall Farms organic dairy operation. Meet at Marshall Farms, 8494 Zachary Taylor Hwy., Unionville, VA. Bring a picnic.

> Sunday Aug. 25, 3 p.m.

The Culpeper Minute Men in the Revolutionary War

Bill Schwetke, of Sons of the American Revolution, will present a history of the Culpeper Minutemen militia and their role in the Revolutionary War. In mid-1775, the Culpeper Minutemen

militia was created by volunteers from Culpeper, Orange, and Fauquier Counties to fortify the revolutionary task force operating at Great Bridge, VA. The minutemen were under the command of Culpeper's John Green and were attached to the 1st VA Regiment (Continental Line) under the command of Patrick Henry. Meet at the Sandra and William H. Speiden Auditorium, 130 Caroline St., Orange, VA.

> Sunday, Sept. 29, 3 p.m.

Rebuilding Menokin

Sam Biggers of Dominion Traditional Building Group will give a presentation on the ongoing reconstruction of Menokin, a well-known example of colonial-era Georgian architecture in Virginia. This innovative rebuilding effort combines traditional materials and methods with modern ones. Dominion Traditional Building Group has been involved in the documentation and rebuilding of Menokin for more than six years. Meet at

the Sandra and William H. Speiden Auditorium, 130 Caroline St., Orange, VA.

> Sunday, Oct. 27, 3 p.m.

Sandra Speiden: Mounds, Indian Pipes and Preservation

Bill Speiden will give a presentation on how his late wife, Sandra, used her platform to advance the cause of archaeological and historic preservation in Orange County and beyond. Meet at the Sandra and William H. Speiden Auditorium, 130 Caroline St., Orange, VA.

> Sunday, Nov. 24, 3 p.m.

Implications of Recent 3-D Scanning of the Barboursville Ruin

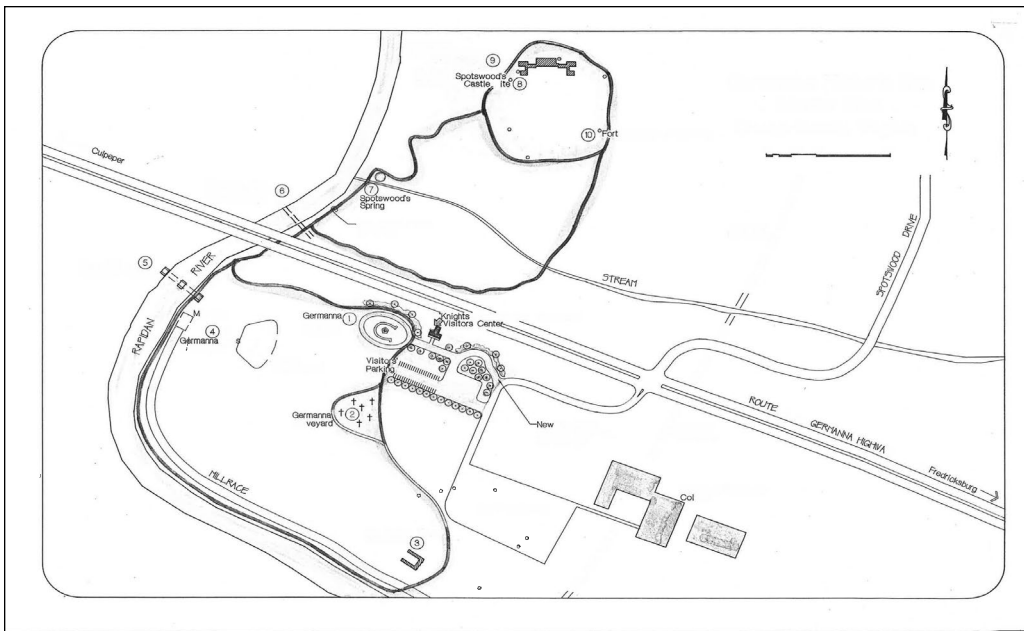
Will Rourk, 3D specialist with the University of Virginia Library, will detail the results of laser scanning of the ruins of the Barboursville mansion and its adjoining landscape. Meet at the Sandra and William H. Speiden Auditorium, 130 Caroline St., Orange, VA.

History-to-Go

A Boy, a Dream and the Orange County Pilots Who Shaped His Destiny

Russ Roberts came to Orange County in 1969 when his folks took over the operation of the Orange County Airport. From that experience, Russ found the path to his dream of becoming a professional pilot. In this highly entertaining talk, Russ honored important mentors, the local pilots who shaped him, not only as a pilot but as a person. To see the program, click here: <https://youtu.be/vNIm0vhXc08>.





Germanna Initiative: Historic Rt. 3 Corridor

Includes controlled access to archaeological sites

By Phil Audibert

Jennifer Hurst-Wender wants to put Historic Germanna on the map. Well, of course, it's on the map, but the Executive Director of the property wants to put it at the top of your list of important local historical sites.

"We are putting together, basically, a coalition of sites, of historical resources along Route 3 to see if there's a way we can promote what we have here, as a tourist destination, as a day trip," said Hurst-Wender. "Historic Germanna is really the cultural resource for Orange and the region."

Somewhat over-shadowed by James Madison's Montpelier, Historic Germanna boasts a unique historical heritage. At one point, it was the westernmost inland British settlement in the Americas. The original five-sided fort and the "Enchanted Castle" Georgian mansion and its dependencies are widely regarded as one of the most important archaeological sites in the state. And the region's history of iron mining and smelting makes it a birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution.

There is a plan afoot to make that

archaeological site more accessible to the public. Hurst-Wender says she's talking to the Department of Historic Resources "to open up a path that would go from our trail at Germanna Ford, under the Route 3 bridge, up the historic 18th century road trace to the archaeological site in a safe and protective way. Our goal would be for it to be not just a walking path but be able to take utility vehicles and larger golf carts, that type of thing, so it can be accessible." Hurst-Wender added it would make, "this entire visitor's center-Fort Germanna complex, a destination for people who specifically drive here to see what's going on."

She hopes that Historic Germanna could become the flagship of a cultural and historical journey along Route 3 through Culpeper, Orange and Spotsylvania counties. That journey could start with dinosaur tracks discovered in a Culpeper stone quarry, and continue through the presence of indigenous people in the area, to the establishment of Germanna as a settlement and jumping off point for westward expansion, to the launch of Grant's Overland Campaign and the Battle of the Wilderness.

North Pamunkey marker approved

"Dear Ms. Conley," writes Highway Marker Program Manager, Jennifer Loux, of the Department of Historic Resources. "I am pleased to inform you that the Board of Historic Resources voted on June 20 to select the 'North Pamunkey Baptist Church' marker proposal as one of the projects that will advance in the process toward becoming a state highway marker."

"I'm very excited," gushed Jennifer Conley when she received the news. She has been working on this marker project for months, maybe even years! Author of a book entitled *Bury Me at North Pamunkey*, Conley presented a program about the historic church this past May. See History-to-Go <https://youtu.be/TI5kulPd5A0?si=mQYaVx-v2RD6Uo-RB>.

The approval letter goes on to say that the text of the marker must be approved by the Marker Editorial Committee. It is limited to 700 characters. Conley says she has whittled her proposed text to 800 characters and is still working on it. Loux added, "Our goal is to present the final text to the Virginia Board of Historic Resources for official approval on September 19, 2024." That date happens to fall just days after the 250th Anniversary celebration at North Pamunkey Baptist Church.

50 years ago: Page 1 of the *Orange County Review*



July 4, 1974

The now infamous Rt. 15 bypass, which carved a swath through a traditional Black neighborhood in the Town of Orange, was dedicated on this day 50 years ago. Attendees included Lt. Governor John

Dalton, and Highway Commissioner Douglas Fugate, who promised that the installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of Main Street and Madison Road "has been awarded a position of high priority."

July 11, 1974

The Master Plan process continues. The consultant who was hired to develop the plan, Robert Plavnick, "explained that thrust and direction of the master land use plan must evolve from citizen expression," reads the article. Plavnick suggested that he interview 50 local citizens about their views on the direction the county should take. Some of

those citizens are local officials; others are Orange County residents (including a high school student) appointed by Planning Commission members.

July 18, 1974

The Montpelier train station closes, and its one-man agent since 1951 retires. "In years past it had a work force of five men and was open 24 hours a day, seven days a week," reads the article, adding "the station is the last of its type along the Southern Railroad from Washington to Monroe." The post office at Montpelier Station remained open.

July 25, 1974

Depositions in a suit by a mobile home park developer against the Board of Supervisors were taken this week in a closed hearing. The case had become a bellwether for the simmering growth-vs.-no-growth controversy that has been swirling around the master land use plan development story.

Is OCHS in your will?

Bill Speiden tells us what to do. Simply provide your attorney or advisor with the following language:

"I give, devise, and bequeath to the Orange County Historical Society, a charitable organization whose office building is located in Orange County, Town of Orange, Virginia, for the general purposes of said organization (the sum of \$_____); (_____percent of

my gross estate, as determined for federal estate tax purposes); (the following property:_____); or (the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate)."

Our legal designation is:
Orange County Historical Society
A 501(c)(3) charitable organization
Office building at 130 Caroline Street, Orange, VA 22960-1533
Tax ID#: 10-541030308F001

Membership

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