

Newsletter

Orange County Historical Society

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Orange County's Reluctant Tourist

Frank S. Walker, Jr.

ON JULY 4, 1976—Bicentennial Sunday—Russell Lovell¹ began his first day as the new organist/choir director for St. Thomas' Episcopal Church in Orange by playing the National Anthem. For the next two years, the community was treated to Russ' wide-ranging musical excellence, then the call came for him to return to his native Massachusetts. He has not forgotten his Orange connections, however, and he returns periodically to visit friends and check up on happenings.

At the time of his St. Thomas' employment, Russ supposed that he was the first of his family to visit Orange County, Virginia. When he was in town during the summer of 2006, however, he reported that he had learned that his great-grandfather, Horace Horatio Phinney Lovell, had been here ahead of him—as a Union soldier. There was no way that such a “visit” could have been one of unalloyed pleasure, but for Horace, it became worse than just dangerous and disagreeable. He wound up being captured and spending the rest of the Civil War in a Confederate prison. Thanks to the Confederate government, Horace got to see Orange County, portions of Virginia, North and South Carolina—and a great deal of Andersonville, Georgia. It is fair to say, though, that he must have been a most reluctant tourist.

Horace was a member of a family that today traces its ancestry back ten generations to the first Lovells who arrived in the Massachusetts colony in 1635. Russ noted that it is possible to continue tracing the family line in England, but it is sufficient for this brief report to say that the Lovells were and are staunch New Englanders. As you would expect, other Lovells preceded Horace in serving their country, as Horace's ancestors helped to secure America's liberty during the Revolution.

Horace was born at Sandwich (on Cape Cod) in 1839. Growing up, he worked for a time at a local nail factory, then like so many young men of that region, he responded to the call of the sea. In fact, it was not until his ship returned to port in June 1861 that he learned that the New England states were gearing up for what their leaders saw as an inevitable war with the Southern states. Adventure, and probably friends, called, and Horace joined a local militia company.

¹ The author is deeply indebted to Russell Lovell for information on himself, his great-grandfather, and the Lovell family generally. Like all the other sources for this article, there is more than space allows. A more extensive recitation is contemplated for a future publication.

That first great battle at Manassas, Virginia, in July 1861 came too quickly for Horace's unit to be ready, but by August 24, they were sufficiently organized to be taken into Federal service, along with seven other companies. Their regiment was designated the 18th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, and Horace's unit became its Company D. Horace sought neither fame nor glory, and the rank of private suited him just fine.²

During the fall and winter of 1861, two more companies joined the 18th Mass., making it a “full” ten-company regiment. The time was spent drilling and enduring camp life. In the spring of 1862, the regiment participated in the Peninsula Campaign, but saw little action. That changed with the Second Manassas/Antietam Campaign, when on August 30, the 18th went up against “Stonewall” Jackson in the infamous Railroad Cut. The regiment suffered 54 killed and 115 wounded. Similar losses attended its efforts in the December battle at Fredericksburg, where the 18th joined in the futile charges against Marye's Heights and its stone wall. In 1863, the 18th was again in every major battle fought by its army, and again sustained severe losses at Gettysburg.

Horace's first visit to Orange County came on November 26, 1863—Thanksgiving Day—when the 18th crossed the Rapidan to initiate the abortive Mine Run Campaign. The regiment missed out on the November 27 battle at Payne's Farm (the only major engagement of the campaign) but it could not avoid the ruthless skirmishing in the Wilderness thickets, nor could it escape the rain and paralyzing cold that froze the armies to a standstill and led to the abandonment of the campaign.

Back in Culpeper County for the winter, the 18th made camp near Beverly's Ford, on the eastern edge of the Brandy Station battlefield. During that winter, Horace and 139 members of Company D reenlisted for an additional three years. Up to this point, Horace had escaped accidents, major illnesses, and serious combat wounds. That of course is partly good fortune, but it was also evident that he had good survival skills. For example, on September 20, 1862, near Shepherdstown, WV,

² Horace's personal military record came primarily from: *Massachusetts, State of, Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines in the Civil War*, Norwood Press, 1931. The record of his regiment came from both the above and: Bowen, James L, *Massachusetts in The War*, Springfield MA, Clark W. Byant & Co., 1889.

See **Tourist** on page 2.

Tourist (*continued*)

the 18th joined in an attack on Confederates withdrawing from Antietam. The Federals were counterattacked by a force outnumbering them four to one. In the confusion, Horace became separated from his comrades. He was gone long enough to be reported “missing,” lost somewhere in enemy territory. Horace, however, avoided capture and made it safely back to his unit.

Horace’s second visit to Orange County came at about 7:00 a.m. on May 4, 1864, when the 18th crossed at Germanna Ford, initiating what became known as Grant’s Overland Campaign. On the next day, the battle of the Wilderness began. It was the first battle of that campaign, but it was Horace’s last. The 18th was at the far left (south) end of the first line of battle coming across Saunders’ Field, and it participated in the rout of the Confederate brigade opposing it. Once out of the field and into the thickets beyond, things began to unravel for the attackers. Horace Mann, a member of the 18th, recalled that he was in the thickets and thinking that his comrades were all around him, when a hand grabbed his musket and a Southern voice advised him “no more of that.” Mann then realized that such company as he had were Confederate soldiers, who already had 3-4 other “unfortunates” under guard. Horace Lovell may well have been one of those unfortunates.³

For the rest of May 5, Horace and his fellow prisoners tended to the wounded, then about dark, they were herded into a huge group of several hundred or more and marched up the Turnpike to Orange Court House. The enclosed Court House grounds had become the usual place to hold prisoners, but the several thousand produced by the Battle of the Wilderness probably filled wagon yards, livestock pens, and anything else that had a good fence. Overshadowing everything was the fact that everyone knew that the Parole and Exchange Protocol that had been in effect through 1863 was no longer being honored by either side. Horace and his mates were not going to be sent home to await exchange; they were going to prison camps.

Eventually by marches and rail transport, Horace and company reached Lynchburg, then Danville, went through North Carolina, through South Carolina, and finally arrived at Camp Sumter in Georgia—a place that soon became known as Andersonville. Horace had gotten one of the more complete

tours of the American South being offered by the Confederate government at the time, but one may assume that he was singularly unimpressed. No “wish you were here” post cards were going to be mailed home by him.

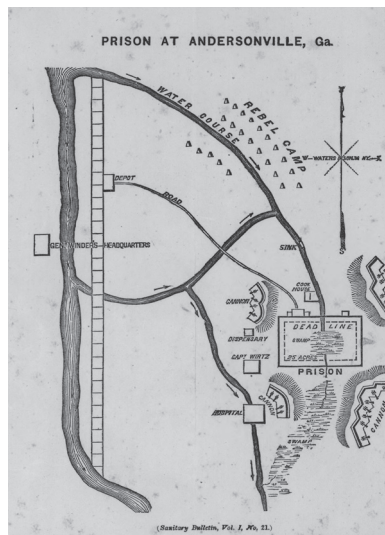
Andersonville was no more ready than any other prison, north or south, for the tidal wave of captives produced by the Overland Campaign. At one point, the camp had some 32,000 prisoners in its six acre compound. The need for food, clothing, shelter, and basic sanitation was overwhelming and was largely unmet. Some 14,000 of the prisoners died—but Horace survived.

Eventually Horace hit a guard on the head with a water pail, grabbed his gun, and disappeared into the swamps. For approximately three weeks, he traveled by night and hid by day. By that time in the war, Southern swamps and wildernesses tended to contain dangerous and desperate people, in addition to the usual snakes, alligators, and Confederate patrols. Horace probably used his seaman’s skills to navigate by the stars, but he evidently had survival skills far in excess of that. Finally he came to a railroad track and flagged down a trainload of Union soldiers. His odyssey was over.

After the war, Horace returned to Massachusetts and quietly lived out his life. “Quietly” includes almost never talking

about his war experiences. On one rare occasion, he said he was a “damned fool” for risking the escape, adding that in two-three weeks the prisoners would have been liberated anyway. (Actually not so; the guards eventually opened the gates and went home, leaving the prisoners to find a way home.) He also said he bore no ill will towards the Confederates, noting that the Andersonville guards received the exact same rations as the prisoners. (True, though the guards did get first choice and had the opportunity to hunt game.)⁴

To sum things up, Horace Horatio Phinney Lovell had a most unsatisfactory tour of Orange County, as well as of all points south of it. We are delighted therefore to have been able to show his great-grandson a vastly better time.



Horace Lovell spent part of the Civil War at Andersonville. This map is from *Sanitary Commission Bulletin*, v. 1, no. 21, Sept. 1, 1864. opp. p. 647. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

³ Hennessy, John, Ed., *Fighting With the 18th Mass., The Civil War of Thomas H. Mann*, Baton Rouge, LSU Press, 2000. Mann’s diary ends about the time of his capture, but Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park Chief Historian John Hennessy completes the saga with information from numerous sources.

⁴ Again, the length of this particular article cannot do justice to the voluminous and interesting information supplied by Kevin Frye, Andersonville Historian. He is a phenomenal resource.

2006 Annual Fund Donors

The Board of the Historical Society appreciates so very much the generosity of the Society's members and friends who have generously contributed to the 2006 Annual Fund Drive. The \$14,000 that was donated has taken the pressure off the treasury and will allow the Board to take on projects that have been on the back burner for some time.

We, the chairmen of this fund drive, thank you for supporting the Society with your donations.

With deepest gratitude...
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Orange County Historical Society Annual Meeting

Lynne Lewis

The Orange County Historical Society held its annual membership meeting on January 28, 2007 in the Parish Hall of St. Thomas' Episcopal Church.

A brief annual report was presented by President Lynne Lewis. Jack Miller, Treasurer, provided a Treasurer's report and a report on the annual fund drive was given by Bernice Walker. Two new board members were elected, Jayne E. Blair and John Floyd. Joyce Clark and Everette Tucker were elected to second three-year terms. We are delighted to welcome our two new members, Jayne and John, and to have Joyce and Everette with us for another three years.

John Amos, an English teacher at St. Anne's-Belfield in Charlottesville and a life-long Orange County resident, presented his remembrances of Orange, based on his column in the *Orange Country Review*, "Every Now and Then." Many of you also may have heard Mr. Amos' wonderful essays on public radio station WVTF.

John held the audience spellbound with his reminiscences about Orange when he was a boy. Many listeners recalled the named personages and places, while others, who did not grow up in Orange, were reminded of their own childhood experiences in other small towns around the country. At the urging of the audience, John's self-allotted 20 minutes expanded to almost an hour. Throughout that time the only sounds were laughter and murmurs of interest and agreement. It was a delightful afternoon!

After the program, the Board of Directors held a brief meeting to elect the following officers for the year (2007):

Lynne Lewis, President
Clara Colby, Vice President
Jack Miller, Treasurer
Joyce Clark, Secretary

The Web Untangled

Lynne Lewis

If you haven't visited our website lately, please do (www.orangecohists.org). It has been updated and tidied, and now looks quite spiffy. We continue to have a shopping cart for the sale of publications, so if you can't get to the Research Center, and must have a gift copy of Frank Walker's *Remembering*, you can just go to the website and order one!

Back numbers of our newsletter, beginning with the Spring 2004 issue, can be found on the website, and as time goes by, older issues will be posted.

We will continue to work on the site, and hope it will be useful to you.

Upcoming Programs

"The Last Steam Railroad in America"
Monday, April 30, 2007, 7:00 p.m.
Orange Train Station/Visitors Center

Bill and Ellen Arnold of the Link Museum will talk about the amazing collection of pictures and recordings made over the years by noted photographer O. Winston Link. The Arnolds will talk about their friendship with Mr. Link, and his photographs of the Norfolk & Western Railway, "the last steam railroad in America."

Visualizing the Archives:
Orange County Population Mapping
June 4, 2007, 7:00 p.m.

In conjunction with the Montpelier Slave Descendants Reunion 2007, Bob Vernon is combining land and personal property tax records with the 1870 U.S. Census to map the locations of all Orange County families recorded in that census. He will give us a view of his work in progress. This will be a joint meeting with the Orange County African-American Historical Society.

Summer Picnics

The picnic season is fast approaching. Plans are underway for picnics from the southwest to the northeast. Stay tuned.

Winter Seminars

Dwight L. Mottet

Our esteemed colleague and educator, Frank Walker, gave another outstanding performance as he presented the major themes of his book, *Remembering: A History of Orange County, Virginia*, to the very appreciative audience at the Lake of the Woods Church during February and March 2007.

Frank's style of humor when compounded with his historical facts is a treat for all to enjoy. Frank is a rare educator whose audience does not want him to leave the stage. Often they signaled him to proceed even though his lecture was running overtime. No one cared about the extra few minutes; they were there to listen to Frank, and attentively listen they did.

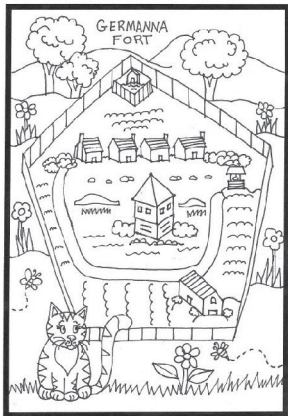
His description of the proposed marriage of William to Anne, the Princess Royal, brought the house down, as only Frank can tell it. The stories about the gold mines in what is now Lake of the Woods property were most enlightening and somewhat surprising. The vivid scenes of the Civil War engagements in Orange County, e.g. Saunders' Field, captured and held the audience's attention.

But it is Frank's acknowledged historical authority laced with his humorous approach to history that brings the audience back – and to their feet.

A wonderful presentation I never get tired of hearing.

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A Purr-fect Outreach to Children

Laura Thompson

In celebration of Virginia's 400th Birthday, the Orange County Historical Society and the Arts Center In Orange have joined forces to produce a children's coloring book illustrating the past 400 years of Orange County history. It will be published as nine bi-weekly inserts in the *Orange County Review*, alternating with, and following the same format as, the *Insider*. Finally, as a complete coloring book including all nine lives and 400 years of history, *The Nine Lives of an Orange Tabby Cat* will be sold to benefit the Orange County Historical Society.

The history will be told by a cat. Orange Tabby's story begins with John Smith's exploration up the James River to present-day Orange County. The next eight lives will include Orange Tabby's adventures with historic Orange County personalities such as Alexander Spottswood, Colonel James Taylor, James and Dolley Madison, Dr. Hume, Polly Gilmore, and George Patton

to name a few. Traveling through nine lives and four centuries, Orange Tabby will cover a lot of ground, including a Manahoac settlement on the banks of the Rappahanock, the Fort at Germanna, Bloomsbury, the original Orange County Court House, Montpelier, Robert E. Lee's winter camp, Gordonsville's Exchange Hotel and train station, The Silk Mill, and Edna Lewis' kitchen in Freetown.

Although Orange County boasts many resources for historians, no dedicated publication is available for children. Thanks to generous support from Virginia National Bank, The Miller Firm, Mason Insurance and individual community members Lou Thompson, Lynne Lewis, and Paul Donohue, the project is well on its way to being fully sponsored. If you feel this is a program of value to your community, and you would like to become a sponsor, please contact Laura Thompson at (540) 672-7311.

Book Corner

The Short Life and Strange Death of Ambrose Madison, by Ann Miller, went out of print earlier this year. We are pleased to report, however, that by the time you are reading this, a second printing will be underway. This monograph has been enormously popular and we are delighted to be reissuing it. If you have not yet read it, be sure to get a copy. We will let you know when it is ready.

Meanwhile, Ann continues her work on the second edition of *Antebellum Orange*, and is nearing the finish line. Again, we will let you know when it is published.

A Kindly Reminder

Thank you to all who have renewed their membership in the Orange County Historical Society. Our members are very important to us, and your support is greatly appreciated.

Sadly though, some of you have not renewed. We sincerely hope that this is merely an oversight on the part of very busy people, and we'd like to take a moment to remind you to renew. Once this newsletter goes out, we will be removing lapsed members from our mailing list. This is necessary not only due to rising costs (postage will increase in May), but also because it is unfair to our dues-paying membership.