

Orange Oracle

An electronic bulletin from the Orange County Historical Society

Orange County Historical Society receives 2024 Commonwealth History Fund Grant

By Ray Ezell

The Orange County Historical Society (OCHS) is delighted to announce that it is one of 14 organizations state-wide that were chosen to receive a grant from the Virginia Museum of History and Culture's (VMHC) Commonwealth History Fund. The Society has been generously awarded \$6,000.

OCHS will use this funding to conduct research and compile an inventory of free Blacks in Orange County from 1734 to 1865. Orange County free Blacks have been little documented; yet evidence exists of a diverse population with a variety of backgrounds, skills, and family/social connections within the county and surrounding region. This group includes individuals who were free-born, emancipated, and those who purchased their freedom. Their skills ranged across a wide variety of occupations, from

domestic work and agriculture to skilled crafts such as shoemaking, blacksmithing, and building construction.

Missing portions of the Orange County register of free Blacks have recently been identified in county records. OCHS plans to build on this information, and, using other research material pertaining to free Blacks, hopes to organize the data on the county's antebellum free Black population. This initiative will use primary and secondary sources to shed light on their lives, families, and livelihoods.

This exciting project has the potential to connect modern descendants and their communities to their own history in Orange County. As a result, the lives and experiences of these people can be told and understood by students, scholars, and the public in a more meaningful way.

The VMHC, in partnership with Virginia's Department

of Historic Resources (DHR), awards grants to history organizations and projects throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia through its Commonwealth History Fund. Funds can be used for a variety of purposes including preservation, publications, artifact acquisition, research, conservation of artifacts and educational programming. Eligible recipients include Virginia non-profits, educational institutions, and state-recognized Virginia Indian tribes. The Fund was made possible through the generosity of Dominion Energy and others. More information on The Commonwealth History Fund can be found at VirginiaHistory.org/HistoryFund.

See the promotional video for the Commonwealth History Fund 2024 awardees here: <https://youtu.be/OQKZRid-QVqY?si=axh0qrc8S4bZsMgT>

Questions can be directed to OCHS president, Ray Ezell at ocvahistorical1965@gmail.com.

**VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF
HISTORY & CULTURE**



**Dominion
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Dr. Edna Lewis

Historic Marker Unveiling at Freetown

April 13, 2024

9:30 am Shuttles begin from North Pamunkey Baptist Church: 15109 Pamunkey Ln, Orange, VA 22960 to the marker location.

10:30 am Historic Marker Unveiling Ceremony

12:30 - 4:00 pm Birthday Cake Reception for Edna Lewis at Carter Farms, 26273 Carters Lane, Unionville, Virginia
Panel Discussion and children's activities



Edna Lewis marker unveiling is April 13

By Phil Audibert

It's amazing what a little cage rattling will do. In last month's *Oracle* we wondered about the status of the long-delayed Edna Lewis Historical Marker. Now, we learn its installation has been moved to the front of the line!

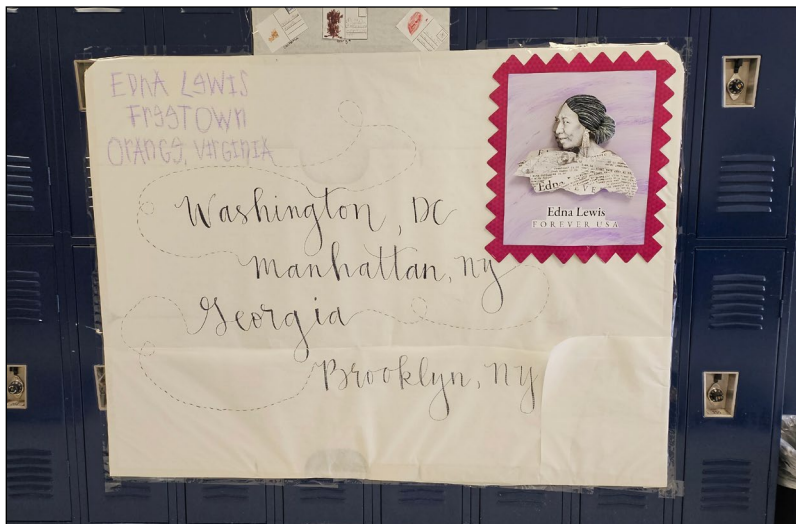
That's because Edna Lewis' birthday is April 13, and Michael Carter, Jr., of the non-profit Carter Farms, was planning an event honoring Edna Lewis' legacy for that same day. When participants at a meeting at the Orange County Department of Tourism office heard that, their eyes lit up. What if we could co-

ordinate Michael Carter's event with the marker installation? A few phone calls and emails later, it became a reality.

The historical marker dedication ceremony is slated for 10:30 a.m., Saturday April 13, at the entrance to Freetown Farm on the Marquis Road. **Please**

note: there is NO PARKING AT THE SITE. Participants must park at North Pamunkey Baptist Church, just a mile and a half away, at 15109 Pamunkey Lane, Orange, VA. Starting at 9:30 a.m., shuttle buses will ferry participants to and from the marker dedication site.

Following the dedication ceremony, the celebration will continue, complete with a birthday cake-cutting at nearby Carter Farms (26273 Carters Lane, Unionville, VA). Carter Farms is a century farm in the Piedmont region of Virginia that specializes in growing ethnic, African tropical vegetables organically.



The Edna Lewis story has captured the imagination of Prospect Heights Middle School children. Here's the winner of the PHMS hall-decorating contest.

IMAGE PROVIDED BY JENNIFER CONLEY)

2024 program schedule

(Dates and times are subject to change)



Chancellor Tavern

> **Sunday, March 24, 3 p.m.**

Implications of Casualties at the Battle of Chancellorsville for the Army of Northern Virginia

Robert Lookabill, Friends of the Wilderness Battlefield historian, will present a program about his research on how the Chancellorsville battle casualties later affected military movements of the Army of Northern Virginia. Meet at the Sandra and William H. Speiden Auditorium, 130 Caroline St., Orange, VA. This program will be livestreamed.

> **Sunday, April 7, 3 p.m.**

Holladay House History and Architectural Tour

Patrick McAloon will present a history of the Holladay House, and University of Mary Washington Professor Michael Spencer and his students will take us on an architectural tour of the structure. Meet at the Holladay House at the corner of Main and Caroline Streets in the Town of Orange.

> **Sunday, May 26, 3 p.m.**

History of North Pamunkey Baptist Church

Jennifer Conley (OC Historical Society Board member and Prospect

Heights Middle School teacher) will give a presentation on the history of this church and congregation. North Pamunkey was the second Baptist church founded in Orange County by Elijah Craig. Founded in 1774, this year marks its 250th anniversary. Learn about its founding, early members, and its legacy in the Lahore community. Bring a picnic and your lawn chair. The program will be held rain or shine. Meet at North Pamunkey Baptist Church on Lahore Rd., 15109 Pamunkey Lane, Orange, VA.

> **Sunday, June 30, 3 p.m.**

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. He will talk about his important mentors, the local pilots who shaped him, not only as a pilot but as a person. Meet at the Sandra and William H. Speiden Auditorium, 130 Caroline St., Orange, VA.

> **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 August 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, September 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.



Single Copy 15¢

Orange County Review

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

March 7, 1974

"Local Drug Arrests Result from Two-County Crackdown," proclaims the headline. Two Orange County young adults and one Madison County juvenile were charged with trafficking in heroin and cocaine. Sheriff G. I. Johnson wryly stated the young men had "graduated" from less potent marijuana to more powerful drugs.

March 14, 1974

The Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to allocate \$5,000 toward the establishment of the county's first mental health clinic. The rest of the \$50,000 cost would be provided by federal and state funds. "Orange County was said to

have the highest percentage of institutionalized citizens in the state," reads the news article.

March 21, 1974

Land use and planning issues continue to dominate the news, this time the much-discussed hiring of professional planning consultant, Robert Plavnick, to develop a county master plan. The news article points to what it calls "differences of development philosophy...At one end are those who seek rigid control of county growth and development. At the other end of the spectrum are those who see no need for controls of any type."

March 28, 1974

And yes, they did it; on a 4-1 vote, the Board of Supervi-

sors hired Plavnick to develop the County Comprehensive Plan. The lone dissenter was R. Lindsay Gordon. "The veteran legislator charged that the Board was proposing to spend \$34,000 for a program for which there has been no demonstrated need," reads the account.

In other news, the School Board passed a budget of almost \$4.1 million dollars, an increase of almost \$600,000 from the year before. Included in this budget is the establishment of a county-wide kindergarten program. But, an increase in state funds will result in "the lowest request for additional local funds for schools in several years."

Call for volunteers

Is there a volunteer job/project that you would like to do for the Orange County Historical Society that you haven't seen in our monthly "Call for Volunteers?" Let us know your ideas and thoughts! Please email Volunteer Coordinator May Saxton at OCHistVolunteers@gmail.com.

Membership

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

Oracle items

Do you have a news item for the *Oracle*? Send to: Phlodbear@aol.com. The deadline for the next issue is April 14.