

Orange County Historical Society



Annual Business Meeting

January 29, 2023

President's Desk... -- Ray Ezell

2022 was a productive and impactful year for our Society that included numerous achievement milestones. Foremost, my thanks goes to our consistently engaged and receptive Board of Directors and our dedicated staff, Jean McGann, Jayne Blair, and Ruth Mallory Long, without whom much of our public engagement could not be conducted. In many ways they are the face of the Society.

During the year, the Society undertook several beneficial projects and delivered on its mission for our patrons and the public. I will touch briefly upon a few here. Foremost of these was our deep involvement in the Town's sesquicentennial celebration, marking 150 years since its incorporation. The town's sesquicentennial year was culminated with the premier of "Orange, Virginia: Unqualified Promise," a new, original documentary produced by our own Phil Audibert, recounting the development of the Town of Orange which was well attended by our members and friends.

The Society's primary engagement vehicles to members and friends, our research newsletter (the *Record*) and monthly digital bulletin (the *Orange Oracle*) were executed with a high technical proficiency and presented well researched and informative content. These publications set a high standard and are widely circulated in our community and beyond. They are worthy to be emulated by other regional historical associations. A new layout editor, former newspaper man Jeff Poole, will join our *Oracle* team, and I am sure his efforts will make an already good publication outstanding. Lastly the Society's Facebook presence was revitalized and provided numerous historical content pieces to engage the public and educate them about the history of Orange County.

This coming year marks the 58th year since our Society was organized, and I am confident that we will continue to innovate how we deliver our mission and tell the stories of our shared past. We anticipate doing this by making significant upgrades to our auditorium's audio-visual capability, including live streaming of programs to remote viewers, as well as physical renovation of our auditorium space made possible by a generous gift in memory of one

of our most prestigious former members, Sandra D. Speiden, who made significant contributions to local and statewide historic preservation.

Lastly, I encourage each one of you to get involved--be it a little or a lot. In order to continue to deliver our mission, we need members like you to contribute your time and talents. You do not have to be an amateur historian to make a significant impact, but you do need to be consistent and enthusiastic. We are all bound together by our appreciation and love of telling our shared history of this place and learning how its people, events, circumstances, and objects contribute to its story. We need people who are: creative, organizers, carpenters, gardeners, problem solvers, public speakers, event planners, technicians, fundraisers, etc. Are you one of these people? Find your niche, and tell the story of Orange County. **Please feel free to reach out directly to me at rayezell_2000@yahoo.com.**

Treasurer's Report-Clara Colby

The Historical Society greatly appreciates the ongoing support of our members and other donors. We are also grateful to the town and county for their grants to us again this year which were instrumental in delivering our mission. Membership dues at various levels and additional donations in 2022 totaled \$46,515.07. Through the generous support of Garland Tyree, we have been able to publish the second edition of Old Blue Run Baptist Church as a fine cloth-bound volume.

Our income from all sources in 2022 was \$65,585.10, and our expenses were \$47,369.10. We began 2023 with \$14,972.65 in our checking accounts, in addition to our investment assets of over \$350,000. Our investments are down somewhat with the market turmoil of the past year, but we expect them to recover over time. We continue to have a solid financial footing from which to continue serving the community through our programs, research efforts, and publications.

Committee Reports

Building and Grounds – Patrick Colby

A number of tasks have been completed and/or coordinated by the Building and Grounds Committee. Highlights include:

- Installed new book cases in conference area
- Front entrance column repairs
- Procured glass shelving for retail book displays
- Conducted an outdoor cleanup day
- Temporary gutter repairs on the building exterior
- Obtained approval for Lafayette Tour marker placement from town Community Development Department

Collections – Ray Ezell

There were no significant additions to our collections this past year. However we continued to make progress in assessing the range and condition of archival collections in our possession. Progress was also made in continuing our work with digitizing vertical files and sorting and indexing our collection of Orange Review photo negatives.

Education – Linda Carlton

The Society was honored to continue our partnership with Orange County Public Schools to make local history more easily accessible to 50 history teachers in grades 4 - 12 during the 2022-23 school year. In November the Education Committee met with Dr. Daniel Hornick, the new Superintendent, to welcome him to the community and to introduce him to the Society's ongoing plan of support for local educators.

This school year the committee has emailed teachers a local history article each month that can be used in their classroom and has supported requests of teachers at Prospect Heights Middle School. Plans are being developed for additional outreach in 2023. The Education Committee encourages anyone interested in local history to explore the articles on the teacher site at <https://www.orangecovahist.org/educator-resources.html>

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Outreach – Phil Audibert

2022 was a busy year for the Outreach Committee. Eight new episodes of History-to-Go were compiled, edited and uploaded to the Historical Society's YouTube channel. They are:

- Robert S. Walker and Woodberry Forest- by Frank Walker
- Andrew Maples Portrait Unveiling- at the Orange County Courthouse
- Juneteenth Commemorative Park Dedication (long and short versions)
- Town of Orange 150th Birthday Celebration (long and short versions)
- "Roads, Taverns and Mills: Cornerstones of Community," a documentary from AHHA Productions
- 18th and 19th Century Building Techniques- with Craig Jacobs of Salvagewrights, Ltd.
- History of the Orange County Airport- with Hubert Compton
- "Orange, Virginia: Unqualified Promise," a documentary about the history of the Town of Orange, produced for the town's 150th celebration by AHHA Productions.

Also for the town's sesquicentennial, the Outreach Committee produced 25 edited episodes of "Memories and Visions" a collection of oral histories and predictions for the future from 25 people who are connected to Orange. These and prior episodes of History-to-Go can all be accessed and viewed by going to the society's web site (www.orangecovahist.org) and clicking on "History to Go."

Finally in 2022, the committee (in collaboration with the Publications committee) produced 12 issues of the society's monthly electronic bulletin, the *Orange Oracle*. Building upon the success of this bulletin, Jeff Poole, former managing editor of the *Orange Review*, will bring his considerable talents and passion to the *Oracle*, taking over for Phil Audibert in 2023.

Membership – Mike Saxton

At the end of 2022, we have 325 active members compared to 189 at this time last year. That represents an increase of 136 members in one year!

However, 88 of you have not yet renewed for 2023. We allow a 60-day grace period until the end of February. If you have not yet renewed, we still need and appreciate your support!

We are in the second academic year of free Educator memberships in support of Orange County social studies and history teachers. We are the only county in the area offering free Educator support in this manner (also see Education Committee Report).

Members also responded to fully fund our first specific project fundraising call for support of improving the audio-visual equipment in our auditorium.

Program – Ray Ezell and Phil Audibert

2022 was a year that saw the return of live, in-person programming at our research center. Programs/picnics were held on Sunday afternoons, with many being held at off-site venues as a way to engage patrons from far flung parts of the county and to stimulate renewed interest (many of these were well attended). Off-site programs included: history of the Blue Run Baptist Church, the historic Waverley gardens, history of Maplewood Cemetery, history of the Orange County Airport, 18th and 19th Century Building Techniques at Taylor Park, and the premier of the documentary, “Orange, Virginia: Unqualified Promise” at the Pavilion at Lakeland Farm. Our “Roads, Taverns, and Mills” program kicked off 2022 in our auditorium. We plan to continue offering programs in our auditorium and at remote locations on Sunday afternoons in 2023. The Program Committee is working to bring you several new and exciting opportunities including the Knights of the Golden Horseshoe expedition, Montpelier Archaeological Investigations, traditional blacksmithing, and others, so stay tuned.

Publications -- Lynne G. Lewis

During 2022 the Publications Committee oversaw the production of two twelve-page print newsletters (**Record**) and collaborated with the Outreach committee to produce twelve digital issues of the **Orange Oracle**.

The second edition of Garland Tyree’s, **Old Blue Run Baptist Church** has been published and is now available at the Research Center and via our on-line bookstore.

The Committee welcomes inquiries regarding potential articles for our newsletter and the **Oracle**. We would love to work with you.

Library – Ann Miller

The year 2022 was quite productive for the OCHS library. The bookshelves in the front room were expanded considerably, and some reorganization (still in progress) is being undertaken to provide more efficient use of this portion of our research library. A “wish list” of new titles and other research materials is being discussed. Reorganization of our stacks room is in progress. In addition, our vault and rare-book inventories are being checked for needed updates. Reorganization of the research map collection, our extra book storage area, and related materials is in the planning stage, and we will see additional progress there in 2023.

Research – Ray Ezell

The Mill Research study group continued to make field visits to area mill sites. New volunteers to the group also began reviewing historic records that may provide insights to mill locations, ownership, and dates of operation.

Research is also ongoing into the downtown commercial district to determine the “genealogy” of businesses that occupied past and present buildings on Main Street, Chapman Street, Church Street, and Railroad Avenue. Sanborn maps from 1905-1931 and archival newspapers have been especially helpful.

Volunteer Support – May Saxton

Our monthly “Call for Volunteers” has been well received this year. In addition to countless volunteer hours offered by board members and some by staff members, over 120 volunteer hours have been logged by society members since June. Special thanks to Carol Couch and Carla Passarello for approximately 70 hours of work organizing the Orange County Review negatives, to Patty Parmer for logging approximately 40 hours of scanning family files. Many thanks to Jayne Blair for coordinating our volunteers on-site at the research center. Watch the “Oracle” for 2023 volunteer opportunities!

5-yr Strategic Planning – Bill Speiden and Ray Ezell

Our 5-yr strategic plan document was presented and accepted by the Board in early 2022, and this ad hoc committee was sunset, as its job was brought to completion. The planning document will help the Society prioritize goals and action items that are intended help us deliver on our mission to our patrons and the public. A copy of the strategic plan can be viewed at the research center upon request.



Orange Baptist Church on Main Street, ca. 1914



Orange County Historical Society, Inc.

130 Caroline Street

Orange, VA 22960-1533

<http://www.orangecovahist.org/>

Founded in 1965, then incorporated in 1966, the Orange County Historical Society, Inc. is a research, archival, and educational organization dedicated to the discovery, preservation, and dissemination of the history of the people, places, organizations, and events of Orange County, Virginia, and the surrounding area.