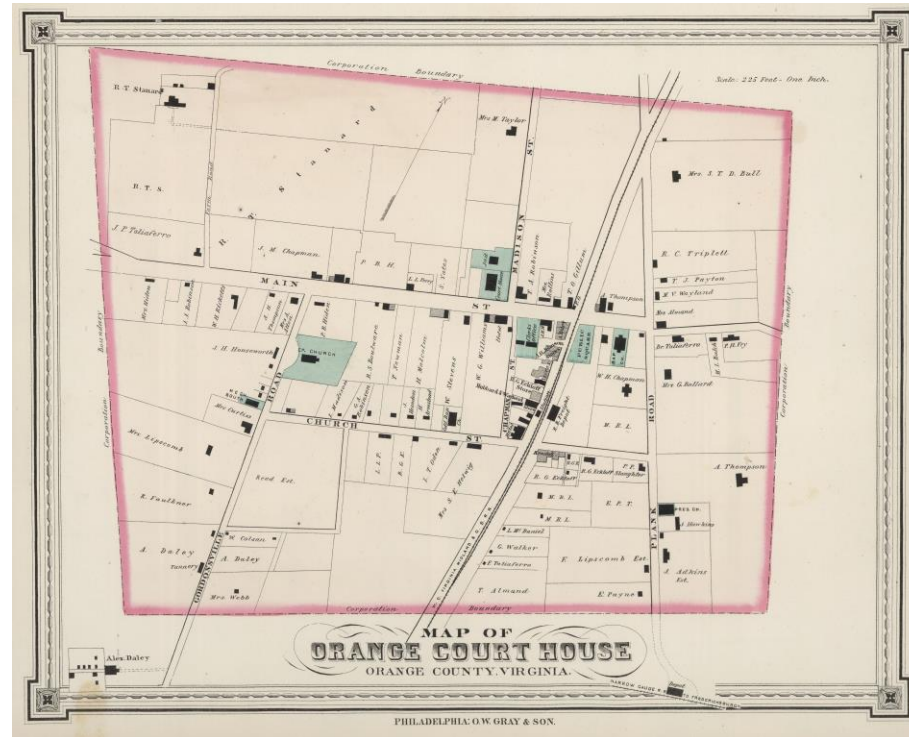


Orange County Historical Society



Annual Business Meeting

January 30, 2022

One of the Earliest Known Maps of the Town of Orange (O.W. Gray and Son 1878)

President's Desk... -- Ray Ezell

Although 2021 was still marred by the lingering effects of the CoVid-19 predicament, the Society and its Board of Directors have worked hard to maintain a strong, visible presence in Orange County and to implement improved ways to engage Society members and the public at large. I also would like to offer my biggest thanks to our research center staff who allow us to operate and provide our services to the interested public (mostly free of charge). The efforts and dedication of Jean McGann, Jayne Blair, and Ruth Mallory Long have not gone unnoticed or unappreciated.

During 2021, the Society undertook a number of beneficial projects. These include the repair of the 4 front porch columns at the research center and the printing of an updated membership brochure. We have inaugurated a program to assist public school teachers in Orange County, providing them with complimentary memberships and web-based resources to supplement their teaching of Virginia history. We have also partnered with the Orange County Department of Planning to have them scan our collection of 1937 aerial maps of the county at high resolution. These maps suffered from deterioration and were infrequently used. These digital images will soon be available at the research center for open use. We have also concluded a strategic 5-yr planning effort to identify needs that should be addressed in the future for the long term success of the Society. 2021 has been a productive year!!

This coming year marks the 57th year since our Society was organized, and I anticipate that it will be a time of additional transition and exploration of new ways to engage our members and the community, while maintaining respect of our core mission. I am also looking forward to a special anniversary in the history of the Town of Orange during the coming year. The town will celebrate the sesquicentennial (150th) anniversary of its official incorporation as a town. While most understand that the town was founded much earlier, this is a milestone that deserves to be marked and appreciated. The Society plans to commemorate Orange's 1872 incorporation with the release of a professionally produced video documentary (as yet untitled) focused on the development and growth of

our town. The release of the documentary is anticipated for the late third quarter of 2022.

The Society endeavors to maintain relevance in a changing world, while striving to honor and "tell" the stories of the past. ***I'd like to take this opportunity to ask each one of you evaluate how you can be of service to this community through the efforts of our historical society.*** I'm excited to see how you respond to this question. **Please feel free to reach out directly to me at rayezell_2000@yahoo.com.**

Treasurer's Report-Clara Colby

The Society greatly appreciates the ongoing support of our members and friends. We are also grateful to the town and county for their grants to us again this year. This fall we combined our membership renewal notice with a request for additional support above the basic membership level, rather than running separate member renewal and annual fund campaigns. We are heartened by your response to this streamlined effort. Membership at various levels and additional donations in 2021 totaled \$34,350, which compares favorably to previous years' support.

Our income from all sources in 2021 was \$39,690.25, and our expenses were \$41,974.86. This loss of \$2,284.61 reflects in part a drop in sales of publications during the pandemic. However, we began 2022 with \$11,500.90 in our checking accounts, in addition to our investment assets of over \$378,000. Thus 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 undertaken or coordinated by the Building and Grounds Committee in order to make our facility safer, more appealing, and accessible by our members and the community. Highlights include:

Assessment of long term building space needs for collections and library; spring clean-up removed a lot of "extra stuff" that had lost its usefulness;

Rapidan Master Gardeners volunteered maintenance and landscape design efforts to renew our landscaping; acquisition of cushioned chairs in the auditorium; repairs to the front porch columns and their masonry pedestals; contracting for additional custom shelving for books (expected completion in the first quarter of 2022); and installation of new fire extinguishers (and yearly inspection), new lighting in the vault, and towel holders in the restrooms.

Collections – Hilarie Hicks

The Collections Committee made an overview of the materials currently stored in the Research Center, including not only items that are part of the Society collection, but also some materials that have been left for evaluation or "foster care" until an appropriate repository could be identified. This prompted the first draft of a Collections Policy, which will guide the decision process for accessioning materials into the Society's collection and deaccessioning materials that are not appropriate for to retain.

The Society received three significant collections as gifts this year. The Duff Green/Orange Review Collection includes thousands of negatives of images published in the Orange County Review. The Orange County Rescue Squad (now dissolved) donated its records, including clippings, plaques, and other materials. Lastly, historian Mitchell Lichtenburg donated a large collection of photocopied Orange County records (tax records, land records, census records, etc.). These materials will save future researchers many a trip to the Library of Virginia to access this information.

Education – Linda Carlton

The Society has partnered with Orange County Public Schools to make local history more easily accessible to history teachers in grades 4 - 12 during the 2020-21 school year. The Committee created an Educators Resource page on the Orange County Historical Society website containing articles, maps, videos and stories for use in the classroom. The articles support the Virginia Standards of Learning in grades 4-12 which are required for high school graduation. Dr. Cecil Snead, Superintendent, and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction facilitated the outreach to county teachers. By

making local history readily available to teachers, it can be more easily incorporated into lesson plans when it is appropriate. The rich history of Orange County supports national and world history events and creates meaning for students by helping them connect first to the world around them to build a context for the history they study in class.

The Education Committee encourages anyone interested in local history to explore the articles on the teacher resources page at:

www.orangecovahist.org/educator-resources.html.

Outreach – Phil Audibert

In a nutshell, the Outreach Committee produced 12 editions of the **Oracle** electronic newsletter and 12 episodes of our History-to-Go videos that are posted on the Society's YouTube channel. Although we never promised to produce one each month, that's the way it turned out. These episodes can be accessed at the society's web site (www.orangecovahist.org). Issues of the **Oracle** briefly discuss a variety of topics of interest to members and the public, supplementing the semi-annual printed newsletter.

Needless to say those two on-going projects kept committee chair, Phil Audibert, plenty busy. But he was greatly relieved when the board agreed to separate the education arm of the committee into a separate entity under the capable and visionary leadership of Linda Carlton.

Membership – Mike Saxton

Even before this year's membership renewal period ends, we have retained a much higher percentage of members (at 92%) than any year recently. As of December 2021, the Society has 189 active members with 86% from Virginia and members from 14 other states reflecting the county's importance to our nation's history. The committee conducted a member interest survey to help inform the 5 year strategic planning recently completed, and implemented a volunteer interest survey to help engage more volunteers. Lastly to increase accountability for results to members, by changing from general fund raising campaign to specific project based fundraising.

Program – Ann Miller

We continued to defer our traditional monthly meetings at the Research Center due to the ongoing COVID pandemic. We had hoped to bring you an outside summer picnic meeting, at Maplewood Cemetery near Gordonsville, but this had to be cancelled due to an impending rainstorm. In lieu of our in-person meetings, we have been fortunate to have Phil Audibert providing a number of his excellent on-line “History-To-Go” programs, involving various video lectures. Response has been very positive (and we have actually reached a larger audience than our typical in-person meetings--with multiple hundreds of people watching some of these programs). Many thanks, Phil! For 2022, the status of monthly meetings at the Research Center continues to be uncertain, and will depend on the evolving COVID situation. However, we do have the possibility of some outdoor picnic meetings. We have tentatively scheduled a picnic meeting for early summer 2022 (showcasing the impressive gardens at Waverley Farm near Somerset). We are also hoping to reschedule the picnic at Maplewood Cemetery as well.

Publications -- Lynne G. Lewis

The Publications Committee oversaw the production of two 12-page issues of our print newsletter in 2021. In addition, 12 issues of the **Orange Oracle**, the Society’s occasional electronic newsletter were sent to our membership and interested friends via email.

Work continues on producing the second edition of Garland Tyree’s **Blue Run Baptist Church**. While we had hoped to have this fine work out in 2021, circumstances beyond our control intervened and we have moved the date into 2022.

The Committee welcomes inquiries from our membership and others regarding potential articles for our newsletter and the **Oracle**. We would be glad to discuss topics and our requirements and protocols. We know there is plenty of untapped talent out there!

Research – Ray Ezell

This past year has been surprisingly productive both indoors and outside. The research committee inspected a late 19th/early 20th century black cemetery at the Order of Galilean Fishermen lodge in the Little Petersburg community, and the Mill Research study group made visits to several mill sites to support ongoing efforts to document millscapes throughout the county. These included; Brockman’s/Matthews mill, Wilhoit’s Mill, and an unnamed mill on Blue Run.

Bill Speiden reports that the Joint African American Land Ownership study group reports that progress was hampered due to pandemic restrictions at the county clerk’s office. However, about 6 inches of papers, correspondence and some deeds going back to the 1870’s have been accumulated with attention paid to Hampstead and plots of land owned by blacks in the now woods south of route 609 and a 25-acre acreage between Rte. 20 and the Rapidan River ½ mile west from the Somerset Center Store site.

5-yr Strategic Planning – Bill Speiden

This special committee was created as a response to discussion of possible expansion of the Society Research Center to increase space for collections. The committee has examined each active committee with attention paid to definition of goals and suggested action points, in conjunction with the Society’s future contributions, while satisfying its mission and vision statements. To date we have written a vision and massaged our mission statements and created action items. Our goal is to have the plan with an Executive Summary ready to present to the BOD in early 2022. Anyone who would be interested in following our progress please let Bill Speiden know at expwr@yahoo.com.



Orange County Historical Society, Inc.

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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.