

Orange Oracle

An electronic bulletin from the Orange County Historical Society

Edna Lewis Historical Marker update

By Phil Audibert

Have you been wondering what became of the Edna Lewis Historical Marker? We sure have.

Until recently, the last we heard about it was in January of last year when Orange County Tourism Director Julie Perry, Orange County African American Historical Society President Bruce Monroe, and I met with a representative from VDOT about choosing a suitable site.

According to High-



PHOTO BY PHIL AUDIBERT

Entrance to Freetown Farm from the Marquis Road.

way Marker Program Manager for the Department of Historic Resources, Jennifer Loux, that site (pictured above) was not formally approved until this past August. Approval from

VDOT came a month later, and Loux says she ordered the marker a few days after that. But by then, 45 other historical markers were scheduled to be cast at the foundry. We went

to the back of the line.

Meanwhile, OCA-AHS President Bruce Monroe says his organization's Historical Committee, under the leadership of Michael Carter, is looking into site preparation at the entrance to Freetown Farm, where Edna Lewis was born and where the sign will go. And they are hoping to install an interpretative panel there to augment the wording of the historical marker. No word yet on when that

See [MARKER](#), page 3

New board member: Patrick McAloon

Patrick has been interested in history from an early age. His work and hobbies have always included elements of historical research and instruction.

After completing an undergraduate degree in East Asian Studies at the



PHOTO BY
PHIL AUDIBERT
Patrick McAloon

College of William & Mary, McAloon lived and worked in China for two and a half years. Returning to the U.S. in 2001, he earned a graduate degree in Chinese language pedagogy at Ohio State University. McAloon continued to enjoy learning and sharing history by giving workshops on American and Chinese history.

In 2021, McAloon and his wife bought the ca. 1830 Holladay House in downtown Orange. Becoming stewards of a local landmark structure drew McAloon and his wife to learn about the house and its surroundings, knowledge which they

share with guests and visitors.

McAloon is a member of the James Madison Museum of Orange County Heritage and a past member of the Norfolk & Western Historical Society. McAloon also serves on the boards of the Orange County Chamber of Commerce and the Orange Rotary Club.

Also returning to the board after serving out unexpired terms of previous board members are: Patrick Colby, our Buildings and Grounds Committee Chairperson and James Luther, our Treasurer. Ray Ezell is starting another term as president.

Boy Scouting roots in Orange County

By Ray Ezell

As of Feb. 8, 2024, the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) celebrated its 114th anniversary. In Orange County, there have been troops that have come and gone, while some troops are still active, promoting good character, citizenship, and leadership. Documentation of the formation of Orange BSA Troop No. 1 (now Troop #14) appeared in the Orange Observer, Feb. 12, 1915.

The earliest leaders of this troop were: Prof. Thomas A. Russell (1st Scoutmaster) who was principal of Orange High School from 1914 to 1916; Dr. Frank B. Perry, dentist and mayor of Orange for 40 years before 1937; Rev. R. F. Staples, pastor of Orange Baptist Church from 1910 to 1915; John W. Browning, the Deputy Clerk and Clerk of the Orange County Circuit Court from 1900 to 1936; Zed W. Chewning a prominent business owner on Main Street; Larkin Willis, Jr., hardware store owner; Preacher A. J. Harlow, Baptist minister, entrepreneur, and former mayor; and Edward V. Huffman, member of the Orange County Bicentennial Committee.

Meanwhile in Gordonsville, Boy Scouting began with Rev. William H. Cumpston, pastor of Christ Episcopal Church and founding scoutmaster of Gordonsville Troop No. 1 (now Troop #12) in 1914. The only scout known to have been in



The oldest known photograph of Boy Scout Troop No. 1.

the unit during this earliest period was James B. Jones. Scoutmaster Rev. Cumpston moved away in 1917, and the troop was then led by Rev. Leander McCormick Williams, pastor of Gordonsville Presbyterian church from 1918 to 1925.

Fast forward about 40 years. As a reaction to local social segregation of the day, Black community members decided to organize the county's only Black BSA troop (Troop No. 111) in the fall of 1967. Scouting had predominantly reflected the prevailing social attitudes of the communities that it served, but the impetus behind founding Troop No. 111 belongs to Mrs. Philippa Wambersie, owner of the West Charlton flower shop and president of the Orange Community Action Organization, in mid-1967. She recruited a cadre of committeemen and scoutmasters, including William Alexander, Joseph Coleman, and Isaiah Coleman. John T. Bracy, from Somerset, was scoutmaster, and Harold Johnson was assistant scoutmaster. Mrs. Wambersie was quoted in a March 14, 1968, *Orange Review* article that the organization of a Boy Scout troop was to, "help raise the living standard in the town of Orange."

For more information on the history of Boy Scouting in Orange County, visit the CENTRAL VIRGINIA BOY SCOUTING PRESERVATION PROJECT at <https://historyofscoutingva.wordpress.com/>.



The first Black Boy Scout Troop No. 111 was established in 1967.

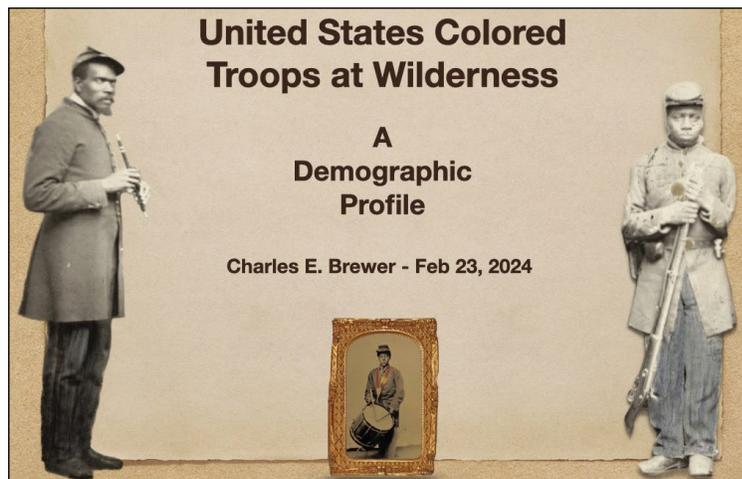
History-to-Go Germanna Archaeology in 2023

GERMANNA
ARCHAEOLOGY
2023



Kelly Arford-Horne

If you missed Kelly Arford-Horne's fascinating program from the annual meeting last month about recent finds at Germanna, you can see it here: <https://youtu.be/NAodbeObCdM>



Mark down Friday, Feb. 23, 10:30 a.m. at the Lake of the Woods Clubhouse where LOW Civil War Study Group President Charles Brewer will present "United States Colored Troops at Wilderness: A Demographic Profile." United States Colored Troops joined the Army of the Potomac for the first time during Grant's Overland Campaign, which started right here with the Battle of the Wilderness in early May 1864. This talk will attempt to give an overview of these USCT troops: ages, birthplaces, places of muster, occupations upon enlistment, etc. In addition, a few relevant stories will be shared. At the LOW front gate just tell the security guard that you are attending this program.

Marker... *continued from page 1*

might happen.

Back at the foundry, as of the end of January, we had moved to 13th place in line. The foundry can cast two historical markers per week, so it may be erected on site as early as next month. And then, we can finally schedule a dedication and unveiling ceremony. We'll keep you posted.

Marker wording:

Edna Lewis was born here in Freetown, a community established by people emancipated from slavery, including her grandfather, Chester Lewis. She learned to cook from her family, using local meat and produce. In 1949, she became the chef and a partner in New York's celebrated Café Nicholson. Lewis later cooked in other elite restaurants,



PHOTO BY PHIL AUDIBERT

Edna Lewis

where Black female chefs were rare. As the author of four cookbooks, including the seminal Taste of Country Cooking, she generated national interest in Southern cuisine and in fresh, seasonal ingredients. She received an honorary doctorate from Johnson & Wales University and in 2014 was depicted on a U.S. postage stamp. Lewis is buried in a family plot near here.

Filmmakers needed

Awaken the filmmaker in your inner self! Society camera operator and video editor Phil Audibert is looking to share some of his tricks of the trade; skills that you may find helpful when recording videos of your own. Specifically, he needs help recording society programs both in the Sandra and William H. Speiden Auditorium and out in the field. We have set Saturday afternoon, March 16, from 3 to 5 p.m., for a hands-on training session, followed by the recording of a live program on March 24. Interested? Please email Volunteer Coordinator May Saxton at OCHistVolunteers@gmail.com.

2024 program schedule

(Dates and times are subject to change)

> No February Program

> 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.

> Sunday, April 7, 3 p.m.

Holladay House History and Archaeological 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 (O.C. 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. In the case of rain, the picnic will be canceled. Meet at North Pamunkey Baptist Church on Lahore Rd., 15109 Pamunkey Lane, Orange.

> 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 by 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.

> 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. 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.

> 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.

> 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.

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

Implications of Recent 3-D Scanning of the Barboursville Ruins

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.

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

Feb. 7, 1974

Delegate D. French Slaughter was summoned to Orange to explain his intended legislation to create a new state commission that would address land use issues in the Commonwealth. "Slaughter was informed that the proliferation of all-powerful state commissions is serving to reduce the authority of local government and further concentrate decision making in Richmond," reads the article.

Feb. 14, 1974

Land use and planning issues continue to dominate the news, this time concerning a dispute over whether the Planning Commission would have a say in choosing a planning consultant. A squabble ensued between Orange County Chamber of

Commerce Vice President, Jim Cortada and Board of Supervisors member, E. C. Hooper.

Feb. 21, 1974

And the beat goes on. The issue of hiring a professional planning consultant continues to dominate, with one planning commissioner saying that "the county is sharply divided on the issue." The Board went into executive session effectively ejecting reporters from the *Orange County Review* and *Richmond Times Dispatch* from the meeting.

Meanwhile, two Orange County High School students went on a vandalism spree. Two county-owned vehicles were damaged, the homes of two high school officials were spray painted with obscene

graffiti, and several automobile windshields and headlights were smashed. The unidentified youths were released to the custody of their parents.

Feb. 28, 1974

Problems persist with the Orange to Gordonsville water pipeline, causing Gordonsville Industries (the old lace factory) to switch to a quarry lake for its water. Meanwhile, the pipeline is losing 50,000 gallons of water per day and the contractor responsible for its construction has still not responded to a demand that he replace a nine mile section of the line.

Editor's note:

Fifty years ago, First Federal Savings and Loan was paying 5.25% on savings accounts!



"Memories" oral history

If you're interested in oral history, you might want to check out the "Memories" playlist on the AHHA Productions YouTube channel. More than 30 in depth interviews of Orange County citizens can be accessed using this link: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJEtOTvrJjnV7KJXf5RUiM->

[JE-LfHNpK2t](#).

Or you can go to the society's web site (orangecovahist.org), click on "Let's Learn" and then click on "Memories" in the drop-down menu. Please note "Memories" is a separate collection of oral history interviews; it is not to be confused with "Memories and Visions," which were recorded for the town's 150th.

Membership

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