

Orange Oracle

An electronic update from the Orange County Historical Society

Ready to roll: the Sandra and William H. Speiden Auditorium



PHOTO BY PHIL AUDIBERT

New custom built cabinetry, featuring memorabilia and artifacts relating to the late Sandra Speiden, now gives the auditorium a cleaner less cluttered look.

By Ray Ezell

OCHS President

It's finally completed and ready for use! Back in the early part of 2023, a generous gift was made to the Historical Society to commemorate the life and legacy of Sandra D. Speiden (late wife of former Board member, Bill Speiden). After much deliberation on how to appropriately honor Sandra's accomplishments in archaeology and historic preservation, the decision was made to renovate the Society's auditorium. We installed custom-designed and fabricated cabinetry and shelving in order to make it a more visually appealing and functional space for storing portions of the Society's archival and library collections.

The renovation also included the enlargement of the storage room at the rear of the auditorium making it more usable for our needs. After several months of work, a fresh coat of paint, and a thorough decluttering, the newly renovated "Sandra and William H. Speiden Auditorium" is ready to be reoccupied and used for Society programs.

Complimenting the auditorium renovation, is

the completed installation of new audio/visual equipment and technology upgrades (fully funded by special donations from Society members) marking a new milestone for how programs are delivered at the society's Research Center. Not only will future programs be recorded for viewing at your convenience via our YouTube History-to-Go channel, but they will also be simulcast over the internet for live viewing. We anticipate that this feature will pay dividends far into the future and will allow for uses of the auditorium hardly imagined before.

I am proud of the Society's vision and innovation in this regard. These upgrades will propel us into the future, equipping us to continue to meet our mission in the coming years.

A formal dedication of the auditorium improvements is planned for the afternoon of Sunday, Oct. 29, at 3 p.m., immediately preceding our scheduled October program. Everyone is invited.



PHOTO BY PHIL AUDIBERT

New equipment, including a flat screen TV, two monitors, two laptop computers, two wireless microphones, a custom built lectern, improved lighting and a new background with a new logo will enable the society to stream programs live.

History-to-Go Bloomsbury

It was touch and go, but in the end, our perfect record for having no cancellations due to weather this year remains intact! This time we gathered underneath the old walnut tree at Bloomsbury and heard from James Madison Museum Director Bethany Sullivan about this historic property. We recorded the whole thing on video, including B-roll of the interior. To see the complete program, including a fascinating impromptu address by Frank Walker about the difference between land “patents” and “grants,” click here: <https://youtu.be/vqpi5o-JRPnw>.



PHOTOS BY PHIL AUDIBERT

The maiden voyage of the new Speiden Auditorium featured a presentation by genealogist Shelley Viola Murphy about her work researching enslaved laborers at UVA. The program was our first attempt at live-streaming. Although we experienced an audio glitch for the first seven minutes of the program, it will be made available in its entirety as a History-to-Go episode in the near future.

Call for Volunteers

We have an immediate need for a couple of volunteers to help with selecting and hanging pictures in the Research Center and the new auditorium. We have the pictures, but could use some input for arrangement. If you are interested in selecting and hanging pictures, please email Volunteer Coordinator May Saxton at OCHistVolunteers@gmail.com. Right away!

Do you have a news item for the Oracle?

Send your stuff to: Phlodbear@aol.com. Deadline for the next issue is Nov. 18.

Historical Society selected as FamilySearch affiliate library

By Mike Saxton

As interest in researching family history grows exponentially, the Orange County Historical Society has applied for and been approved as a FamilySearch affiliate library.

FamilySearch is a free resource provided by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It maintains the largest collection of genealogical materials in the world with many records now available for home use. These resources span the globe from local courthouse records to historical sources from many other countries. According to the FamilySearch web site, this “helps millions of people around the world discover their heritage and connect with family members.”

However, access to many of these records is restricted and only available through approved affiliate libraries. Now, anyone visiting our Research Center in Orange will have access to these additional source records. The service is free, but it will take us another month to set up a dedicated workstation for genealogists’ use. So, stay tuned for further details!

Membership

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

Bury Me at Pamunkey

The 250-Year History of North Pamunkey Baptist Church

Intrigued by Jack Frazer's book about the Pamunkey neighborhood and looking forward to North Pamunkey's 250th anniversary, local teacher and Historical Society board member Jennifer Conley became even more fascinated in telling her church's backstory. Pulling from the memories of Lahore community members and resources available at the Virginia Baptist Historical Society, the Goshen Association, and North Pamunkey, among others, she set forth to tell the tale of the little country church that began meeting in a tobacco barn at a time when its founders faced persecution for simply being Baptists. *Bury Me at Pamunkey* weaves together American, local, church, and family history in a compelling narrative.

For the many people who have ties to Pamunkey and/or Lahore, this book will help readers understand how much of the history of the "dissenters" intertwines with more notable figures of Orange County, and the nation as a whole, most notably James Madison. For those interested in history, it is full of names and events that illustrate the importance of family legacy and faithfulness to God.

The book will be available for purchase in early December. To reserve your copy in advance, access the form by clicking here: <https://forms.gle/997CrpNzfwGpdpSW6>. The cost will be \$25.



North Pamunkey Baptist Church,
illustration by Edwin Talley

Editor's Note: And speaking of books, Nov. 1 is the deadline to order Frank Walker's new book, Rural Virginia Reflections. You can place your order by calling the society at (540) 672-5366 during regular business hours (1-5 p.m. weekdays) or sending an email to info@orangecovahist.org.

Upcoming programs

> **Sunday, Oct. 29, 3 p.m.**
Preservation Virginia
(formerly APVA) Revolving
Loan Fund with Gordon Lohr

Meet at the newly renovated Sandra and William H. Speiden Auditorium at 130 Caroline St., Orange. A dedication of the new auditorium will precede the program.

> **Sunday, Nov. 19, 3 p.m.**

**The Berry Hill
Restoration Program**

A look at the ongoing restoration/stabilization effort and architectural analysis of this historic structure. The program will be delivered by Casey Squyres (architectural historian) and Sam Biggers (Dominion Traditional Building Group). Meet at the Speiden Auditorium, 130 Caroline St., Orange.

> **No December Program**

> **Jan. 28, 2024, 3 p.m.**

**Annual meeting. Archaeology
at Historic Germanna**

Meet at the Speiden Auditorium, 130 Caroline St., Orange.

> **No February Program**

Program Ideas for 2024? Contact Ray!

Do you have an idea for a Historical Society program for next year? We will probably schedule 10 dates, usually in the afternoon or early evening of the fourth Sunday of every month except December and February. Weather permitting, May, June, July, August, and September programs are usually held outdoors at historic locations in Orange County. Autumn, winter and early spring programs are held at the Sandra and William H. Speiden Auditorium at the Research Center on Caroline St. Suggestions? Ideas? Volunteers? Contact Ray at rayzell@yahoo.com.