



Down to Earth: The Orange County Airport, Orange, Virginia

Lynne G. Lewis and Priscilla Mills

IN 1945, AS World War II in the European Theater was winding down, thoughts in the United States were turning toward life in the post-war world. “The United States today has approximately 25,000 civilian aircraft,’ according to the [Civil] Aeronautics Administration. [‘]We estimate that there will be 400,000

civil airplanes in this country within ten years of the war’s end, and that the number will continue to increase in following years. To serve this expected extensive growth in civil aviation, the CAA proposes that this nation construct 3,050 new airports and improve 1,625 of the 3,000 existing fields.”¹ It was anticipated that 166 airports in Virginia would be constructed or improved, including new ones for Orange and Gordonsville and the improvement of an existing airport south of Gordonsville, near Boswell’s Tavern, that was maintained by the government as an emergency landing field. The costs would be defrayed in part by the National Airport plan, part of a bill then before Congress, that culminated in the Federal Airport Act of 1946.²

In a small corner of the front page of the *Orange Review* from February 8, 1945, at the end of an article entitled “Zoning and Airport Planned for Orange,” appeared two paragraphs that were to be the genesis of the Orange County Airport. The article noted that “Orange County was listed for an Airport Project in No. 1 class by the Division of Aeronautics of Virginia.”³ A “No. 1” airport would consist of two 300-foot-wide runways, over 1,800 feet long. The costs would be divided between the Federal government (one-half), the Commonwealth (one-quarter) and the County (one-quarter), with a total estimated cost of \$75,000. The county was asked to take the first steps by selecting



Birdseye view of the Orange County Airport from the southeast. Courtesy of the Orange County Airport.

possible sites, which subsequently would be inspected by the Engineers of State and Federal agencies. The Orange County Planning Commission proposed to take the initiative.

By July 1945 it was reported that surveying of a potential site for the Orange airport had begun. The survey was carried out by County Surveyor Keese Brooking and volunteer workers. Lawrence Rigby, Howard Lane and others were

assisting. The survey was going to be used to obtain approval from state and federal airport authorities on the suitability of the location. The bill to provide federal aid to local airports was progressing in Congress, and everyone was preparing their plans for the day when the funds became available.⁴ The survey was completed by September 1945.⁵

The site must have been deemed suitable, because on September 11 “Mr. J. Clyde Marquis, secretary of the Orange County Planning Commission, appeared before the board and made a report of a survey for a proposed airport on the property of John W. Camper’s estate, situated on Route No. 20 about 3½ miles east of the town of Orange, containing 405 acres. After discussion, the Board took a verbal option for 60 days to purchase said land through Mr. Frank J. Camper, one of the heirs of the said John W. Camper, deceased, at a price of \$10,000.”⁶

⁴ “New Center Square Idea for Orange. Planners Survey Airport Site Near Nasons. . .,” *Orange Review* (Orange, VA), July 12, 1945, Vol. [X] IV, No. 19, p. 1.

⁵ “Orange Airport Plans,” *Orange Review* (Orange, VA), September 6, 1945, Vol. XIV, No. 27, p. 1.

⁶ “Minutes of Board of Supervisors Regular Meeting Held Tuesday, September 11, 1945 . . .,” *Orange Review* (Orange, VA), September 20, 1945, Vol. XIV, No. 29, p. 4.

¹ “Two Airports for Orange County,” *Orange Review* (Orange, VA), February 22, 1945, Vol. 13, No. 59, p. 1.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Airport_Act_of_1946, accessed October 11, 2018.

³ “Zoning and Airport Planned for Orange” *Orange Review* (Orange, VA), February 8, 1945, Vol. 13, No. 48, p. 1.

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Down to Earth (*continued*)

OBER 11, 1945

Airport Site Bought By County Tuesday

Camper Estate of 404 Acres
on Fredericksburg Road Purchased for \$10,000

The Board of Supervisors, by a unanimous vote, with Chairman C. A. Utz presiding, decided Monday to take up its option for the purchase of the Camper property of 404 acres on the Fredericksburg road, 3½ miles from Orange, to be used as an airport, at a price of \$10,000.

The matter has been agitated for some time and the Board has held two open sessions for the purpose of hearing the public for or against the proposition. There have been no objection.

The land is reported to be more nearly level than any other within five miles of town and has the additional advantage of being almost altogether cleared. The mansion house burned to the ground several years ago and the property is owned by the heirs. Frank J. Camper, administrator, representing the heirs, reports that all are in agreement to sell.

Airplane pilots passing over the county report that it is best spot available for a landing field. Engineers say that the land has a natural drainage and it is possible to lay out a runway of 2800 feet with little or no grading, which can be extended to 3400 feet with a minimum amount of work, while there is ample room for a cross runway.

It is likely that the next step by the county will be to lease the property to a company for development.

As can be seen from the article at left, the purchase was finally approved on October 9, 1945. It was noted that aviators felt that this was a good site for the new airport and that the County would lease the property to a company for development.⁷

Activity involving the airport clearly went on hold until the official passage of the Federal Airport Act, signed into law by President Truman on May 13, 1946, since the next step for the airport was construction and the Board of Supervisors only began the bid process at their May 1946 meeting.⁸ Then on June 13, 1946, it was announced that the Supervisors had leased the airport to George B. Tyler and Randolph Holladay. The lease was to run for two years, at the cost of \$5 a month. The two men, returning from military service, "...agreed to construct a runway 1800 feet long and 300 feet wide..." along with other improvements, all at their own expense.⁹

On July 18, 1946, the *Orange Review* announced that the "County Airport Soon To Be Open to Public." This informative article delineates the makeup of the airport, including a large canvas hanger expected to house approximately 40 ships. It also noted that Eston Holladay had soloed on July 9 and that Miss Mathilde Ross of New Orleans soloed on July 3.¹⁰ This announcement was followed by a September 12, 1946, article noting that \$2,898 had been spent by Randolph Holladay and George Tyler in developing the airport. The two managers also asked for an extension of their two-year lease to a longer period, among other requests.¹¹

From the date of land acquisition to the official activation date for the airport, recorded as November 1, 1946 at 12:00:00 a.m., it appears that it took about a year for the airport to be completed.¹² In short order the airport was in use, according to an article in the *Orange Review*, dated November 21, 1946. There it is recorded that Virginius Shackelford arrived home via a new Cessna 140 from Mt. Pocono [PA]. The article goes on to report on other airport users, including lumber spotters and those who were taking lessons.¹³ *Orange Review* advertising clippings from 1946 and 1947 show that the new airport was indeed an active part of Orange County.

Many changes have taken place over the intervening 72 years. Now with a 3,200-foot asphalt runway, the airport has over 8,000 single take-offs or landings each year. There are 40 aircraft based at the airport, and 28 hangars. The airport, operated under the supervision of the County's Public Works Department, has beautifully maintained grounds and facilities.¹⁴ A three-letter FAA airport code – OMH – has been assigned to Orange.

County Airport Soon To Be Open to Public

Randolph Holladay and George B. Tyler, who leased the Camper property on the Fredericksburg road about a month ago, to be used as a county airport, report that progress has been made toward getting it ready for public use. One runway 2000 long is under construction, and grading of the other will begin soon. A canvas hangar has been ordered, which is 96x140 feet clear span, and this will house approximately 40 ships. An administration building will be in place soon which will have class rooms and rest room facilities. Five new Piper Cubs are on order and delivery on the first plane is expected this month. The lessees are prepared to offer charter service to any point in the country. In addition to complete flying instruction, sight-seeing tours, aerial photography, farm inspections, small cargo transportation and other jobs.

Miss Mathilde Ross, of New Orleans, visiting at "Piedmont", Rapidan, soloed on July 3 and Eston Holladay on July 9. Several other students are making progress under Randolph Holladay, flight instructor.

The field will be officially opened soon and a dedication ceremony and air show will be given after it is completed. Visitors are welcome and suggestions for improvements will be gratefully received.

⁷ "Airport Site Bought by County Tuesday," *Orange Review* (Orange, VA), October 11, 1945, Vol. XIV, No. 32, p. 1.

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Airport_Act_of_1946, accessed October 11, 2018. "Airport Lease Bids Called For," *Orange Review* (Orange, VA), May 30, 1946, Vol. XVI, No. 12, p. 1.

⁹ "Board Leases Airport to Geo. Tyler, Randolph Holladay," *Orange Review* (Orange, VA), June 13, 1946, Vol. XVI, No. 14, p. 1.

¹⁰ "County Airport Soon To Be Open to Public," *Orange Review* (Orange, VA), July 18, 1946, Vol. XVI, No. 19, p. 1.

¹¹ "\$2,898 Spent on Orange Airport, According to Report," *Orange Review* (Orange, VA), September 12, 1946, Vol. XVI, No. 27, p. 1.

¹² <https://www.funplacestofly.com/Airport-Info-Orange-County-Virginia>, accessed October 10, 2018.

¹³ "Orange Airport News," *Orange Review* (Orange, VA), November 21, 1946, Vol. XVI, No. 38, p. 6.

¹⁴ <http://orangecountyva.gov/index.aspx?NID=150>, accessed October 25, 2018.

Down to Earth (*continued*)

The airport has played, and continues to play, an important (and perhaps unrecognized) economic role in Orange County. Patrons drive to town, dine in the restaurants, and shop in the stores. Another factor contributing to the town's commerce that many may not be aware of is Skydive Orange.

Skydive Orange, founded in 1977, is a nationally renowned jump club providing unparalleled support to the airport throughout the year on a daily basis. They hold four large events each year, filling the hotels in town to capacity. It is one of the county's most active employers, serving all the major regional metropolitan areas with training for both civilian and government clientele. Jumpers from Skydive Orange can be found in key positions in the skydiving and parachute industry worldwide. Skydive Orange's student training program was adopted by the United States Parachute Association and has become accepted as the international standard.¹⁵

¹⁵ <http://www.skydiveorange.com/about/>, accessed October 24, 2018.

Until 2013 (due to reorganization), the airport also hosted an Aviation Battalion of the Virginia Defense Force, which acted in support of the Virginia National Guard, as well as local law enforcement and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries with the capability to do aerial surveys, search and rescue, and aerial photography.¹⁶

So, the next time you drive by the airport, take a moment to reflect on its importance to the county and know that change is coming once again with the addition of a new, \$12.2 million county facility to house our public safety offices.¹⁷ It would seem that the investment of \$10,000 in 1945 continues to be an important part of our county.

¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia_Defense_Force#Former_Units, accessed October 27, 2018.

¹⁷ "Public safety contract awarded," *Orange County Review* (Orange, VA), October 25, 2018, Vol. 87, No. 50, p. 1.

Orange Airport News
 (Intended for last week)
 (Reported for the Review)

Virginius Shackelford surprised everyone last week by arriving home two days early. When George Tyler flew Lyne Shackelford to Mt. Pocono to drive Mr. and Mrs. Shackelford home, Mr. Shackelford decided to fly back with George in two hours rather than take the 14-hour automobile ride. He had a very comfortable trip back in the new Cessna 140 and seemed to be thrilled over it.

Ed. Breckenbrough has made this field his regular overnight stopping point on his way to Charlotte, N. C., from the Piper factory in Lockhaven, Pa. It looks like an air show when he comes zooming in with four other of his planes following him.

Some of our leading citizens in the lower part of the county have been wondering about the increase in number of planes in that section. You turkey hunters can relax because they are merely lumbermen spotting lumber—not turkeys.

Clifton Almond became so enthused over a few flying lessons that he bought one of our planes before he even soloed. Since he continued flying regularly, he made his solo flight a short time afterwards.

Bobby Chermside did a nice job of soloing Saturday a week ago. Mr. Chermside was on hand Sunday to watch and was very pleased with Bobby's flying ability.

Mrs. Ben Cone, the former Anne Coleman Wortham, was pleased to find out that she could fly direct from here to her home in Greensboro, N. C. George took her down Thursday. Her friends in Orange will be glad to know that she will be here more often from now on.

SPECIAL!

Orange County Airport

LEARN TO FLY DURING MONTH OF DECEMBER

SOLO FOR . . . **\$50.00** GUARANTEED

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WONDERFUL GIFTS FOR ALL

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS OF HOME OR FARM
 Beautiful 11" x 14" Prints.....\$15.00 for the first; \$7.50 for each additional

SIGHTSEEING TOURS
 See the countryside at its loveliest from the air..... Rides, \$1.00 and up

CHARTER FLIGHT TO ANYWHERE
 SAVE SHOPPING TIME—GO BY AIR

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ORANGE COUNTY AIRPORT

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Before the “Knights”: Some Early Piedmont Explorations Towards the Blue Ridge Prior to the Spotswood Expedition

Ann L. Miller

Part IV. Alexander Spotswood Looks Westward, 1710 to mid-1716

During the six years prior to the 1716 Spotswood expedition, interest in explorations to cross the Blue Ridge Mountains was accelerating. Although there are no copious amounts of information surviving on these quests, the story can be traced through surviving official records of the colonial government. This growing push westward was inextricably tied to the ambitions and encouragement of Alexander Spotswood, who became Lieutenant Governor of Virginia in early 1710.

By late 1710, several individuals had made application to [Lt.] Governor Spotswood to undertake explorations over the Blue Ridge. An extract from the *Journals of the Virginia Council*, October 10, 1710, regarding proposed expeditions over the mountains, lays out the conditions of such an expedition, stating that the leader of any such expedition had to receive a military commission, be enjoined “not to make War” on any person(s) that they met, and would be required to keep a journal of the “proceedings and Observations”:

Whereas application hath been made to the Governor by several persons for leave to go upon new discoveries over the Mountains to the Westward of this Colony. It is the Opinion of the Council that all suitable encouragement be given to the said persons for prosecuting that design w^{ch} may prove of great Advantage to her Majesty's Service and the trade of this Colony, and that for the better management of the same. It is necessary that a Commission be given to such persons as the Governor shall think fit to command the party intended to go on this expedition whereby the said Officer may be enjoined not to make War upon or offer Injury to any persons whatsoever that he shall happen to meet with, and to keep an exact Journal of his proceedings and Observations and lay the same before the Governor at this Return.¹

By December 1710, an expedition of “Adventurers” reached the summit of the Blue Ridge, as noted in the following extract from Spotswood’s letter to the Council of Trade, December 15, 1710. Unfortunately, only a few details and no names associated with this expedition were given in this report, which apparently forms the only record of the endeavor. In Spotswood’s letter, support for this expedition is couched as a way to check the advances of the French in the Mississippi region, and to facilitate trade with the various Indian tribes beyond the mountains:

That Whereas the ffrench are endeavoring to settle a communication between Canada and their late Settlements in Mississippi by way of the Lakes, our people would, by pushing on their settlem^{nts} in one straight Line along the banks of James River, be able to cut off that communication and fix themselves so strongly there that it would not be in the power of the French to dislodge them, especially considering how much further they must travel than we to come at that place as seems to be manifest by the Discoverys which I have encouraged to be made this fall by a Company of Adventurers, who found the Mountains not above a hundred miles from our Upper Inhabitants, and went up to the top of the highest Mountain with their Horses, tho’ they had hitherto been thought to be unpassable, and they assured me that ye descent on the other side seemed to be as easy as that they had passed on this, and that they could have passed over the whole Ledge (which is not large) if the season of the year had not been too advanced before they set out on that Expedition. And by this means also it is most probable that a very profitable Trade might be established with foreign Nations of Indians, and our Indian Traders would find convenient places of Refreshment without being obliged (as they are now) to travel some hundreds of miles through Deserts before they can vend their Commoditys. . . .²

Interestingly, especially in light of his later ironworking operations in Spotsylvania County, Spotswood goes on to mention his ideas to start iron works. He promotes the idea of utilizing mines at the falls of the James River, noting “I have been assured that the Oar has been tryed and found extraordinary Rich . . .”

Spotswood’s efforts to set up a number of forts along the western frontier included the establishment of the fort at Germanna in 1714. Spotswood’s mileage accounts survive, noting his May 1714 journey to fortify the site of the Germanna fort, and his August 1714 trek to locate sites for his other planned forts, although few specifics of his route can be determined from the available evidence.

1714 May 17: A Fortnights Expedition to Reconnoitre the Norward Frontiers & to fortify a place for Settling a Body of Germans above the Falls of Rappahannock . . . 0322 [miles]

¹ *Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia*, v. III, p. 253 (Richmond, Davis Bottom, 1928).

² Alexander Spotswood to the Council of Trade, December 15, 1710, in *The Official Letters of Alexander Spotswood . . . from the Manuscript in the Collections of the Virginia Historical Society*, introduction and notes by R. A. Brock, v. I, pp. 40-41 (Richmond, Virginia Historical Society, 1882).

Before the “Knights” (*continued*)

Aug. the 30: A six Weeks Expedition to Reconnoitre all the Frontiers from South to North far without the Inhabitants, in order to find out proper places for fixing Forts . . . 0500 [miles]³

A subsequent mileage account for his 1716 expedition to the Shenandoah Valley survives as well, and is noted later in this article.

In May 1716, Spotswood wrote the Commissioners of Trade about the Indian Company's (the recently-formed monopoly on Indian trade) intention of fostering trade with the Indians west of the Blue Ridge:

. . . From ye first erection of that [Indian] Company their great Aim has been to endeav'r at a trade with the Nations on ye other side of the Mountains, and by their encouragement a passage is (since the date of the enclos'd Memorial,) discovered through those Mountains w'ch have always been look'd upon as unpassable. They are preparing to open a trade that way, and seem resolved to push it on whatever it Cost . . .⁴

On June 12, 1716, Spotswood announced to the Virginia Council that some of the rangers who patrolled and explored the Virginia frontier had discovered a passage over the mountains. It seems likely that this was the same passage noted by Spotswood the month before, although it is unknown if this was the same passage, supposedly discovered by the “Adventurers,” that Spotswood had announced to the Council of Trade in December, 1710. Spotswood stated that he planned to send a larger group of rangers over the mountains in August, although this quickly grew into an expedition including not only rangers but land scouts and surveyors, various political figures, and wealthy planters from various counties, with Spotswood himself commanding the group:⁵

Whereas the Governour was pleas'd to informe this Board that some discoveries have lately been made by the Rangers of a Passage over the great mountains to the westward of this Colony and that he intended next August to send a greater Body of the Rangers upon further discoveries

³ *Journal of the Lieut. Governour's Travels and Expeditions Undertaken for the Public Service of Virginia* (no transcriber credited), *William & Mary Quarterly*, Series 2, v. III, No. 1, January 1923, p. 42.

⁴ Alexander Spotswood to the Commissioners of Trade, May 9, 1716, in *The Official Letters of Alexander Spotswood . . . from the Manuscript in the Collections of the Virginia Historical Society*, introduction and notes by R. A. Brock, v. II, pp. 149-150 (Richmond, Virginia Historical Society, 1882). The Indian Company was a joint-stock company, granted a 20-year monopoly on Indian trade. After opposition by private merchants and traders, it was dissolved in 1717.

⁵ At this point, it is worth remembering, as was cited in article II of this series, early 20th-century historian Fairfax Harrison's stated opinion that Spotswood had access to the information from, or an actual copy of, the map of Cadwallader Jones's late 17th-century explorations over the Blue Ridge; Fairfax Harrison, *Landmarks of Old Prince William*, (reprt. Baltimore, Gateway Press, 1987) p. 612.

which he Judges may be of great advantage to this Country the Council are of opinion that all Suitable Endeavors ought to be us'd and encouragement given for Prosecuting the said as being for the Benefit of y^e Colony.⁶

Spotswood also recorded this situation in his subsequent mileage accounts:

[Margin note] Vide Council Journ. June 12th 1716

Upon Notice of a Passage being discovered through the great Western Mountains, the Governour advising with the Council, judg'd it might be for the Safety & benefit of this Colony if the Pass could be secured by a Fort, & a Trade opened that way with remote Indians, & therefore resolving to view it himself, he undertook Aug. the 20 [1716] a Monts Expedition w'ch 63 Men & 74 Horses marching beyond the high Ridge of Mountains, until he arriv'd at a large River on the other Side . . . 0445 [miles]⁷

Some three weeks after Spotswood's June 12 announcement, and less than two months before the expedition began, Richard Beresford, an agent for the South Carolina Assembly, reported on the proposed exploration in a letter dated July 4, 1716:

There is in three of the Frontier counties of Virginia a company of Twelve Rangers who make it their business upon the Govern.'s order to Range and make Discoveries. One of these companies has made a Discovery of a passage through ye mountains between Rappahannock & Potowmake Rivers very easy for horses, the pass being of easy ascent & falls very easy to the westward. they Report that they went about 40 Miles to the westward of the Mountains from which divers runs & brookes of water made into Small Rivers they saw Some new cabins and much Sign of Indians being near; they Did not perfect their Discovery being so few in Number.

Upon this Discovery, It is said the Govern.r will order the three companies of Rangers consisting of 36. Men & Some Small Number more with a few Goods to perfect ye Discovery very Shortly . . .

. . . These things cause many Speculations in Virginia . . . Some imagine this only an amusement That under the Notion of discovering this pass they make a more profitable Discovery of a mine . . .⁸

⁶ *Executive Journals, Council of Colonial Virginia*, v. III, p. 428 (Richmond, Davis Bottom, 1928).

⁷ *Journal of the Lieut. Governour's Travels and Expeditions Undertaken for the Public Service of Virginia*, *William & Mary Quarterly*, Series 2, v. III, No. 1, January 1923, p. 43.

⁸ The Beresford letter, transcribed by John Blankenbaker, was published as part of his *Beyond Germanna* series, v. 15, No. 6, 2003, p. 912.

Before the “Knights” (*continued*)

The location of the passage cited by Beresford is uncertain from his description. It would be expected that the planned 1716 expedition would be going through this mountain passage. Both Chester’s Gap and Thornton’s Gap lie between the Potomac and the southernmost tributaries of the Rappahannock (i.e., the Rapidan River and its own tributaries), although the evidence points to Spotswood’s expedition crossing at Swift Run Gap. Swift Run, which is a tributary of the Rivanna (and ultimately of the James River) is less than two miles to the south of the Rapidan’s tributaries, and this short intervening distance possibly could allow for some confusion. Was Beresford in fact referring to one of the gaps between the Potomac and the Rappahannock tributaries (which ultimately were not used by Spotswood’s expedition)? Was Beresford’s source of information actually referring to Swift Run Gap, and slightly mistaken about the gap’s location and the fact that Swift Run was not a tributary of the Rapidan (and thus the Rappahannock)? Or was Beresford, identified as the agent of another colony, being intentionally fed slightly inaccurate information by a supposed informant?

Given the lack of additional evidence, the truth of Beresford’s evidence may never be known. What is certain, however, is that within a few months, Alexander Spotswood and his expedition had reached, and passed the Blue Ridge, signaling the opening of the region to settlement.

The articles in this series, with additional material, will be expanded into a future Historical Society publication, scheduled to be available in 2019.

Woman’s Club History Project

In 2015, the Woman’s Club of Orange celebrated its 100th Anniversary making it the oldest civic organization in Orange County. Through the years, the Club kept detailed records that included minutes, yearbooks, and scrapbooks. These records document the history of the county through the activities and the concerns of the ladies over the decades.

Beginning in November, the Woman’s Club will launch the Woman’s Club History Project along with the help of the Historical Society. Vickie Morris, President of the Woman’s Club, and a committee of nine members will begin scanning the records. It is their hope that these records will be enjoyed by many and will be a useful resource for researchers looking to shed light on life in Orange County, through the eyes of the Woman’s Club members.

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Research Historian

Ann L. Miller

The World War I Memorial Plaque at the Orange Courthouse

With the centennial of the end of World War I occurring on November 11, we thought it would be fitting to remember the Orange County men who fought in that war by printing the text of the memorial plaque at the courthouse:

IN HONOR OF THE MEN OF
ORANGE COUNTY VIRGINIA
WHO SERVED IN THE GREAT WAR
AND IN MEMORY OF THE EIGHTEEN
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES

DANIEL ASHBY MCINTOSH
EDWARD D’OYLEY NORTHRUP
BERNARD E. VERLING
CHARLES R. CLARK
VIVIAN SLAUGHTER
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PETER ELLIS

In Case You Missed It

Lynne G. Lewis



Photo postcard from the Grymes Collection.

Our year of revisiting the 20th century continues, and the past few months were fun and informative. We started the summer with an excellent talk, on June 4, about the first Boy Scout troop formed in Orange. *When We Were in Our Golden Age: Early History of Orange Boy Scout Troop #1, 1915-1918*, presented by Raymond Ezell, local professional archaeologist and District Commissioner for Monticello District, Stonewall Jackson Area Council, BSA. Along with examples of Scout uniforms from earlier eras, Ray entertained the audience with the organization and activities of Orange County's first, and now 103-year-old, Boy Scout Troop.

The picnic season began on a lovely evening in June with a visit to the home of Steven and Catherine Brooks, Gaston Hall. Built ca. 1905-1909 by Annie Rogers Zinn duPont for her son by her first marriage (to George Zinn), the home was patterned after the appearance of Montpelier as it was when the duPonts first purchased it in 1901. During these early days, the property also contained extensive farm structures, athletic accoutrements, and even a private zoo. Ann Miller presented a brief history of Gaston Hall, while Mr. and Mrs. Brooks shared their experiences in restoring this fine home and ensuring its preservation as it enters its second century.

Unfortunately, the July picnic had to be cancelled due to the weather, but we resumed picnicking on August 27 with a visit to the George Washington Carver Regional High School (today known as the Carver Center). The Orange County African-American Historical Society joined us in listening to a most excellent presentation by Dr. Hortense Hinton-Jackson, a Carver alumna. Dr. Hinton-Jackson explained the origin and history of the George Washington Carver Regional High School, a school that served Culpeper, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock counties from 1949 to 1968, prior to integration. She also described the future Carver 4-County Museum, (which had its preview opening on October 13) and encouraged those with memories and memorabilia to contact the museum

curator. The presentation was followed by lively discussion of memories and experiences of the school, the students, the teachers and all those who were associated with the school.

The summer picnic season over, we began our fall programs with a history of the Mason Insurance Agency on September 24. Founded in 1891 as Shackelford, Warren and Mason Insurance, this 127-year-old business is the oldest in the Town of Orange and Orange County that is not a farm and is still run by the same family. Chuck Mason, grandson of the founder, told of the early days and stories of the many people associated with the business over the years. He delighted the audience with tales of insurance (mis)adventures. Brian Hargett, who succeeded his father Ben as a member of the firm, told of his father bringing the family to Orange in the 1960s, and his growing up in the town. It was an evening enjoyed by one and all.

On October 29, the Great Fire of Orange, which marked its 110th anniversary on November 8, was commemorated with a program discussing the origins of the fire and showing its results through photographs and artifacts. The artifacts, melted coins, were recovered from the ashes, while the postcard shown here was converted from one of the numerous photographs taken by the Seabrook Brothers of Charlottesville and later sold at Grymes Drug Store.

Upcoming

Finally, we will close out 2018's programs on November 26, with the commemoration of another very important anniversary, that of the Armistice that ended World War I on November 11, 1918. We plan to have an array of artifacts, documents, and graphics illustrating the county's involvement during the war. Bill Speiden, who has a remarkable collection of his father's World War I papers, will recount several anecdotes and we will discuss the effects of the war on the people of Orange County. Sid Sidelko, member of the Orange VFW, will provide some information on deceased World War I veterans from Orange.

Orange County Historical Society
130 Caroline Street
Orange, VA 22960

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Permit No. 60

Membership 2019: We Need Your Email Address!

Sometime in late December/early January you will receive your annual membership renewal letter. Your membership is very important to us and helps to fund our day to day operations. Among other things, that means we are able to keep the Research Center staffed (with most excellent people) to help both you and our visitors, be they from around the corner or around the world. It also means that you get to come to our summer picnics, a privilege only available to Historical Society members. And of course, you receive our interesting and informative newsletter.

Of particular importance this year is that you will see a line on the membership form requesting an email address. This is because we are taking the first steps to convert our mailed postcard to email notifications and web site postings. This will not happen until some time mid-2019, but we need your email or updated email so we can prepare for this conversion. If you are unable to receive email or access our website (www.orangecovahist.org), please let us know so we can make alternate arrangements.

We promise that you will not be bombarded with email. We will let you know of upcoming meetings and special events – and we will have a way to notify you of cancellations quickly and more easily.

Finally, by employing email instead of postcards, we will save up to \$2,000 a year – a savings that can be applied to the phenomenon we all have to deal with in our lives – ever increasing costs.

Thank you for helping. It is a step we've considered for a long while now, and your Board of Directors feels that the time has come when we simply must do this.

Please Join Us!

We invite you to join the Orange County Historical Society. Please provide your name and contact information as you wish it to appear in our records and select the appropriate dues level. Mail the completed form, along with your dues payment to The Orange County Historical Society (OCHS), to 130 Caroline Street, Orange, VA 22960.

The Orange County Historical Society is a non-profit organization. Your membership fees are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Name: _____

(If business/organization member, name of business or organization)

Street: _____

City: _____

State: _____ **Zip:** _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Membership Status: New Renewal Address, name, etc. update

Membership Level: Society dues are for the period of January 1 - December 31.

Annual Individual Member: \$25

Annual Student Member (High School or College): \$12.50

Annual Family Member: \$35

Annual Sustaining Member: \$100

Annual Patron Member: \$200

Annual Sponsor Member: \$300