



The Newspaperdom of Orange County (1830-1941): Part I

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With the recent reorganization of the *Orange County Review* newspaper and the retirement of its longtime managing editor, Jeff Poole, it is time for a detailed examination of the historical print media outlets that existed in Orange County since the first quarter of the 19th century. Surprisingly, this is a topic that



Figure 1. Historic newspapers printed in the Town of Orange.

has seen little serious research and is fraught with its share of confections, hazy traditions, and factual errors in Orange’s collective memory and in the (few) sources that treat this topic.

Gordonsville and Orange each published at least one newspaper during much of the 19th and 20th centuries. Many of these newspapers were relatively short lived, while a few became long running, influential pillars of their communities and are fondly remembered to this day. This essay also corrects mistaken local tradition regarding a few of Orange County’s most recognized newspapers. Part I of this essay describes the newspapers that operated in the town of Orange from the second quarter of the 19th century through the late 20th century (Figure 1). These papers have consistently served to bolster the town’s image as the commercial and political hub of the county.

Orange

The first newspaper documented in Orange, Virginia, was *The Reporter*, established and edited by Peter B. Stone beginning in April 1830.^{1,2} The paper carried the Latin phrase, *In Civitate Libera Linguam Mentemque Liberas Esse, Debere* on the masthead which translates to, “in a free State speech and thought ought to be free.” It ceased operation sometime

after June 1831.³ Alternately, local historian Frank Walker reports in his seminal book of Orange County history that the *Orange Record* was the first newspaper published here during 1830-1831 and is only known, according to Walker, from secondary mentions in a few Orange County Court records.⁴ *The Record* was

not listed in Cappon’s 1936 catalog of early newspapers in Virginia—it being augmented with additional information during the years since its publication.

The next newspaper established here was *The Orange Express* founded in May 1831 by William R. Robinson. It also bore the motto, *In Civitate Libera Linguam Mentemque Liberas Esse, Debere*.⁵ *The Express*, occasionally referred to as the “Orange Free Press,” may have merged with *The Reporter*, as both papers carried the same Latin phrase on their mastheads.⁶ In the spring of 1832, Robinson, a supporter of Gov. Col. James Barbour, changed the paper’s name to the *Orange Press*.⁷ Typically changes in newspaper names were ordered by some change in ownership.

After Robinson left the newspaper, *The Orange Press* (Figure 2) bearing the slogan, “Principles Not Men,” was edited/published by William H. Smoot until summer 1833.⁸ In June

¹ “Record of County Paper First Made Even 100 Years Ago,” *Orange County News*, November 27, 1930, 53.

² Lester J. Cappon, *Virginia Newspapers 1821-1935: A Bibliography with Historical Introduction and Notes* (“Guide to Virginia Historical Materials,”) Part I (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1936), 146.

³ Chronicling America. “About The Reporter.” Library of Congress. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn94059412/>. Accessed November 25, 2022.

⁴ Frank S. Walker, Jr., “Chapter VII: the Commerce of a County,” *Remembering: A History of Orange County, Virginia*, (Orange, Virginia: Orange County Historical Society, 2004), 278.

⁵ Scott, W. W., *History of Orange County, Virginia*, (Richmond, Virginia: Everett Waddey Co., 1907), 128.

⁶ Cappon, *Virginia Newspapers 1821-1935*, 146.

⁷ “Record of County Paper First Made Even 100 Years Ago,” 53.

⁸ “Prince William Notes,” *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, December 14, 1895, 2.

See *Newspaperdom* on page 2.

Newspaperdom (continued)



Figure 2. Orange Press, April 5, 1833 (courtesy of James Madison Museum).

1833, the *Richmond Enquirer* reported that Smoot retired and sold his interest in *The Orange Press* to John Woolfolk and Joshua Wesley Fry. Woolfolk served in the Virginia House of Delegates and Senate for several terms, and Fry was deputy sheriff of Orange County. They changed the name of the paper to *The Orange Democrat*.⁹ Their paper was discontinued in August 1834¹⁰; and, in the summer of 1838, another newspaper took the place of the defunct *Democrat*, but its name has been lost to history.

It is unlikely that there was no newspaper in Orange for the next 20 years, but the next known paper was *The Southern Chronicle*. Alfred Joseph Stofer, the founder of the *Culpeper Observer*, and Dr. George K. Gilmer, former editor of the *True American* in Staunton, attempted to establish this paper in mid-1857. Apparently that partnership never materialized, probably due to insufficient funding, and Gilmer instead became editor of the *Virginia Citizen* in Harrisonburg. Nevertheless, *The Southern Chronicle* began publishing in Orange at the end of 1857 by Stofer and his new partner, John S. Payne, who edited the paper.¹¹ Around this time, Stofer's printing house for the *Culpeper Observer* was destroyed by a fire on November 11, 1857.

In the spring of 1860, *The Southern Chronicle* folded, and Payne was empowered to collect outstanding debts and make

arrangements to pay creditors.¹² Alfred Stofer's half-brother, Alonzo Franklin Stofer, who resided in Florida at the time, quickly responded to the paper's dissolution by stating that he was also a one-half owner of the failed enterprise and that he had never authorized Payne nor his brother to settle accounts on his behalf (Figure 3). The details of how this arrangement was ultimately decided are unknown, but financial troubles dogged Alfred Stofer for the next several years until 1874 when a U.S. District Court judge declared that his property be sold to pay his creditors.¹³

A paper that competed with *The Southern Chronicle* was the *Orange Chronicle* (sometimes referred to as the "*Orange County Chronicle*"), established by January 1858. In late 1859, Alonzo Stofer sought to sell his half interest in the *Orange Chronicle* and retire to Florida. By April 1860, it appears that John S. Payne acquired the *Orange Chronicle* which carried the slogan, "The Slave of No Man-The Tool of No Party" on its masthead. Payne mortgaged the newspaper to the Sander-son Thrift bank (of Loudoun Co.) for \$400 (which may have been the price paid to assume the paper's ownership).¹⁴ In July 1861, the *Chronicle* (along with other newspapers in the Commonwealth) was reduced to half its usual length due to a paper

shortage and then ceased operation sometime after mid-1861 due to difficulties exacerbated by the Civil War.¹⁵

In April 1867, Alonzo Stofer returned from Florida and re-entered the newspaper business and established *The Orange Expositor*.¹⁶ He had spent the Civil War in the 1st Florida Infantry Regiment and the Milton Light Artillery and was paroled in April 1865.¹⁷ The first issue of the *Expositor* was printed in May 1867. After six months, its name was changed to *The Native Virginian* on November 15, 1867, when new co-owner, Dr. George W. Bagby, began editing the paper (while Stofer was business manager). With a medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania, Richmond resident Bagby

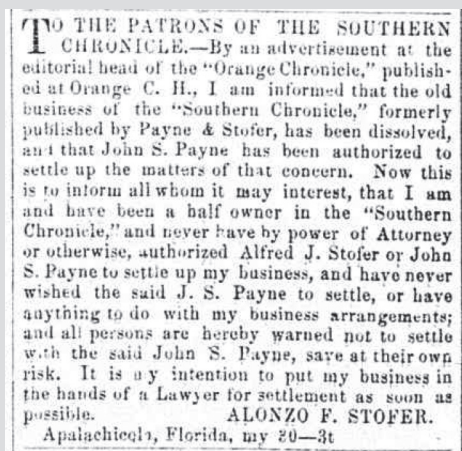


Figure 3. Alexandria Gazette advertisement, May 30, 1860 mentioning the closing of *The Southern Chronicle* (from Library of Virginia, Virginia Chronicle).

¹² *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, May 30, 1860, 2.
¹³ "Local Matters," *Richmond Dispatch*, November 23, 1874, 1.
¹⁴ Orange County Deed Book 45:219. Orange County Circuit Court Clerk's Office, Orange, Virginia.
¹⁵ "Half Sheets," *Lexington Gazette*, July 18, 1861, 1.
¹⁶ George W. Bagby, "The Editor's Salutation," *The Native Virginian*, November 15, 1867, 2.
¹⁷ David Coles and David W. Hartman. *Biographical Rosters of Florida's Confederate and Union Soldiers, 1861-1865*. Vol. 5. (Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1995), 1961.

⁹ *Richmond Enquirer*, June 28, 1833, 2.
¹⁰ *Virginia Herald*, August 13, 1834, 3.
¹¹ "Record of County Paper First Made Even 100 Years Ago," 53.

Newspaperdom (*continued*)

was former editor of *The Southern Literary Messenger* magazine and the *Richmond Whig*. A former Confederate soldier, he was a popular Virginia writer and lecturer, and was previously forced out of the newspaper business by a severe inflammatory eye condition.¹⁸ Bagby and Stofer's new paper carried the Latin slogan, *Patriae fumus, igne alieno Luculentior* on the masthead which translated to, "the smoke of one's own country is brighter than any fire in a foreign land," in an apparent nod to their "Old Virginia" heritage.

Before their new operation was perfected, Bagby and Stofer sought a used R. Hoe & Co. Washington Press. They may have acquired the new equipment the following year when in March 1868, the *Virginian's* printing office began job printing work. Upon the first anniversary of the paper's establishment, it was fiscally sound (unusual for most small newspapers), and it had ample subscribers in Orange County. Large shipments of the newspaper were even regularly sold in Richmond, Lynchburg, Baltimore, and Alexandria.

The Native Virginian resided in Orange until December 17, 1869, then it was moved to Gordonsville. The move was necessary because Orange was "small and comparatively a small part of the county trades with it."¹⁹ This sentiment reflects the notion that Gordonsville had much more growth and commercial potential than the county seat. In 1879, Gordonsville boasted a population of about 1,500 and was reported as the largest grain shipping depot between Richmond and the Ohio River.²⁰ By comparison, the town of Orange had about half that population.

Bagby and Stofer vowed to re-establish the defunct *Orange Expositor* or a newspaper under a different name (which never materialized).²¹ Newspapering must have been a hardscrabble business, and as early as March 1869, Stofer sought to sell his interest in the *Virginian* but was unsuccessful in finding a buyer. In the summer of 1869, Dr. Bagby sought to begin a second paper at Gordonsville. Possible titles of the intended publication were the "Gordonsville Gazette" and the "Atlanta of Virginia." Bagby continued to edit *The Native Virginian*, but his new paper in Gordonsville did not materialize.

In February 1870, rumors swirled that Dr. Bagby would leave Gordonsville to edit the *Petersburg Courier*. Bagby mentioned that he would not need to resort to this measure if the *Virginian* could successfully collect the debts it was owed.²² Dr. Bagby hung on until May 20, 1870, when he finally gave up his

share of the partnership. In his final editorial, he informed readers that he was forced into this position due to the inability of the small paper to be profitable.²³ Stofer bought out Bagby for \$500 and made other concessions, including allowing Bagby to retain rights to *The Native Virginian* moniker for his future use.²⁴ Bagby moved to Richmond and became State Librarian, a post he held until July 1878.^{25,26}

Upon executing Dr. Bagby's buy-out, Alonzo Stofer immediately returned the paper to the town of Orange and changed its name to *The Piedmont Virginian* (but retained the familiar Latin phrase on the masthead), and produced its first edition on June 3, 1870.²⁷ In September 1872, there must have been more problems in collecting debts owed as it suspended publication for two weeks, then resumed publication seemingly in a stronger fiscal position.²⁸ In November 1880, and again in the summer of 1905, Stofer sought to sell *The Piedmont Virginian*, but apparently found no buyers.²⁹

Just after the turn of the 20th century, the paper's printing office on Railroad Avenue narrowly escaped destruction during the devastating downtown fire of 1908. However, in March 1909, due to Stofer's poor health, he sought once more to sell the operation described as, "one of the best equipped newspaper and job offices in the State of Virginia."³⁰ A sale failed to materialize and within a few months, the *Virginian's* underinsured facility was destroyed by the July 1909 Orange fire, even though Stofer may have given up many of his day-to-day duties by then.³¹ After the fire, Alonzo Stofer did not re-enter the newspaper business, and he died at Waynesboro in April 1910. He had a successful career of over 50 years as a newspaperman.

An obscure newspaper, the *Boy's Banner*, was published semi-monthly by J. H. Curtis & Co. at Orange. It began publication on July 22, 1876 and lasted for only a few years.³² No examples of the news sheet or any other information has been found pertaining to this paper's operation.

²³ "The Editor's Farewell," *The Native Virginian*, May 20, 1870, 2.

²⁴ Orange County Deed Book 47: 331-332. Orange County Circuit Court Clerk's Office, Orange, Virginia.

²⁵ "The Native Virginian (Orange Court House, Va.) 1867-187?," Library of Congress, November 24, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/item/sn94051044/>.

²⁶ William H. B. Thomas, "Gordonsville a Thriving Town..." in *Gordonsville Virginia: Historic Crossroads Town*, (Verona, Virginia: McClure Printing Company, 1971).

²⁷ "The Editor's Farewell," 2

²⁸ "Briefs," *The Fredericksburg Herald*, September 16, 1872, 3.

²⁹ "Don't Want to Lose You," *The Evening Journal*, June 17, 1905, 4.

³⁰ "For Sale," *The Times-Dispatch*, March 14, 1909, 11.

³¹ "Virginia News," *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, July 27, 1909, 2.

³² Chronicling America. "About Boy's Banner." Library of Congress. Accessed November 25, 2022, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn94059434/>.

¹⁸ "The Native Virginian (Orange Court House, Va.) 1867-187?," Library of Congress, November 24, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/item/sn94051044/>.

¹⁹ Alonzo F. Stofer and George W. Bagby, "Announcement-Removal of This Paper," *The Native Virginian*, December 3, 1869, 2.

²⁰ *American Newspaper Directory*, (New York: George P. Rowell & Company, 1879), 338.

²¹ "Announcement-Removal of This Paper," 2.

²² "Announcement," *The Native Virginian*, February 4, 1870, 2.

Newspaperdom (*continued*)

Next, *The Orange Observer* was founded on March 12, 1881 by John Jones Robinson, a native of the Raccoon Ford neighborhood of Orange County and participant in the California Gold Rush. For the first several years, the paper's business office and printing plant were run out of Robinson's modest two-story home on West Main Street, just beyond the Presbyterian Church.³³ His operation later moved into the two-story brick Marshall Willis building near the Southern Railroad freight depot. The *Observer* carried the slogan, "We Labor for the Best Interests of the People-and Our Pocketbook," on the masthead, and it was printed on a used Washington hand press, the workhorse of the printing industry during the 19th century. This press served throughout the paper's entire run and ultimately contributed to its closure in the mid-1930s as the operation made little use of other style printing presses. John Robinson died in July 1891; and, his son, Robert Newton Robinson, and daughter, Miss Bertha Gray Robinson, operated the paper as co-editors going forward.

R. Newton began his career at age 14 (about 1877) as an apprentice printer/typesetter for *The Piedmont Virginian* in Orange and helped to open the *Observer* at 17 years old with his father and sister. Newton also held the office of Town Recorder and served on the Town Council for ten years. He was also the treasurer of the Virginia Press Association for a number of years. He died in 1936 after a career that spanned more than 55 years. Up to his death, he had been the *Observer's* primary typesetter.³⁴

³³ "Old Landmark to Go to Auction Block," *The Orange Review*, August 21, 1941, 7.

³⁴ "R. Newton Robinson Buried Here Sunday," *The Orange Review*, July 30, 1936, 1.

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Interestingly, James A. Robinson, older brother to Bertha and Newton, also began his newspaper career in Orange at 15 years old (1869) as a "printer's devil" (apprentice) for *The Native Virginian* (forerunner of *The Piedmont Virginian*). He apprenticed for about three years and began his career as a paragrapher³⁵ by publishing the *Southern Home* in 1870 and the *Boy's News* in 1871 at Orange.³⁶ Unfortunately, no copies of these publications survive. In 1873, he moved to North Carolina and established himself in the newspaper industry there. Known by his pen name, "Old Hurrygraph," Robinson was a successful editor/publisher for many years.³⁷

Having begun her career at the age of 12 in the *Observer's* printing shop (and composing a poem that appeared in the *Observer's* first edition), Bertha Robinson was a unique fixture on the Virginia press landscape. She was the only female editor in Virginia and the only female member of the Press Congress of the World in the United States. Beginning in 1897, Bertha served as the first historian of the Virginia Press Association, a post she would hold for more than two decades.³⁸ In 1903, Ms. Robinson was offered editorial positions at the *Washington Post* and the *New York Journal*, which she declined, preferring to stay in Orange.³⁹ She was also an active supporter of women's suffrage and, in 1906, donated the portrait of General Robert E. Lee that hangs today in the historic Orange County courthouse. Most assume that Ms. Robinson was a lifelong bachelorette. In fact she was married on December 24, 1916, to Lewis Cass Martin, a newspaper editor in Farmville. The couple remained married for only three years, as Martin sued for divorce on the grounds that Robinson abandoned him.

Not surprisingly Bertha was a highly regarded member of the Orange County business community. Demonstrating her station, she is pictured alongside 20 of Orange's most well-heeled business leaders at the 10th anniversary celebration of the opening of Orange's American Silk Mill plant (Figure 4).

The Orange Observer reportedly had a circulation of 2,000 copies during the early 1900s, which exceeded the total population of the town of Orange. In early 1903, the *Observer* moved its printing operation out of the Marshall Willis building on Church Street to a new building, probably on Main Street, where it remained for some time before relocating again (probably after 1909). It was during this period (ca. 1900-1913) that

³⁵ "Paragrapher: a writer of paragraphs especially for the editorial page of a newspaper. Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paragrapher>. Accessed 24 Oct. 2023.

³⁶ Boyd, William K., *The Story of Durham: City of the New South*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1925), 257

³⁷ Cook, James P., ed., "Reminiscences," *The Uplift*, Vol. X, No. 43 (December 4, 1920): 9.

³⁸ "Orange Editor Gets Publicity," *Orange County News*, April 13, 1933, 1.

³⁹ "Orange," *The Free Lance*, January 31, 1903, 7.

Newspaperdom (*continued*)

Figure 4. Orange County's Business Leaders at the 10th Anniversary of the American Silk Mill in 1939. Bertha Robinson (far right) and *Orange County News* editor, Mrs. Lottie D. Thomasson (center) (Orange County Historical Society).

the *Observer* modified its masthead by adding the Seal of the Virginia Commonwealth. In February 1933, the paper moved from its longtime location in the McIntosh (a.k.a. Robinson) Building on Railroad Avenue (over the Sunny South store) back to the second floor of the Willis building.⁴⁰ This is the building where the *Observer* had its early downtown printing plant. The operation returned to the Robinson home on West Main Street by July 1936.⁴¹

Having escaped the fires of 1889, 1908, and 1909 that burned large swaths of the town's business district, the *Observer* ceased printing at the end of July 1936 upon the death of R. Newton Robinson. Miss Bertha Robinson indicated that the primary reason for ending the paper was the inability to find someone who could adequately set type on the antique Washington Press.⁴² Its run of 55+ years was no insignificant feat in a time when many papers lasted only a few years.

As a final blow to the recently closed newspaper and marking the end of a golden era of printing in Orange, the *Observer's* Washington press was sold to a local junk dealer. Incidentally, local tradition holds that rather than sell the *Observer's* press to the Green family (owners of the recently established *Orange Review*) who had offered to buy the equipment, Bertha vowed that no other paper would be published on her press and relegated it to the scrap yard.

In May 1909, William Henry Wadsworth Moran (who had previously established the *Warrenton Review* for a run of less than two months and was the previous editor of *The Manassas Journal*) came to Orange and established the *Orange Review* (no relationship to the later *Orange Review*) on the southern

end of Railroad Avenue in the Star Building. Moran hired Ernest R. Roads, a former editor of the *Gordonsville Gazette*, to help run the paper's operation.⁴³ Local tradition (incorrectly) claims that Moran purchased A. F. Stofer's ownership of *The Piedmont Virginian* and quickly changed the name of the paper to the *Orange Review*, making the *Review* the successor of the *Virginian*.⁴⁴ The facts bear out that the *Virginian* was offered for sale in March 1909, but there is no evidence that Moran made the purchase (substantiated by period deed records), and Stofer retained ownership. Careful examination of regional newspaper announcements and printing industry directories from this era confirm that the *Virginian* and the *Review* were unconnected (and competing) enterprises in Orange.

A few months later both the *Orange Review* and *The Piedmont Virginian* offices were destroyed by the fire of July 1909.⁴⁵ The *Review* lost an estimated \$5,000 to \$6,000 in equipment and was only partially insured.⁴⁶ With insufficient funds and equipment to restart the newspaper, Moran sold his property in August and then left town.^{47, 48}

On March 8, 1911, *The Orange Press* (no connection to the 1830s *Orange Press*) was established by the Press Publishing Company, owned and edited by William Andrew Bickers.

⁴³ "New Paper in Orange," *The News Leader*, May 21, 1909, 12.

⁴⁴ "The Review Entering its 16th Year of Publication," *The Orange Review*, February 28, 1946, 1.

⁴⁵ Ezell, Ray. "Fiercest of Fires: the Great Orange Fires of 1889, 1908, and 1909." In *Record*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Fall 2022): 1-8.

⁴⁶ "Virginia News," July 27, 1909.

⁴⁷ "Founder Of The Journal Dead," *The Manassas Journal*, March 14, 1913, 1.

⁴⁸ "Brief Local News," *The Manassas Journal*, August 6, 1909, 4.

⁴⁰ "Observer Has Moved," *The Orange Review*, February 23, 1933, 1.

⁴¹ "Old Landmark to Go to Auction Block," 7.

⁴² "To The Patrons of The Orange Observer," *The Orange Review*, July 30, 1936, 6.

Newspaperdom (*continued*)

He was also owner of the short-lived *Culpeper News*.⁴⁹ In May, Bickers entered into an agreement with the American Type Founders Company to lease equipment for job printing and printing newspapers, including a 10 x 15 Chandler and Price job press.⁵⁰ Bickers sold the *Press* in November to New York and Pennsylvania newspaperman Richard N. Tarkington.⁵¹ In early 1912 *The Orange Press* was in difficult straights, and in April it was incorporated into the newly established *Orange Review* which had begun publication on March 9th in the Grasty Brothers building on Wall Street, under the direction of Tarkington (no connection to the former *Orange Review* that burned in the 1909 fire).^{52, 53}

After about a year, the *Review* defaulted on a mortgage, and it was sold at auction on January 31, 1913 to Orange attorney (and prize hog breeder), A. Barclay Taliaferro for \$620.⁵⁴ Among the equipment sold at auction was the Chandler and Price job press originally acquired in 1911 by former owner, W. A. Bickers, and a Campbell newspaper press, along with the other equipment for printing. At the time of its sale, it reported printing equipment worth approximately \$1,500.⁵⁵

On February 11, 1913, Bayne McDonald Bushong, son of a Lutheran minister and a long-time newspaperman and editor of the *Greene County Record*, acquired the *Review* for \$850 from A. B. Taliaferro, becoming its new publisher.^{56, 57} Afterward, the paper was relocated to the two-story Haggerty building on Church Street. On March 7, 1914, the paper was sold at public auction to Rufus G. Roberts, the agent of Raleigh Travers Green, the publisher of *The Culpeper Exponent*.^{58, 59} That sale included what Duff Green would describe years later as, "broken down" presses.⁶⁰ Within a few weeks, the *Review's* printing office was moved to the north side of Main Street, to a building owned by Mayor Frank Perry, adjacent to Grymes Drugstore west of the railroad tracks (where the Lerner Bros.

store was later located).⁶¹ The paper operated under the management of Ben R. Roberts (brother of Rufus Roberts) who operated it until 1918.⁶²

Local tradition claims that on January 1, 1918, the *Review* suspended its operation due to an inability to find suitable employees to replace the ones that had left for military service during World War I.^{63, 64} This tradition states that Ben Roberts locked up the building on the first day of 1918 and never returned. While there may be some truth to this (e.g., the newly declared war causing a dearth of suitable employees), in fact it appears that the *Review* continued its operation (possibly from a printing plant in Culpeper) until April of that year.⁶⁵ In any event, Orange was a one newspaper (the *Observer*) town for the next decade.

Beginning in 1929, the Orange businessmen's association (similar to the Chamber of Commerce) recognized the need to add a second newspaper in Orange. At the urging of Severn N. Nottingham and Virginius R. Shackelford, business leaders lobbied that the *Orange Review* be re-established.⁶⁶ In response, James W. Green of Culpeper (WWI veteran and nephew of Raleigh T. Green) and Bayne M. Bushong, editor/owner of the *Greene County Record* and the *Madison Eagle* (and future mayor of Madison), formed a partnership in mid-1930 to publish a new paper in Orange called the *Orange Sun*. They intended to publish by August, but there were delays. At the end of the year, Green moved to Orange to perfect the new operation; and in January 1931, Green and Bushong leased the old Express building, adjacent to the Gaines building on Railroad Avenue, from Norman C. Bailey and installed their linotype press in the building that later would be occupied by the Sunny South grocery.⁶⁷ The linotype was purchased in Farmville and hauled to Orange by R. G. Blakenbaker of Madison in two trucks.

Bushong and Green purchased the rights to the *Orange Review* name from Raleigh Green, thereby continuing the *Review* franchise in Orange and bridging it to the 1913-1918 iteration of *The Orange Review*.⁶⁸ On March 5, 1931, the first issue of the newly constituted *Orange Review* (under J. W. Green) was published on a flatbed press from its Railroad Avenue printing

⁴⁹ *Richmond Times Dispatch*, January 31, 1911, 7.

⁵⁰ Orange County Deed Book 70:226-227, Orange County Circuit Court Clerk's Office, Orange, Virginia.

⁵¹ "Sold Orange Press," *The Daily Star*, November 20, 1911, 2.

⁵² "Home and School Edition," *The Culpeper Exponent*, April 26, 1912, 1.

⁵³ "New Look Featured," *Orange County Review*, January 4, 1973, 1.

⁵⁴ Orange County Deed Book 72:375, Orange County Circuit Court Clerk's Office, Orange, Virginia.

⁵⁵ "Orange Review Bankrupt," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, February 1, 1913, 7.

⁵⁶ "Paper Changes Hands," *Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser*, February 28, 1913, 3.

⁵⁷ Orange County Deed Book 72:376, Orange County Circuit Court Clerk's Office, Orange, Virginia.

⁵⁸ "Orange Paper Purchased," *The Culpeper Exponent*, March 13, 1914, 5.

⁵⁹ "Auction Sales, Future Days," *The Times Dispatch*, March 4, 1914, 11.

⁶⁰ Duff Green Collection, Orange County Historical Society, Orange, Virginia.

⁶¹ "Our Birthday," *Orange County Review*, March 3, 1977, 1.

⁶² "Former Review Man Here," *The Orange Review*, September 7, 1933, 1.

⁶³ "History of Newspapers Published in Orange," *The Orange Review*, January 17, 1952, 12.

⁶⁴ "New Look Featured," January 4, 1973.

⁶⁵ "Orange Review Suspended," *The Culpeper Exponent*, April 11, 1918, 1.

⁶⁶ "Review Completing 25 Years of Service in Orange County," *The Orange Review*, March 1, 1956, 2.

⁶⁷ "Orange to Have New Newspaper," *Virginia Star*, January 22, 1931, 1.

⁶⁸ "Madison Truckman Moves Orange Newspaper Press," *Greene County Record*, February 12, 1931, 2.

Newspaperdom (*continued*)

Figure 5. James W. Green, Sr., with his sons in 1960: (LtoR) Duff, Angus, James W., Sr, Andrew, and James W., Jr (Duff Green Collection, Orange County Historical Society).

plant. The first local subscriber to the new *Orange Review* was reported to be W. H. Bates of Bates Brothers garage on Chapman Street. The paper continued at this location until 1936.

In describing the new endeavor, James Green's first editorial testified that it was launched in "response to forward looking citizens who visualized a greater future for the community." Green opined that the key ingredient for the new publication was the newly installed modern equipment and that the paper should "encourage the spirit of confidence in the future of Orange."⁶⁹ On April 27, 1932, the newspaper's owners amicably dissolved their partnership, with Green acquiring Bushong's interest.⁷⁰ In 1936, the newspaper moved a block west from its Railroad Avenue location to its new home on Chapman Street.⁷¹ Interestingly, in 1942 during the country's scramble to recycle metal for the war effort, the *Review's* linotype press was scrapped and donated to a Boy Scout scrap metal drive. The *Review* replaced it with a newer model.⁷²

In 1963, the Greens incorporated their operation into Green Publishers, Inc., which eventually owned five weekly papers and published ten others throughout the region (Figure 5). It became one of the first papers to implement offset type, eliminating the need for most of the company's linotype presses.^{73,74} After James Green died in 1965, R. Duff Green became editor and Angus Green continued as the business manager.

⁶⁹ "Salutatory," *The Orange Review*, March 5, 1931, 4.

⁷⁰ "Notice of Dissolution of Partnership," *Greene County Record*, April 28, 1932, 4.

⁷¹ "Review Completing 25 Years of Service in Orange County," 2.

⁷² "Old Printing Press on the Scrap Heap," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Oct 16, 1942, 1.

⁷³ Holladay, James. *A Study of the Orange County Review*, (n.d.): 11, Manuscript on file, Orange County Historical Society, Orange, Virginia.

⁷⁴ Miscellaneous Duff Green notes on file, Orange County Historical

Not included in the photo above is sister, Nancy Ball Green Moser who, according to family members, was J. W. Green's "right hand woman," writing "The Office Cat" weekly column, as well as obituaries, church/social news, wedding announcements, and composing photo captions. She also managed the "Locals" column that employed local women contributors throughout Orange County. Nancy also kept the paper going during World War II when three of her brothers had gone off to war and Duff was in college. Another sister, Lillian Green, wrote the classified ads and birth announcements, managed the administrative office duties, and proofed much of each issue. All told, three generations of the Green family built the *Review* into a local institution that was the focal point of so much of Orange County life.⁷⁵

With the first issue of 1973, the name of the paper was changed to *The Orange County Review* to reflect a geographically appropriate, countywide focus and reached a distribution of 7,000 copies.⁷⁶ A revised banner was also employed beginning with this edition. Their operation was contained in a complex of five adjacent buildings in downtown Orange.

In 1982, the Green brothers sold their company to Worrell Enterprises, a regional newspaper corporation. By 1996, Worrell sold the *Review* (along with other newspapers) to Media General — which owned the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* — creating a large network of Virginia newspapers roughly along Route 29 from Manassas to Bristol. The Media General footprint eventually included newspapers in Florida, North Carolina, South

Society, Orange, Virginia.

⁷⁵ Eleanor Long, personal communication, 2023.

⁷⁶ *A Study of the Orange County Review*, 11.

Newspaperdom (*continued*)

Carolina, and Alabama. Media General sold the *Review* and several of its other newspapers to Berkshire-Hathaway in May 2012, which owned the papers for about six years. In 2019, *The Orange County Review* and other former Media General papers were transferred to Lee Enterprises to manage. In early 2020, Lee Enterprises formally acquired these papers.⁷⁷

Figure 6 shows several newspaper locations in the town of Orange since the late 19th century. Not all newspaper printing shops could be located from the available records.

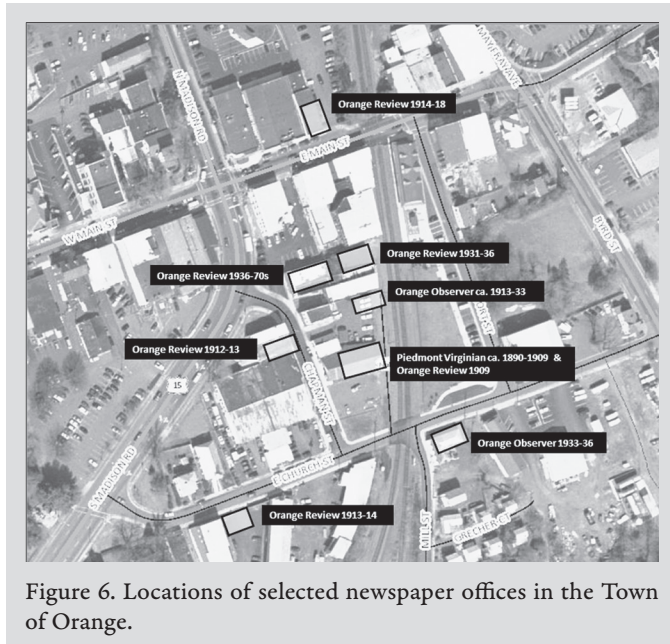


Figure 6. Locations of selected newspaper offices in the Town of Orange.

Part 2 of “The Newspaperdom of Orange County (1830-1941)” will be published in the Spring 2024 issue of the *Record*. It will deal with the papers of Gordonsville.

If Society members have pre-1940 copies of any of the Orange County newspapers described in this essay, the Historical Society would be interested in examining them to supplement our historical records database. Please contact Society president, Ray Ezell to discuss at rayezell_2000@yahoo.com.

⁷⁷ Jeff Poole (former managing editor of the *Review*), personal communication, 2023.

Dowsing: Tale or Tool

Bill Speiden

Dowsing

Dowsing is a type of divination employed in an attempt to locate ground water, buried metals, other ores, gemstones, oil, gravesites, and many other objects and materials without the use of complicated manmade apparatus. It is also known as divining, doodle bugging, water finding, or witching. A Y-shaped twig or two L-shaped wires individually called a dowsing-rod, divining rod, or witching rod are usually used during dowsing. Some dowzers/witchers use other equipment, e.g., a pendulum, or even nothing at all. The motion of such dowsing devices is generally attributed to the ideomotor phenomenon,¹ a psychological response where a subject makes motions unconsciously. Dowsing rods respond to the user’s accidental or involuntary movements. Much scientific evidence shows that dowsing is no more effective than random chance. It is, therefore, often regarded as pseudoscience.

Having been brought up on a farm, I experienced that well water was needed in large volumes to fill the needs of six tenant houses and a dairy and beef farm serving up to 550 head of cattle. Dowsing or witching frequently comes up in conversations with fellow farmers. Personally, I have had wells drilled where the advice of a dowser was followed successfully. Just as often I just picked a site to drill with equal success.

My first wife, Sandra, an avid avocational archaeologist, read about finding graves and physical underground structures by witching. Having an open mind on the subject, she contacted an “archaeology” dowser to find the corners of a building on our property, which her research indicated was an inn at the junction of Constitution Highway (Route 20) and Scuffletown Road (Route 609) in Orange County, Virginia. I had been plowing up bricks there for years. The dowser spotted three out of the four corners of said inn, which were subsequently revealed on digging below the plow layer. The fourth corner was easily extrapolated from the first three. Sandra became a believer based on this success. How far from a foundation would bricks be scattered after 100 years of working the land? From one archaeologist the answer was “Not far.”

Sandra also showed the dowser the Hampstead Farm, Somerset, Virginia, slave grave site. There he determined that it had its first permanent occupant 3,000 years ago. The author is not convinced about that one!! There are 108 burials there and the last was 38 years ago. I am not sure when Sandra did this dowsing caper, but, if memory serves, there was a marked grave site with a metal marker approximately 4 x

¹ William Benjamin Carpenter (March 12, 1852). “On the influence of Suggestion in Modifying and directing Muscular Movement, independently of Volition.” <https://ia801305.us.archive.org/5/items/b22377074/b22377074.pdf>

See **Dowsing** on page 9.

Legacy

One way to extend your positive influence on your community is to include the Orange County Historical Society (OCHS) in your Will. Whether you wish to support the Society’s genealogy files, research materials, programs including the extended outreach via the “History-to-Go” series, oral histories, local history books or any combination of these, a legacy gift in your will would be an investment in Orange County’s future.

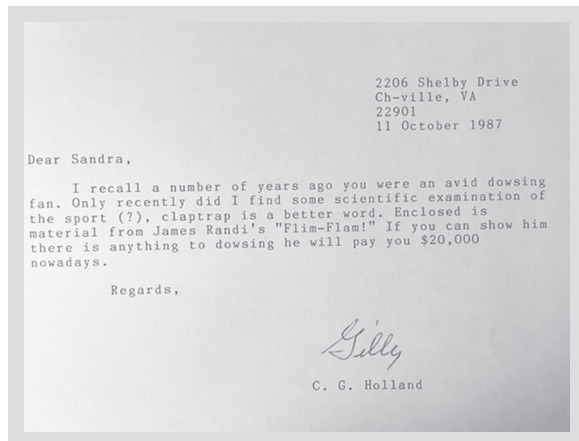
When writing your will, you can include a gift to OCHS with little fanfare. And if you already have a will, you can, when updating it, add a codicil leaving what you wish to any entity. Ask your attorney about including the OCHS in your will. As Board of Directors member Bill Speiden likes to say, “Charity begins at home.”

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to seeing you at our programs this summer season and/or in the Research Center at 130 Caroline Street, Orange, perhaps researching your family’s genealogy, local history, or just browsing our publications.

Dowsing (*continued*)

6 inches for a Tom Freeman who died in 1948. He was a farmhand on Hampstead Farm when my father bought it in 1935. The dowser mentioned that there was a recent burial in this cemetery, so that last observation is true. The handwritten marker in a “waterproof” sealed case may still have been legible through the cellophane cover.

Sandra’s mentor, archaeologist Dr. Gilly Holland of the University of Virginia Archaeology Department, who respected her tenacity and successes finding Indian sites and involvement with both a Germanna dig in eastern Orange County, and the Manahoac mound in western Orange County, appealed to her sense of humor and self-deprecation by chiding her gently for her “belief” in witching.



Sandra tried witching herself and became possessed with the idea that she had this talent. She used it at Bloomsbury, just east of the town of Orange, one of several sites purported to be the birthplace of Zachery Taylor, future president of the United States. The 90-degree bent coat hanger “rods” crossed when she asked if a President was born here, was his name Taylor, and so forth.² Funny how the rods tended to cross when she thought the answer was “yes.” This is one way believers are born.

In researching the history of the practice, I discovered that there are indications that dowsing existed in prehistoric times, but among the early evidence I encountered was a woodcut from Germany, which shows the use of dowsing to locate iron ore in the 16th century.

The author, Georgius Agricola (Georg Bauer) describes dowsing with a forked twig in Volume II, believed to be the first written description of how dowsing is done. This, despite the fact that Bauer rejected the method himself.³

A slightly earlier text, Cosmographia, by Sebastian Munster (1550), has an image of a dowser walking around with a forked stick that is actually labeled: “Virgula Divinia” and “Gluck Rut,” which are, respectively, Latin for “divine rod” and German for “luck stick.” But, even earlier, Martin Luther supposedly wrote that dowsing was a violation of the first commandment, “you must not honor other gods except me.” This was in 1518, so it seems reasonable that the practice might have been around a while longer in Europe and could

have been regularly practiced as early or earlier than the 15th century.⁴

Feagans goes on to note that the *New American Standard Bible* has a passage apparently denouncing dowsing as pagan: “My people



Woodcut from Georgius Agricola's [Georg Bauer] *De Re Metallica* depicts the use of the dowsing rod. The work involved in creating 289 detailed woodcut illustrations delayed the publication of *De Re Metallica* until after Bauer's death in 1556. This illustration, from Book XII, depicts prospecting work. Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Georgius_Agricola_Erzsucher.jpg, accessed June 25, 2023.

consult their wooden idol and their diviner's wand informs them; for a spirit of harlotry has led them astray and they have played the harlot, departing from their God” (Hosea 4:12).⁵

Science or Pseudoscience?

The most widely accepted scientific view of dowsing is that the technique works solely because of unconscious muscular movements on the part of the user. It seems that the odds of success or failure, in various studies that have been conducted, are no better than chance results.⁶

Indeed, the preponderance of evidence indicates that witching does not work. Yet, having seen water and electric lines located by witching, it is difficult to state that witching has no positive use in our society. What do you think? Is it a pseudoscience? Tool or tale? Maybe it is a tale until it works, then it becomes a tool.

⁴ Carl Feagans, *Dowsing and Archaeology*, August 21, 2021. <https://ahotcupofjoe.net/2021/08/> accessed March 28, 2023.

⁵ *Holy Bible: New American Standard Bible*. 1995, 2020. LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

⁶ For a more detailed exposition on the scientific views of dowsing, see <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dowsing>

² The above information was taken from Sandra Speiden's field notes.

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_re_metallica

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John Walker Frazer, Jr.

(courtesy of his brother, Philip G. Frazer)

John Walker “Jack” Frazer, Jr., 80, died on August 10th after a brief illness. He was born in Richmond, Virginia, and grew up on the family farm, Great Oak, in Orange County, Virginia. He graduated from Orange County High School where he was captain of both the 1960 Battlefield District championship football team and the 1961 district champion track team. He graduated from the Virginia Military Institute in 1965 with a BA degree in history. While at VMI, he was a team captain and an All-State and All-Southern Conference performer in cross country and indoor/outdoor track. Jack was subsequently awarded a MS degree from the University of Wisconsin in adult education administration and also completed graduate studies in program evaluation and statistics from the University of Southern California.

He proudly served his country as a U.S. Army infantry officer attaining the rank of captain while completing airborne, army aviator and instructor pilot assignments. He served 12 months in Vietnam in 1966 and 1967 as a platoon leader and helicopter pilot in the 48th Assault Helicopter Company, 1st Aviation Brigade. During that time, he flew over 1,100 hours on combat related missions and was decorated for both heroism and meritorious service. In 1969 he was appointed a Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and for 25 years investigated or supervised a wide range of complex federal criminal and intelligence related investigations. In 1982 he was detailed to the House Appropriations Committee of the United States Congress for a four-year period as an investigative team leader where he supervised a number of highly classified military and intelligence projects. During his FBI career he received 16 personal commendations for investigative excellence, exceptional performance and bravery from the FBI Director, including four from J. Edgar Hoover.

After retirement from the FBI in 1994, he was employed by the American International Group (AIG) managing insurance claims and fraud investigations until 2013. He was a company Subject Matter Expert in insurance investigations, a Certified Fraud Examiner and a licensed private investigator. After retirement from AIG, he pursued his interest in genealogical and historical research of his home area of Lahore, Virginia, where he owned (with his brother and sister) a farm in their family since 1745. He was a life member of the Jamestowne Society; a lifelong member of Macedonia Christian Church at Lahore; a member of the Society of Former Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Inc.; the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association; the American Legion – J. Edgar Hoover Memorial FBI Post 56; the Virginia Museum of History and Culture; and the Orange County Historical Society.

Editor’s Note: One of Jack’s favorite stories was that he was responsible for the Historical Society getting its new heating and air conditioning system. He recalled the October meeting in 2016 when he was the featured speaker, on the verge of publishing his book, *The Pamunkey Neighborhood: 1727-2016 (The Long History of a Small Place)*. It was extremely warm in the auditorium and that was the evening the old a/c system chose to quit. Jack was visibly uncomfortable — and the next time he visited us, we had the new system up and running.

Jack contributed a number of interesting and informative articles to our newsletter, *Record*, as well as donating items of historic interest for our files and collections. He was knowledgeable, willing to share that knowledge, and always a gentleman; several of us always looked forward to his visits to Orange and sharing a meal while listening to his wealth of stories. He will be very much missed.