



***Octagon House Foundation, Inc.***

615 Octagon Road  
P O Box 1701  
Marion, VA 24354  
[www.smythoctagonhouse.org](http://www.smythoctagonhouse.org)

**Greetings** from the Octagon House Foundation! We hope this newsletter finds you well and happy as spring approaches. As always, this newsletter serves as a connection between the Board of Directors, foundation members, supporters, volunteers, and other interested individuals. We encourage you to share this newsletter with your family and friends who may not know about the effort to restore this historic piece of Virginia history. The Board wishes to thank everyone for renewing their memberships and for all who donated money or helped in any way on the fund raisers. We couldn't do it without you!!

Many thanks to board member Kathryn Beattie for furnishing a beautiful Christmas wreath that was placed on the front door of the house by Chilhowie resident Tommy Heffinger.



A big thank you to Sam Rosenbaum for volunteering his time to service the lawn equipment.

Contact Rita Blevins on our FaceBook page (<https://facebook.com/OctagonHouseFoundation>) to purchase T-shirts, both short and long sleeved. We have shirts in stock or limited special orders can be requested. Rita continues to work hard to supply and deliver orders locally and ship orders out of the area. Thank you so much for your hard work and dedication, Rita!

**“WE NEED YOUR HELP”**

As the efforts to obtain funding for restoration of the Octagon House gain momentum, “WE NEED YOUR HELP”! The Board of Directors finds itself stretched very thin in several areas. In addition to local fundraising efforts, such as spaghetti dinners, silent auctions, and various other events, there are multiple efforts behind the scenes that require copious amounts of time and effort by members of the board.

Currently, a business plan is being developed with the help of Cindy Fields and her staff of the Small Business Development Center located in Abingdon. A well-developed and detailed business plan is vital to procurement of grant funding of this magnitude.

The plan encompasses three major areas: the total estimated costs to complete the entire project, the educational component as it relates to Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL's) and Common Core curriculums, and projected future abilities to support the project once completed. Thankfully, these three components have been in development for some time and are now beginning to take shape. We hope to have the plan completed by September and have it available for your viewing at the annual meeting. As this project grows, expands, and takes shape, specific areas now require more manpower than can be fulfilled by the Board alone.

As dedicated as members of the board are in their efforts, we are now at a crossroads between planning and action. Unfortunately, the action needs are now outpacing the ability of just the Board of Directors to complete. This is why, “WE NEED YOUR HELP”.

The Board is in the process of developing committees to address specific needs. We are asking members to volunteer for one or more committees if possible. These committees will include the following:

- |                             |                                    |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Build and Grounds Committee | Membership and Volunteer Committee |
| Fundraising Committee       | Finance Committee                  |
| Grants Committee            | Planning Committee                 |

Please contact any Board member or Nancy Smith (276-783-3723), for more information about volunteering for these committees. Also, the monthly Board meeting is held the last Monday of each month at the Smyth County Library at 6:00 PM. You are always welcome to attend.

## 2019 UPCOMING FUNDRAISING EVENTS

<b>March 25</b>	<b>Raffle Drawing</b>	A drawing for the winner of the “Rustic Table Lamp” donated by Wanda Poston. If you have not purchased a ticket and would like to do so, contact any board member who will gladly sell you a ticket for only <b>\$1.00 each</b> .
<b>April 12</b>	<b>Spaghetti Dinner</b>	Adwolfe Volunteer Fire Department
<b>July 12</b>	<b>BBQ Dinner</b>	Adwolfe Volunteer Fire Department
<b>November 8</b>	<b>Pinto Beans and Cornbread</b>	Adwolfe Volunteer Fire Department

Additionally, in an effort to help with the restoration, a fundraiser has been organized in partnership with Digital Memories Link, a business specializing in the preservation of family photos, slides, negatives films and VHS tapes. Anyone who places an order for the preservation of their priceless family memories will also be able to help in the restoration. A percentage of each sale will be donated to the Octagon House Foundation. Please call 1-833-497-7936 or place an order on line at [www.digitalmemorieslink.com](http://www.digitalmemorieslink.com). (Check out their flyer with all the details in this newsletter!)

Likewise, a big “shout out” to DJ’s Dan Kegley and Joe Rogers (Dan and Joe, Music for the Community) for the beautiful traditional music they provided at the spaghetti dinner last November.



### Planning

Planning for large scale projects, such as the Octagon House, is essential to success. As planning and preparation for original construction took years, so has the restoration planning. Part of this planning has been to develop our sustainable vision for use of the home and grounds. This process has involved multiple development phases, bringing the Foundation’s vision to fruition. Once completed, visitors and guests will be able to step back in time to experience facets of life from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The following is a list of tours, demonstrations, and experiences visitors may choose from. Some of these are hands-on, while others are demonstration only. Many of these will be held seasonally, while others will be year around.

Mansion Tours	Learn How to Cook on the Open Hearth Cooking Tours
Open Hearth Cooking	African-American Life on the Plantation
Apple Butter Making	“Did You Know”...Medicinal and Wild Herbs
Ghost Tours	19 <sup>th</sup> Century Toys and Games
Haunted House	19 <sup>th</sup> Century School House
Cobbler Shoe Making	Chores and Chalkboards
Molasses Production	Back Country Mercantile
Christmas Tours	Before There Were Matches
Making Bricks	Working the Loom
Farm Animal Tours	Learn How to Quilt
Basket Weaving	

While this list is still a work in progress, the Foundation would like to offer you the chance to share with us other tours, events, or demonstrations you would like to see. All suggestions will be considered, so contact us if you have some 19<sup>th</sup> Century ideas!!



### 2018 Foundation Annual Meeting

Thank you to all who attended the Annual Meeting in September 2018 to see the preliminary planning and design work of the Octagon House complex completed by VA Tech Community Assistance Design Center. Also on display were copies of the VA Tech book of Octagon House designs and “Southern Splendor”, which included a section about the Octagon House.

## Consortium of Smyth County's Historic Places

As we have learned through the process of applying for US Federal grants, historic places and museums in Smyth County are at a disadvantage. Any federal grant funds dispersed through agencies, such as the National Park Service, are dictated by a specific protocol. This protocol requires any grantee to have active SAM (System for Award Management) and DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) numbers, which certify business locations in order to receive and administer federal contracts or grants. Additionally, some grants require a grantee which would distribute grant funds to more than one sub-grantee. However, the grantee must be a locally registered non-profit or certified county government.

During our recent attempt to obtain such grant funds, we were hindered by the lack of any certified non-profits having been assigned a DUNS or SAM number. The foundation approached county government officials who, after researching the issue, informed the board representative that Smyth County is not certified to disperse such funds. Only three municipal locations in Southwestern Virginia are certified to receive and disperse these specific grant funds. However, county officials are continuing to investigate the matter for feasibility and will present their findings to our board representatives.

Therefore, board member Derek Orr, in consultation with Michael Pulice of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, is in the process of developing a planned consortium of museums and historic places within Smyth County. This consortium will be able to give one voice to our needs and strength through numbers. Many times individual entities must rely on similar entities, whatever the need or cause may be.

A public meeting will be held either in the month of May or June for all interested parties. The date will be announced in the Smyth News and Messenger, local radio stations, our FaceBook page, our website ([www.smythoctagonhouse.org](http://www.smythoctagonhouse.org)), and other media outlets. Please join us for this important meeting.

## Welcome New Members

The Foundation is pleased to announce that we have received several new memberships this year. We are getting new members from all over the country, as well as locally. New members are always welcome.

## Go Fund Me Opportunity

Karla Henderlong, one of our relatively new members who happens to live in California but has family ties to Smyth County, came up with a perfect way to make others aware of the Octagon House and help raise money at the same time! On National Giving Tuesday she set up a Go Fund Me page for the Octagon House, and notified her family and friends through FaceBook that they could make donations to help with the restoration. Thanks to her planning and sharing this info, we received \$910 from her special one day efforts!! Many thanks for setting an example and sharing your idea with us, Karla!



### *In Memoriam*

*We dedicate this newsletter to member Anna "Butchie" Crabtree, for being a faithful supporter and volunteer at Foundation events. Anna went to her heavenly home on February 26, 2019. We shall surely miss her adoring smile and all of the wonderful desserts she brought to share at the community events.*



Octagon House Foundation, Inc.  
P O Box 1701  
Marion, VA 24354

### Holston Mills History

The Octagon House Foundation represents more than the mansion house itself. Our aim is also to educate the local populace and others about the history of the area. Holston Mills...have you heard of it?

Many would never realize that a fully functioning antebellum town once thrived around the intersection of South Fork Road, Redstone Road, and Old Mill Road west of South Fork Baptist Church, below Thomas Bridge.

Often towns were defined by their industry, their location along trade routes or railroads, or their access to natural resources. Holston Mills had a thriving textile and manufacturing industry established by the Thomas Family along the South Fork of the Holston River. Eventually, this industry was solely owned by Abijah Thomas, owner of the Octagon House.

However, Holston Mills had one institution many other settlements lacked—a post office. Many letters and correspondence still exist with the Holston Mills stamp. The original document (right), dated April 11, 1879, appointed the first US Postmaster, Edward M. Worden, to that position.



**Your time and monetary donations are always needed and gratefully appreciated.**

It's easy to make donations on our web site: [www.smythoctagonhouse.com](http://www.smythoctagonhouse.com)!  
And check us out on FaceBook at <https://facebook.com/OctagonHouseFoundation>.