



Record

www.orangecovahist.org

Vol. 46. No. 2

Winter 2015

The Flood of '95 in Rapidan Gary Jones

(Our August picnic, held at the Rapidan firehouse, featured Gary Jones's report of the epic flooding of June, 1995, especially the Rapidan Volunteer Fire Department's and other emergency responders' heroic battling of the disaster. The first part of the following article (Mr. Jones's account of the flood in Rapidan) was previously published under the heading "Reliable RVFD battles the river, exhaustion to protect, serve friends and neighbors" in the July 2, 2015 supplement to the Orange Review that marked the 20th anniversary of the 1995 flood. This is followed by Mr. Jones's reflections on the aftermath of the flood and the following 20 years in Rapidan.)

"The farmers were pleased with the weather in June 1995. The three-month drought of the early spring had broken by Memorial Day with regular substantial showers that made the corn crops the tallest and darkest folks had seen in a good while. Most corn was at least chest and head-high and looked to be tasseling by the Fourth of July. From Thursday, June 22 through Monday, June 26, most of the local area had around 4 ½ inches of rain in good showers. The ground was well-soaked so that the corn crop would be able to endure sudden drought conditions for at least six weeks before showing effects. Tuesday, June 27, 1995, 2 a.m. A heavy torrential downpour covered the general area and was followed by spectacular lightning strikes. What normally were babbling brooks turned into raging torrents causing widespread flooding and damaging roads and small bridges. The Rapidan Fire Department's tone went off at 5 a.m. for a lightning strike and structure fire at T. O. Gillum's place at Madison Mills. Rapidan and Orange responded to the call and extinguished an outbuilding set ablaze. The rain was still pouring as crews got back to station only to answer calls of basement flooding at nearby houses. It was 9:30 a.m. by the time crews got back in. By then the Rapidan River had swelled fully and was starting to come out of the banks. The crackling of the fire radio indicated heavy rains continued to pour in northern parts of Madison County where rescue operations had already begun. We'd later hear the headwaters of the Rapidan received anywhere from 20-22 and perhaps as high as 30 inches of rain Tuesday from 2 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Firemen and villagers started moving furniture and belongings to the second story of residences and moving yard items to high ground. While they were busy doing that, a tree on the river bank fell and knocked power out in the village of Rapidan. Virginia Power spent most of the day stringing and setting poles for a new line that followed the Highway Bridge and road to connect to a Culpeper side transformer. Power was reestablished by 6:30 p.m. By noon, the river had come up to cut off the road between the church and Jim Furlough's house. The Robinson River had flooded the bridge and roadway at Horseshoe Farm. That left the Rapidan Road to Orange as the only way in with the bridge over Turkey Run down to one lane due to earlier flood damage. The river continued to rise, running over the dam and spreading quickly in the bottomland of Rapidan Berry Garden and Pannill Park. Back water was filling behind the village's old passenger and freight depots and between Lower Rapidan Baptist Church and back to

Continued on page -2-

the Pattie house and Cross Keys. After 6 p.m. the river was beating on the steel joists of the Rt. 615 Bridge and the spectators were coming out like locusts. State Police had closed the bridge to vehicles but still allowed foot traffic. It would be 18 hours before the water receded enough to permit bridge vehicle traffic. By 10 p. m. the river had exceeded the November 1985 flooding of 26 feet and was nearing the June 1972 flood line. Four-lane bridges on U.S. 29 at the Greene/ Madison County lines were closed by the flooding as well as the northbound bridge at the Robinson River. A California tour bus ventured to Rapidan by Rt. 615 looking for a way to get to Washington D. C. Meanwhile, the Rapidan River flooded Walker's Bottom as well as the northbound bridge at the Rt. 15 bridge at the Robinson and Rt. 20 at Somerset. Their only remaining option seemed to be backtracking on Rt. 15 to Gordonsville onto Zion Cross Roads to Interstate 64 East and then Interstate 95 North. So they turned around in the gathering dusk. Meanwhile the roar of the Rapidan, by that point, was beyond description and spray was coming over the highway bridge. Weary firefighters and rescue crews headed for bed and waited to see what the morning would bring. Wednesday, June 28, Midnight. Crews camped out at the firehouse received a phone call from Donald Hearl who had a message on the answering machine from the Archibalds of Riverbend, located two miles away downstream; water was waist-deep and still coming up. Firemen Jim Furlough, Dewey Hearl and Brad Wade took Wagon 10, Furlough's four wheeler and a 20-foot boat along the Southern Railway tracks to the other side of the brown rolling waters. Clay Pannill's house faced water on three sides and the post office was slowly being surrounded. They reached the other side, taking the Willis bridge road until water stopped them roughly a half mile from the house. They put in the boat, rowing in the backwater past the grove of trees to the west and working to a line of trees near the barn 300 yards away from the house. The current was too swift to attempt to get any closer. Shouts were made to the Archibalds to hold tight. The river had crested between 2-3 a.m. at roughly 29 ½ feet (the gauge at the mill had been washed away.) Contact was made with the Culpeper Sheriff's Office, and the Fairfax swift water team was notified. The RVFD crew headed out for the Archibalds and established a landing zone nearby for the team. The dazzling lights of Quantico's Chinook helicopter coming up the Rapidan River valley, about 5:30 a.m. broke the

gathering greyness of the dawn. It circled and closed in, churning the water and trees with twin rotors before the rear doors dropped open with an 18 man crew. The Archibald rescue was effected and the helicopter zoomed away as quickly as it came. The light of dawn brought the stupefying scene of the extent of the flooding. Not since the week of October 12-17, 1942 had the village seen this amount of water. The backwater flooded the furnace and air conditioning unit in the crawl space of the Lower Rapidan Baptist Church and nearly got to the level of the old bridge road bed in front of Old Home. The water came up on the Orange side around the Mill House, the oldest structure in Rapidan (1774) with evacuation of its tenants by Orange firefighters in the early hours. Danny and Terri's place had knee-deep (34") water on the first floor. The passenger depot, Foushee's home and the freight depot all had water over the top of their door frames around 6 ½ feet. On the other side of the road, the water line was closer to 7 ½ feet. Jim Furlough's place, a 142-year-old two story house built for the railroad agent in the early days of railroading in Rapidan, was moved off its foundation and downriver. Its side wall separated and pushed out about two feet. The other building with severe damage was the vestry and guild hall addition to Emmanuel Episcopal Church. These were added on to the church in 1888. The water line in the church was 5'2" and the force of the river pushed out the walls of the vestry and the back wall of the guild hall. The frame of the doorway to the church marked the height of the June 1972 flood. Now, the water line was 14 inches above that. Everywhere in these buildings, there were several inches of mud covering everything. All told, a total of nine buildings in the village suffered water damage. We didn't know it at the time, but two truss bridges, upstream at Woodberry Forest (1908) and downstream at Willis (1906), were swept away in the night. In the afternoon the receding water brought again the rush of spectators. Most wanted to film the damage done by the flood but a number came for the sole purpose of ransacking houses and looting. Culpeper deputies came the circuitous route of Rt. 522 and Rt. 20 to set up barrier tape and chased everybody out and maintained the watch lines on both ends of Rt. 615 until 9 p.m. Local residents treaded through water and mud to survey the damage. Portable floating pumps were engaged to pump readily available flood water to start hosing out the mud in the houses.

Meanwhile, the Red Cross canteen had arrived and served food to weary workers. At twilight, preparations were under way to move church pews and other furniture that had jumbled up in the back of the church. Wagon 10 was put in place and a hose advanced to wash

off the mud and loaded the pew on a flatbed truck for storage at the Rapidan Berry Garden. That operation was finished at 11 p.m. and weary fire crews headed home.



Madison County Flood of 1995 by Patricia J. Hurst

Thursday, June 29, 10 a.m. The firehouse became a beehive of activities as a command center was established for cleaning up operations in Rapidan, Tom Williams, Culpeper County Emergency Service Coordinator and Rapidan VFD Ernest Landes coordinated dumpsters to be brought in for clean-up efforts. Deputies and a detachment of guards from Coffeewood set up road blocks at the three advances into Rapidan. The only people allowed in who didn't live in the village were those with mail boxes at the post office. Fire trucks from Salem, Brandy Station, Culpeper and Orange volunteer fire companies brought crews and brooms and squeegees for the difficult task ahead. From building to building, debris was hauled out and hoses washed out the mud. Representatives from Culpeper Planning and Zoning inspected damaged buildings and delivered the dreaded news that the Furlough home and the church guild hall/vestry were condemned. Doors and windows were boarded up and signs posted. Friday, June 30. The upstairs banquet rooms at the firehouse had become office meeting areas for both Red Cross and Federal Emergency Man-

agement Agency (FEMA) representatives. They inspected the village and interviewed residents affected by the flood. Coffeewood officers continued their presence in the village, keeping the traffic moving, particularly with Rt. 15 and U.S. 29 closed. Saturday, July 1. Saturday was spent cleaning up fire company equipment, hoses and turnout gear. The village continued to clean up, moving around mounds of mud deposited by the flood. It was the last day Coffeewood Correctional officers would direct traffic. The southbound lane of U.S. 29 at the Madison/Greene line had opened up, meaning fewer vehicles routing through Rapidan. Both Red Cross and Salvation Army canteens packed up and headed to Madison where the damage assessment reached \$67 million. The fire company's bingo was cancelled and work was finished by 6 p.m. Crews headed in for an early night at last. Sunday, July 2. Throngs of spectators continued to cruise through the village the weekend checking out the damage and making a general nuisance of themselves—particularly as village residents worked to cleanup and rebuild. Tuesday, July 4. As most American celebrated Independence Day, folks in the village of Rapidan continued the process of cleaning up and drying out. The corn had begun to tassel. Reflections on the Flood 20 Years Later Rapidan VFD: The upstairs addition was completed June 18 with the flood coming little over a week later. The hall that later was named Strong Hall became a bee hive of activities with State, FEMA, and Red Cross. The Archibald rescue got the idea going for establishing a water rescue team. Equipment was obtained and training undertaken at Richardsville but cost and storage of a boat and trailer (currently at \$40K) has been an issue never resolved. In addition, this type of specialty training needs to be practiced regularly. Currently, only Richardsville has trained water rescue team (Lake of the Woods has a boat for their use only). But Rapidan VFD recently updated water rescue equipment and still lists a boat on our Culpeper County Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) wish list. The Annual Craft and Music Show started in 1979 was cancelled due to damage to the Rapidan Berry Garden. It moved to the firehouse for 1996 as a ghost of its former self and then was cancelled for good. The flood showed a need for a generator that was slated for a FEMA request but did not happen. The Culpeper County CIP program was started in 2010 and an electrical upgrade and 60kw generator was in the first request. Village of Rapidan: Gwen Williams's jewelry business, opened that May in the Freight Depot, closed. The Rapidan Berry Garden after decades of

operation was shut down for good. Jim and Brenda Furlough were among the worst affected. Their house was condemned and the fire wake was held a couple of weeks later. They had countless interviews with FEMA and the Red Cross but this came to nothing. They were able to rebuild their FEMA approved elevated house through a low interest loan through the state, newly formed Madison County Flood Relief (they were the only persons in Rapidan to get support), a Rapidan Foundation spaghetti dinner (over 200 attended), and, finally, Madison County Mennonites, who came with wives and children and did an old-fashioned house raising on an elevated platform—getting under cover as showers started in the gathering dusk. The loan was paid off in 2010. The Rapidan Foundation, started in 1968, worked with Rapidan VFD to host its now-famous spaghetti dinner. Working together they channeled donations and reviewed distribution of relief. This experience had them work for and get Section 501(c) (3) status. Emmanuel Church also had substantial damage from the flooding. After discussion, planning and funding, the church and rebuilt guild hall were moved away from the river, and set on an elevated platform sitting on a foundation of buried pilings with concrete footers. There has not been a flood since 1996 to challenge this design. Willis bridge: This bridge was built during 1904-05 of Pratt truss design at a contract price of \$3,995.00, with Orange County's share being \$1,318.34. It was closed in January 1995 due to damage from overloading. After local petitioning, the Orange County Supervisors had monies set aside for repairs to start in September 1995. A review of the bridge remains after the flood found structural issues that were not known earlier. Donald Lay, a local farmer who sat on the Rapidan Foundation board, had urged a petition to FEMA for a replacement bridge in a design style similar to the Madison Mills bridge. This bridge replaced the old truss Madison Mills bridge in 1991 (the new Madison Mills bridge, roughly 10 feet higher than the old one, was battered by the 1995 high water, so the old bridge probably would have met the same fate as the Woodberry and Willis bridges downstream). Neither the Willis nor the Woodberry Forest bridges were replaced.

Historical Markers Dedicated

Two important Orange County African-American historical sites, the Isabella Lightfoot Training School and the Shady Grove School, were recently recognized with state historical markers. Both dedications took place on Saturday November 14th. The Isabella Lightfoot Training School, built in 1930 served students through grade 11 until the opening of the George Wash-

The "Rapid Ann River":

Letters regarding a World War I ambulance donated from Orange, Virginia

During the first World War, an ambulance donated by the people of Orange and christened "Rapid Ann River" was in service on the battlefields of Europe. One of the ambulance drivers, Eldridge W. Quinlan, later made an effort to contact the donors, and eventually corresponded with Mrs. Sarah Brady of Rapidan, who had been instrumental in raising the funds for the ambulance.

Two letters from Mr. Quinlan concerning this ambulance are now owned by the Orange VFW Post 2217 and the texts of these provide a heartfelt and affecting story of the deeds of Mr. Quinlan and the Orange County-funded ambulance that he drove. The transcriptions below preserve the spelling and punctuation of the original letters.

His draft registration record indicates that Mr. Quinlan was born in Newburgh, New York in 1892, and was a salesman working for his family's business when he entered military service in 1917. He served in spite of being blind in one eye. As noted in the letters, by the end of the war Mr. Quinlan suffered from various health issues. These included what then was called shell shock (now known as post-traumatic stress), apparently a result of his battlefield experiences.

He later moved to Chicago; there, in the mid 1930s, he and Ann Reader Quinlan (probably his wife), applied for and received a patent (# 2000985) for a "Light modifying device" using calcium sulfide. No additional information has been uncovered about the Quinlans or the whereabouts of the ambulance plate. Any information would be gladly received by the Historical Society. The World War I memorial plaque on the Courthouse, referred to in Mr. Quinlan's second letter, is still in place and a transcription appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

[Letter 1]

158 South St.
Newburgh, New York

Mr. Hiden
Atty at Law
Orange, Va.

Dear Sir:

Through the kindness of Dr. W. R. Aylett of your state, I was given your name and address in response to my appeal for the name of somebody who would be interested in a souvenir of the War, especially so, on account of its close intimacy with the people of Orange, Va. and their friends. In the latter part of 1917, I was picked from my Company to drive an ambulance and one of the Ambulances was a G.M.C. on each side was a brass plate inscribed as follows: [sketch:]

**RAPID ANN RIVER
GIVEN BY THE PEOPLE
OF ORANGE, VA. AND THEIR FRIENDS**

I drove this ambulance through some pretty tight places and carried a good many of our boys through some severe bombing and can say, honestly, that the sacrifices you all made were well worth it and my one regret is to think I cannot come down and thank each and every contributor, no matter how small their contribution, in person, on behalf of the boys who were carried back. After having transferred back to my Division, I was in an old Dug out and found one of the brass plates. I do not know whether the Ambulance was blown up and somebody picked the plate up as a souvenir or else some body just unscrewed it off but I do know I have it in my possession now and if the people of Orange, Va. and their friends would care for this plate, I will gladly send it to you. It would be far more appreciated by you all than by me. I am leaving for the West, for my health, this coming month and would appreciate very much, if you would kindly let me know, as soon as possible, concerning this.

Sincerely,
Eldridge W. Quinlan
27th of Aug. 1918

[Letter 2]

158 South St.
Newburgh, New York

My dear Mrs. Brady:

Your very touching letter was received by me last Tuesday, 2nd of September and would have attended to the sending of the plate before this late date but have had two bad spells which necessitated a sojourn in bed. I am shell shocked and had a few other happenings, so sincerely hope you will not think it negligence on my part for not acknowledging your very kind letter. If I can possibly arrange with my chum to go by the way of Rapidan and then to Chicago, I most certainly will arrange to come down and tell you all, the career of R. A ambulance while I was driving it. It carried a good many ghastly cases but each and every fellow carried out the spirit of the American Army "With a Smile". Of course, we did a lot of cussing and wishing the war was over but this only happened while we were not actually fighting. I was too scared to think of anything then. Since writing Mr. Hiden, I have found out that the Rapid Ann ambulance was turned over to the Navy and used at a hospital in Scotland. It was missing a brass plate but this was told to me by a young chap who saw the plate I am sending you. It surely must have been a funny looking ambulance because I drove it through a barrage & a fiendish machine gun fire, then a bombing raid, I only counted five bullets and two shells that missed me and there surely must have been at least a million shots fired at me. I had four wounded Germans in but fortunately they were all dead when I arrived at the Field-dressing station. Mrs. Brady, it is very sweet of you to suggest about having my name put on the tablet at the Court House but really, I could not consent because it would not be fair to the other boys that drove it

and I am only a soldier, the boys who gave their all are the heroes, the real heroes, and my name enturned [sic] with theirs would make me ashamed as I would feel like a thief because I would be sharing their glory, their full sacrifice. Do you understand what I mean? I cannot take one tiny speck of glory from those boys memories of deeds etc. The world owes them more than can ever be repaid. If you could have seen the wonderful work of your ambulance, you would have been repaid a million times for the sacrifices and I thank God every night to think I came home alive. If we can possibly make Rapidan on our way West, you can rest assure we will do our best to tell you all what your ambulance did for a good many mothers sons, who are still "over there" and over here. I will telegraph you when we leave and thanking you very kindly for your very kind efforts, I am,
Very Sincerely,
Eldridge W. Quinlan
Sept. 8th 1919

World War I Memorial Plaque at the Orange Courthouse

In the Orange County Courthouse is a memorial to honor those 18 men who served and died for their county during World War One. Below is a copy of that Memorial Plaque, listing the names of these men.

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 NORTHROP
BERNARD E. VERLING
CHARLES R. CLARK
VIVIAN SLAUGHTER
RICHARD BEADLES TODD
LUCIAN L. VAUGHAN
GARRETT EDWARD WAUGH
FITZHUGH L. JONES
MARION W. BOWLER
JAMES FOSTER
HENRY H. WOODVILLE
WM. JACKSON WHITLOCK
LUTHER FALLS
CHARLES HENRY BRAME
ARCHIE GALLOWAY
ANDREW FUND
PETER ELLIS

The Big Night in Feb. 1935

by R. E. Lee

In late February 1935, considerable excitement was generated by the forced landing of a commercial passenger plane near the town of Orange. We are pleased that one of the Society's senior members, Mr. Robert E. Lee, who was then 17 years old, has shared his memories of that event.

On that night, 80 years ago, Michael Lonergan and I were building a model plane in an upstairs room in his home on Barbour Street. It was very cold outside and sleeting. At about 7 or 8 p.m. we heard a plane flying very low, circling over Orange. We knew the plane was in trouble and were afraid it would strike the "Stand Pipe" off S. Madison Street. We climbed out on the kitchen roof, to watch, and as the plane continued to circle getting lower we ran to my house on N. Almond Street and got my 5 cell flashlight. We stood on the sidewalk and shined the light straight up, waving it back and forth. By that time a few members of the OVFD [Orange Volunteer Fire Department] had manned the salvage truck with all 4 search lights shining up. They drove up E. Main Street down to the P. S. Boxley "Greenfields" farm, trying to direct the plane there. Too late. Looking west Michael and I saw the last flare drop; we saw the plane go down in its light.

Very soon a lot of people drove to the crash site. A few moments after the crash the passengers got out, all unhurt, and were driven to the James Madison Hotel. The next morning they took a train to Washington. It snowed during the night, and in the morning the ground was white. Before school, I put a chain on the rear wheel of my bicycle, took my Kodak box camera and rode out Rt. 20 to the "S" curve.¹

The plane was a few hundred feet south, in a field, to the left of Rt. 20. A number of people were at the crash site, including the co-pilot. I took a picture of him (J. G. Tilton) and spoke with him at length. His flight was from Washington National to Pittsburgh and beyond with passengers and mail.

Somewhere over Maryland the weather turned bad; the wings began to ice up so the pilot turned south to find warmer air. He saw the lights of Orange, and knew he had to come down. The flare we saw was his last one; the pilot tried to set the plane down parallel to Rt. 20 but the left wing tip clipped the top of a tree near the Fred Kenzer---**KINZER???**--- home. The wing tip broke off as well as the top of the pine. The landing gear was down: the left wheel dug a hole in the ground that spun the plane to the left 90 degrees; when it hit the creek bank the landing gear folded back as well as the prop blades. The nose was on a slight incline up. That is why the passengers could step out onto the ground. The wing tip was taken home by Bobby and Newton Sparks; they had to return it later.

Some days later a salvage crew went to the plane, jacked it up, removed the wings back to the motors, removed the tail section, and welded the landing gear. They also painted over the PAL (Pennsylvania Air Lines) markings. A local hauling man contracted to tow the plane to Washington National. He installed a bracket, in the center of his flatbed truck, for the tail wheel to fit in.

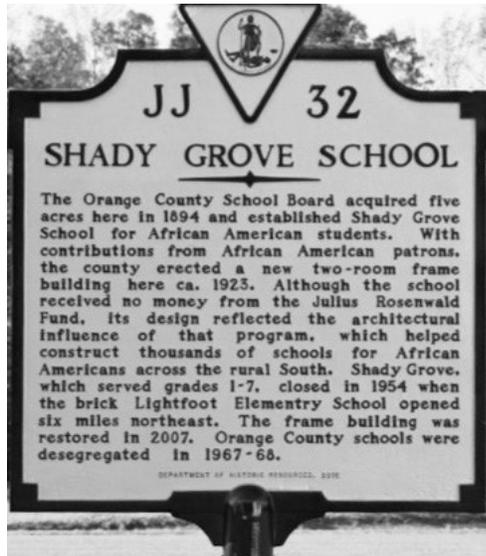


Co-Pilot J.G. Tilton, courtesy of Mr. Lee

The plane was towed to town and parked on the lot behind the Courthouse. A special permit was obtained from the Virginia State Police to use US 15 and US 29. Virginia State Police Sgt. Carr from Culpeper led the way in his white patrol car. I watched as the plane was towed down Jailhouse Hill and passed the Silk Mill.

¹ The Kodak box camera was a gift from the Eastman Kodak Company. In 1928 the EK Company gave all children that could prove they were 10 years old a Kodak box camera to celebrate the Company's 10 years in business. We had to go, with a parent, to Rickett's Drug Store to receive a camera. My mother went with me.

ington Carver Regional High School in Culpeper County in 1948. The building then was used as an elementary school until it burned in 1953. A new brick Lightfoot Elementary School opened in 1954. The historical marker commemorating the site and history of the Training School is on Marquis Road at Unionville



Members of this Society will remember our August 2009 summer picnic held at the Shady Grove School. Built ca. 1923, the two-room frame school building was patterned after the architectural design of the well-known Rosenwald schools, but did not receive monies from the Rosenwald fund. Instead, it was a local initiative with extensive community support. Shady Grove School, which served grades 1-7, closed in 1954 when the new brick Lightfoot Elementary School opened. The old school building later



Photos by Ruth M. Long

served a number of uses for the adjacent Shady Grove Baptist Church. The school was restored in 2007 to reflect its appearance during the second quarter of the 20th century, with current Society board member Ruth Mallory Long spearheading the project. Further development of exhibits is ongoing. The marker is located adjoining the school building at Shady Grove Church on Piney Woods Road.

The historical markers were sponsored by alumni of the George Washington Carver, Lightfoot, and Shady Grove schools.

Meetings

The last half of 2015 included a variety of Orange County Historical Society programs. Our July picnic was held at Salem United Methodist Church. Society president John Tranver Graham spoke on the history of this church, noting the original church building (1842) and the Civil War activities in the area, and the current building (built ca. 1900).

The August picnic saw a large crowd gathered in the Rapidan Firehouse to hear Gary Jones's *Emergency and Rescue Response in the Great Flood of 1995*, recounting the epic flooding and heroic efforts of emergency responders 20 years ago. (Mr. Jones's article on the flood and its aftermath appears elsewhere in this newsletter.)

Our September meeting featured a panel discussion by Jayne Blair, Lynne Lewis, Barbara Little, and Ann Miller: *What Do We Do With Grandma's Stuff (And Our Own)?*. Their presentations noted the need (and gave overviews of proper procedures) for organizing, identifying, and planning to address the futures of family possessions and personal research files alike.

In October, Dr. Dena Jennings presented "*Cause of Death*": *A Physician's Perspective on 19th Century Orange Death Records*, analyzing the information in the early county death records from a physician's viewpoint. Dr. Jennings included information on medical practices and procedures of the era, as well as once-common diseases.

Our November meeting was "*The Riot of 1741 and Other Stories from Orange County Elections of the Past*". Jayne Blair headlined the program with a spirited reading of the original House of Burgesses investigative report on the tumultuous 1741 Orange County election. Other presenters were Frank Walker (who related a number of 18th and 19th century election stories featuring James Madison and other local political figures), and Bethany Sullivan of the James Madison Museum and Ann Miller from the Society (who exhibited and gave the background of a number of 19th and 20th century election-related materials from the Museum's and the Society's collections). Active audience participation provided a number of additional election stories.

Orange County Historical Society
130 Caroline Street
Orange, VA 22960

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Orange, VA
Permit No. 60

T/5 RUSSELL KENNETH ELLIS

By Paul Carter

Russell Kenneth Ellis, son of Russell Hendrix and Caroline Brockman Ellis of the Lahore area of lower Orange County, was born in 1919. He had three sisters, Alice Elizabeth, Caroline, and Frances, and one brother, John. A brother, Jack, died in a farm accident when he was eleven years old. Russell grew up on the family farm, went to county schools and later attended Fork Union Military Academy for three years. Russell enlisted in the army on 30 June 1942 in Charlottesville, VA. He first went to Camp Lee, VA, and then on to Camp Croft, SC, for six months of training. He was later transferred to Camp Bowie, Texas, and left for overseas duty on 1 December 1943. He was stationed in England prior to D-Day, 6 June 1944, and was a member of the 526 Ordnance (Tank) Company of the 29th Division.

On 9 June 1944 he was aboard a LST (Landing Ship Tank), crossing the English Channel, when it was attacked and sunk by a German torpedo boat. The family first received a telegram that he was missing in action. A week later a War Department telegram stated the he had been killed. His body was never recovered. Captain Willard E. Anderson, commanding officer of the 526th, wrote the family praising the character of Russell, "Your son's primary duty in the company was mail clerk, but he did so much more. On his own time he was the company barber and good friend to all the men." Technician Fifth Class Russell received the Purple Heart and was memorialized on the Tablets of the Missing at the Cambridge American Cemetery in Cambridge, England. This cemetery covers 30 acres and is located 60 miles north of London. It contains 3,812 burials and the names of 5,127 missing in action.

Life went on for the Ellis family after the war. Sister Caroline later taught biology at Orange County High School for many years and John went on to excel on local baseball circuit. John is now a resident of Dogwood Village.



The picture is of Russell at Fork Union