



# Orange County Historical Society

# Record

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Summer 2015

## View from Lee's Camp

Stephen Cushman

White-haired now, he played as a boy  
where the fireplace bricks still stood  
and piles of stones that supported the floor  
still described the shape of the tent,  
before bulldozer blades had swept them away,  
before the cherry tree where they must have tied  
the famous horse came down, before each playmate  
died in turn and left him alone, the only one  
living who knew where it was. At the funeral home  
he ordered granite from up north, along with a plaque  
to mark the spot, the hillock on a treeless hip  
of the final mountain between Orange and the sea  
a perfect place to watch the plank road from,  
the traffic there rattling off to the Wilderness,  
or to focus farther off and see, if not quite Richmond  
sixty miles southeast, beyond the geese  
rising in formation, then at least what Richmond  
needed to be told. *Unless there is a change; I fear  
the army cannot be kept effective.* When he speaks  
of war, he almost makes it sound like woe,  
and when he speaks of dying, if he does  
in shrugging off names he cannot remember,  
it sounds as though he fears it now  
somewhat less, now that he can't wholly take  
what little he knows to oblivion with him.

Dr. Stephen B. Cushman is the Robert C. Taylor Professor of English in the College and the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences at the University of Virginia. The University's Teaching Awards Committee recently awarded him its Distinguished Teaching Professorship, the highest teaching award of the University. He is a former Head of the University's English Department, but he has also won acclaim as a serious historian, as well as a poet and literary critic.

Dr. Cushman's numerous published works include five books of poetry (*Riffraff*, *Heart Island*, *Cussin Lesson*, *Blue Pajamas*, *The Red List*), two full-length studies of specific aspects of the American Civil War (*Bloody Promenade*, *Belligerent Muse*), and various critical works on American prose and poetry.

A member of St. Thomas' Episcopal Church in Orange and of the Orange County Historical Society, Dr. Cushman maintains a much-appreciated presence in Orange County, and he numbers himself among the many who appreciate its beauty and history.

## A Note about the White-Haired Man

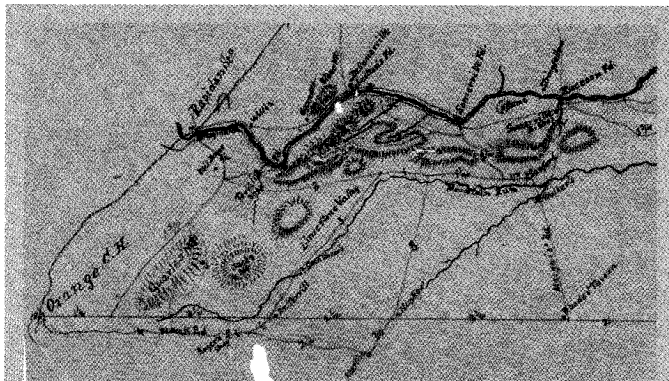
During the winter of 1863-1864, the headquarters of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia - Lee's camp - was located near the crest of the first Southwest Mountain ridge east of the Town of Orange. The Orange Turnpike ran along the crest of the ridge. The Orange Plank Road at that point is traced by Route 20, and the road-bed of the "unfinished railroad" lay just north of it. A signal station at the headquarters communicated with the one on Clark Mountain that in turn handled orders and information all along the twenty miles of the Rapidan Line earthworks being monitored by the army. The centerpiece of the headquarters settlement was General Lee's tent, set on a low wooden platform supported by rock pillars and having a brick fireplace and chimney.

The white-haired person referenced in the poem is Wallace Walters. He grew up on a farm across Route 20 from the roads and campsite, a farm that included the swim club and subdivision there now. As youngsters, Wallace and friends played around the stone pillars and crumbling brick chimney of Lee's tent site.

Wallace was well on in years when he learned that the then-owner of the site had gotten the pillars and chimney remains pushed into a ditch and covered over. Then his old boyhood friends began to die off. Before long the site was going to be lost, forgotten.

Wallace went to Preddy's Funeral Home, and asked Tony Preddy to order a small granite monument stone and a bronze plaque reciting the existence of Lee's campsite. By then the property was owned by the Hon. Helen Marie Taylor, and she gave permission to set the monument at the camp site.

Lee's message to Richmond reflects the work of Samuel Ruth, Superintendent of the RF&P Railroad and a competent Union operative. Ruth controlled Lee's only supply line, and during that winter he dedicated himself to starving Lee's army out of existence. He nearly succeeded.



Although this map is probably from 1862 and thus predates Lee's 1863-1864 camp, it shows the mountains east of town and the Plank Road. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

## 2014 Annual Fund Donors

The Orange County Historical Society acknowledges with gratitude recent contributions to the annual fund drive.

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## Milk, Wool and War at Our Meetings

Lynne G. Lewis

The Orange County Historical Society held its annual meeting on Sunday, January 25, 2015, at the Research Center, 130 Caroline Street, Orange, Virginia. John Tranver Graham, President of the Board of Directors, opened the meeting by welcoming the members and providing a review of the activities undertaken by the Society during 2014. In his report, he mentioned that the programs and picnics sponsored by the Society were well attended and that plans for the 2015 programs were progressing nicely.

Ann Miller informed the members about the digitizing of a large body of work done by Pete Joyner, entitled *Glimpses*. Mr. Joyner had kindly donated his work to the Historical Society and the society had long been searching for the best means of disseminating this invaluable research. Finally, it was determined that scanning the material, which includes such subjects as the Clerks of Orange County, then putting it on compact disk (CD) would be the most efficient and economical way to do this. As of this newsletter, this project is nearing completion and the CD will be available for purchase before the end of the year.

Frank Walker spoke briefly about the plans of the Publication Committee. A book by Patrick Sullivan, provisionally titled *Memories*, is in the works. It will consist of a series of articles concerning people and events in (but not limited to) the Orange/Spotsylvania/Culpeper County area. Mr. Sullivan has written several articles for our newsletter, *The Record*, and the book will assemble a choice selection of the more than 100 articles he has written.

Bernice Walker also spoke briefly on the scanning project stating that the volunteers doing the scanning have completed the family files and are now scanning the Historic Place files.

Following the brief program, Mr. Graham thanked the two members who were retired from the Board: Clara Colby and Barbara Vines Little, both of whom will continue to work on the Publications Committee. The nominees for the 2015 Board were also announced: Henry Lee Carter, Paul Carter, Lynne Lewis, and Frieda Willey. The four nominees were duly elected and the 2015 Board is comprised of

John Tranver Graham '15  
(President)

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(Vice-President)

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John Strader '17

Frieda Willey '18

Sterling Howell, Associate Director of Interpretation at Montpelier, addressed a packed house on March 30<sup>th</sup>. His subject was the War of 1812, also known as "Mr. Madison's War." He presented the audience with the history of the war, explaining how very unpopular the war was in certain parts of the country, its impact on the national economy and other well-known and not so well known facts about this important, but frequently neglected, piece of our history. The audience was fascinated and many commented on how much they enjoyed this informative program.

The April meeting, scheduled to be a tour of the house and grounds of "Lovell Farm" in Madison County, was unfortunately cancelled due to wet weather. It is hoped that this visit can be rescheduled for the fall.

"We Got Milk!" The Historical Society's famous May Meeting in June, held on June 1 this year, featured Bill Speiden and Frank Walker speaking on the history of the dairy industry in general and in Orange County specifically. Focused on the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the two retired dairy farmers regaled the audience with information and stories of the changes in breeds, herd management, milking procedures and health and regulatory issues that have occurred. Mr. Speiden read from letters that his mother wrote to his father while she ran the dairy farm during his absence during World War II. The two gentlemen brought items from the dairy, including large and small milk cans, an early milking machine and pre-computer record books. The presentation was enjoyed by all.

For our June meeting we enjoyed a picnic at historic "Oak Grove Farm," the home of Heidi McMurren. Ms. McMurren provided an interesting overview of the impressive array of historic and modern spinning wheels and other fiber equipment from her collection that was on display. Some of the adventurous young members even tried out drop spindles and spinning wheels.



June picnic at Oak Grove. Photo courtesy of Bryan Wright.

A reception was enjoyed by all after the adjournment of the business meeting.

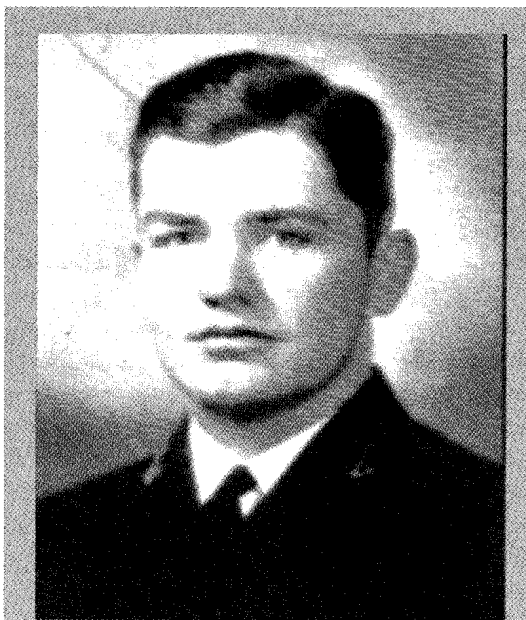
## William "Billy" Barton Mason, Jr.

Paul Carter

William Barton Mason, Jr., son of William Barton Mason, Sr., and Eugenia Coppee Mason, was born in Orange, Virginia on 23 August 1915. His parents' residence was on East Main Street in the same house that was Mrs. Russ Robertson's guest house. Like most boys growing up in Orange, he could be found playing football on Landon Lane on the property of Mrs. Mary Frances Kempe.

After elementary school in Orange, he entered Woodberry Forest School where he was a three-year varsity football player and went on to become the starting quarterback for the 1932 and 1933 seasons. He also played baseball where he hit a grand slam in 1933 to beat Episcopal. He was not only outstanding on the athletic field, but was an excellent student with a character that was loved by all. Billy graduated in 1933.

He entered the Naval Academy at Annapolis on 20 June 1933, graduated in 1937 and entered the submarine service. In the fall of 1942, Billy was cited by Secretary of the Navy Walter Knox for showing unusual bravery during a fire aboard ship.



William Barton Mason, Jr. at Annapolis.

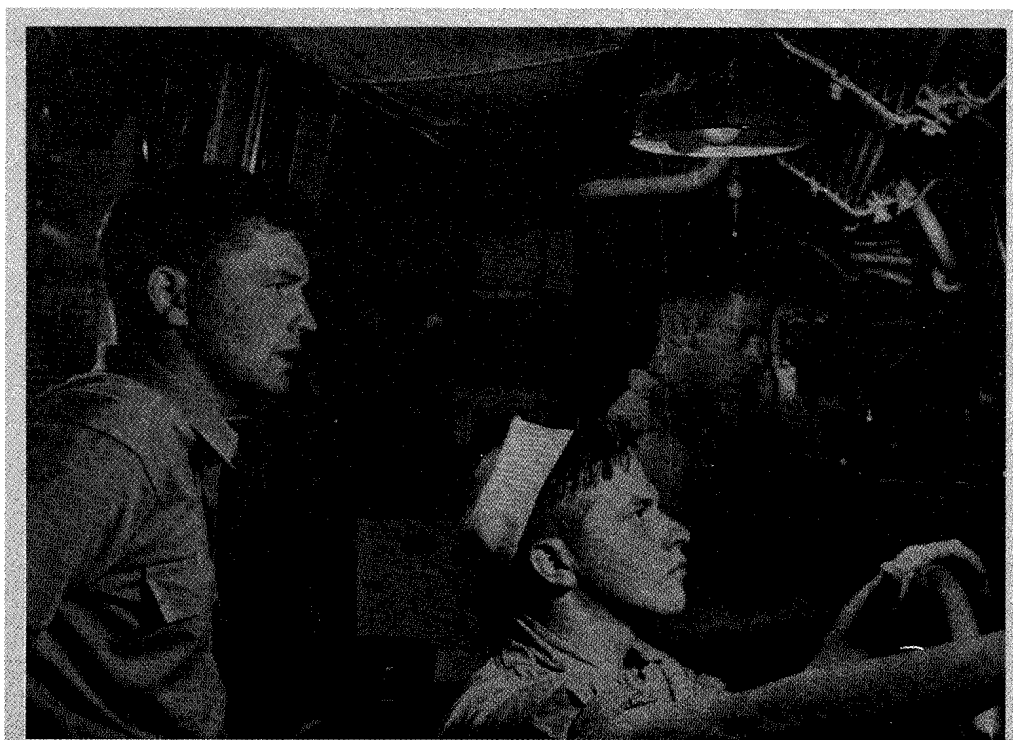
He closed off an area that was ablaze and brought the boat to the surface quickly. Two sailors died in the tragedy, but many lives were saved.

He eventually was assigned to the submarine USS *Capelin* (SS-289) as the diving officer, and by the time of his death he was Lieutenant Commander, third in command of the submarine. The *Capelin* was commissioned on 4 June 1943 at Portsmouth Navy Shipyard, Kittery, Maine. It was 311 feet long and able to do 20 knots on the surface with a crew of 78 sailors. The *Capelin* departed New London, Connecticut, on 3 September 1943 for the Pacific. During the first patrol, the *Capelin* was credited with sinking two medium-sized Japanese freighters with 7,400 tons of cargo in the area west of New Guinea in the South Pacific. After

only 17 days out on its first assignment patrolling the islands west of New Guinea, defects in the ship presented themselves and the *Capelin* returned to port for the corrections. The very next day, 17 November 1943, with the defects corrected to the satisfaction of the commander, it departed on its second

patrol in the area of Kaeo Bay in the Celebes Sea. This assignment was to last until 6 December 1943. The *Capelin* was never heard of again. Enemy minefields were known to be in this vicinity and she may have been lost because of a mine explosion. The United States submarine, USS *Bonefish*, had spotted another submarine in this vicinity on 2 December 1943. The *Capelin* was declared missing in action on 15 December 1943 when she failed to return from patrol duties in the Pacific.

Billy's death was a shock to the Orange area and especially Woodberry Forest where he was so well liked and known. J. Carter Walker, Headmaster of Woodberry Forest, wrote to Billy's parents on January 1, 1944:



William Barton Mason, Jr. (at left) on duty aboard the USS *Capelin* in August 1943.

See **Mason** on page 5.

## Mason (*continued*)

Dear Barton and Eugenia,

There is pitifully little that I can say. I know only that you have received official notification that Billy is missing. There may be at best a ray of hope that he is not lost. There have been other cases of men reported killed who have returned. I devoutly pray that Billy may be another.

I have been devoted to Billy ever since he came to Woodberry Forest as a very little fellow many years ago, and as he has earned one distinction after another. I have felt all the pride in his achievements that I could have felt if he were my own son. He was my boy as well as yours. I share your sorrow, your feeling of desolation. My grief is second only to yours.

Harry [Mrs. Walker] joins me in this message of heartfelt sympathy.

This is a poor and inadequate letter to write to dear friends who have been plunged into deep sorrow by the heroic sacrifice of a noble and beloved son.

Lieutenant Commander Mason was officially declared deceased by the Honorable James Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy, in January 1946. He was awarded the Purple Heart posthumously. His name was memorialized on the Tablets of the Missing at Manila American Cemetery in Manila, Philippines. This cemetery covers 152 acres where 17,201 are buried and 36,285 are listed as missing in action.

In 1949, Mr. and Mrs. Barton Mason established the William B. Mason Memorial Medal to be awarded to the best all-around athlete of the Sixth Form at Woodberry Forest. This award is still presented today and is the only athletic award presented during graduation exercises.



Mr. and Mrs. W. Barton Mason of Orange, are shown above with their two sons, each of whom is in the Navy.

Lieutenant W. B. Mason, jr., 27, (left) graduated from the U. S. Naval Academy in 1937 and is in the submarine branch of the service. He was cited for bravery last fall when his vessel caught fire and he brought it to the surface quickly, saving a number of lives.

Ensign Harry Coppee Mason, 24, (right) U. S. N. R., graduated in law from Washington & Lee University in 1942 and received his commission from Columbia University Midshipman's School in December, 1942. He is serving with the Amphibious force of the Navy.

Photo of the Mason family that was published in the *Orange Review*, 1943.



## Joseph Young Rowe

### July 2, 1922-January 4, 2015

Longtime Society member, and former president, Joseph Y. Rowe passed away this past January. Joe's educational career encompassed long service to both Woodberry Forest and Grymes Memorial schools (he was only the second recipient of the Orange County Education Foundation's Lifetime Contribution award), and his historical interest extended through the multiple books that he wrote, as well as preservation projects such as his interest in Graves Chapel in Madison County. A number of our members have shared their memories of Joe with us, but none was more "from the heart" than the following memorial from Doug Graves. Doug's memory is here edited slightly for length, but the full texts of this and other memories of Joe Rowe are on file at the Society's Research Center

#### Reflections of My Friend-Joseph Y. Rowe

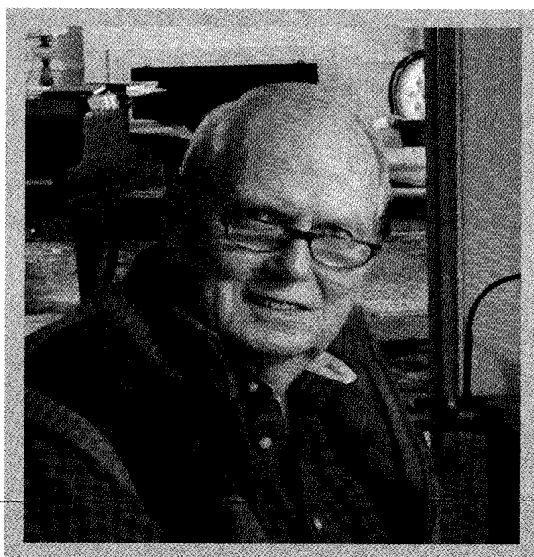
I met my dear friend Joe Rowe in 1998. Joe recently purchased his first computer and he realized he needed some training on the computer. I was in the same situation having recently purchased my first computer. By chance, we both enrolled in the same very basic entry level computer course at the George Washington Carver-Piedmont Technical Center. We met in this class and because of our shared computer interest we immediately began to connect with each other. We found later that we both shared many similar interests.

We found we both shared a thirst for history and basically, a quest for the unknown! Joe was always ready for a road trip. No matter where we went or the events we attended—historical society meetings, museums, art shows, visiting graveyards, or simply riding the roads—we always attempted to learn something new. Joe was always quick to remark, "When you learn something—write it down!" Well Joe did that very thing, for he authored 8 books. Was he smart? My goodness; he has forgotten more than I and most others will ever, ever learn or hope to learn.

For the past 40 years or so, Joe visited Graves Mill (Madison County) during the spring and summer months and picnicked on the grounds of Graves Chapel. He said the Chapel and the surroundings always reminded him of being a young boy growing up in southern Maryland. And that Graves Chapel was very reminiscent of the little Episcopal Church that was so dear to him, that he attended near his home in Maryland.

Graves Chapel went through transitional years being active and inactive. However in year 2008 it reopened and began providing evening prayer services on the last Sunday of each month. Joe immediately became a regular attendee of the services and a staunch supporter of Graves Chapel.

As the prayer service became more popular, additional interest within Graves Chapel grew and as a result, general improvements to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century structure became a frequent topic of discussion. Joe, being a gracious and generous individual, contributed much to Graves Chapel. Through the years,



the chapel structure had deteriorated in some areas; thus, it needed improvements and upgrades. As a result, in his own quiet and unassuming manner, he invested his own personal funds and had the most urgent improvements and upgrades completed within the structure. Graves Chapel and the community of Graves Mill, owes much to Joe—due to the pure goodness of this man, Joe Rowe.

As the result of Joe's strong commitment and generosity to Graves Chapel and the surrounding Graves Mill community, Joe was deemed an honorary member of the Graves Mill Community. In his normal unassuming and bashful manner, Joe accepted this award and designation at an evening prayer service. His involvement and participation within the Graves Mill community did not cease at that point for as recently as September through December of 2014, Joe was an active member of the recently established Graves Chapel Council.

Joe was extremely proud of his heritage which can be traced back to one of the earliest founding individuals of our country, at the Jamestowne community (1608) namely, Captain Thomas Graves. Joe's direct line is from Verlinda, a daughter of Captain Thomas Graves, who married Governor William Stone of Poynton Manor, Maryland.

Joe's deep interest in genealogy and especially his family lineage began at a very young age. As a young child, Joe's grandfather pointed out to him the Naylor graveyard located upon his property. George Naylor was the immigrant and presumably, is buried there (Joe's maternal great-grandmother was a Naylor). A few years ago, many of Joe's cousins requested he show them where this graveyard was located! Joe, always ready for a road trip and/or an adventure, met them on site. The site was overrun with trees, weeds and such and no tombstones. Joe immediately requested from the DAR a stone to place within the graveyard to honor his Naylor Revolutionary War Patriot (Joshua Naylor). They provided him with this stone. Joe and his

*See Rowe on page 7.*

## Rowe (continued)

cousins then decided to purchase a stone, for each generation, and place it within the graveyard after a complete clean-up of the graveyard by Joe and his cousins. This was truly an adventure which Joe was extremely proud of completing.

Since the completion of that project, the interest within the Naylor family has grown within Joe's immediate family and elsewhere. As a result, Joe and his Naylor cousins worked tirelessly on the Naylor genealogy and the outcome is Joe's most recent and his last book, *The Naylor's of Woodborough*.

Because of our similar interest, Joe and I would venture out on road trips. We learned of an 18<sup>th</sup> century burial with a tombstone, located on a farm in the eastern portion of Orange County. So Joe, never to turn down an opportunity for a trip, said, "When are we going?" We obtained permission from the owner and ventured out on our journey. When we arrived, we were immediately confronted with a locked gate and no key! Not wasting a beat, Joe immediately began climbing over the 7 board high wood fence. I followed bringing up the rear. Well this was not the only fence we had to maneuver through or over. We additionally faced barb wire and tensile fences.... all were safely crossed (thank goodness!) and then, we were confronted with a large field with high growth. After navigating and cutting a path through this field, we saw a waist high rock wall at the edge of the woods. We were told that the cemetery was near a rock wall at the edge of a wood line. After climbing over the rock wall, we scoured the immediate area and located the tombstone—success!

After some general discussion and relaxation, we now faced the arduous task of returning to our vehicle. Joe again, not wasting a beat, said "let's go" in his blunt-no frills-let's get it-manner. We successfully retraced our footsteps and using our previously acquired climbing skills; we successfully navigated the return trip to our vehicle and eventually, back home.

Some have said that Joe was a "Father figure" to me and others. In my case, I believe Joe and I were more like brothers. I regrettably had no brothers but had I, I would most certainly wish he was from the same mold as Joe.

On various occasions, I would ask Joe for his highly respected and admired opinions on various topics or situations that I routinely came across in my daily activities. If Joe did not have an immediate response, he would say—let me think about it. I knew exactly what this meant! He would not call me on the telephone with his response; and he would not use his computer to send me an e-mail response. Joe, in his most polite and courteous manner, would write a letter or brief note—using long-hand (not his computer), and mail his reply to me by the United States Post Office. It just doesn't get any better than that in my opinion!

As Byron C. Hulsey, Headmaster at Woodberry Forest School recently wrote, Joe was "a true [Southern] gentleman in the truest sense of the term." What a fitting commendation to a great, great man!

They say opposites attract; well that must be a very true statement. Joe was like the arts; fine wines and caviar; I am most certainly, the complete opposite—more like meat-bread-and potatoes. Whatever the reason, Joe and I were great friends and I consider myself so fortunate to have known a man of his moral and personal value and character.

With Joe's passing, we have a loss—however it is heaven's gain.

Doug Graves  
Graves Mill, VA

## Lights on in Gordonsville

Gordonsville began wiring houses and businesses for electric lights one-hundred-fifteen years ago, as shown by this excerpt from the Gordonsville gossip column published August 25, 1901, in the *Richmond Dispatch*.

**THE ELECTRIC LIGHT.**

**GORDONSVILLE'S POWER AND ILLUMINATING PLANT.**

**IT IS NOW IN OPERATION**

**Shiloh Baptist Association to Meet at Barboursville — Gordonsville's Female College Reopened—Real State Sales—The Ticket Endorsed.**

**GORDONSVILLE, VA., August 23.—(Special).—**Thursday night marked a new era in the progress of this town. Our new electric-light and power plant was put in successful operation and the citizens may now banish darkness and brighten their daily (or nightly?) lives with the brilliant rays of the incandescent lamp. Many of our people have had their residences and business houses wired, and the streets have a few lights as a test. Public sentiment will soon require the Council to light all the streets by this means.

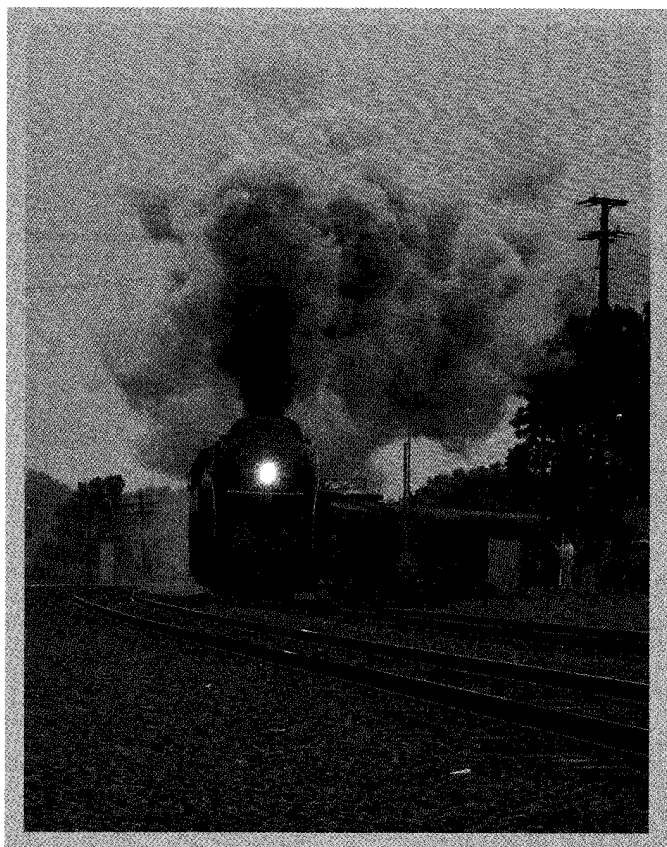
**Shiloh Baptist Association con-**

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## Steaming through Orange

The newly-restored J611 steam engine passed through Orange on its way to Manassas on June 3. Historical Society board member Lynne Lewis captured this beautiful image that afternoon. You can learn about Orange County's railroad history by following Frank Walker's guidebook, *Tracks Through Time: A Railfan Tour of Orange County, Virginia*, which is available at the Orange County Visitors Center.



## 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

**Would you be willing to receive meeting notices via email in lieu of a postcard?** ☐ Yes ☐ No

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

☐ Annual Individual Member: \$20

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

☐ Annual Family Member: \$30

☐ Annual Sustaining Member: \$100

☐ Annual Patron Member: \$200

☐ Annual Sponsor Member: \$300