

# Orange Oracle

An electronic update from the Orange County Historical Society

## OCHS-county clerk partnership praised

By Ray Ezell

Orange County Court Clerk Teresa Carroll has been an outstanding partner with the Orange County Historical Society. Several weeks ago, historical society staff approached Ms. Carroll to find a way in which the two organizations could partner to help meet the needs of the many people who call or write the clerk's office requesting copies of county records. Due to the workload of their normal administrative duties, the clerk's staff cannot fulfill these requests. However, the historical society has staff that can perform basic research for remote customers. As a result, the county clerk's office has granted the historical society complimentary electronic access to a portion of the clerk's archival records, including deed/land records (1734 to the present), marriage licenses (1912-1995), and wills and fiduciaries (1734-1995). This is a wonderful complement to the historical society's already extensive archival holdings, and it will help us provide relevant and efficient responses to basic research inquiries made by our patrons.



PHOTO TAKEN IN 2013 BY PHIL AUDIBERT

Teresa Carroll has been the county's record-keeper since 2009.

## Local history gatekeeper steps down

Teresa Carroll, Orange County Clerk (2009-2023)

By Phil Audibert

After 35 years, a true friend of the historical society and the community as a whole retired as Orange County Clerk of the Court. Teresa Carroll's last day was June 30. She has named her chief deputy, Melissa Morris, to serve out the rest of her second eight-year term.

Carroll has worked at the clerk's office since 1988, serving under U. P. Joyner and Linda Timmons before becoming county clerk herself in

2009. Although the bulk of her department's work focuses on criminal and civil proceedings coming before the county's circuit court, duties also involve keeping and safeguarding a myriad of other records that make up our county's written history: deeds, wills, land records, marriages, order books, board of supervisors' minutes up to 1991, death certificates, bond books, oaths of office, fictitious names, gun permits,

See [CLERK](#), page 5

## **OBITUARY**

### **Ruth Lewis Smith** (*February 29, 1924 - June 25, 2023*)

**R**uth Lewis Smith, formerly of Orange County, died late last month at the age of 99, although she would claim she was only 24 because she was born on a Leap Year. She was the last of a distinguished generation of Lewises who were born and raised in Freetown near Lahore.

After graduating from Lightfoot Elementary School, Ruth, like so many other young Blacks at the time, moved to New York City, where she joined her not-yet-famous sister Edna Lewis as a sous chef at Cafe Nicholson. Later, having demonstrated a talent for mathematics in school, Ruth parlayed that ability into a career in data processing when that field was in its infancy. She eventually became a data processing supervisor and trainer at the University of Pennsylvania.

In 1986, she moved back to the Lahore area of Orange County with her husband, Thomas Leon Smith, who had suffered a stroke. She remained in Orange County surrounded by friends and family, raising chickens, quail and guinea hens, and becoming active in community affairs. Ruth was President of the Orange County Branch of the NAACP for 12 years. She also served on the



PHOTO BY SUSIE AUDIBERT

boards of Habitat for Humanity and Hospice of the Piedmont.

Since 2015, she had been living in Galesburg, Illinois, with her daughter and son-in-law, raising chickens, quail and guinea hens just like she did for years at her home on the Marquis Road. She is buried in the Lewis family plot right by that same road.

## **Research update:**

### **Seeking information on craftsmen/tradesmen (1720 - 1870)**

**By Ray Ezell**

There is much to learn about a community by studying the people who were involved in its industrial and craft "trades."

The historical society is compiling information on free and enslaved craftsmen/tradesmen in the 18th - 19th centuries (ca. 1720-ca. 1870) who can be positively documented in the archival record (e.g., blacksmiths, masons, carpenters, wrights,

etc.). I currently have a database of approximately 140 craftsmen, spanning about 150 years, but there are many more to compile.

I envision this as a first step in creating a fuller historical context to understand how Orange County residents created the places where they lived and conducted their businesses. I want to learn about the items they manufactured and consumed, and how this information was transmitted between genera-

tions.

If you would like to contribute to this research, by providing names, dates, associated trades, and document references (e.g. apprentice records, wills, court records, farm records, family letters, census etc.) of those involved in craft trades from ca. 1720 to ca. 1870 in Orange County, please message me at [rayezell\\_2000@yahoo.com](mailto:rayezell_2000@yahoo.com).

I plan to publish this information in the fall of 2023.

## 2023 programs

> **Sunday, July 30, 6 p.m.**

**Grymes School 75th**

**Anniversary with Margaret Hill**

> 13775 Spicer's Mill Rd., Orange



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Margaret Hill unveils a portrait of Grymes Memorial School founder, Emily Grymes at a recent alumni reunion.**

Bring your picnic supper and lawn chair and join us on Sunday, July 30, at 6 p.m. for a presentation by Margaret Hill on the history of

Grymes

Memorial School. This year marks the 75th anniversary of this important local, educational institution. The program will be held at Grymes Memorial School. Turn into the main entrance.

Park around the traffic circle and in the adjacent parking lot. Gather at the brick patio outside the gymnasium. The event will happen rain or shine. In case of inclement weather, we'll move to the gymnasium.

> **Sunday, August 27, 6 p.m.**

**The History of Woodley by Steve Sanford**

Woodley Road. Bring a picnic.

> **Sunday, September 24, 3 p.m.**

**The History of Bloomsbury with Bethany Sullivan**

Bloomsbury Road. Bring a picnic.

> **Sunday, October 29, 3 p.m.**

**Preservation Virginia (formerly APVA) Revolving Loan Fund with Gordon Rohr**

Meet at the newly renovated OCHS Sandra Speiden auditorium at 130 Caroline St., Orange.



Orange County Historical Society

# Record

www.orangecovahist.org

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## A Note on the *Record*

By Lynne Lewis

You may have seen a blurb here in the *Oracle* encouraging members who are so inclined to submit an article for our print publication, the *Record*. So, we thought you might like to know a bit more about the process involved in producing it, should you wish to contribute to our newsletter.

The *Record* is published twice a year and runs between 8 and 12 pages. The spring issue has a submission deadline of March 1, with a goal of being sent to the printer by June 1. The fall issue's submission deadline is Sept. 1, to be sent to the printer by Dec. 1. Other than the printing and mailing, everything is done by the publications committee, all volunteers. Occasionally, as unfortunately happened with the most recent issue, something will occur along the way to delay the arrival of your copy, though we do our best to avoid such hiccups. And of course, we can't control what happens once it hits the postal service.

When an author submits an article, it is broadly reviewed by the committee for general interest, appropriateness and accuracy. It is then accepted or not, and if accepted, the editorial process begins. While our three editors endeavor to preserve an author's "voice," they do correct grammatical/spelling/punctuation errors, suggest ways to clarify or un-complicate a sentence or paragraph, and the like. We also check all footnotes for accuracy or flag something that might need a citation. Over the course of a few weeks, and a lot of back and forth with the author, the article morphs into its finished form. This process is repeated for every article, and if there are graphics associated, they have to be of suitable quality and properly credited.

Once all that is done, the issue goes to our layout editor and is put into the format you ultimately see as the *Record*. It then goes to the printer (in electronic format) in Charlottesville. The printing is usually done within five business days, and the newsletter goes to our mailing firm, which then gets it to the post office within a day or two.

And that, in a nutshell, is how the *Record* is produced.

*If any 2023 members failed to receive their issue in the mail, they may call the research center and request a replacement copy be sent to them (while supplies last).*



## “Memories” oral history continues with new interview

The “Memories” Oral History Program started out as a joint venture between AHHA Productions, Dogwood Village and the James Madison Museum. At the time it was limited to the recording of residents of Dogwood Village. When available, family photos of the interviewees were woven into the edited conversations.



Carter Jacobs

The program soon went beyond Dogwood Village and out into the Orange County community, until Covid made recording these oral histories too risky. Recently a new interviewee, Carter Jacobs, joined the Memories “club,” bringing the total to 29 being posted on the Memories Playlist of the AHHA Productions YouTube channel. To view any and all of these intriguing personal histories, just click on this link: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJEtOTvrJjnV7KJX-f5RUiMJE-LfHNpK2t>.

## History-to-Go



## Mayhurst

A near perfect June evening greeted a good size crowd last month for a program about Mayhurst.

Built in 1859 by Col. John Willis, it is considered one of the finest examples of Italianate architecture in the country. Owners Jason and Casey Cashell have renovated it and have operated it as an inn and special events facility since 2020.

Here’s the link to view Jason’s informative presentation: <https://youtu.be/FLTBo7JTNBk>.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Jason Cashell spoke to the society about the history of Mayhurst last month.

carry applications, name changes, restrictions, "and I'm sure there's many more that I can't think of," she said in an interview late last month.

She has served as the protector and gatekeeper of our county's past, "including land records and anything doing with the history of Orange County. We have the older books here. And, by the way, we have all of the older land records from 1734 to the present already scanned. So they are available to the public. We offer remote access, if anybody is interested in it."

That remote access (on line) is available to anyone for \$600 per year, a fee she waived for the historical society. "The historical society, they do a lot for our office too," she continued. "I feel like we need to join together as a group, and I didn't mind waiving the fee because they're wonderful to deal with."

Carroll served during a period of great transition in the clerk's office, adapting from an era when anybody could just walk in and look at records to the present atmosphere of high-tech security, where all visitors must pass through a bailiff's check point with no recording devices

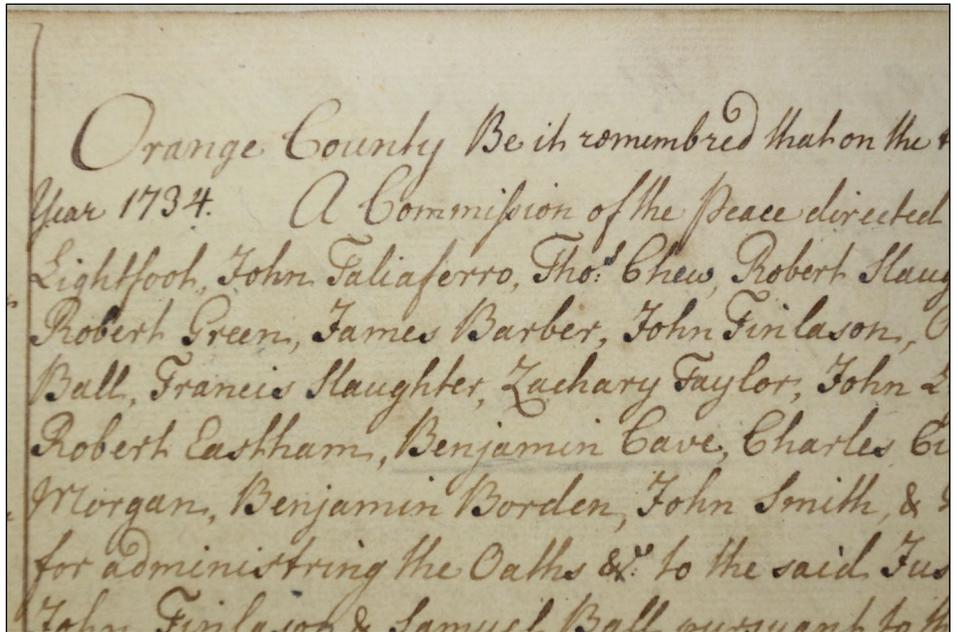


PHOTO TAKEN IN 2013 BY PHIL AUDIBERT

The original record establishing Orange County in 1734 is one of the documents kept in the clerk's record room.

allowed, including cell phones. For researchers, she would often authorize exceptions to these restrictions.

In 2021, Carroll was diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer. Two major surgeries and 12 rounds of chemo later, she is now cancer-free. But, the experience made her realize that it's time to stop and smell the roses. "I'm really going to miss my job...It's going to be a new chapter in my life which I'm going to have to get used to because I'm used to getting up every morning and

coming to work and working all day and working sometimes late in the evening."

She added that her chief deputy, Melissa Morris, "will follow in my footsteps and I think the county will find that she will do maybe a better job than me." Asked what she'll miss most about the job, she didn't hesitate: "the people, the citizens of the county. I've enjoyed working with everybody over the last 35 years...and I just want to thank everybody for putting their trust in me as clerk."

## Call for volunteers

Do you enjoy looking at old local postcards? If so, we have a short-term project just for you! We are looking for a volunteer to transfer a number of old photos and postcards to photo sleeves to make them available to the public for viewing. If you are interested, please email Volunteer Coordinator May Saxton at [OCHistVolunteers@gmail.com](mailto:OCHistVolunteers@gmail.com).

## Membership

Interested in Orange County history? Become a member of the historical society. Visit <https://www.orangeco-vahist.org/about-us.html>.

## Oracle items

Do you have a news item for the Oracle? Send to: [Phlodbear@aol.com](mailto:Phlodbear@aol.com). Deadline for the next issue is **Aug. 20**.