



## The Chimneys

*Frank S. Walker, Jr.*

**W**ITHIN MY FAMILY, “the chimneys” has two meanings. Spelled without capitals, the words describe the remains of a row of five abandoned stone chimneys. When both words begin with capitals, it is the name of the farm upon which the chimneys stand. That farm is located in Orange County, Virginia, roughly two miles southwest of the village of Rapidan. This article will first tell the story of The Chimneys, then the story of the chimneys. For both stories, I am indebted to my late mother, Margaret Wilson Shackelford Walker, who many years ago wrote a narrative title search report on the property. Mother had a special interest in it for reasons that will become apparent as you read. We have since learned more, but she was the first to begin telling the stories.

### The story of The Chimneys.

Clovis spear points have been found in the region, evidencing the always-temporary presence of Paleo Indians some 12,000 years ago. Their presence, however, was because of the animals they hunted, not the land they hunted over. Camp sites of the later, semi-nomadic Archaic Indians are found all through the region. It wasn't until the Woodland Indian period, however, that we finally met and documented people occupying and using the land. When Captain John Smith explored up the Rappahannock River in 1608, he learned that the land we would call The Chimneys was part of the territory of the Siouan-speaking Manahoacs. Their territory lay between the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west and the Tidewater Fall Line at today's Fredericksburg. Their arrowheads and spear points are everywhere. The specific area we are interested in lay between their villages of Shackaconia, near Germanna, and Stegara, near Somerset. Further exploration around 1670, however, revealed that the Manahoacs as a distinct tribe had disappeared. The Iroquois then claimed the land, but they never occupied or defended it.

The first European owner of the land was Colonel James Taylor II, who in 1722 was awarded a patent to 8,500 acres of land whose northern boundary followed the Rapidan River down from Barnett's Ford at Madison Mills to just upstream of the settlement of Rapidan. Col. Taylor was one of the group organized in 1716 by Lt. Governor Alexander Spotswood who rode over the Blue Ridge and into the Valley of Virginia. He thus had an opportunity to inspect the lands along the Rapidan, and later as a County Surveyor, he helped himself to some of



Chimneys 4 thru 1 (uphill), after restoration of 1-3 completed. Only chimney 5 cannot be seen. Photo courtesy of Bernice Walker.

it. He “seated and planted” his patent within the required time period, and title to it vested in him. Col. Taylor then quickly began selling off portions of his patent. In 1725 in fact, he conveyed a large tract containing The Chimneys to John Taliaferro (“Toliver”).<sup>1</sup> That was nine years before Orange County was formed, so the deed is recorded in Spotsylvania County.

Over time, the Taliaferro tract was subdivided and portions changed hands multiple times. Eventually, The Chimneys portion came into the ownership of members of the Willis family. The patriarch, Col. Henry Willis, though a resident of Spotsylvania County, was instrumental in the 1734 formation of

<sup>1</sup> Sparacio, Ruth and Sam, *Virginia County Court Records: Order Book Abstracts of Spotsylvania County, Virginia 1734-1730 (Part I)*, The Antient Press, McLean, Virginia, 1990, p. 55.

See **The Chimneys** on page 2.

## The Chimneys (*continued*)

Orange County, took a position in the county government, and like Taylor, took title to thousands of acres of its fertile red soil.

The future Chimneys tract went into the American Civil War era (1861-1865) as the 263-acre "mountain field" of Wood Park, a farm owned by George and Sally Willis. George died in 1861, leaving Wood Park to Sally. During the winter of 1863-1864, the Confederate army occupied a 20-mile defensive line in Orange County along the south bank of the Rapidan River. The railroad bridge at Rapidan was a special concern, and as many as two Confederate infantry brigades overwintered in the Mountain Field. Sally Willis almost certainly came out of that winter with little or no stored food supplies, livestock, or fences, and with her woodland clear-cut. Most would have been formally impressed by army quartermasters, but then paid for with nearly-worthless currency. The rest would have disappeared via "moonlight requisitioning" by resourceful soldiers. Like most of their neighbors, however, Sally somehow toughed it out.

Sally died about 1881. In her will, Sally recited that no structures stood in the Mountain Field and directed that it be sold. In November 1882, executor John G. Williams sold the mountain field to Oscar F. Bresee for \$7,500.

Oscar Bresee was a well-to-do Maryland businessman, with extensive New York connections, who added the former Wood Park Mountain Field to the adjacent Rose Hill farm, a former Taliaferro property he had purchased earlier. Small portions of both Wood Park and Rose Hill exist today; however, Bresee's Rose Hill house was destroyed by fire in 1917. Pat Hurst writes about Mr. Bresee in her book about the many bridges that have spanned the Rapidan River over the years.<sup>2</sup> He built a private one-lane, moderate capacity bridge across the river in order to get his New York *Times* and other mail from the Rapidan post office.

Oscar Bresee died in 1901, and his will left Rose Hill to his wife Louise. Upon her death, the property needed to be sold to satisfy obligations of the estate. An effort to sell the farm as a whole failed, and Rose Hill was broken up and sold in tracts. In 1912 the former Mountain Field was sold to Thomas B. Aylor for \$6,500. It's not clear how Mr. Aylor used the land, but two things are certain: one, he borrowed money using the land as collateral, and two, there was a row of five stone chimneys standing along one edge of his property. If there had been any frame cabins associated with those chimneys when he bought the land, they were gone by the 1930s.

In 1931, at the beginning of the Great Depression, Aylor defaulted on his loan, and the mortgage holder, N. Y. Life Insurance Co., conducted an auction. The bids were so low the company decided to wait until things got better. Things didn't, and finally in September 1935 it announced another auction.

My father wanted to buy the property, but since he was known as both a wealthy farmer and the president of the National Bank of Orange, he feared that appearing and bidding at the auction would only attract counter bidders seeking to run up the price. So he sent my mother, eight months pregnant with what would be their fourth child. She succeeded in buying the 250-acre pasture field portion, but a 13-acre woods tract went to someone else. A few weeks later Mother gave birth to me. For the rest of her life, Mother persistently campaigned to have the property called The Chimneys, but Father and all the farm people just as persistently called it the "mountain farm." Mother, however, has finally prevailed.

Following the dissolution of our family farm corporation in 1979, I took title to The Chimneys as a part of my distributive share. In 2002, I placed an open-space/conservation easement on 227 acres that restricts development on that tract. In 2019, I gave my wife Bernice a half-interest in the 227 acres, and in 2020, Bernice and I gave our title to The Chimneys' 227-acre tract to the next generation of our family. The remaining acres are still owned by our daughters and me.

### The story of the chimneys.



Chimney No. 1, restoration underway. Photo courtesy of Lynne G. Lewis.

Until early 2020 this story was not nearly as detailed or documented as the story of the land. Theories involving the chimneys with slavery, with the Civil War, with Emancipation, and with railroading had all been advanced, but the dates and circumstances didn't fit. I advocated my mother's position that Oscar Bresee built the cabins to attract and house labor. It is possible that she knew that as a fact, but I'm not sure. That would have been in the 1880s and might have indeed involved freedmen or their children. That said, nothing is actually known about the people who occupied the cabins.

<sup>2</sup> Patricia J. Hurst, *Bridges Over the Rapidan River in Virginia*. Compiled by Jayne E. Blair. Privately published by the estate of Patricia J. Hurst, 2017.

## The Chimneys (*continued*)

The chimneys are located along and close to the Route 673 boundary of the property, where it slopes down to intersect with Route 700, just a few hundred yards west of Trimmer's Crossing on the Norfolk Southern Railway. Their hearth openings reveal that the frame portions of the cabins lay between the chimneys and the road. They were therefore rather small, and they are being called "cabins" in this story. All that is left are the remains of the stone chimneys, and since 1935 they had continued to collapse. As of 2019, only two truncated chimneys were standing.

With the exception of the "no structures" statement in Mrs. Willis' will and with no known local legend or lore to track down, we were challenged to find a date for construction of the chimneys. I wrote a letter to the editor of the *Orange County Review*, asking if anyone had information. Editor Jeff Poole kindly published the letter, and local businessman and Orange County native Rod Sedwick spotted it. He soon thereafter spoke with Duff Green, the retired long-serving editor of the *Review*, telling him that as a youngster, he had seen some lumber at the chimneys site. That triggered Duff's memory and when I called him, he was ready for me.

Duff recalled Mr. George W. Peyton, one of the many Peytons who over the years have inhabited the Rapidan area. In his later years Mr. Peyton was an officer in an organization that used the *Review's* services to publish its reports. He was something of a character, and his visits to the *Review* office were sometimes pleasantly memorable. On one occasion, Mr. Peyton came into Duff's office expressing much amusement at a postcard Duff had recently published. The card had been authored by the Orange County Jaycees, and it showed the chimneys with a caption stating that they were the remains of slave cabins.



Postcard (postmarked 1955) of The Chimneys. Courtesy of Lynne G. Lewis.

Mr. Peyton playfully chided Duff and the *Review* staff and the Jaycees for not knowing their local history. He stated that as a boy he had seen those chimneys being built and that they had nothing to do with slavery. Duff added that Mr. Peyton

often remarked that he was born the same year as Sir Winston Churchill – 1874 – making a young George Peyton just old enough to remember the chimneys being built in the 1880s.

Just to cover one more base, the property tax records were checked. An intrepid Jayne Blair of the Historical Society staff ventured into the Circuit Court Record Room as soon as permitted and emerged reporting that at least by 1887 Mr. Bresee was indeed taxed on buildings standing on that tract. Combining that information with the wording of Mrs. Willis' will and the recollection of George Peyton, confirms my mother's understanding that Oscar Bresee built that row of five cabins with their stone chimneys in the 1880s, almost certainly to attract and retain labor for his Rose Hill operation.

A few years back, I decided that I should undertake the restoration of the collapsed chimneys to their approximate 1935 appearance, the year they came into our family's owner-



Chimney No. 1, after restoration was completed. Courtesy of Lyne Shackelford.

ship. To that end, I contacted Chris Peters of Southern Stone and Landscaping Creations, LLC. I quickly discovered that not only is Chris a highly-regarded stone mason, he is also a huge history enthusiast. In March 2020, Chris and his crew started work. The job took a little over a month, and the results are all we could have hoped for. Thanks to their skill and interest, we also learned much more about that small, apparently short-lived settlement.

With the exception of the middle chimney, the stone work evidences some sophistication. The hearth and flue construction reflect the Rumford design, maximizing the heat being radiated out into the living space. Also, instead of using metal lintels to span across the hearth openings, two long stones were set on each side of the opening, and a third stone was wedged between them in a type of a rustic arch. At least two

## The Chimneys (*continued*)



Chimney No. 4. This chimney was cleaned of overgrowth but did not need restoration. Note the method of creating the lintel. Photo courtesy of Bernice Walker.

stone masons were involved, and the stone was poorly laid in the middle chimney. It was almost surely the first to collapse, possibly while its cabin was still occupied.

The artifacts that Chris and his team found suggest a deliberate departure—an abandonment—in which only items of

nominal or no value were left behind. Possible exceptions are the remains of three pocket watches, but then they could have been broken and deemed not worth repairing.

The chimneys went from “just-built” in the 1880s to abandoned and collapsing in less than 50 years. The relatively brief life of the settlement could be a combination of Mr. Aylor being unable to pay labor and the unsuitability of the housing for rural living. On the latter point, rural people not only like having open space between houses, they also needed it for gardens, hog pens, chicken coops, and outhouses. Five houses side-by-side in a town-like arrangement wasn’t going to be popular. That said, the specific reason(s) for the settlement not thriving may never be known, but we intend to keep our ears open.

Interestingly, it doesn’t appear that the frame portions of the cabins burned or rotted at the chimney sites. Ashes are only present at the bases of the chimneys, not out where the cabins stood. There are no partially burned or rotted framing timbers under the grass. Numerous cut and wire nails have been found, and many show evidence of their having been pulled out of the wood into which they had been driven. I suspect that the frame portions were dismantled and the materials used elsewhere. If that is in fact the case, those materials may be in one or more structures still standing in the region today. Again, that is something we hope to learn more about in time.

By far the greatest mysteries, the greatest unknown stories, involve the people who lived in the cabins: who were they, when, why, for how long? The more you imagine them, the longer the list of questions grows. A critical “people” part of the fabric of this story remains missing. Rest assured that we will keep asking and listening.

I hope you have enjoyed reading the stories of The Chimneys and the chimneys. It was a pleasure to write them.



These artifacts are a selection of those found by stone masons during recent restoration of the chimneys. At left is a late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century ironstone chamber pot (reconstructed) found in and around Chimney No. 2. The photo at right shows two spoons and nails, found in and around Chimney No. 2 during restoration. Photos courtesy of Bernice Walker.

## The Orange County Historical Society 2020 Annual Report

The 2020 annual meeting of the Orange County Historical Society was held via Zoom on Monday, February 1, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. A brief business meeting was held, with the various reports below presented to the approximately 60 members attending.

### Nominating Committee

The first order of business was to elect new/returning members of the Board of Directors. The slate of nominees was presented by Lynne Lewis, as follows:

Ray Ezell, for a first full 3-year term  
 Richard Floyd, for a first 3-year term  
 Rod Hawkins, for a first 3-year term  
 Ruth Mallory Long,\* for a first 3-year term  
 Joe Wayner, for a first 3-year term

Nominations from the floor were called for, and there being none, Frank Walker moved, and it was seconded that nominations be closed and that the slate as presented be elected by acclamation.

The motion passed unanimously.

\*Ms. Long has since resigned for personal reasons.

### Treasurer's Report

It was with great sadness that Lynne Lewis reminded the membership that Richard "Dick" Durphy passed away in March 2020, and that due to COVID, a temporary treasurer was at the helm. We are still learning the ins and outs of accounting and while the following figures are generally an accurate reflection of our financial position, some adjustments undoubtedly will be made before the final accounting is completed.

Our income is derived primarily from our annual fund drive, membership dues, and investment income. We are fortunate that for the past several years we have received two much-appreciated small grants from the Town of Orange and from the County. This past year we also received a small bequest from an anonymous donor. Finally, we generate some income from the sale of our publications, although this was substantially curtailed this past year.

In 2020 our Annual Fund Drive donations totalled \$13,500 while membership dues totaled \$7,952.50. Our operating income, \$35,888.87, less our expenses, \$31,726.63 resulted in a net profit of \$3,965.15 for the year. We started the new year with checking and savings of over \$13,000, while total other current assets amount to more than \$300,000—the details of which are provided in Mr. Speiden's investment report.

We are in a good financial position to continue to perform our mission to promote, preserve and disseminate our history to our community and our visitors. We will be able to continue meeting our goals and completing our mission without diminishing our endowment and with a generous 'rainy day' fund.

### Committee Reports

#### Investment Committee

Bill Speiden reported that despite the very rocky market in March 2020, we ended the year with \$338,776.53, an increase over the previous year's end. This amount represents our endowment and generates the monies to fund about one-third of our annual budget.

#### Program Committee

The last in-person gathering was on January 26, 2020, since we do not meet in February. History-to-Go was created to help fill the gap, but rest assured that as soon as it is safe to do so, we will resume our in-person meetings.

#### Outreach Committee

Regrettably, most outreach activities on the part of the Orange County Historical Society fell victim to the Covid-19 pandemic. Contact with schools and nursing homes effectively ground to a halt starting in mid-March and continuing through the end of the year. However, the gap was filled by the creation of the *Orange Oracle*, an occasional electronic newsletter that kept the membership in touch with what's happening at the society. To date, nine issues have been published.

And to make up for the lack of in-person monthly programs the society hatched "History-to-Go." So far, six episodes have been uploaded to the organization's newly created YouTube channel, effectively bringing history right into the living rooms of its membership. Our YouTube channel can be reached by using the following link: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQvPfUSloS7GZW4Pce\\_17XQ/featured](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQvPfUSloS7GZW4Pce_17XQ/featured)

#### Buildings and Grounds Committee

Paul Carter reported that we hired a permanent housekeeping firm and thanks to the Rapidan River Master Gardeners, the landscape at the front of our building was reworked and recommendations for improvement were made. These will be pursued in the coming year.

Unfortunately, we were unable to do the construction for a new reception desk/area and the front columns have not yet been repaired. We continue to keep both projects on the docket and hope to get the columns done sometime this spring.

#### Collections Committee

Two particularly welcome collections were accepted by the Orange County Historical Society during 2020.

The Orange County Volunteer Rescue Squad, which was in existence for 67 years, has permanently closed. They offered to donate their collection of papers, photographs, minutes, and newspaper clippings, which they are still in the process of organizing, to the Historical Society. This collection will

## Annual Report (*continued*)

allow us to preserve valuable information about a significant community organization in Orange County.

Historical Society member Mitchell Lichtenberg offered to donate the extensive research materials he collected on Orange County for the period 1849-1861. These materials are primarily microfilm printouts from the Library of Virginia (such as land tax and personal property tax records), and are organized in sleeves in three-ring binders. This gift will make a wealth of information accessible in our Research Center, that researchers would otherwise need to travel to Richmond to access. The first shipments of Mr. Lichtenberg's gift were received in February, with more boxes to come.

The Collections Committee thanks and deeply appreciates the Orange County Volunteer Rescue Squad and Mitchell Lichtenberg for sharing these valuable resources with the Historical Society.

### Publications Committee

Lynne Lewis reported that during the past year the Society published two newsletters, the Spring and Fall 2020 *Record* and nine issues of the *Orange Oracle*. The second edition of Garland Tyree's *Blue Run Baptist Church* is well on the way and should come out in May or June 2021.

### A Farewell from Lynne Lewis, President

This will be my final time addressing you as President of the Orange County Historical Society.

First, I would like to thank my fellow board members, past and present, who have been the most excellent team members and made my job that much easier. Their devotion and creativity have enabled us to explore new avenues of communication

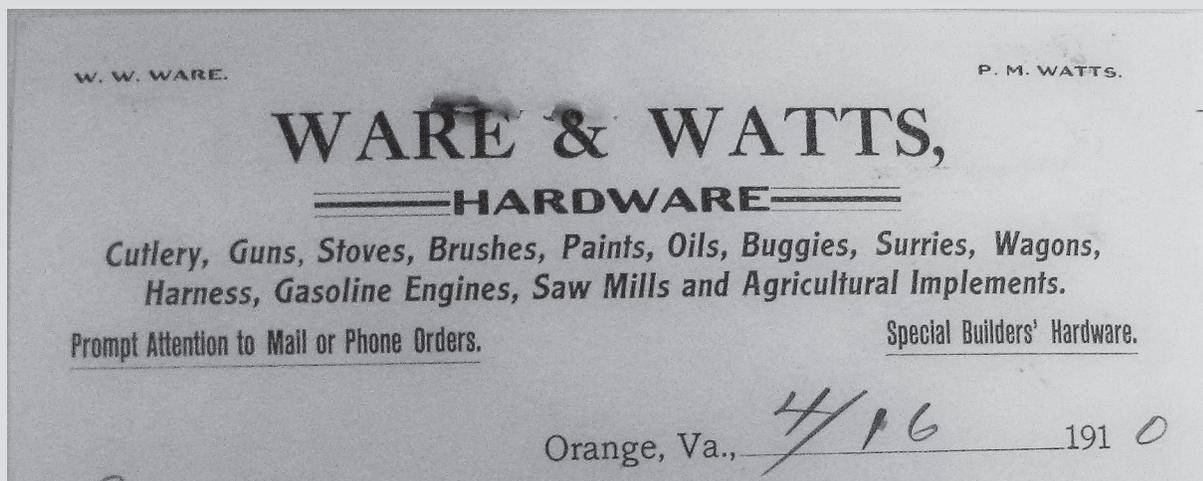
or improve old methods. From the most mundane tasks to the most demanding, they were always ready to dive in.

Next, I want to thank our always impressive staff—Jean McGann, Jayne E. Blair and Ruth Mallory Long. They are the people who keep things running smoothly, day in and day out. And they have been the heroes during 2020, working once we re-opened in June and maintaining the needed protocols so we can remain open. Their knowledge and ability to help our members and visitors is unparalleled.

And finally, but certainly not last, I would like to thank all our wonderful members. Your support over the many years I have been closely associated with the Historical Society is a measure of your interest in and caring about Orange County history. With your help we have been able to improve the 'greenness' of our building (and in the process, save money), keep our equipment up to date, and slowly but surely digitize our collection, which will one day be online.

On a personal note, I take great pride in our publications program, from the twice-yearly newsletter, *Record*, to our most recent book, *No Matter What Befalls Me*. The greatest regret is that we have not been able to launch a building campaign. We are bursting at the seams, and as our collections continue to grow, we must find room to properly store and preserve the items entrusted to us. But I trust that in the near future, the Society will be able to undertake a project of that magnitude. After all, if our founders could do it in 1979, we can do it before 2079!

So, thank you, everyone, for your hard work, energy, creativity, passion, and support. I have enjoyed my time as President and I retire knowing that the Historical Society will move forward in fine fashion.



The top of an April 16, 1910 receipt from Ware & Watts Hardware. This was one of several hardware stores in Orange from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2020 Annual Fund Donors

The Orange County Historical Society is deeply grateful for the support shown by our community. Whether a long-time supporter or a newcomer to our Society, we appreciate your contributions – they help us to carry out our mission in a meaningful way. Not only does our Research Center now have a fresh new look, but a modern new microfilm reader was delivered in April – thanks to your generosity!

### Historians

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 Mildred Staton  
 Wm. O. Stidham *in memory of Thomas Jackson*  
 Patrick C. Sullivan

Thank you, one and all!

## Pandemic!

*Ann Miller*

### Part 1:

The pandemic had struck the area, leaving people terrified and uncertain of how to treat or fight the dread disease. A preventive treatment via inoculation became available, but many were uncertain of its safety and fearful of potential side effects. Finally, one of our leaders ordered widespread accessibility of the treatment . . .

While this appears to describe our current experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic, it actually relates Orange County's (as well as Virginia's and elsewhere in America's) experience with the smallpox pandemic in the later 1700s.

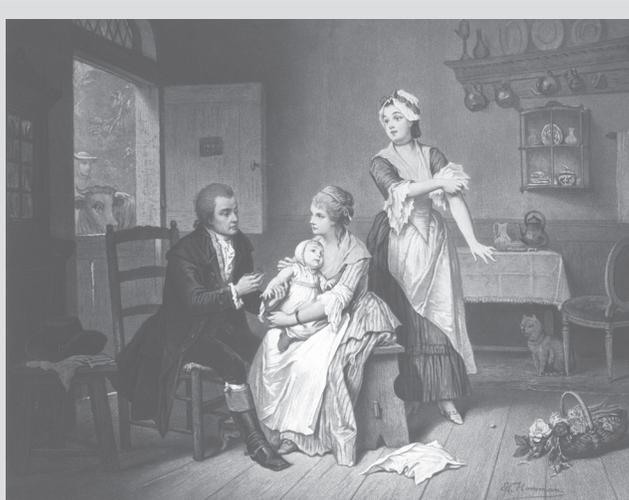
The first part of this article will give some background on the disease, its common 18<sup>th</sup>-century preventive treatment, and related Virginia legislation. The second part will give some specific examples of its impact in Orange County.

#### Background and Virginia Legislation

Smallpox is an ancient enemy, known at least as far back as early Egypt—evidence of smallpox has been found in 3000-year-old Egyptian mummies. Over the centuries, trade, exploration, migration, war, and conquest spread the disease through much of Africa, Asia, and Europe, and large scale outbreaks occurred periodically throughout the Middle Ages. Another factor in the spread of the disease was the African slave trade: many slaves came from parts of Africa where smallpox was endemic. (Smallpox had been unknown in the New World prior to its introduction by European explorers and settlers—with devastating results for many of the native populations.)

Smallpox, the common English name, distinguished the small lesions of the disease from the “great pox” or merely “pox,” the common name for syphilis. The fatality rate for smallpox outbreaks commonly ranged from between 20% to 60%. Those victims who survived, although thereafter immune to the disease, often suffered disfiguring scarring and other effects such as blindness.

By the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, a preventive treatment for smallpox had reached Europe, and was introduced into the American colonies by 1721 during the smallpox outbreak in Boston. Known as “variolation” or “inoculation,” this consisted of in-



Edward Jenner vaccinating his young child, held by Mrs. Jenner. Engraving by C. Manigaud after E. Hamman. Credit: Wellcome Library, London - <http://catalogue.wellcomelibrary.org/record=b1546000>

roducing matter from a lesion on a smallpox patient into a cut made on the arm or leg of the person to be inoculated. A mild case of smallpox then resulted which would leave the patient immune to further attacks from the disease. Although not without risk (the mortality rate for inoculation generally varied from less than 1% to a little over 2%), this rate was far below the usual death rates from naturally-contracted smallpox. Some form of inoculation previously had been used in the Middle East (Ottoman Empire), and parts of China and Africa

Still, the inoculation process was often met with fear and suspicion—and at times, mob violence. It was known that inoculated patients, if not properly quarantined, were capable of spreading the disease. During the 1721 Boston outbreak, the house of Rev. Cotton Mather, one of the leading proponents of inoculation, was bombed by opponents of the process. Interestingly, Mather had learned about the process both from British sources and from one of his slaves, Onesimus, who had been inoculated in his native Africa. In an abundance of fear and caution, some colonies, such as New York, expressly forbade inoculation.<sup>1</sup>

While the disease certainly could spread faster in the more crowded northern cities and towns than in largely rural colonies such as Virginia, it could devastate rural areas as well. Moreover, in Virginia, which suffered multiple outbreaks of smallpox, particularly after the late 1740s, belief was widespread that inoculation spread the disease rather than prevented it.

Virginia legislation passed during the 1720s required ships coming from places infected with the plague to be quarantined. This act was amended in 1766 to require ships bringing in

<sup>1</sup> There are some good and readily available internet sites with medical information on the history of smallpox, including Stefan Riedel, M.D., Ph.D., “Edward Jenner and the history of smallpox and vaccination,” (Baylor University Medical Center Proceedings, 2005, at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1200696/>). Another valuable resource is Wyndham B. Blanton, M.D.’s *Medicine in Virginia in the Eighteenth Century* (Richmond: Garrett & Massie, Inc., 1931); see Blanton, pp. 60-61 for some references to early inoculation (and anti-inoculation agitation).

## Pandemic (*continued*)

convicts and indentured servants who might have smallpox or gaol fever (i.e., jail fever or typhus) to be quarantined as well. In 1772, another act extended the quarantine requirements to include imported slaves.<sup>2</sup>

Legislation passed in November 1769 railed against preventive inoculation and forbade nearly all importation into Virginia of “any variolous or infectious matter of the said distemper” (i.e. any material from a smallpox lesion which was used for the purpose of inoculation).<sup>3</sup> The text of the statute began by stating a strong opinion that inoculation generally was not necessary, that it actually spread the disease, and that Virginia’s location and scattered population generally provided sufficient protection against the disease:

*Whereas the wanton introduction of the Small-Pox into this colony by inoculation, when the same was not necessary, hath, of late years, proved a nuisance to several neighborhoods, by disturbing the peace and quietness of many of his majesty’s subjects, and exposing their lives to the infection of that mortal distemper, which, from the situation and circumstances of the colony, they would otherwise have little reason to dread . . .*

Later in the statute, though, there was a grudging admission that in some “peculiar” situations inoculation might be warranted:

*. . . forasmuch as the inoculation of the small-pox may, under peculiar circumstances, be not only a prudent but a necessary means of securing those who are unavoidably exposed to the danger of taking the distemper in the natural way, and for this reason it is judged proper to tolerate it, under reasonable restrictions and regulations . . .*

The statute required anyone contemplating using inoculation to seek and get approval, and a license, from the governing body of their county or town. (And the governing body had the option of forbidding the inoculation if they did not feel it was warranted.)

A few years later, during the Revolutionary War, came a general pandemic lasting from 1775 to 1782. There were serious outbreaks among the American troops, a sizable percentage of whom had not been exposed to smallpox or inoculated. (British troops had had a higher percentage of exposure and immunity due to the disease being endemic in the British Isles and Europe for many generations.) Sensing that continued outbreaks among American troops would cripple the army and lose the war, George Washington made a radical decision: he ordered the mandatory inoculation of all of his troops who had not previously had smallpox. Moreover, in order to prevent the British from taking advantage of his recovering and temporarily

weakened soldiers, Washington directed that the inoculations and subsequent quarantine and recovery *were to be done in secret*. In several inoculation campaigns in 1777 and 1778, he (and, of course, his doctors and their support staff) pulled off this massive covert effort, and saved countless lives—and probably the war as well. (Washington, incidentally, was not among those inoculated—he was already immune, having survived an attack of smallpox as a young man.)<sup>4</sup>

By October 1777, now more cognizant of the advantages of inoculation, and with continued outbreaks threatening Virginia, legislators would amend the 1769 act to slightly better facilitate inoculations. (One of the committee members was a legislator from Albemarle County whose interest in science made him a proponent of inoculation and later of the improved process of vaccination—Thomas Jefferson.)<sup>5</sup> The introduction to the statute noted:

*Whereas the smallpox, at this time in many parts of the commonwealth, is likely to spread and become general, and it hath been proved, by incontestable experience, that the late discoveries and improvements therein have produced great benefits to mankind, by rendering a distemper which taken in the common way is always dangerous and often fatal comparatively mild and safe by inoculation, and the [1769] act for regulating the smallpox having been found in many instances inconvenient and injurious, makes it necessary that the same should be amended . . .*

However, there were still requirements to be observed. Those who wanted inoculation were required to get the consent, in writing and “attested by two witnesses” of “a majority of the housekeepers, residing within two miles and not separated by a river, creek or marsh, a quarter of a mile wide.” Those who had been inoculated had to observe a strict quarantine, and written notices of inoculation had to be posted. Patients and their clothes had to be “cleansed” before they rejoined the public, and permission still had to be sought from the local government.

Additional severe outbreaks of smallpox occurred in Virginia throughout the 1790s. The previous acts were consolidated by legislation early in that decade, but the need for local government approval of the inoculation process would remain through the end of the century and into the next.

(Part 2 of this article will discuss some references and reactions to smallpox in Orange County during the last half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.)

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Blanton, pp. 63-64; and Amy Lynn Filsinger and Raymond Dwek, “George Washington and the First Mass Military Inoculation” Library of Congress Science Reference Services, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/scitech/GW&smallpoxinoculation.html>

<sup>5</sup> Hening, vol. 9, pp. 371-373, October 1777; for Thomas Jefferson’s involvement on the legislative committee, see the Monticello Research & Collections Menu, “Inoculation,” <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/inoculation>

<sup>2</sup> William Waller Hening, *The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia* (Richmond: 1821; facsimile reprint, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1969), vol. 8, pp. 260-261; 537-538.

<sup>3</sup> Hening vol. 8, pp. 371-374.

## Sgt Wiley Sullins Munsey, Jr.

*Paul Carter*

Wiley Sullins Munsey, Jr., son of Wiley S. Munsey, Sr., and Frankie Hopkins Munsey, of Roanoke, Virginia, was born on 13 April 1919. He was a descendant of a Magna Carta Surety (1215); a descendant of the Rev. Nathaniel Brewster, Harvard class of 1642, and of the local early Roanoke area families Burton, Stafford, Gillespie, Bowen, Duncan, Hopkins, Goins and Williams. He had six sisters and one brother. He attended Jefferson High School in Roanoke. His yearbook noted, "Wiley, better known as 'Buss,' is nonchalant, distinguished and full of fun. Between classes

'Buss' could always be seen carrying signs and walking with a member of the fairer sex." He had aspirations of going to the University of Virginia, but just after graduating, his father died of a heart attack. Buss had to provide for the family and he started working at a tire store in Roanoke where he met his future wife, the business manager and an honors graduate of Roanoke Business College.

Wiley married Mary Elizabeth "Maiba" Terrill of Lahore in 1941 at Macedonia Christian Church, near the Terrill family farm on what is now called Grasty Lane. Most of their married life was spent in Roanoke. After Buss became a part of the Army Air Corps, Maiba returned to the farm where she had their son, then continued to join Buss at his various training bases. The Terrills are an old Virginia family, cousins of patriots Zachary Taylor, James Madison, descendants of the Moore, Gibson, Mallory, Daniel, Taliaferro, Barbour, Warner, Frazer and Smith families, and connected to the Washington and Ball families.

Buss couldn't stand seeing others going into the military and was compelled to join himself. On 26 October 1943 he enlisted in the Army Air Corps (later the U. S. Air Force) at Fort McPherson, Atlanta, Georgia,



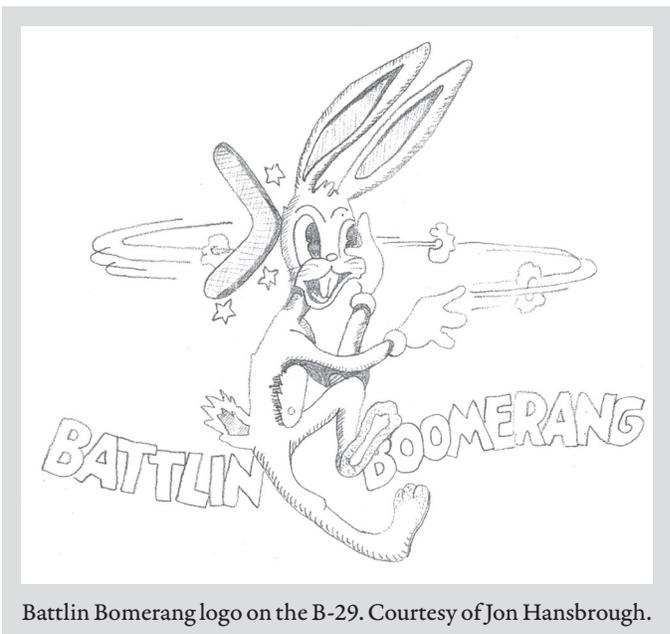
Munsey during pilot training. Courtesy of Fran Osbourne.

trained at nearby Camp Gordon and was assigned to the Army Air Corps as a member of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Squadron, 29<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (Very Heavy). His training was very extensive including B-29 training at Pratt AF Base in Kansas. He always wanted to be a pilot, but his eyes were just not good enough. His main position was tail gunner, but he was trained on all positions of central fire control. He was a member of the Fritschel (pilot) crew on a B-29 named "Battlin Boomerang," flying out of Guam attacking Japanese targets. On the night of 13-14 April 1945, the target was

the Tokyo Arsenal. In the formation were 327 B-29s carrying 2100 tons of bombs. His plane carried incendiary bombs to be dropped from the unusually low altitudes (to insure accuracy) of five to seven thousand feet, a controversial order given by General Curtis Lemay. At that altitude the planes were sitting ducks. Seven planes including Wiley's were lost due to unknown reasons. It crashed east of Tokyo in Tokyo Bay. No official reason was ever listed on the cause of the crash. Whether it was enemy aircraft or ground fire, no one actually knows. On low altitude night flights sometimes pilots get disoriented and believe water is actually sky. His plane carried a crew of eleven and only two of thier bodies were ever recovered, but not Wiley's.



Maiba's badge when she worked at Camp Gordon. Courtesy of Fran Osbourne.



Battlin Bomerang logo on the B-29. Courtesy of Jon Hansbrough.

See **Munsey** on page 11.

Munsey (*continued*)

On 14 April the plane was considered lost and officially condemned lost on 25 April 1945. It was only the tenth mission for Buss and sixth with this crew. He had substituted on other flights. It was a long time before his wife Maiba ever received notification of his Missing in Action status but Maiba's brother, J. Barbour Terrill, a colonel (artillery officer) in the U. S. Army in the Pacific, had earlier notified his sister of Buss's demise.



Hawaii, Dec. 22, 2020. Wiley, grandson, along with other grandchildren and great-grandchildren at the memorial wall. Wiley is pointing to his grandfather's name. Photo courtesy of Fran Osbourne.

We would like to thank Fran Osbourne and Jon Hansbrough for their many contributions to this article. Much of the detailed information is courtesy of their research.

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.

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

- Annual Individual Member: \$25
- Annual Student Member (High School or College): \$12.50
- Annual Family Member: \$35
- Annual Sustaining Member: \$100
- Annual Patron Member: \$200
- Annual Sponsor Member: \$300

A Welcome from Ray Ezell

It's with great pleasure that I've been elected your next Society president. Our former president, Lynne Lewis, has served with great distinction for several years and has left large shoes to fill. It's almost unfair to any president that comes behind her; she has set the bar very high.

I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and provide a bit of my vision for our Society as we move forward. I am a native of East Tennessee, having moved to Orange in 2005 with my wife, Barbara, and daughter, Kaitlin. I am a regional archaeologist with the Va. Dept. of Transportation and have been a Boy Scout volunteer for many years. I coach youth football and basketball and enjoy University of Tennessee athletics. My wife and I have two dogs, Josie and Mr. Darcy.

As your next Orange County Historical Society president, I hope to build upon the collective successes we've enjoyed over the previous years and lay the groundwork for greater success in the coming year and beyond. My priorities include expanding our membership, broadening our research initiatives, deepening our public outreach and educational efforts, and expanding the society's relevance for our members and the general public. As a matter of fact, in a recent issue of the *Orange Oracle*, you will notice a new column, "From the Vault," which will spotlight interesting objects housed in the Historical Society's repository. I hope you'll enjoy it.

In the meantime, each of you can help me get started by replying with one thing that you'd like to see the society engaged in over the next few years. You can reply to me at: rayezell\_2000@yahoo.com.

I'm looking forward to a productive and exciting 2021.

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## Now This . . .

WJMA Radio's Early Years 1949 — 1984

*Updated in 2020 with new graphics,  
 WJMA audio, images, and video.*

*I had something of a spirit of  
 PRIDE as I watched and listened,  
 thinking that I had a small part in  
 the launching of the enterprise,  
 and finding it hard to believe that  
 it accomplished all that it did in  
 succeeding years.*

— Charlie McGinley  
 WJMA 1949

*A celebration of what small market  
 radio and Central Virginia can do.*

— Jack Du Long  
 WJMA 1958

*Many stories of extraordinary  
 people and times were told in  
 loving and humorous detail.*

— Carol Couch  
 Orange County Historical Society

## History-to-Go

Be sure to check our latest History-to-Go offering on YouTube. “Now This . . .” is a history of Orange’s WJMA Radio station, produced by former station Program Director, Ross Hunter. The documentary focuses on the glory years of a small rural radio station. Ross writes, “I began with WJMA founder Welford Sherman in the fall of 2006. Eventually I had almost 40 hours of video tape and a couple of audio only interviews. Of the 28 people included in the video, 11 have died since it was completed. “You can view “Now This . . .” at <https://youtu.be/hPLm1P140nU>

Also, be sure to join us on Monday, June 28 at 7:00 p.m., for “Now This . . . Extras.” This Zoom presentation features a collection of out-takes from the original documentary that offer an informative and sometimes humorous glimpse behind the scenes at the local radio station. WJMA alums, Ross Hunter, Phil Audibert and, we hope, a few others will be available to answer questions in this our first attempt to slowly bring back live programs on the last Monday of the month. Instructions for joining the Zoom meeting will appear in the next *Oracle* and/or by email.