

Newsletter

Orange County Historical Society

Spring 2008

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Octonia Revisited

Frank S. Walker, Jr.

THE LATE RANDY Grymes' documented history of the 1722 Octonia Patent of 24,000 acres is not only a classic blend of thorough research and careful writing, it is also a darned good story. Its most dramatic scene is the one where Randy finally finds the Octonia Stone, which a 1721 survey showed as being at the northeast corner of the patent. He is driving along the South River in Greene County, asking people if they know anything about a stone carved with the figure "8" surmounted by a Christian cross. He knows that if the stone still exists, it is nearby.

"One Sunday in 1963, [I] saw a young man by the name of Shelton, washing a pickup truck at the river. Upon being asked if any of the creeks in the area were called Octonia Creek, Shelton replied that he didn't think a creek was named that, but there was a rock in his grandmother's field called the "Octoney Stone," but he had no idea of its significance. [I] asked if it had a figure eight with a cross marked atop it, and, seeming somewhat astonished, Shelton said it did."¹

Following Randy's rediscovery, the memory of the stone's existence has remained widespread, but with the passing years, the knowledge of its precise location has again begun to fade. Determined to reverse that trend, a trio of intrepid explorers, assisted by a knowledgeable and interesting guide, set off a few weeks ago to revisit the Octonia Stone.

The trip organizer was Joe Rowe. He invited Tom Pitz and Frank Walker to go along, and they jumped at the opportunity. Guiding and driving was Doug Graves, Madison County historian and tireless champion of the heritage of its Graves' Mill region. Doug had earlier located the stone and had offered to take us there. The ride of Spotswood and the Knights of the Golden Horseshoe it wasn't, but close enough for our purposes.

¹ Grymes, J. Randolph, Jr., *The Octonia Grant*, 1977, Ruckersville VA. The Seminole Press, p17. Changed to have Randy speaking in the first person.



Tom Pitz

In the photo above, Doug Graves points to the symbol on the Octonia Stone. In the photo below, chalking reveals the details of the symbol.



Doug Graves

Our journey to and from the Octonia Stone was somewhat circuitous but informative, as Doug visited and pointed out historic mill sites, property lines, and rights-of-way. Particularly interesting in the latter category were the routes followed by Union cavalry general George Armstrong Custer to and from the 29 February 1864 Battle of Rio Hill and the abandoned roadbed of the Rapidan Railroad. The former was the only Civil War engagement in Albemarle County, and it has been memorialized by the construction of a shopping mall over the battlefield. The latter was the railroad that brought logs from the mountains to the Town of Orange in the early 1920s, unloading them at a station just across Madison Road from today's silk mill building.

In time, Doug pulled up at a small house and asked its occupants for permission to visit the stone. With permission received, Doug drove us to the stone, which turned out to be almost in the yard of the house.

We had all read Randy's book and looked at his photos of the stone and at his drawing of its distinctive symbol. We had all gotten the impression that we would be seeing a quarried and carved item, much like a cemetery marker, that would be fairly obvious to passers-by. Not so. The Octonia symbol is carved on a large, naturally occurring rock outcrop. There is no telling how many feet or miles of that rock lay below us, but the exposed part is almost as big as a small car. The Octonia symbol is faint, but clearly recognizable. Outlining it with chalk (that disappears in the next rain) is about the only way to get a good photo of it.

See Octonia on page 2.

Octonia (continued)

Randy had surmised that the symbol was carved by Col. James Taylor II, or by some member of his party, when Taylor surveyed the 24,000 acres in 1721 as a part of the patenting process. The memory of our standing there and looking at the carving that would soon be three hundred years old, and knowing its history, is something that will stay with us forever. Thank you Doug.



Lynne Lewis

The Research Center on a beautiful spring afternoon. The new roof and exterior paint, as well as the screen of hollies on the left side of the lot, were all made possible through the generosity of our members and other friends of the Society. This year we look forward to interior renovations.

From the President

Joyce Clark

It is with great pleasure, and a little bit of trepidation that I take on the role of President. I look forward to this year, and feel we are off to a good start with many exciting things going on.

I am very excited about a project that Carol Couch and her committee are working on to record Frank Walker's lectures. We will be applying for a matching grant from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities to do this and we plan to present it to school teachers to enhance their knowledge of our local history. Carol and I have been meeting with the videographer to make the necessary arrangements and test the Research Center for its recording qualities. Thanks to Carol for all her hard work on this project.

We are also pleased that the Structural Engineer's Report shows the building to be sound, so we can get started on our face lift. It is certainly needed and will make us all feel prouder of our research facility.

We will be undertaking many other projects as the year progresses, including our records scanning, and I look forward to working with all of you. I would like to thank everyone for your hard work and cooperation, both past and future. We must work together to accomplish our goals.

Chronicling America Provides Glimpses of Life a Hundred Years Ago

Clara Colby

Whether you're researching your family's history or working on a dissertation in American history, you can find a wealth of useful information through the Library of Congress' Chronicling America web site at <http://www.loc.gov/chroniclingamerica/>

The site allows you to search and view pages from a selected (but growing) list of newspapers from around the country. The time period currently covered is 1897-1910. Chronicling America also provides brief descriptions of thousands of American newspapers published between 1690 and the present.

Newspapers on the site of most interest for Orange County researchers include three from Richmond, the Times, the Richmond Dispatch, and the Times Dispatch. Orange information can also be gleaned from some of the fourteen Washington, D.C. area papers on the site. General news, society gossip and community boosterism can all be found.

The selections here give some idea of the range of material available. The bank article is from the Richmond Dispatch, May 31, 1900; the boarding classifieds are from the Times Dispatch, May 24, 1908; the Howard family note is from the Colored American, August 1, 1903; the robbery story is from the Richmond Times, May 25, 1901; and the Somerset Social News is from the Times Dispatch, September 11, 1910.

TO START A BANK AT ORANGE. Messrs. Lockwood Have Secured a Charter for That Purpose. Messrs. J. W. Lockwood, Jr., and Newton Lockwood will, unless their present plans are changed, establish a national bank at Orange Courthouse, Va. This plan has been under consideration for some time. So far has it progressed, in fact, that the Messrs. Lockwood are already in possession of the necessary charter. The bank will be actually established very shortly. It is understood that promoters of the new bank are young men, and stand high in the banking profession. They are sons of Mr. J. W. Lockwood, who has been in the banking business here for more than forty years, and who had had ten years' experience before coming to Richmond. Messrs. J. W., Jr., and Newton Lockwood resigned as cashier and teller, respectively, of the American National Bank before announcing their purpose to establish a bank at Orange. Their father remains as Vice-president of the American National.

Boarding. LARGE SHADY LAWN, PLEASANT rooms and porches; nice bath, two miles from Orange; board unexcelled. Adults, 12c. Apply to Mrs. ALFRED WOODSWORTH, Orange Courthouse, Va.

Suburban Board, GENTLE PARK, for two or three adults. Apply with reference to C 603, care Times-Dispatch.

NICE ROOMS WITH GOOD SERVICE; excellent meals; by treatment, 12c per day; one block from all car lines.

Rev. W. H. Howard's family is all away for the summer; Mrs. Howard and the others at Barboursville, Miss Annie at Charlottesville, Va. and Miss Bertha is the guest of Rev. Mrs. Henry Creamer, 119 E Eighty-fourth street, New York City.

Taken to Norfolk. James Dillon and Frank Johnson, two miscreants who have been held here by the Federal authorities, were taken to Norfolk yesterday by United States Marshal Treat and Deputy Marshal J. E. Vase to stand trial on the charge of robbing the postoffice at Orange Courthouse.

Somerset Social News. [Special to The Times-Dispatch.] Somerset, Va., September 10.—Miss Mary Jane Walker, of Barboursville, has been the recent guest of Miss Bessie Walker at her home, Brookside, near here. Among the guests at Hilton, the home of R. M. Newman, are Miss Florrie Lee Taylor, of Louisville, Ky.; Mrs. Bettie Robertson, Miss Hallie Robertson and Richard Robertson, of Corpus Christi, Tex., and Robert and Frank Whittle, of Petersburg. Miss Faye Waller Newman has been the recent guest of Miss Peachy Gascoyne Lyne at "Willow Grove," her beautiful country home near Orange. Mr. and Mrs. Barton Haxall Cameron, of Richmond, are spending some time with the former's sister, Mrs. George Zinn. Miss Kathleen Newman expects to leave Tuesday for Gastonia, N. C., where she has accepted a position to teach in Lynwood College. Miss Marlane Walker is visiting friends in Alexandria. Miss Audin Turner has returned home after a delightful touring trip with Mr. and Mrs. Joseph G. Walker. They visited a number of Virginia summer resorts. Miss Elise Woodruff left Thursday for New York, where she is the guest of her aunt, Mrs. Harriman. Mrs. Thomas H. Ellis, of Barboursville, is spending some time with her brother, George W. Barbour, near here. R. Lindsay Coleman and uncle, Mr. Tinley, of Baltimore, left for Washington Sunday. Rev. Mr. Williams, of Charlottesville, has been the recent guest of Mr. and Mrs. R. T. Halberton, near here. John J. Woodruff returned home Saturday from New York. Miss Eleanor Noble is now at her beautiful country home after spending several months abroad.

2007 Annual Fund Donors

Early in the New Year, the Society's Annual Fund Drive committee closed its books on the 2007 drive and announced that a total of \$12,915 was received. Your Board is deeply grateful to the members and friends of the Society named below for their continuing support of its programs, publications, and heritage-based services to members and to the public generally. The 2007 drive sought funds to assist with publications, collections preservation, and property improvement, and we trust that you will see measurable progress in all three areas as 2008 progresses.

Thank you so very much.
Frank and Bernice Walker

Hank & Mary Altman
Molly Barrow
in memory of Rear Admiral John C. Barrow
B. Phill Bettis
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Robert J. Brennan
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in memory of Billy Brockman
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Bee Browning
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in memory of Hope Clark
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in memory of Marilyn B. MacGregor
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Butch Davies/Marty Moon
in honor of Thomas Graves' public service
Deanna & Ernest Dvorak
Samuel & Sharon Elswick, Holladay House Bed and Breakfast
Dana & John Faulconer
in memory of George Meredith Fitz-Hugh, my cousin,
who loved history and lived his life studying history &
our family.
John & Julie Floyd
in honor of Eric and Arden
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See Donors on page 4.

Donors (*continued*)

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in honor of Frank S. Walker, Jr. for all he has done for
the Society
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in honor of Adam Wilhoit (1719-1763)
Thomas L. Woolfolk
Bryan Wright & Clara Colby
in honor of Lynne Lewis
Barbara Yancey
in memory of Ruby Woolfrey Jett

Program Notes

John O. Floyd, Joyce Clark and Lynne Lewis

Farming in Orange County: Personal Memories of a Century of Change

During the past 100 years farming changed more than in the previous 400 years of American settlement. On the evening of October 29, 2007, Historical Society members were treated to an eclectic evening devoted to the story of farming in Orange County, past and present. Bill Roberts, Bill Speiden, Will Likins and Ted Haberland contributed their personal memories and knowledge of the tremendous changes that have occurred to the farms—and farmers—of Orange County. Each of these gentlemen could have held the interest of the Society for the entire evening. The profound alterations in the lifestyles of farm families, agricultural buildings, farming practices, equip-

ment, technology and energy sources, crops and animals, and marketing of farm products, were all discussed. A diverse group of retired and active farmers came out as they might have for an old time barn raising, several of whom added their personal memories and knowledge to the discussion. It was a fascinating and thought-provoking evening.

Road Trip to History: Orange, Virginia

On November 26, 2007, the Orange County Historical Society was pleased to be one of the first places to show the newly released video "Road Trip to History" not long after its premiere at the Old Courthouse earlier in the month. An

See Programs on page 5.

Programs (*continued*)

attentive group not only got to see this excellent work, but also were able to speak to some of the Society's members who had participated in the production. Sponsored by the Orange Downtown Alliance and the Town of Orange, and filmed by Oak Tree Productions, a professional company, this video was shown on Public Broadcasting in mid-November. A number of our members had a part in the video, including Ann Miller and Frank Walker, who were present and described the production. Copies of the video are available (\$15) at the Historical Society's Research Center, The Arts Center In Orange and the Orange Downtown Alliance offices.

John Amos: *Every Now and Then*
& 2008 Annual Membership Meeting

The 2008 Annual Meeting of the membership of the Orange County Historical Society was held at the Research Center of the Orange County Historical Society at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 20. Approximately 50 persons enjoyed a short social period, at the conclusion of which the meeting was called to order by outgoing President Lynne Lewis.

Ms. Lewis addressed the assembly, updating them on the activities and programs of the Society in 2007, noting that it had been a very good year. She mentioned that we have made some needed and expensive repairs to our building and roof, and that it would be necessary to make additional repairs to the interior this coming year. She announced we had purchased equipment to start scanning our records to preserve the originals. She especially thanked the membership for their "phenomenal" response to the year end appeal. In the coming year the Society will continue to make itself heard on issues that impact historic sites and subjects that are important to the area.

Bernice Walker gave a report on the successful 2007 annual fund drive. Letters were sent to a number of businesses, non-members, friends, and visitors who came to the Society to do research, as well as to members, and we were gratified that 135 donors responded. Ms. Walker expressed her thanks to everyone.

Ms. Lewis called on Ms. Walker for a report from the nominations committee. Bernice reported that Chuck Mason, Jack Miller, Laura Thompson and Bernice Walker would be going off the Board and David Purdue had resigned with two years remaining in his three-year term. The slate of nominees was presented: Paul Carter, Samuel Elswick, Frank Walker and Carla Wascalus for full three-year terms and Thomas Chapman to fill the unexpired term of David Purdue. A call for nominations from the floor drew a motion to close the nominations and elect the nominees by acclamation. The motion was seconded and passed.

The business being concluded, Ms. Lewis introduced speaker John Amos, an English teacher at St. Anne's Belfield, and author of *Every Now and Then*, a collection of short essays

on his memories of Orange. Many of these essays have been published in the *Orange County Review* and the *Fredericksburg Free Lance Star*. Mr. Amos described his feelings about being an historian (he claims not to be one!) and read several of his essays, which were so engaging that the audience kept asking for one more. After the readings, Mr. Amos graciously signed copies of his book and the compact disk version for those who enjoy audio books.

Grymes Memorial School:
Celebrating 60 years in Orange County

For more than 60 years the Grymes Memorial School has been an unobtrusive but significant Orange institution. On Monday, March 31, 2008, the Grymes Memorial School hosted the Historical Society and presented an excellent program about the history and mission of the school. Head of School Penny Work, Academic Dean Pat Barnhardt, and Grymes alumnus and former board of directors chairman V. R. "Shack" Shackelford, III, talked about the school and its structures (both physical and educational). They presented a wonderful photographic history of the school, evoking memories and smiles from members and alumni seeing photos of themselves or their friends and neighbors, past and present. We thank the school and staff for providing a fun and educational evening.

Orange County History Seminars

Frank S. Walker, Jr., for the third year running, presented his winter seminar series on the history of Orange County. Beginning on February 2nd and for the next six weeks Frank (accompanied by his faithful sidekick, William the yellow lab) regaled the attendees with our county's history from the time of the Indians to the early twentieth century. New friends and members, as well as those who have been attending the seminars on a regular basis always learn something and always enjoy themselves. Our special thanks to Frank for taking this on, and to all the people who contributed to the extraordinary refreshments.

Upcoming Programs

The picnic season is fast approaching. Since our fair county doesn't exist in a vacuum, we occasionally like to slip over the line into neighboring counties. Our first picnic, in late June, will be at Graves' Mill, in Madison County. In preparation for that picnic, Historical Society member Doug Graves will share his knowledge of the mill at our regular indoor meeting on June 2. The July picnic will be held at Aerie Farm. The August picnic will feature tours of the historic churches on Main Street in Gordonsville.

Orange County Historical Society
130 Caroline Street
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From the Former President

Lynne Lewis

It seems incredible that three years (and a bit more) have passed since I became President of the Orange County Historical Society, a happening that amazes me still, and a job which I was much honored to do. I enjoyed virtually every minute of my three years, and I like to think that we as a Society did much in that time, although as with everything in life, not all I hoped to do was accomplished.

Among those things that were done, however, was the establishment of the annual fund drive, the inauguration of Frank Walker's winter seminar series (the 2008 just finished up in March) and a greater variety of topics and venues for our programs and picnics.

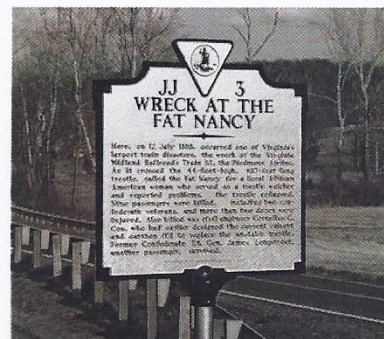
Certainly my pride and joy for 2007 was the publication of *PURR*, the brainchild of Laura Thompson. Working in collaboration with The Arts Center In Orange, we successfully commemorated the 400th Anniversary of Jamestown with this history-for-children of our county – something that hadn't been done before. Some publications have been reprinted, while others have gone out of print (temporarily).

Most of all, I would like to thank all the wonderful people who have helped to make the last three years such a pleasant, informative, experience. The members, the staff and the board members all made my time as president memorable. The names are too many to call out, but I do want to take a moment to thank our office staff in particular – Jean McGann and Marianne Hurd. Without these two fine ladies, the Research Center would not function as smoothly and as efficiently as it does. Visitors are always met by a smiling face and helpful knowledge of our collections, and the day-to-day business of the Society is in the best of hands. Thank you one and all.

Oakley & Fat Nancy Historical Markers Dedicated

Lynne Lewis

On the breezy, cool, but sunny afternoon of March 24, 2008, about 90 people gathered near Route 20 to attend the dedication of two new historical roadside markers in Orange County. Ridge and DeLane Porter, through whose auspices the markers were created and placed, hosted a lovely dedication ceremony and reception on the grounds of their home, Oakley Town, County and Commonwealth notables were on hand to commemorate the occasion, which was opened by an invocation from The Reverend Lin Hutton, the new Rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church. A number of others brought greetings and well wishes, and Frank Walker provided a brief and elegant history of both Oakley and the Fat Nancy Trestle and Culvert. Accompanied by the Honorable Helen Marie Taylor, former Lieutenant Governor John Hager and Board of Supervisors Vice-Chair Terri Pace shared the pleasant duty of cutting the ribbon. The Porters have provided a very nice pull-off so that passersby can safely stop to read the plaques, which are about two miles south of Orange on Route 20.



Lynne Lewis