

# Orange Oracle

An electronic update from the Orange County Historical Society

## New sign!

### Marking Lafayette's Footsteps

By Ray Ezell

In October, a corrected interpretive marker, commemorating General Marquis de Lafayette's 1824 visit to Orange, was installed on the front lawn of the Society's Research Center. It replaced a



similar marker that had been installed here several months ago, which contained an unexpected factual error in the text. Julien Icher, President of The Lafayette Trail, Inc., Kathy Coffta Sims, Director of Communications, and Susan Hughes, Historian and Archivist of the William G. Pomeroy Foundation, were eager to find a favorable solution to this problem. A replacement interpretive marker with corrected text was soon fabricated and

provided to the Orange County Historical Society at no cost.

I am very grateful for the cooperative spirit of the William G. Pomeroy Foundation in their effort to assist the Society to implement a remedy beneficial for everyone involved. The new marker is an attractive

addition to the streetscape along Caroline Street and will remind passers-by of the significance of General Marquis de Lafayette's place in Orange County and Virginia history. Special thanks are also extended to the Society's research

historian, Ann Miller, who spent many hours carefully examining several translations of the account of Lafayette's 1824 U.S. tour to determine the precise events that took place in Orange.

Stop by the Research Center soon and take a selfie with the new marker. If you are interested in learning more about General Marquis de Lafayette's United States' farewell tour visit: <https://thelafayettetrail.org/>



## Sandra & William H. Speiden Auditorium dedicated

OCHS President, Ray Ezell (right) congratulates and thanks Bill Speiden at the dedication ceremony of the Sandra and William H. Speiden Auditorium late last month. The auditorium renovation was also made possible by additional cash and in kind donations from:

Barbara Pendry  
Clara Colby  
Corner Cabinets  
Floyd Hill  
Linda Carlton  
Mike Saxton  
Patrick Colby  
Dr. Randy Merrick  
William Speiden  
Willow Drinkwater  
Bowers Building  
Charlie Seilheimer

—PHOTO BY PHIL AUDIBERT

# Local history lesson



A dozen middle school teachers from Locust Grove and Prospect Heights toured the Research Center earlier this month. OCHS Board members Jennifer Conley and Rod Hawkins, both teachers themselves, introduced the group to the vast array of historical resources available both on the Society web site and at the Research Center. All went home with a copy of Fannie Hume's 1862 diary.

PHOTO BY PHIL AUDIBERT

## History-to-Go Preservation Virginia *(with Gordon Lohr)*

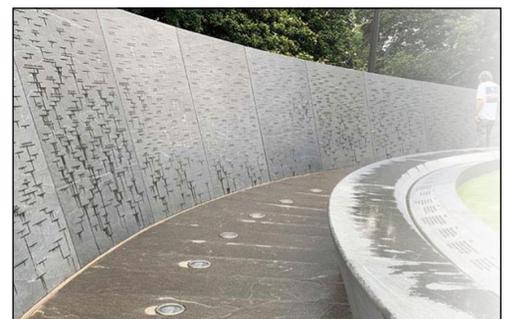
Following the dedication ceremony on October 29, program goes at the Research Center enjoyed a presentation by Gordon Lohr of Preservation Virginia (formerly Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities). That group's Revolving Fund was set up by the General Assembly to save historic properties. Ironically, Lohr's program had to be shown on an old fashioned carousel slide projector. But the OCHS Audio/Visual team was able to adapt to this "horse drawn" technology and live-stream the program in its entirety as well as produce a History-to Go-episode. To view it, click on this link: <https://youtu.be/Qip-03XzdM?si=TsBMWyhrA0bKlseB>



PHOTO BY PHIL AUDIBERT

## Live stream: *Enslaved Laborers at UVA*

Previously, the new Speiden Auditorium featured a presentation by genealogist Shelley Viola Murphy about her work researching enslaved laborers at the University of Virginia. The program was our first attempt at live-streaming. Although we experienced an audio glitch for the first seven minutes of the program, the A/V team was able to edit the program into a History-to-Go episode. Click here to see it: <https://youtu.be/dfxK-FAC-A2E?si=duuhpphaQxs8GGdF>



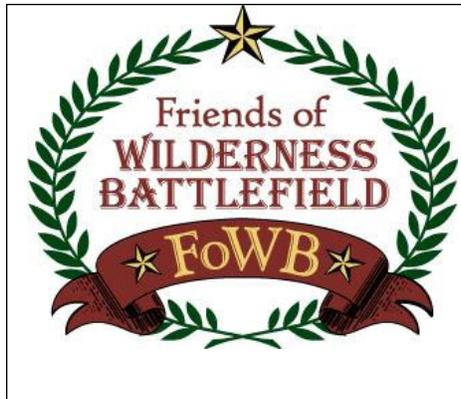
# FoWB revitalized post-NPS

By Phil Audibert

Friends of the Wilderness Battlefield is expanding its area of interest since it parted company with the National Park Service (see the June 2023 issue of the Oracle). Although its 48 interpreters no longer give tours at Ellwood, five have remained as volunteers at the Fredericksburg Spotsylvania National Military Park. Those five join the rest of the interpreters to help out at other battlefields and historic sites in the area.

According to FoWB President Bob Lookabill, former Ellwood tour guides are now volunteering at Germanna Visitor Center and Archaeology Center. And they are lending their tour guide skills at the Graffiti House in Brandy Station and at the Cedar Mountain Battlefield.

Most significantly, FoWB is working with the American Battlefield Trust, and the Central Virginia Battlefield Trust for interpreter training at the Mine Run battlefield in Locust Grove. They have already hosted several weekend tours at Payne's



Farm and provided two free bus tours of the battlefield for its members and supporters. To honor the 160th anniversary of the Mine Run Campaign, FoWB has scheduled several events for Saturday, November 25, at the battlefield. These events are all free and open to the public. To learn more, go to [www.fowb.org](http://www.fowb.org).

"Eventually we hope to be able to provide more improvements to the Mine Run Battlefield," said Lookabill, adding that regularly scheduled weekend guided tours of the battlefield may be in the future. "We are honored to be working with the American Battlefield Trust to help people learn more about this important event in our country's history." Stay tuned!

## Upcoming programs

> **Sunday, Nov. 19, 3 p.m.**

**The Berry Hill  
Restoration Program**

A look at the ongoing restoration/stabilization effort and architectural analysis of this historic structure. The program will be delivered by Casey Squyres (architectural historian) and Sam Biggers (Dominion Traditional Building Group). Meet at the Speiden Auditorium, 130 Caroline St., Orange.

> **No December Program**

> **Jan. 28, 2024, 3 p.m.**

**Annual meeting. Archaeology  
at Historic Germanna**

Meet at the Speiden Auditorium, 130 Caroline St., Orange.

> **No February Program**

## What is your Legacy...?

Did you know that you can designate the Orange County Historical Society in your will? Yes, your investment in the future of the Society will provide a long-lasting impact, ensuring that our mission is upheld. And it will help educate future generations of Orange County residents. Consult your attorney about including the Society in your estate planning. This can be completed quickly and easily. Charity begins at home but its impact serves our entire community

## Membership

Join the O.C.  
Historical Society

Interested in Orange County history? Become a member of the historical society. Visit [www.orange-covahist.org](http://www.orange-covahist.org).

## Call for Volunteers

SECOND CALL!!

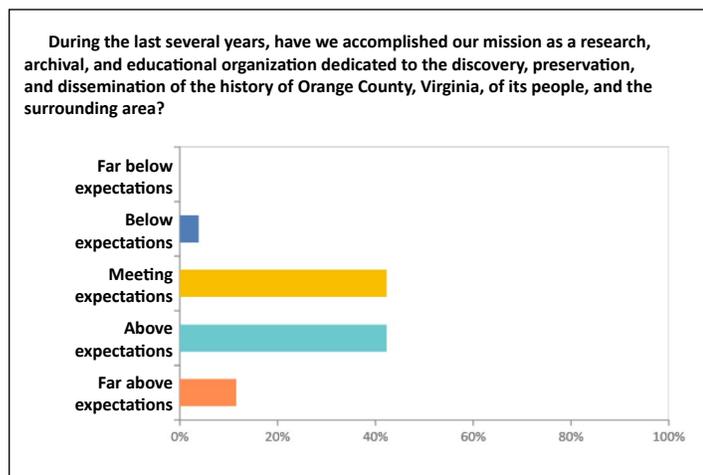
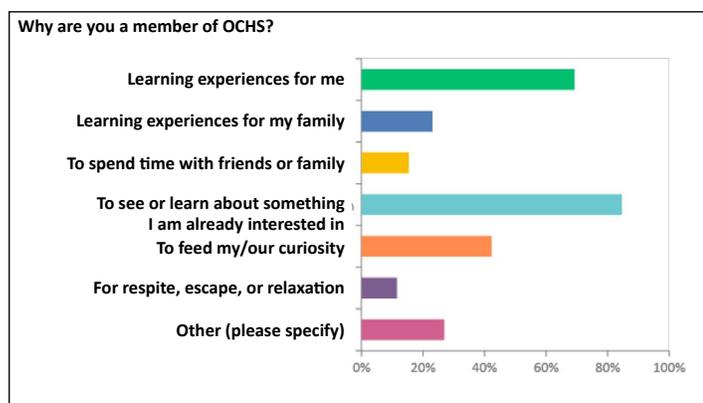
We have an immediate need for a couple of volunteers to help with selecting and hanging pictures in the research center and the auditorium. We have the pictures, but could use some input for arrangement. If you are interested in selecting and hanging pictures, please email Volunteer Coordinator May Saxton at [OCHistVolunteers@gmail.com](mailto:OCHistVolunteers@gmail.com) ASAP!

# OCHS member survey results

By Mark Hoerath, Outreach Committee Chair

Recently, members were invited to complete a survey of their thoughts on priorities and future goals of the Orange County Historical Society. Thank you to those who offered valuable direction to our constantly evolving enterprise.

Your ideas will be considered by staff and board members for daily planning, strategic planning and for orienting new board members. If you want to receive the full survey results, email [mfhoerath@gmail.com](mailto:mfhoerath@gmail.com).



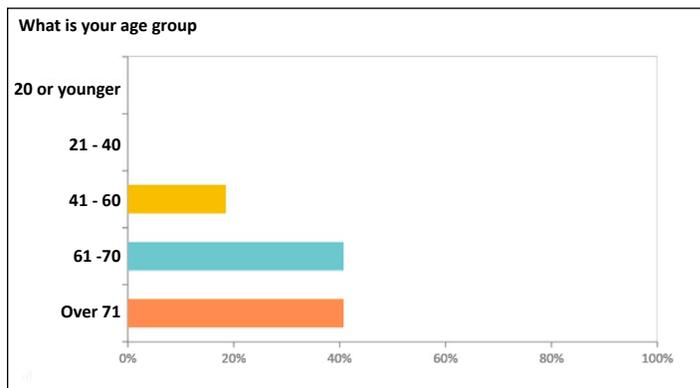
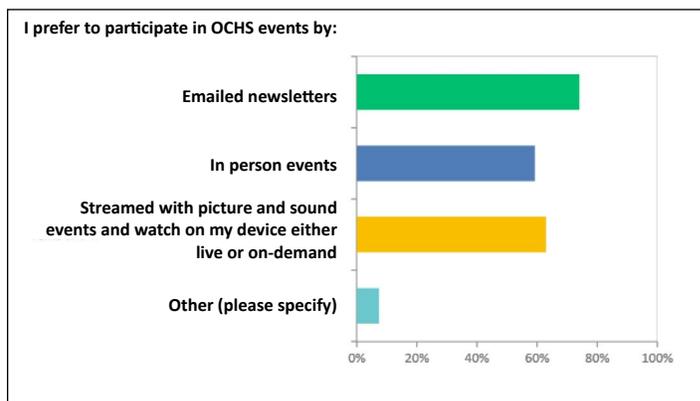
Which goals should be OCHS's priority?

## The top 5:

- Improve accessibility by digitizing collections
- Offer informative presentations to the public
- Supporting historic preservation efforts in the community
- Improve social media and web presence
- Research early African American communities

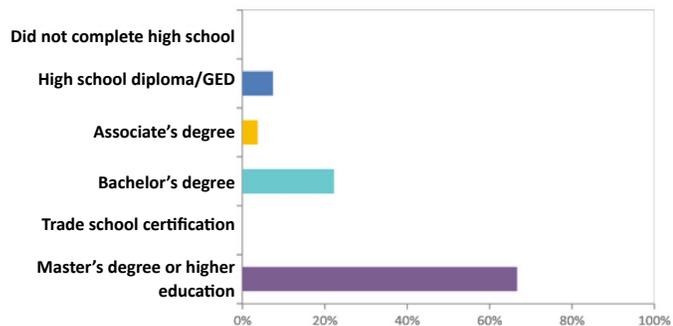
What additional future programs or areas of interest would you like to see developed?

- Wider array of programs, such as: historic trades, archaeology, collaboration with other historical groups, remote programs away from the Research Center
- Colonial/Revolutionary War history
- Provide information on early families.
- History of post-Civil War Orange, 1865-1945
- Expand newsletter content, easy to use articles, events from local/regional/national sources
- Keep it up!
- Anything that's not on a Sunday
- Recreational and sports history
- Genealogy special interest group, other special interest groups
- More on historic buildings
- Dating old photographs, Survey of Orange County area maps, early roads survey
- I want to learn about my ancestors re: Civil War timeframe

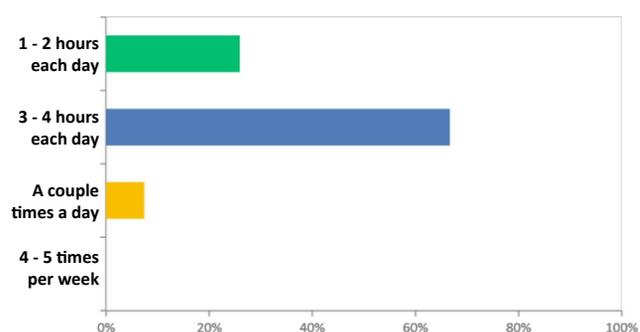


## OCHS member survey results, *continued*

What is your highest level of education?



How often do you use the internet for information, education or communication?



## Initial scan day



Maybe it was the beautiful mid-October weather. Maybe everybody had something else more pressing that day. Whatever the reason, the Saturday scanning event was sparsely attended. In fact only one person showed up. Here, Society President, Ray Ezell and Vice President, Mike Saxton (standing) inspect a tin type of a portrait of Major Richard Graham (inset) in his War of 1812 uniform. Graham is the great-great grandfather of your hapless Oracle editor.

PHOTO BY PHIL AUDIBERT

**Do you have a news item for the Oracle?**

Send your stuff to: [Phlodbear@aol.com](mailto:Phlodbear@aol.com). Deadline for the next issue is Dec. 10.