



## “Water Full of Wigglers”: the 1914 Virginia Volunteers’ Encampment at Gordonsville

Ray Ezell

**I**N THE YEARS leading up to the United States’ entry into World War I, state volunteer militia organizations (i.e., National Guard) were eager to demonstrate their military readiness and receive War Department training to ensure that their soldiers were prepared for potential military actions if called upon by the

Federal government. Even before America’s entrance in the Great War in 1917, the Mexican Border Campaign had been “hot” for several years and made repeated headlines in Virginia newspapers. This circumstance provided a constant backdrop for the military training being conducted by state militias in the decade preceding 1920. The Virginia Volunteer militia was no different in this respect.

In 1914, the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, Virginia Volunteers was composed of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments, the independent Richmond Light Infantry Blues Battalion, as well as associated Signal Corps, Hospital (Sanitary) Corps, Field Artillery, and General Staff Corps.<sup>1,2</sup> The muster of the Virginia Volunteers was drawn from across the Commonwealth with the closest companies to Orange from Culpeper and Charlottesville.

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Adjutant-General of the Commonwealth of Virginia for the Year Ending October 20, 1914 (Richmond: State of Virginia, 1915): p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Note: After the passage of the National Defense Act in 1916, the Virginia State militia changed its name from the Virginia Volunteers to the Virginia National Guard. “A Guide To The Virginia National Guard, Muster-In Rolls, 1916-1922,” Library of Virginia, accessed 5/3/2020, <https://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=lva/vi00859.xml>

The images with this article are from the Report of the Adjutant-General of the Commonwealth of Virginia for the Year Ending October 20, 1914 (Richmond: State of Virginia, 1915). If you have any photos, documents, artifacts, or family stories associated with this encampment, please contact the author at [rayezell\\_2000@yahoo.com](mailto:rayezell_2000@yahoo.com).



Second Infantry in Parade Formation in Front of their Camp

Gordonsville was selected to host the “Camp of Instruction for the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Infantry” after the normal state militia campground at Virginia Beach was closed for needed repairs. Gordonsville was selected over sites in Fredericksburg, Charlottesville, Richmond, and Petersburg.<sup>3</sup> On two occasions, inspections of the Gordonsville site were made by officers of the Virginia Volunteers, as well as Captain A. M. Shipp, U.S. Army

Inspector-Instructor. The Gordonsville Board of Trade (an early version of the Chamber of Commerce) presented the choice of Gordonsville to the Adjutant-General’s office, and after its selection, the Board of Trade acted as a sort of official liaison between the town and the Virginia Volunteers for logistical and administrative necessities.

The influx of an estimated 2,000-2,500 soldiers into the town of just under 1,000 required the identification of an appropriate water source to satisfy the cooking, sanitary, and personal needs of the visiting soldiers (and their horses). The camp utilized town water, and the source for the municipal supply was a spring-fed reservoir southwest of town, approved by the inspection team without in-person examination prior to the camp. After the camp began, the water supply was put under additional scrutiny and the reservoir was described as, “...full of wigglers, tadpoles, and vegetable matter.”<sup>4</sup> Measures were taken to strain the water at the camp spigots, but tadpoles and frogs were noted in several of the gauze filters.<sup>5</sup> Two

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Adjutant-General, 1915: p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> “Orders to Boil Water Used in Camp,” *Ledger-Dispatch* (Norfolk, Va.), n.d.

<sup>5</sup> “Orders to Boil Water Used in Camp,” n.d.

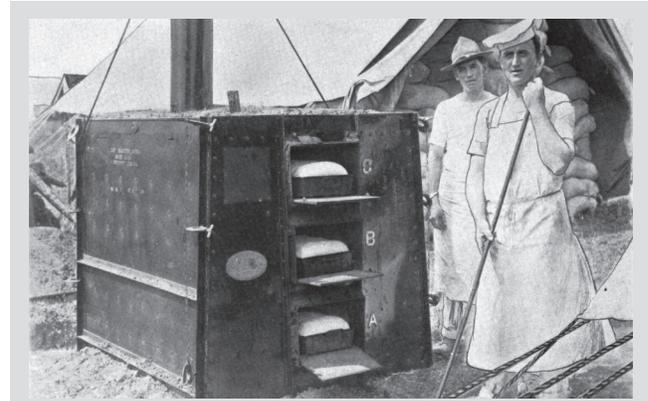
See **Water Full of Wigglers** on page 2.

## Water Full of Wigglers (*continued*)

samples were submitted for analysis to the office of the State Chemist by the Gordonsville Board of Trade and the surgeon general of the Virginia Volunteers. The sample submitted by the camp surgeon was found to be contaminated by livestock feces, causing camp headquarters to issue a boil water directive to all soldiers.<sup>6</sup>

In order to put the Gordonsville camp into full readiness, a number of infrastructure improvements had to be made. On May 24<sup>th</sup>, Lieutenant Colonel Allen Potts and Sergeant John C. Weckert, Quartermaster Corps, Virginia Volunteers, were posted to Gordonsville to coordinate the necessary construction.<sup>7,8</sup> Infrastructure facilities were underway by late June and included at least 15 bath houses, 55 kitchens and mess buildings, latrines, electrification of the camp including 150 lights, and water spigots on every company street.<sup>9,10</sup> The cost for the construction of the camp infrastructure totaled approximately \$4,000 and the total expenses allocated for the encampment was \$50,000 from state coffers.<sup>11</sup> The Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Railroad also quickly constructed a spur line to deliver men and materials directly into the camp. The company owned by Mr. Alex T. Peers of "South Gordonsville" undertook the construction of the new railroad tracks on behalf of the C&O.<sup>12</sup>

Pursuant to General Orders No. 20, Adjutant General's office, a total of 1,941 members of the Virginia Volunteers mustered at the Camp for the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Infantry on July 21, 1914.<sup>13</sup> The Volunteers were commanded by Brigadier General Cecil C. Vaughan, Jr. Company E of the 29<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry Regiment (from New York) and 14 mounted troopers and officers of the 5<sup>th</sup> U.S. Cavalry Regiment served as instructors.<sup>14,15</sup> Colonel Wilbur E. Wilder, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, from Fort Myer (in Arlington, Va.) was the camp commander<sup>16</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Theodore M. Chase, U.S. Army Coastal Artillery Corps (and instructor at West Point), was the camp quartermaster. The instruction camp did not include the First Battalion Field Artillery as it



U.S. Army Field Bakery

went into training at Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania instead, and the Field Company Signal Corps was excused from the maneuvers due to inadequate equipment.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the soldiers, a total of 124 horse mounts and 46 draft animals were a part of the equipment. At least three hospital wagons and a field bakery were supplied by the U.S. War Department,<sup>18</sup> and a telegraph station was set up in the camp to provide for immediate communication with Richmond and the outside world.

Brig. Gen. Vaughan complained in his report to the Adjutant-General that although the maneuver grounds (adjacent to the camp grounds) were promised at no charge, once the military arrived, the landowner demanded payment for their use. He refused to allow access until a \$1,000 payment was provided. The quartermaster staff finally came to a settlement for use of the pastures for \$250.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately the General's report failed to include the name of the landowner who drove this hard bargain.

Once fully populated by the Volunteers, the encampment occupied a footprint that extended for almost a mile with company streets being about 100-yards long. The camp was reported to be located southwest of the center of Gordonsville along Charlottesville Road (current Rte 231), within a quarter mile of the Christ Episcopal Church.<sup>20,21</sup> This area is reckoned to be just north and west of the former Piedmont Association's Tabernacle Assembly Grounds inside the Orange/Louisa county line, near the present-day Tabernacle Road.<sup>22,23</sup> The

<sup>6</sup> Report of the Adjutant-General, 1915: p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Report of the Adjutant-General, 1915: p. 25.

<sup>8</sup> Annual Reports of Officers, Boards, and Institutions of the Commonwealth of Virginia for the Year Ending September 30, 1914, (Richmond: State of Virginia, 1915): p. 176.

<sup>9</sup> "Preparing for State Militia," *The Daily Progress* (Charlottesville, Va.), July 18, 1914, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> "Preparing for State Camp at Gordonsville," *The Times Dispatch* (Richmond, Va.), June 26, 1914, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> "Preparing for State Camp at Gordonsville," p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> "Working on Camp Grounds," *The Daily Progress* (Charlottesville, Va.), July 13, 1914, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Report of the Adjutant-General, 1915: p. 51.

<sup>14</sup> "Blistering Sun Greets Soldiers," *The Times Dispatch* (Richmond, Va.), July 22, 1914, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Note: Charlottesville's *Daily Progress* incorrectly reported Co. E, 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry as Co. F.

<sup>16</sup> Note: Col. Wilder was a 1913 veteran of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry's expedition to help secure the Mexican border.

<sup>17</sup> Report of the Adjutant-General, 1915: p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> "Preparing for State Militia," p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Report of the Adjutant-General, 1915: pp. 63-64.

<sup>20</sup> Report of the Adjutant-General, 1915: pp. 63, 69.

<sup>21</sup> "Sunday Program at Militia Camp," *The Daily Progress* (Charlottesville, Va.), July 25, 1914, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> William H. B. Thomas. *Gordonsville, Virginia: Historic Crossroads Town* (Verona, Virginia: McClure Press, 1971), p.99.

<sup>23</sup> "Sentry at Camp Victim of Thugs Who Attack Him," *The Times Dispatch* (Richmond, Va.), July 27, 1914, p. 1.

## Water Full of Wigglers (*continued*)

enlisted men's portion of the camp was west of today's Rte 231 and officers were quartered to the east. The road was extremely dusty which posed a health risk to soldiers and mess hall work. After some discussion, the C&O Railroad provided multiple car loads of cinders to spread on the road to mitigate the dust.<sup>24</sup>

The Town of Gordonsville responded in kind to the newly established military tent city by decorating the town with abundant flags and patriotic ribbons and set up a carnival to entertain soldiers and the throngs of visitors that had come to see the spectacle.<sup>25</sup>

On the first day of the encampment, July 21<sup>st</sup>, the Gordonsville baseball team played the 29<sup>th</sup> Regiment team, and Gordonsville took the victory by a score of 8-2 led by players Perkins and Goodwin.<sup>26,27</sup> Each regiment organized their own baseball squads and several games were held<sup>28</sup> between the regimental teams and with the Gordonsville team. Several inter-company boxing matches were also held, and a professional wrestling match was held during the last week of the camp between wrestlers from Richmond.<sup>29</sup>

On July 22<sup>nd</sup>, the soldiers settled into the full program of military instruction, including non-commissioned officer training, close order drill, military tactics, weapons care, land navigation, etc.<sup>30</sup> Regimental and battalion parades were held on most evenings and proved to be a favorite of the locals.

On Saturday, July 25<sup>th</sup>, military exercises took place about three miles from camp and consisted of "war strength" battalions attacking an imaginary enemy on a hill about a mile from their lines. Inspector-instructors from the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry directed the day's maneuvers and provided evaluation of the Volunteers' performance.<sup>31</sup> Later that day Governor Henry C. Stuart, in his capacity as commander-in-chief of the Virginia Brigade, conducted a formal inspection of the militia



Volunteers' Encampment along Charlottesville Road (Rte 231)

exercises and reviewed a combined military parade west of the encampment in a heavy downpour. He had been the overnight guest of Mr. J. R. Anderson of Gordonsville,<sup>32</sup> and his review was accompanied by military aides and William W. Sale, Adjutant-General of the Volunteer Brigade.<sup>33,34</sup> In addition to the mounted command corps and instructors, there were reported to be several hundred cars filled with Orange County citizens who witnessed the grand cavalcade of the 38 volunteer regiments, 3 regimental bands, and the hospital corps in full battlefield regalia. *The Times Dispatch* of Richmond reported that this was the largest gathering of volunteer forces in Virginia since the Spanish-American War.<sup>35</sup> That evening, the Governor and commanding officers were entertained by Lieut. Col. Allen Potts and his wife at their home.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the review by the Commonwealth's commander-in-chief, there was a brief visit to the Saturday exercises by Major General Leonard Wood, the ranking officer in the U.S. Army and the Chief of Staff. He was impressed with what he saw from the Virginia Volunteers, especially the bugler,<sup>37</sup> Lee Scott (1<sup>st</sup> Infantry). Gen. Wood's visit fueled rumors that the Volunteers would soon be called up for duty on the Mexican border.<sup>38</sup>

Gen. Vaughan's report to the Adjutant-General after the

<sup>24</sup> "Governor Guest of Troops To-Day," *The Daily Progress* (Charlottesville, Va.), July 24, 1914, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> "Blistering Sun Greets Soldiers," p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> "Gordonsville Wins," *The Times Dispatch* (Richmond, Va.), July 22, 1914, p. 7. Unfortunately, the first names of the two players were not given.

<sup>27</sup> Note: The first names of the Gordonsville baseball players are unknown.

<sup>28</sup> "Sentry at Camp Victim of Thugs Who Attack Him," p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> "Angry Soldiers Take Prisoner from Town Jail," *The Times Dispatch* (Richmond, Va.), July 26, 1914, p. 14.

<sup>30</sup> Annual Reports of Officers, Boards, and Institutions, 1915: p. 139.

<sup>31</sup> "Sunday Program at Militia Camp," p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> "Militia Honors to Gov. Stuart," *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Va.), July 25, 1914, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> "Governor Guest of Troops To-Day," p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> "Angry Soldiers Take Prisoner from Town Jail," p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> "Angry Soldiers Take Prisoner from Town Jail," p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> "Militia Honors to Gov. Stuart," p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> "State Encampment," *The Big Stone Gap Post* (Big Stone Gap, Wise Co., Va.), August 5, 1914, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> "Angry Soldiers Take Prisoner from Town Jail," p. 14.

## Water Full of Wigglers (*continued*)

conclusion of the camp included a curiously brief mention of an incident that occurred on the evening of July 25<sup>th</sup>. He stated that, "A case of serious disorder occurred...through the throwing of bricks at soldiers..." He continued that a black man was arrested and soldiers attempted to "take him from the jail." Vaughan reported that an investigation could only identify one soldier who was court-martialed as a result.<sup>39</sup> No other details were provided in Vaughan's report; however, regional newspapers including the *Alexandria Gazette*, reported a number of additional essential details in the days following the incident. Nonetheless, those details are sometimes contradictory and a comprehensive description of the episode is difficult to reconstruct.<sup>40</sup> Attempts to gather the details of the court-martial from records contained in the Library of Virginia's archives failed to produce fruit as well.

The *Alexandria Gazette* reported that on the night of the 25<sup>th</sup> (Saturday), a fracas began when James Addison, a Gordonsville stable hand described by the newspaper as a "half-witted negro", allegedly threatened and then attacked a sergeant of the militia with a rock or brick at the town carnival.<sup>41</sup> A fight ensued and Addison was beaten. Subsequent to Addison being taken to jail by Gordonsville deputies, a large number of soldiers formed a mob, stormed the jail, and broke down the door with a battering ram made from a wagon tongue and attempted to remove Addison to lynch him.<sup>42</sup>

In short order, Captain E. R. Gale (4<sup>th</sup> Infantry) organized a provisional company of 90 soldiers and officers and quickly marched to quell the violence.<sup>43</sup> Gale's squadron prevented the impending lynching and stopped a full blown riot, and Gordonsville deputies removed Addison from immediate danger (and may have brought him to Orange to be held in custody). Upon the orders of Col. Wilder, camp commander, the nearly 800 soldiers (including some Army regulars) in town were taken into custody by a provost guard commanded by Capt. Jacob C. Bowman (Company M, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry from Radford) and were returned to the camp. The situation was brought under control by around 11 p.m. that night.<sup>44</sup>

The *Staunton Daily Leader* alternately reported that the soldier assaulted in this incident was Private Russell Gooch

of Company D, Richmond Light Infantry Blues Battalion (rather than an unidentified sergeant), while he was on sentry duty during the night of the 25<sup>th</sup>. Pvt. Gooch was reported to have been hit on the head and robbed by two men (one was presumably Addison). He was slashed across the chest with a razor or knife.<sup>45</sup> Maj. Bowles, commanding the Richmond Blues Battalion, offered a reward of \$150 for information leading to the arrest of the assailants, and an investigation was carried out by the Brigade commander, but neither of these resulted in the identification of the two men who assaulted Pvt. Gooch.<sup>46,47</sup>

The *Times Dispatch* of Richmond reported that the two attackers were dressed in militia uniforms and that one of them punched Gooch. The other hit him on the head with a bottle.<sup>48</sup> The private recovered from his wounds.

On Sunday, July 26<sup>th</sup>, the entire camp was invited to attend a community worship service at the Christ Episcopal Church and hear a sermon delivered by Rev. Walter G. Parker, chaplain of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry. The service also featured a Virginia Volunteers male chorale<sup>49</sup> and the three regimental bands performing sacred music.<sup>50</sup> It was reported that several hundred militiamen attended the outdoor service at the Episcopal Church.<sup>51</sup>

The Medical Corps, commanded by Major A. T. Finnish, was also inspected on Sunday by Maj. Hutton, U.S. Army.<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, while the Medical Corps consisted of 49 officers and enlisted men, none were assigned to the Richmond Light Infantry Blues Battalion. Did they not get sick or injured?

The Volunteers' training culminated in the maneuvers on July 28-29<sup>th</sup>. On Tuesday the Blue Force, comprised of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry and the Richmond Light Infantry Blues Battalion marched out of the camp approximately four miles to near the Atkins farm<sup>53</sup> and established a bivouac along Somerset Road (present Rte 231) west of Cameron Mountain. They conducted a nighttime exercise at 9:30 p.m. to defend their position from an attacking enemy force and performed sufficiently according to the instructors.<sup>54</sup> The Red Force, composed of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Regiments, also left the main camp that day and set up a temporary camp several miles southwest of Gordonsville along the Charlottesville Road.<sup>55</sup> They conducted a similar nighttime

<sup>39</sup> Report of the Adjutant-General, 1915: p. 64.

<sup>40</sup> Note: The contradictions in the reporting of the details of the assault on Pvt. Gooch underscores that newspaper accounts were often only as good as the informants' information and reporters who created the reports. Factual details were often incomplete, partly correct, or grossly incorrect, and subject to emotion and failure to understand a larger context—a problem that persists across all platforms of the media today.

<sup>41</sup> "Take Prisoner from Town Jail," *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Va.), July 27, 1914, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> "Camp is Quiet after a Near Serious Mixup," *Staunton Daily Leader* (Staunton, Va.), July 27, 1914, pp. 1-2.

<sup>43</sup> "Credit Belongs to Capt. E.R. Gale," *Ledger-Dispatch* (Norfolk, Va.), n.d.

<sup>44</sup> "Take Prisoner from Town Jail," p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> "Camp is Quiet after a Near Serious Mixup," pp. 1-2.

<sup>46</sup> Report of the Adjutant-General, 1915: p. 67.

<sup>47</sup> Note: It is not understood why Maj. Bowles' report omits the name of James Addison as one of the attackers.

<sup>48</sup> "Sentry at Camp Victim of Thugs Who Attack Him," p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> "Sunday Program at Militia Camp," p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> "Sunday Program at Militia Camp," p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> "Sentry at Camp Victim of Thugs Who Attack Him," p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> "Angry Soldiers Take Prisoner from Town Jail," p. 14.

<sup>53</sup> "State Encampment," p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> "State Encampment," p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> "Home Troops Bore Brunt of Mimic Fighting," *Staunton Daily Leader* (Staunton, Va.), July 31, 1914, p. 1.

## Water Full of Wigglers (*continued*)

exercise against a fictitious opponent.<sup>56</sup>

On Wednesday morning, the Blue and Red Forces broke camp and squared off against one another at Cameron Mountain. The Blue Force took up a position defending the heights and the Red Force, substantially outnumbering the Blue, was instructed to advance and take the high ground. After approximately 100,000 blank .30 calibre rounds were fired, the Blue Force was judged to have ably defended their position. The umpires determined that the mock battle was a draw and each side performed satisfactorily.<sup>57</sup>

The soldiers and officers were invited to attend several local functions during their time at Gordonsville. One of these on July 29<sup>th</sup>, organized by the Gordonsville Board of Trade,<sup>58</sup> was the unveiling ceremony of a granite marker commemorating the site of the Presbyterian church of the "Blind Preacher." This marker can still be seen today north of town along the southbound lanes of Rt. 15.

Gordonsville also hosted another large rally in tandem with the militia encampment. On July 24<sup>th</sup>, the Piedmont Assembly of the Disciples of Christ began their 17<sup>th</sup> annual camp meeting at their Tabernacle grounds southwest of town just within the limits of the county.<sup>59</sup> These meetings drew several thousand participants, as well as onlookers (from 2,500 to 10,000 by some estimates — the latter seeming inflated). Reportedly hundreds of the Volunteers attended the Disciples' meetings. The 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry band played at several of the Disciples' services at the Tabernacle grounds.<sup>60,61</sup>

Upon completion of the exercises, the regimental commanders were complimentary of the camp conditions, how the encampment was conducted, and the military benefit that it provided. However, Major E. W. Bowles, commander of the Richmond Light Infantry Blues Battalion, was generally dissatisfied with the Gordonsville camp. He stated in his report to the Adjutant-General that the training results were mostly unsatisfactory and that there was too little space for adequate troop maneuvers. The commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, Col. Robert Leedy, also reported that the maneuver field did not contain adequate space.<sup>62</sup> Maj. Bowles referenced a 10-acre field that was insufficient for attack maneuvers, but Bowles conceded that his soldiers improved when the exercises changed to maneuvers along the roads.<sup>63</sup> Maj. Bowles was also very critical that the water supply suffered from poor pressure and volume for the needs of his troops.

Upon completion of the encampment and the departure of the soldiers, the quartermaster corps tore down the camp and the militia soldiers returned to their homes across the Commonwealth. One soldier, Private John Myers, Company M, 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry from East Radford, was left behind with an attending soldier from his company (Robert Luttrell). Myers was diagnosed with a non-fatal case of smallpox and was left under the care of Gordonsville's Doctor Bank.<sup>64</sup> He is presumed to have made a full recovery.

The Virginia Volunteers did not return again to Gordonsville, and memory of their 10-days of training there have faded in the minds of Gordonsville residents. The encampment grounds have since been reclaimed as farm fields and pastures and no trace of the railroad spur can be discerned on the present landscape.

<sup>64</sup> "All Camp Equipage is Safely Stored," *The Times Dispatch* (Richmond, Va.), August 4, 1914, p. 5.

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<sup>56</sup> Annual Reports of Officers, Boards, and Institutions, 1915: p. 139.

<sup>57</sup> "State Encampment," p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> "Governor Guest of Troops To-Day," p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> "Simple Life at the Assembly," *The Daily Progress* (Charlottesville, Va.), July 31, 1914, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> "Mimic Battle on Tomorrow," *The Daily Progress* (Charlottesville, Va.), July 28, 1914, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> "Simple Life at the Assembly," p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> Annual Reports of Officers, Boards, and Institutions, 1915: p. 65.

<sup>63</sup> Report of the Adjutant-General, 1915: p. 67-68

## The Marquis Road

Jack Frazer

In his iconic 1907 history of Orange County, Virginia, W. W. Scott wrote, “The Marquis [pronounced mar-key] Road is one of the historic highways of the county, extending originally from old Raccoon Ford to Brock’s Bridge, from the Rapidan to the North Anna.”<sup>1</sup> His rationale is based on the Marquis de Lafayette’s June 1781 travel across Orange County in support of General George Washington’s campaign against the British, and the road’s later use by both Union and Confederate troops during the Civil War.

The name’s origin is well documented. A second historian, John H. Gwathmey, pointed out:

*The young Marquis turned his retreat into an offensive and recrossed the river into Orange. Over what is still known as the Marquis’ Road in Orange and Louisa Counties, crossing the North Anna at Brock’s Bridge, the Continental troops marched south to intervene between the British and stores in Albemarle.*<sup>2</sup>

William H. B. Thomas’ history of Orange County during the Revolution even attached a date to the name, “His [Lafayette’s] route across the county has been called, at least since 1786, the ‘Marquis’s Road.’”<sup>3</sup>

The Scott, Gwathmey and Thomas citations suggest the entire length of county road was named for the Marquis, but no map record has been found identifying the northern portion that way. However, the earliest identified use of the “Marquis Road” name appears in an Orange County court order of March 23, 1786, dividing the county into districts for choosing the Overseers of the Poor. One boundary of the Middle District was noted as “Begining at Ch<sup>s</sup>. [Charles] Porters and runing along the Marquis’s Road to Brockmans bridge.”<sup>4</sup> Charles Porter’s is at the old Raccoon Ford. Early maps show Lafayette’s command used unnamed by-ways from (old) Raccoon Ford (upriver from the 19<sup>th</sup>-century ford) until reaching the present day village of Rhoadesville on Route 20. After an overnight encampment there, travel continued southwest, ultimately intersecting the later named Marquis Road near Unionville.<sup>5</sup>

Thomas provides an account of the Marquis’ date, direction, and location of movement:

*On June 9 [1781] General Wayne crossed the Rapidan*

*River and, as had Lafayette before him, procured provisions and pasturage. But his command kept on into Orange County for five or six miles. . . and camped probably near the area from which Muhlenberg and Nelson had departed shortly before. The latter had continued their march that same day and were by nightfall “in the branches of the Pamunkey” near the present Labore. Lafayette had advanced his headquarters somewhat further to a point near Brock’s Bridge.*<sup>6</sup>

Brock’s Bridge was an interim objective for Lafayette. It was strategically located, guarded by a sizable detachment of Continental Army troops, and provisioned by local farmers. Upon reaching that site, the Marquis made camp on the north side of the river, taking time to send a letter to General Washington. Brigadier General “Mad” Anthony Wayne met him there, and placed his troops under the Marquis’ control. On June 11<sup>th</sup> Lafayette’s enlarged command crossed the North Anna into Louisa County.<sup>7</sup>

The Lafayette association has been a matter of pride within the Pamunkey neighborhood, advancing the narrative that his troops built the road through the area. However, that impression is unsupported by historical records.

Ann B. Miller’s two Orange County road order publications describe 18<sup>th</sup>-century roads as primitive.<sup>8</sup> Some of the earliest were referred to as “bridle ways,” pathways wide enough for a horse and rider but insufficient for larger or heavier traffic. Even “roads” in that era typically consisted of dirt tracks that had been roughly cleared of trees and bushes. These could carry foot and horse traffic, tobacco hogsheads being rolled to market, and smaller wheeled vehicles—most often carts and two-wheeled “riding chairs.” Four-wheeled vehicles were uncommon.

Due to the condition of the roads, Lafayette’s troops would have needed to improve, rather than build them, to allow movement of military horse drawn wagons, cannons, and equipment. As local historian, Frank Walker noted, “In early June 1781 Lafayette used his pioneers in Orange County to improve and widen what we today call ‘the Marquis Road’ (Rte. 669).” A pioneer was customarily a foot soldier who marched in advance of an army to clear the way with spades, axes, etc.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Scott, W. W., *A History of Orange County, Virginia*. (Richmond, VA: Everette Waddy Company, 1907), p. 174. Brock’s Bridge was the colloquial term for Brockman’s Bridge.

<sup>2</sup> Gwathmey, John H., *Twelve Virginia Counties: Where the Western Migration Began*, (Richmond, VA: Dietz Press, 1937; Reprinted 2007), p. 284.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas, William H. B., *Patriots of the Upcountry: Orange County, Virginia in the Revolution*, (Orange, VA: Green Publishers, Inc., 1976), p. 70.

<sup>4</sup> Orange County Minute Book 2, p. 352.

<sup>5</sup> Prior to the Civil War era, Orange County maps lacked road names. The earliest examined with names were the 1864 Gilmer Map, the 1871 Hotchkiss Map, and the 1907 Scott map. All support this statement. Also see Thomas, p. 70.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas, pp. 70-72.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas, p. 72.

<sup>8</sup> Miller, Ann Brush, *Historic Roads of Virginia: Orange County Road Orders 1734-1749*. Virginia Highway & Transportation Research Council, July 1984 (VHTRC 85-R2). Reprinted 1997 by the Orange County Historical Society, Orange, Virginia and Miller, Ann Brush, *Historic Roads of Virginia: Orange County Road Orders 1750-1800*. Virginia Transportation Research Council, August 1989 (VTRC 90-R6).

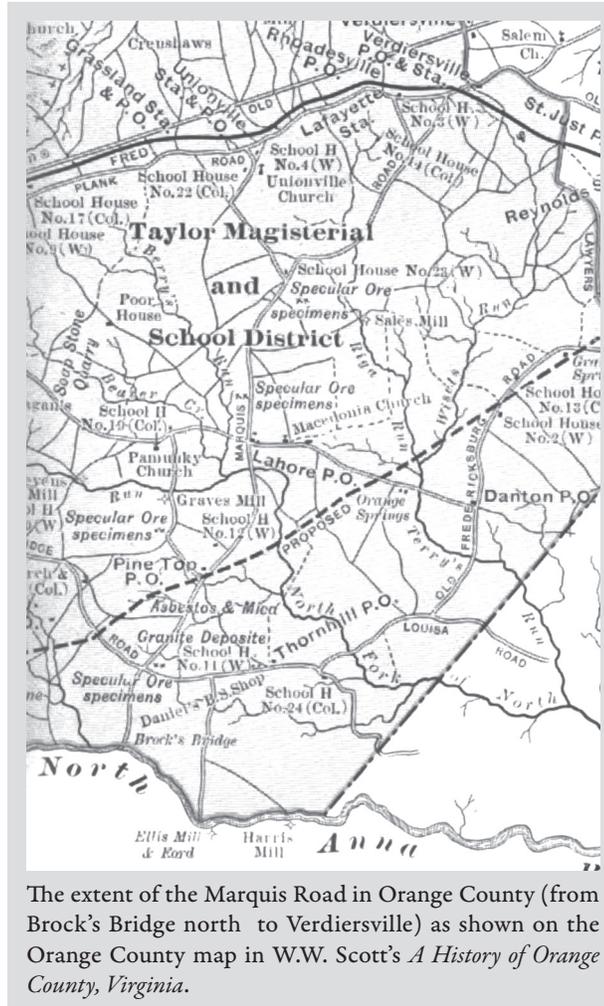
<sup>9</sup> Audibert, Phil, *Orange County Review: Insider Edition*, (Orange, VA, February 4, 2010), p. 3.

## Marquis Road (continued)

Moreover, Brock's Bridge was constructed 15 years prior to Lafayette's arrival. Area landowner Joseph Woolfolk was paid 1,000 lbs. of tobacco for Orange County's portion of the construction cost on November 27, 1766.<sup>10</sup> Without an existing road or bridle way, there would have been no need for the bridge.

According to the County's website, Lafayette's military movement was one of two "significant actions of the American Revolution which took place in Orange County." However that connection is only one facet of the road's history. Along its 10-mile route, past and present historic venues are plentiful. Travelling north to south: The Bethel Baptist Church (ca. 1890) is at the intersection of the Marquis Road (Rte 669) and Independence Road (Rte 650). With a predominantly African-American congregation, it is adjacent to the former Isabella Lightfoot Training School. Although the school building no longer exists, it was one of three early African-American schools in the county, and the site is commemorated by a Virginia Historical Marker. Ms. Lightfoot, the school's highly regarded founder and teacher, is buried in the nearby church cemetery.<sup>11</sup>

Freetown, between Bethel Baptist Church and Lahore, was founded by the formerly enslaved Ellis and Lewis families shortly after the Civil War. Its land was donated by Dr. Claiborne Rice Mason, Jr., a local physician and Confederate veteran, for whom an Ellis family member had served as coachman. The late "Grande Dame of Southern Cooking," Edna Lewis, and her brother, noted horticulturalist George Herman Lewis, were born, raised, and are buried there. The settlement has been designated an historic and cultural site by the Orange County African-American Historical Society. "Ellerslie" (ca. 1855), built by enslaved brick masons, is the area's oldest extant structure.<sup>12</sup>



The extent of the Marquis Road in Orange County (from Brock's Bridge north to Verdierville) as shown on the Orange County map in W.W. Scott's *A History of Orange County, Virginia*.

Originally known as Jackson's Shop, Lahore is at the intersection of the Marquis and Lahore Roads, midway between Unionville and Brock's Bridge. The now untenanted village consists of several vacant structures surrounding the original store building (ca. 1850s) and an adjacent store owner's residence.<sup>13</sup> In addition to serving as a community center, Lahore maintained a U.S. Post Office for 100 years, from 1878 to its closing in 1978. It also supported an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century public school and a grange hall later converted to a community center. After the school closed, its empty building was used as a county voting precinct. A Civil Air Defense station also operated on the school grounds during World War II.<sup>14</sup>

The greater Lahore area is anchored by two antebellum church buildings, Macedonia Christian Church (ca. 1853) a few hundred yards to the east, and North Pamunkey Baptist Church (ca. 1851) a short distance to the west.

As the Marquis and his troops moved down the road on June 10<sup>th</sup> (a Sunday), members of the Pamunkey Baptist congregation, constituted in 1774, may have been attending services in its original log meetinghouse.<sup>15</sup>

Pamunkey Creek crosses the Marquis Road about 300 yards south of Lahore, a spot charted on early county maps as Morton's Ford. On November 29, 1745, Thomas Burgis was paid 2,000 lbs. of tobacco for "Building a Bridge over Pamunkey River."<sup>16</sup>

A grist mill, owned successively by the Brockman, Graves, and Matthews families, was upstream. It was operational from

Publishing, 1976), p. xiii (Introduction). Frazer, pp. 45-46.

<sup>13</sup> Miller, Ann L., *Antebellum Orange: The Pre-Civil War Homes, Public Buildings and Historic Sites of Orange County, Virginia*, (Orange, VA: Moss Publications, 1988), p. 172. Frazer, numerous references.

<sup>14</sup> Frazer, pp. 5, 37.

<sup>15</sup> Miller, pp. 171, 176; Scott, p. 48.

<sup>16</sup> *Orange County Order Book 1*, (order dated November 29, 1745), p. 448. Also see orders dated June 28, 1744 and September 27, 1744 for preliminary construction information. Note: The Pamunkey River, Pamunkey Creek and North Fork of the North Anna names have been used interchangeably for the same stream over the years.

<sup>10</sup> *Orange County Minute Book 1*, (November 27, 1766, order entitled: County Levy), p. 117. Also found in *Orange County Order Book 7*, p. 403.

<sup>11</sup> Frazer, John W. (Jack), Jr., *The Pamunkey Neighborhood: The Long History of a Small Place*; (Richmond, VA: Brandylane Publishers, Inc., 2016), pp. 53, 60, 62 and 106.

<sup>12</sup> Lewis, Edna, *A Taste of Country Cooking*, (New York, NY, Knopf

## Marquis Road (*continued*)

the 1850s to 1938. Remnants of its stone foundation and mill pond dam remain visible, and it has been featured as part of the Historical Society's Historic Mills Project.<sup>17</sup>

In June 1745, Peter Montague purchased property south of Pamunkey Creek. Two months later, he was allegedly poisoned and killed by his slave, Eve, an act resulting in one of the most notorious judicial proceedings in Colonial Virginia. Montague's oldest daughter, Sarah, married wealthy neighbor and land owner John Stevens in 1756, and the property transferred to them. They subsequently built a large structure used concurrently as a tavern, inn, and family residence. Operational before 1781, it was later named Pine Top.<sup>18</sup>

In commenting on Lafayette's 1781 travel through the area, Thomas wrote:

*During these operations the Marquis or some of his command stopped, according to local tradition, at Montague's Tavern, the site of which is on Secondary Route 669 a mile or so from where that road crosses Pamunkey Creek. This has been known for some time as Pine Top.*<sup>19</sup>

The inn/tavern ceased commercial operation during the early 1800s, although it was used as a post office from 1829 to 1841. The Pine Top name for the post office and an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century school continued, but a portion of the property deeded to Dr. John W. Goodwin (a Stevens/Montague descendant), was renamed Thornhill. Dr. Goodwin was also appointed Pine Top postmaster.<sup>20</sup>

The original building continued as a family residence until catching fire and burning to the ground on Christmas Eve in 1935. It had a number of brick chimneys, possibly as many as seven, and a bricked wall basement. The bricks from the chimneys and basement walls subsequently formed the basis for the two-story brick house now on the same site as the old inn.<sup>21</sup>

Eighty years after the war against the British, the Marquis Road became a highway for both Union and Confederate soldiers during the American Civil War. In addition to travelling on the road, Confederate troops camped at Thornhill, and Union soldiers on the Morton farm. Patricia J. Hurst's history of Orange County in the Civil War notes that

*On October 3<sup>rd</sup> [1862], the Richmond Howitzers bivouacked on Dr. John Goodwin's farm at Thornhill. The soldiers dined with the Goodwin family, played the piano, sang and danced. When the soldiers left, the Goodwins gave them a basket of sweet potatoes.*<sup>22</sup>

A few months later, in the spring of 1863, Union troops occupied the Morton farm on Pamunkey Creek during a cavalry action known as "Stoneman's Raid." General George Stoneman made his headquarters in the family's house. During the encampment, virtually all the Mortons' possessions were confiscated. One soldier (Dallas M. Haling of the New York 2<sup>nd</sup> Calvary) died while there, and is buried in the family cemetery.<sup>23</sup>

The Marquis Road intersects Monrovia Road (Route 612) before reaching Brock's Bridge. Monrovia, a former community center adjacent to the intersection, was established before the Civil War. Little has been discovered about its beginning; however, a post office was located there from 1893 to 1934. Greenway (ca. early 1800s) and Walnut Hills/(Monrovia), are that area's oldest extant houses.<sup>24</sup>

In the Civil War chapter of his history, Scott referred to "the tragic story of the Burrus boys." Lancelot Burrus (1797-1878), a former High Sheriff of Orange County, owned a farm at Monrovia. Five of his six sons enlisted in the Montpelier Guard, Company A, 13<sup>th</sup> Virginia Infantry. On June 27, 1862, three were killed on the same day during the Battle of Gaines Mill, and the other two were wounded. Mr. Burrus travelled to the battlefield, collected the bodies of his dead sons, brought them home in a wagon, and buried them on his farm.<sup>25</sup>

The Marquis Road continues as the main north-south Pamunkey neighborhood thoroughway, extending from Unionville to Brock's Bridge. Change has been constant. Freetown is now more an historic footnote and memory than a physical place. The Lahore settlement is an empty shell. Former schools and post offices along the road no longer exist. Heavy rain washed away bridges on the Pamunkey and North Anna, as well as Matthews Mill.

However, Bethel Baptist Church, North Pamunkey Baptist Church, and Macedonia Christian Church have retained active congregations. Family farms still proliferate, and the rural nature of the community continues. New bridges have replaced the more primitive structures on Pamunkey Creek and the North Anna River. And, from a recent history perspective, Chateau Merrill Anne, an award-winning boutique winery located midway between Lahore and Monrovia, opened in 2012.<sup>26</sup>

After 250 years, the Marquis Road footprint remains much as it was then. Although the original has been paved and straightened, the old road bed closely parallels and frequently intersects the current version. If Lafayette could return, he might still recognize it.

<sup>17</sup> *Orange Oracle*, Orange County Historical Society, Volume 1, Issue 2, (May 22, 2020), pp. 1-2; Frazer, pp. 5-6, 87.

<sup>18</sup> *Orange County Order Book 4*, pp. 454-455; Scott, pp. 135-136; Frazer, pp. 26-27.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas, pp. 71-72. The number 669 is the Orange County secondary road numerical designation for the Marquis Road.

<sup>20</sup> Frazer, pp. 23-24.

<sup>21</sup> Frazer, pp. 34-35.

<sup>22</sup> Hurst, Patricia J., *Soldiers, Stories, Sites and Fights: Orange County,*

*Virginia 1861-1865 and the Aftermath*, (Rapidan, VA, Bookcrafters, Inc., 1998), p. 46.

<sup>23</sup> Hurst, p. 57.

<sup>24</sup> Frazer, pp. 2, 5, 42; Miller, pp. 181-182. Monrovia Road was named Brock's Bridge Road prior to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>25</sup> Scott, pp. 157-158, 282; Hurst, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> The Chateau Merrill Anne Winery was voted the third best winery in *Virginia Living* magazine's "2019 Best of Virginia" issue.

## SSGT William E. Reynolds, Jr.

*Paul Carter*



William E. Reynolds, Jr. Photo courtesy of the Todd Family.

SSGT William E. “Bill” Reynolds, Jr., oldest son of Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Reynolds of “Oakland Heights,” near Gordonsville, was born on September 17, 1906. He had three sisters and six brothers. He attended Gordonsville High School and was employed for 13 years with the Virginia Trailways bus line driving the route from

Danville to Washington, D.C.

He entered the army on February 25, 1941, and was sent to Fort Meade, Maryland, for his basic training. He became a member of Co. A, 67<sup>th</sup> Armored Regiment, 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division at Fort Benning, Georgia, training in tank warfare. He was then transferred to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. While at Fort Bragg he was promoted to sergeant on July 22, 1941, and then promoted to Technician 4<sup>th</sup> Grade on February 1, 1942. In August 1942 he was promoted to staff sergeant and transferred to Co. G, 67<sup>th</sup> Armored Regiment. He was able to visit with his family on leave before he sailed for Africa on October 1, 1942.

Bill arrived in Casablanca in November 1942 as a member of General George Patton’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division as a driver of the M4 Sherman tank. Patton’s orders were to secure the north coast of Africa to keep shipping lanes open for the Suez Canal from German forces. The Suez Canal was a life line for oil from the Middle East and raw products from Asia. There was no resistance in Casablanca, but battles were fought in Algeria and

Tunisia. In Tunisia Bill’s tank hit a mine and exploded. The M4 was gasoline powered and it went up like a fireball. No remains were ever found. It was December 6, 1942.

The family had last received a letter on Christmas day that had been written on November 18 from Africa. Six weeks passed before final notification of his death was sent to the parents. It was a telegram with a black border. His mother couldn’t accept his death. Every day she went to the mailbox still hoping for a letter from her son. His name is listed on the Tablets of the Missing at the North Africa American Cemetery in Carthage, Tunisia. This cemetery covers 27 acres with 2,841 graves and 3,724 names on the wall. He was awarded the Purple Heart posthumously.



View of the North Africa American Cemetery in Carthage. (Photo by Eric T. Gunther, Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:North\\_African\\_American\\_Cemetery\\_and\\_Memorial\\_2006\\_Carthage.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:North_African_American_Cemetery_and_Memorial_2006_Carthage.jpg))

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## Add Some Local Lore to Your Holidays

As the holiday season approaches, we would like to remind you that we have a nice selection of publications—both books and videos—that would make very nice gifts for those with curiosity about our history. One little gem, published in 2013, is *Echoes of Orange* by Frank S. Walker, Jr. *Echoes* is a series of essays covering a wide range of fascinating stories from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to World War II. The stories focus on Orange County and environs, its people, and its wider influence on the world. (Hardcover, 160 pages including index). Younger readers might enjoy *The Nine Lives of an Orange Tabby*, a delightful coloring book that tells the story of Orange County as seen through the eyes of Purr, an orange tabby cat with nine lives.

## Silently Beside the River

Frank S. Walker, Jr.

By the time I felt I knew enough to write about this structure, I had accumulated information from a large number of sources. The most broadly knowledgeable was “Smitty” – William Smith - now retired, but for years the Town of Orange’s Public Works Supervisor. When it comes to the history of the town’s utilities, Smitty is pretty much the corporate memory. He started out working with the “old heads,” and he learned about where things were and how things worked that most people don’t even know existed. Using Smitty’s general outline and supplementing it with bits and chunks of information that I have accumulated over the years, I came up with a story. It goes like this:

In the nineteen teens, the Town of Orange built the water treatment plant you see in the accompanying picture. Long abandoned, the concrete structure stands near the Orange County (south) bank of the Rapidan River on Grelen Farm, a short distance upstream from the old Sylvan Lodge site and directly across the river from Woodberry Forest School. It was modern for its day, with settling tanks and water filtration and chlorination equipment. A 6” cast iron line connected the plant to the recently-built town standpipe and water distribution system that General William Nalle, a retired Army Engineer



Ruins of water treatment plant on the south bank of the Rapidan. Photo courtesy of Frank C. Tallman.

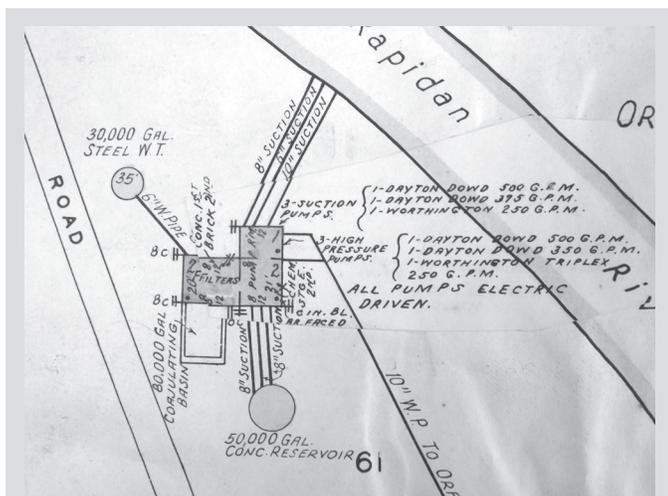
living in Culpeper, had designed for the town. All this replaced a collection of inadequate and probably polluted springs piped in from outside of town, supplemented by private wells, which were also likely polluted. Even in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, livestock was still kept on some town lots, as well as cesspools and rudimentary septic systems, all in close proximity to wells.

According to my Uncle Joe, then the business manager for Woodberry Forest School, the town made a huge mistake by locating the plant just downstream of the Woodberry sewer

outfall line. The town tried to bluff the school into relocating its line, but Woodberry stood fast, citing its having given prior notice to the town. The town knuckled under and did the relocating. It would seem however that the town was probably more tactical than thoughtless, since as even Uncle Joe noted, the plant’s location put it in a perfect position to sell water to Woodberry, which in later years it did.

The plant may have begun operating with engine-driven pumps, but if so it soon converted to electric motors. Getting power to the plant is a sub-story in itself. It begins with Hiram Oliver “H.O.,” “Ollie” Lyne buying the diesel powered generator belonging to A. J. “Preacher” Harlow, a funeral home owner, movie theater operator, one time town mayor, and general entrepreneur. Indeed Harlow’s engine may have been among the earliest to be built at the New York engine factory of beer magnate Adolphus Busch. Lyne moved the generator from Harlow’s lot on Caroline Street (where the fire house is presently located) and set it up at his flour mill at the south end of Mill Street. In addition to running the mill equipment, Lyne used the power to operate an ice plant. He also sold power to town customers as quickly as lines could be strung. There were other small private power systems around, but Lyne evidently continued to upgrade and maintain his dominance of the local market.

By the time plans for the new town water plant were finalized, Lyne owned Willow Grove just north of town and not far from the proposed plant site. The idea of running a power line to the plant by way of Willow Grove was too tempting to pass up. Also, there was the possibility of selling power to Woodberry and nearby residents. By 1917, Woodberry was indeed one of Lyne’s customers. After Woodberry connected,



Detail of the design for the pumping station across the Rapidan River from Woodberry Forest School. Sanborn Map Company, New York. “Orange, Orange County Virginia,” June 1931, updated September 1948.

Beside the River (continued)

my father arranged to tap into that line and run power to our dairy farm. The concept of electric power was so new to some rural folk that Father was required to string a chicken wire “net” under the power line, so if a wire broke it wouldn’t fall and blast the anticipated huge swath of death and destruction.

In the 1940s Woodberry contracted with the town for water, and a line was extended from the plant to the school. Steel pipe was used to cross the river, but it is believed that once across, the line reverted to cast iron. No great effort was made to bury the line in the river bed; in fact during low water periods, it could be seen on the bottom. The price to pay for that type of installation was paid when flood-borne trees snagged the line and ripped it out. The replacement line is understood



Hiram Oliver Lyne’s flour mill on Mill Street. Photo courtesy of Lyne Shackelford.

to be buried under concrete. That will be checked at the next low water time. The break and repair took place in the 60s. By then the plant had been taken out of service, and Woodberry had its own in-house water system. Woodberry, however, still wanted that line available in case of an emergency. Today in a Grelen pasture there is a town water meter. After conferring with the town’s facilities department, Woodberry can go to that meter, open a valve, and town water will flow to the school.

This, then, is the story behind that mysterious building that stands silently beside the river. Writing it has allowed me to assemble information I’ve picked up over several decades. I hope you’ve enjoyed reading this as much as I have enjoyed writing it.

Volume 1, Issue 1 April 24, 2020

## Orange Oracle

An Occasional Electronic Update from the Orange County Historical Society

**New Acquisitions**

**Rescue Squad**- The Orange County Volunteer Rescue Squad, which was in existence for 67 years, has donated all of its papers, photographs, minutes and clippings to the Historical Society.

**New Book**- The Historical Society has a new book: *Local Folks* by Phil Audibert. It is a collection of feature stories he wrote for the Orange County Review in the mid to late 1980s. \$19.95. All proceeds go to the historical society.

**“Memories” Update** Mary White

Obviously like everything else in these difficult times, the “Memories” oral history project has been put on hold. The last person interviewed by Phil Audibert and Bruce Monroe in late February was Mary Holladay White of Scotstown...age 101. She still walks unassisted despite the fact that she broke both legs in an automobile accident at age 97. And although she is hard of hearing, her mind is crystal clear.

Another person to squeak through the interview process before Coronavirus slammed the gates shut was the venerable Frank Walker. The interview, which took more than two hours to conduct, has been edited down to a sparse 51 minutes...all of it fascinating. Many thanks to Bernice Walker for finding and providing so many

Orange County Historical Society

# History to Go

0:15 / 52:04

Our Historical Society has new offerings to help offset the lack of in-person programs during the pandemic. If you have given us your email address, you already will have seen the *Orange Oracle*, our occasional electronic update edited by Phil Audibert. Our History-to-Go programs on YouTube are also the brainchild of Phil. (See “In Case You Missed It” on the next page for details about the videos posted so far.) You can find a link to the YouTube channel on our web site at <https://www.orangetcovahist.org/history-to-go.html>. If you would like to be added to our email list, please send your email address to [info@orangetcovahist.org](mailto:info@orangetcovahist.org).

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## In Case You Missed It

*Lynne G. Lewis*

The title of this column seems slightly ironic given the nature of this year, but the Historical Society has been very busy, if not in the traditional way. We do greatly miss having our monthly programs but hope you have found our new endeavors worthwhile.

After determining that we would need to cancel our programs for the balance of the year, Phil Audibert suggested that we create a YouTube channel and record presentations that were scheduled for some of our monthly meetings. We then decided to include previous offerings if possible, since we have a great many members who live too far away to attend meetings, or who cannot attend for other reasons.

The Orange County Historical Society's YouTube channel was launched with a recording of the May 2018 dedication ceremony for the Madison-Barbour Rural Historic District highway markers, kindly recorded by Ross Hunter. We subsequently uploaded our first program presentation, the remarkable video *Rediscovering Little Petersburg*. The premier, held in November 2019 at the Bethel Baptist Church in Orange, was very warmly received. Produced by Doug Myrick and the late David Sides, and photographed, written, and edited by Phil Audibert, the *Rediscovering Little Petersburg* video was originally intended for our March 2020 program. Now you can enjoy this wonderful slice of Orange County history any time you wish.

This was followed by Frank Walker recording his excellent talk on the four women who were most influential in our first president's life. Entitled *George Washington and His Women*, this informative talk, presented with Mr. Walker's usual sly humor, is a delightful way to learn about a side of General Washington that we don't often consider.

More recently, Bill Speiden recorded the story of his family, embodied in his recent book, *Letters to Tyler*, an homage to his late wife, Sandra Speiden, whose presence in Orange County, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and beyond will not be forgotten. Learn, as will her grandson who never got to know her, about her accomplishments, as well as those of the entire Speiden family.

One more video will be posted before the end of the year, so keep your eye on our other new outlet, the *Orange Oracle*. Another fine idea hatched by Phil Audibert, the *Orange Oracle* is an occasional electronic update, which serves nicely to provide information about our research and activities between issues of our twice-yearly print newsletter. Started in April 2020, the latest issue was emailed just before Thanksgiving.

And that reminds us—if you have not provided your email address, you are missing out on much of our activities. So, please, send it to us (or call 540.672.5366) if you would like to receive the *Orange Oracle*. The link to our YouTube site can be found on our website ([www.orangecovahist.org](http://www.orangecovahist.org)) under the History-to-Go tab at the top.

Finally, we have not determined the format for our annual meeting, but it will not be an in-person event. The “meeting” will take place toward the end of January 2021. Please check our website for up-to-date information as the time approaches.

We wish everyone a happy and safe holiday season and hope that we will be able to gather once again sometime in the coming year.