



## The Gordon Inn

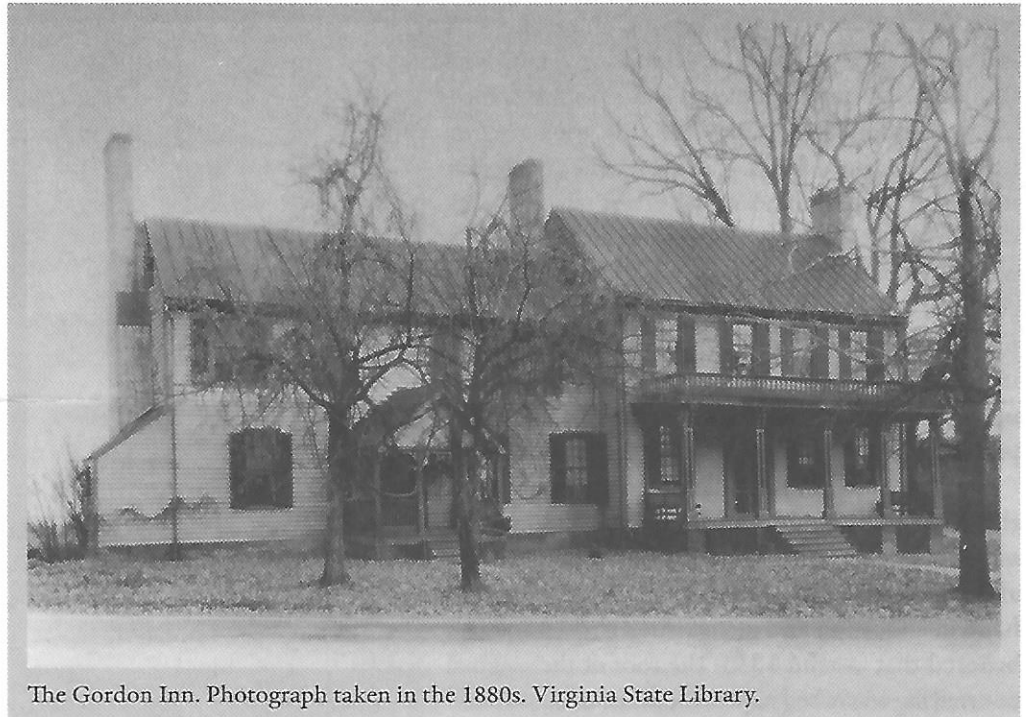
Jayne E. Blair

**N**ATHANIEL GORDON WAS born on August 20, 1763, to Col. James Gordon and Mary Harrison in Merry Point, Virginia, and died on February 28, 1820. He rests in Maplewood Cemetery, located in Gordonsville, Virginia. On his tombstone it states “Founder of Gordonsville 1787.”

On April 14, 1787, Gordon purchased 1,350 acres from John Whitaker Willis, a relative of James Madison,<sup>1</sup> paying “one thousand and fifty pounds of the present curt [currency] of Virginia.”<sup>2</sup> This location presented a great opportunity for Gordon as it was at the cross-roads of two major travel routes, the Fredericksburg Road and the Richmond Road. It was here that he would build his home, calling it “Newville.”<sup>3</sup>

Soon, this area was teeming—with dependencies, other buildings, and individuals. In addition to the outside kitchen, there was a granary and a stable. Across the road was a dairy and farther away a barn and a corn house. Gordon had approximately 20 slaves to not only work the farm and care for the livestock, but also to work as house servants.

In 1794 Nathaniel Gordon applied for and was able to obtain a license from the county to open a tavern at this location. Most taverns of the era also provided room and board for the weary traveler. Very soon Gordon’s Tavern became a stop on the stage line that ran from south to north (Charlottesville through Orange Court House on to Fredericksburg) via the Fredericksburg Road and the west to east route (Shenandoah



The Gordon Inn. Photograph taken in the 1880s. Virginia State Library.

Valley through Louisa and on to Richmond) via the Richmond Road. Before long the tavern acquired many other names including Gordon’s Tavern, the Gordon House, or the Gordon Inn. Gordon enlarged his home by the addition of a wing in 1802.<sup>4</sup>

Thomas Jefferson often told people traveling by way of Gordonsville on their way to Washington, the new capital of the United States, to stop by the Gordon Inn as it was a “good house.”<sup>5</sup> Many noteworthy individuals did follow Jefferson’s advice and stopped by Gordonsville visiting the Gordon Tavern, some spending the night upstairs at the Gordon Inn. The list of visitors included not only Thomas Jefferson, but also James Monroe, James Madison, James and Philip Barbour, James

<sup>1</sup> The property had been owned by Ambrose Madison, the grandfather of President James Madison. Upon the death of Ambrose Madison in 1732, the land went to his daughter Elizabeth who would later marry Richard Beale. Afterwards the land was given to their daughter Ann Beale who married John Whitaker Willis [Miller, Ann L., *Antebellum Orange: The Pre-Civil War Homes, Public Buildings and Historic Sites of Orange County, Virginia*, (Orange, VA: Orange County Historical Society, 1988), 41].

<sup>2</sup> Orange County Deed Book 19, 93.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, 41.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>5</sup> *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 1940, Vol. 48, 99.

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Waddell, William Wirt, Henry Clay and even the Marquis de Lafayette on his visit to the area in 1824.

On February 2, 1813, Nathaniel Gordon became postmaster of the newly created post office, which would become known as Gordonsville, named after the postmaster. At the time, post offices were created to keep pace with the area's population and to satisfy merchants who had to travel long distances to receive any mail whatsoever.<sup>6</sup>

Gordon died on February 28, 1820, at the age of fifty-six. By the time of his death, the little town of Gordonsville was growing. It now consisted of the post office, a grocery store, a blacksmith shop, and several homes including a substantial house built by Dr. Charles Beale. Dr. Beale had married Gordon's daughter Mary and purchased land near his father-in-law. Gordon's son, John N. Gordon, took over the business, but within a few short years, the tavern shut down and the property was put up for sale. By 1830, the tavern had become a private residence when it was purchased by Martin Baker, who would then establish a boy's preparatory school. At the time, the property consisted of not only the residence but also its dependencies and "other buildings which make up Old Gordonsville."<sup>7</sup> By 1831, Baker had been appointed Postmaster for the Gordonsville area.

In the mid-1850s, William Kemper purchased the Gordon Inn and continued running a boy's school. His cousin was James Lawson Kemper, who, although a lawyer in Madison and Orange, kept his hand in education and often visited the school. It is believed that around 1853 "the roof of the original tavern wing was raised to provide for two full stories."<sup>8</sup> The house would eventually have 21 rooms.

Kemper's school closed after only four years. In 1857, he put the Gordon House up for sale along with its dependencies and 28 acres of land. The property now occupied space on both sides of Main Street and the main road to Orange Court House. The following year, "a distinguished school of long standing in Alexandria"<sup>9</sup> came up for sale and Kemper jumped on it.

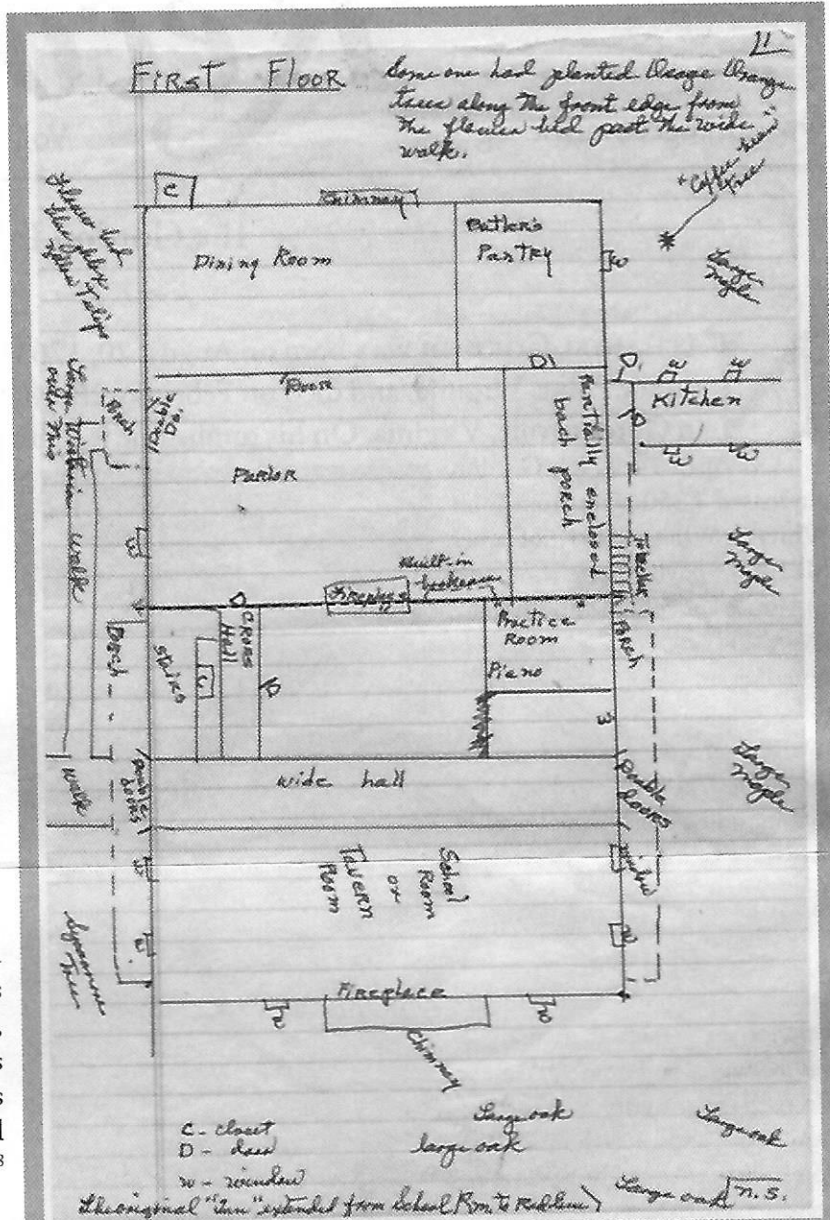
Mrs. Mary E. Barbour, the daughter-in-law of Philip P. Barbour of the nearby home known as Frascati, purchased the Gordon House. She was by now a widow with four children. One of her daughters, Miss Jennie Barbour, set up and ran her "Select School for Girls" out of the house. The school contin-

<sup>6</sup> Chesapeake & Ohio Piedmont Subdivision: Gordonsville, Larry Z. Daily, April 2022, [www.piedmontsub.com/Gville.shtml](http://www.piedmontsub.com/Gville.shtml).

<sup>7</sup> Thomas, William H.B., *Gordonsville, Virginia: Historic Crossroads Town*, (Orange, VA: Green Publishers, 1980), 28.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.



First floor plan of the Gordon Inn as drawn in 1987 by Nina B. Shannon. The red line mentioned in the note at the bottom of the figure is indicated by the dashed line added across the middle of the drawing. From the Orange County Historical Society Collections.

ued until the early 1900s. The property would remain in the family until 1935.

In 1840 the Louisa Railroad came to Gordonsville and would be joined by the Orange and Alexandria in 1854. Some trains ran north to south while others would run east to west. Where the tracks crossed in Gordonsville, the Exchange Hotel was built in 1860, providing a stopover and resting place for those who had to switch trains to continue to their destination.

With the onset of the Civil War, Gordonsville provided a major communication center for the Army of Northern Virginia. In 1862, the Confederate Government took possession of

## Gordon Inn (*continued*)

the Exchange Hotel and converted it into the Gordonsville Receiving and Forwarding Hospital where soldiers could be treated either for disease or injuries. By the end of the war, over 70,000 men had been treated at the Hospital. The Town of Gordonsville was now anchored between the Gordon House holding the north part of Main Street while the hospital held the south part of the town.

In 1878 Charles Beale Linney, grandson of Dr. Charles Beale, built his house “just below the present traffic circle and within sight of the Gordon Tavern.”<sup>10</sup> Mr. Linney, a generous benefactor to many civic organizations in the county, was also a frequent visitor to the Gordon Inn. It had often been reported that Mr. Linney was quite smitten with Miss Jennie Barbour and thought that his home would eventually become their home. But that was not to be.

Orange County saw the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding in 1934 with elaborate celebrations from September 25<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup>. On Wednesday, September 26, at 10:45 AM a reception was held at the Gordon Inn, attended by numerous individuals including Thomas P. Somerville and Mrs. Mary Barbour Shannon, great grandchildren of Justice Phillip Pendleton Barbour of Frascati, and Thomas Barbour, George W. Barbour, Mrs. C. H. B. Ellis, Mrs. J. C. Graves and Mrs. W. G. Christian, grandchildren of Governor James Barbour of Barboursville. Dr. John W. Wayland, the noted historian of the Shenandoah Valley, was the guest speaker. An article in the *Orange County News* reported that the Gordon Inn “is one of the oldest and most historical homes in the State” and “vies with Montpelier and Monticello in historical significance.”<sup>11</sup>

The following year, 1935, the Gordon Inn, having fallen into disrepair, was looking for a new owner to take charge. By now, the Inn was in terrible shape and The Golden Horseshoe Chapter of the D.A.R. and its Chapter President Mattie Leitch Scott, the wife of Coast Guard Commander Philip Henshaw Scott, made a proposal to her chapter to not only repair the Inn but also to purchase it.

Mrs. Scott's effort, though temporarily successful, failed after a few years. The Inn was purchased by Mrs. George Zinn and Mrs. Charles T. Neale, of Orange County, who later sold it



This photo of the Gordon Inn is believed to have been taken in the 1920s. According to G. Strange, the woman leaning against the porch pillar is Annie Sommers. The other women are her daughters but the young man leaning against the tree is unidentified. Used in later years as a private residence, it was torn down in 1947. From the R. Duff Green Collection, Orange County Historical Society.

to James W. Halley, of Orange, and Garland Shuler of Somerset. They were, it is “believed planning to demolish the building and erect a modern tourist court on the site.”<sup>12</sup>

Over the next few years, the Gordon Inn continued to decline as it was left alone and abandoned. The building became an eyesore as the county and the Town of Gordonsville were attempting to grow financially by attracting new businesses. It was decided by the town leaders that the Gordon Inn/Tavern must go. It was announced in the *Orange Review* on February 8, 1947, that the Historical Gordon Inn was going to be torn down, saying that “the passing of this old landmark is worthy of extended notice” and ending the article saying, “It was a quaint and historic old place with an air of charm. It is with regret that the county notes its passing.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Orange Review*, February 2, 1947.

<sup>13</sup> *Orange Review*, February 8, 1947.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>11</sup> *Orange County News*, September 20, 1934.



## Little Petersburg Cemetery

*Patrick Colby*

On a cool but sunny morning in early November 2021, an intrepid corps of volunteers assembled to tackle the clearing and cleanup of the Little Petersburg Cemetery. Those who have seen the wonderful documentary, *Rediscovering Little Petersburg*, will recall that it was established as a Freedman's village after the Civil War and lies at the eastern end of Little Skyline Drive in Orange County.

An important feature of the village was the Fisherman's Lodge with an adjacent cemetery. In later years the Lodge was abandoned and the entire area, including the cemetery, had become overgrown. Thus, a few days prior to the cleanup crew arriving, the Monroe brothers reopened Petersburg Lane to permit tractor access to the area adjacent to the cemetery and Fisherman's Lodge structure. They also did preliminary clearing of brush in the cemetery to simplify locating burial sites in and adjacent to the cemetery. This was done a few days prior to the cleanup and proved to be quite an eye-opener.

The number of burials without formal headstones was far greater than the number of graves with manufactured headstones. Thirteen headstones have been found, and approximately 65 burials were marked with flags (where some combination of a depression, headstones and/or footstones were observed) for a total of about 80 graves. The burial area extends to the parcel boundaries and in some cases beyond, and is considerably greater than the area with manufactured stones. Some of the suspected burials are near the Fisherman's Lodge, and suggest that early burials may have been inadvertently covered during construction of the Lodge. Much is still unknown, but it seems plausible that some of the earliest burials could predate the Civil War.

The cleanup activities focused on clearing the trail created around the perimeter of the parcel by the Monroes' earlier work. The work fell into two general categories: brush/fallen limb/vine removal, and collection of trash. Brush was consolidated into piles for eventual burning, chipping, or disposal at the landfill. The entire area is heavily trash strewn, especially with glass bottles and household "junk" (the lodge had been most recently used as a squatter's residence). Metal trash was consolidated for eventual recycling. Most debris was clearly trash, though some items may have been used as burial markers (a cast iron child's bed frame, for instance) and such items were set aside.



Gravestones in the Little Petersburg Cemetery. Photo courtesy of Marcia Colby.

By the end of the effort, the area was generally clear of trash and free of brush/limbs. There are numerous larger live "volunteer" trees still in the area, but these were left undisturbed at present. The most daunting cleanup task remaining is clearing of old trash dumps around the edges of the burial areas. Likewise, disposal of the collected trash-filled plastic bags and brush/wood will require considerable effort.

In addition to the cleanup, the cemetery has been surveyed, the parcel deed has been updated to reflect current Bethel Baptist Church trustees, and the county tax information (GIS system) has been corrected and updated. The cemetery is thought to be secure for the foreseeable future.

Thanks are owed to the following volunteers: Anita, Angie, and Wayne Kelly; Sabra, Bruce, Detrick, Melvin, and Greg Monroe; Alyson and Larry Sappington; May and Mike Saxton; Marcia and Patrick Colby; and Alexis Kemper. Special thanks, too, to James Monroe for the use of his driveway, as well as his kitchen for preparing coffee break supplies.



Fall 2021 cleanup day volunteers at Little Petersburg Cemetery. Left to right: Detrick Monroe, Melvin Monroe, Greg Monroe, Bruce Monroe, Alexis Kemper, Patrick Colby, Wayne Kelly, Angie Kelly (in front of Wayne) and Anita Kelly. Volunteers not in photo: Alyson and Larry Sappington, May and Mike Saxton, Marcia Colby, Sabra and James Monroe. Photo courtesy of Marcia Colby.

## Little Petersburg (continued)

Over the winter, the 50+ bags of trash collected in November were hauled to the dump, along with the old tires and wheels. On the cold, snowy weekend prior to the spring cleanup, the brush piles created last fall were burned.

Then, on the lovely spring afternoon of March 19, 2022, volunteers Bruce, Detrick, and Melvin Monroe; Alyson and Larry Sappington; May and Mike Saxton; Barry Barr; Marcia and Patrick Colby; and Alexis Kemper returned to the cemetery for spring cleaning. James Monroe again graciously allowed the use of his driveway.

The work begun last November resumed; brush and (smaller) trees were removed and piled, and more trash was picked up and bagged to continue defining the tractor trail around the perimeter of the lot. The Fisherman's Lodge remains untouched and still in a sorry state, but the rest of the property is now much improved and hopefully will remain so during the spring and summer season with some minimal maintenance. Access to the cemetery is now free of vines, brush, and trash (though footing up the path and in the cemetery is still not perfect).

The Saxtons began a methodical documentation of the marked and unmarked burials. The technique involves a grid system where individual graves are noted with flags, then numbered, permitting them to be recorded and referred to later. This also allows a better count of the number of burials.

Complementing the physical work at the site, Lynne Lewis is starting research on the history of the Grand Order of Galilean Fishermen as well as of the cemetery. The Grand Order of Galilean Fishermen, a prominent Black fraternal organization, apparently had an important role in the Little Petersburg community. Currently, virtually nothing is known of the early days of the cemetery, or how the Fisherman's Lodge came to be built on the parcel. Hopefully Lynne's work will shed some light in both areas.

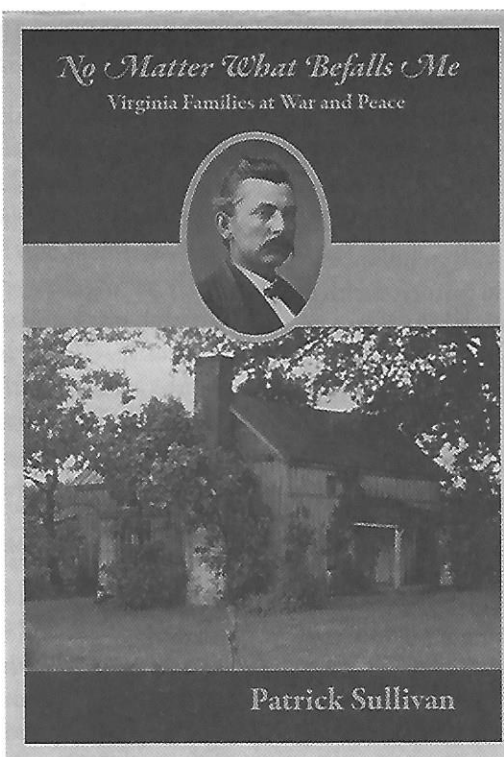
The next formal cleanup will be scheduled for this fall. In the meantime, trips to the dump, maintenance to control summer vegetation, and perhaps improvements to the entry path footing will occur informally. If you'd like to help with any of the above, contact Patrick Colby (732-266-4219).

## Patrick Sullivan, OCHS Author, Receives Honor

Lynne G. Lewis

The Orange County Historical Society was delighted to learn that Patrick Sullivan, author of *No Matter What Befalls Me: Virginia Families at War and Peace*, a collection of historical essays published by the Orange County Historical Society in 2015, received the 2022 Dr. Edward Alvey, Jr. Education Award from the Historic Fredericksburg Foundation on March 27<sup>th</sup>. The award recognizes significant contributions made to the advancement of preservation-related education. In addition his book, Mr. Sullivan publishes the blog, *Spotsylvania Memory* (<http://spotsylvaniamemory.blogspot.com>) that covers not only Spotsylvania but also surrounding counties and published *Rockbridge Memory* (<http://rockbridgemory.blogspot.com>), which covered that county.

Mr. Sullivan was born in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and grew up in Spotsylvania County. He was educated in the area public schools and received his degree from Madison College (now James Madison University) in Harrisonburg, Virginia. His post-graduate work was done at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.



He became interested in the history of his large and widely-connected family, their friends and neighbors, and the free and enslaved people of color who lived and worked among them. His research yielded many stories and an enormous collection of documents, photographs, and artifacts. A particular area of interest has been the effect of the American Civil War on various families and individuals. In *No Matter What Befalls Me*, and using their own words wherever possible, he presents stories of how a number of them endured, adapted, and survived to rebuild their lives. In going beyond the war, Sullivan also tells us of such things as the practice of a doctor in Orange, the strange behavior of a court clerk, the dangers of working on the local railroad, and the historic connections and questionable virtue of a Wilderness lady.

Founded in 1965, The Orange County Historical Society maintains an active publishing program, and its list of titles, including *No Matter What Befalls Me*, may be viewed at [www.orangecovahist.org](http://www.orangecovahist.org). The Research Center at 130 Caroline Street in Orange is open weekday afternoons from 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

## The Orange County Historical Society 2021 Annual Report

The 2022 annual meeting of the Orange County Historical Society was held at the Research Center at 130 Caroline Street (Orange, VA) and via Zoom, on Sunday, January 30, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. A brief business meeting was held with the various reports below presented to the members attending. The meeting concluded with the video presentation of *Robert S. Walker and His Legacy, Woodberry Forest* by Frank S. Walker, Jr.

### Nominating Committee

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

Ashley Abruzzo, for a first 3-year term

Mark Hoerath, for a first 3-year term

Mike Saxton, for a second 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.

### President's Desk (Ray Ezell)

Although 2021 was still marred by the lingering effects of the Covid-19 predicament, the Society and its Board of Directors have worked hard to maintain a strong, visible presence in Orange County and to implement improved ways to engage Society members and the public at large. I would like to offer my biggest thanks to our research center staff who allow us to operate and provide our services to the interested public (mostly free of charge). The efforts and dedication of Jean McGann, Jayne Blair, and Ruth Mallory Long have not gone unnoticed or unappreciated.

During 2021 the Society undertook a number of beneficial projects. These included the repair of the four front porch columns at the research center and the printing of an updated membership brochure. We inaugurated a program to assist public school teachers in Orange County, providing them with complimentary memberships and web-based resources. We also partnered with the Orange County Department of Planning to have them scan our collection of 1937 aerial maps of the county at high resolution. These maps suffered badly from deterioration and were infrequently used. The digital images will be available at the research center for open use. We also concluded a strategic five-year planning effort to identify needs that should be addressed for the long term success of the Society. It was a very productive year!

The coming year marks the 57<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Society's founding, and I anticipate that it will be a time of additional transition and exploration of new ways to engage our members and the community, while maintaining respect for our core mission. I am also looking forward to a special anniversary in the history of the Town of Orange during the coming year. The town will celebrate the sesquicentennial (150<sup>th</sup>) anniversary of its official incorporation as a Town. While most understand that the town was founded much earlier, this is a milestone that deserves to be marked and appreciated. The Society plans to commemorate Orange's 1872 incorporation with the release of a professionally produced video documentary focused on the development and growth of our town. The release is anticipated for the late third-quarter of 2022.

The Society endeavors to maintain relevance in a changing world, while striving to honor and tell the stories of the past. *I'd like to ask each one of you to evaluate how you can be of service to this community through the efforts of our historical society.* I'm excited to see how you respond to this question. **Please feel free to reach out directly to me at rayezell\_2000@yahoo.com.**

### Treasurer's Report (Clara Colby)

The Society greatly appreciates the ongoing support of our members and friends. We are also grateful to the town and county for their grants again this year. This fall we combined our membership renewal notice with a request for additional support above the basic membership level, rather than running separate member renewal and annual fund campaigns. We are heartened by your response to this streamlined effort. Membership at various levels and additional donations in 2021 totaled \$34,350, which compares favorably to previous years' support.

Our income from all sources in 2021 was \$39,690.25, and our expenses were \$41,974.86. This loss of \$2,284.61 reflects in part a drop in sales of publications during the pandemic. However, we began 2022 with \$11,500.90 in our checking accounts, in addition to our investment assets of over \$378,000. Thus we continue to have a solid financial footing from which to serve the community through our programs, research efforts, and publications.

### Committee Reports

#### Building and Grounds Committee (Patrick Colby)

A number of tasks have been undertaken or coordinated by the Building and Grounds Committee in order to make our facility safer, more appealing, and accessible by our members and the community. Highlights include:

Assessment of long term space needs for our collections and library; spring clean-up/removal of much extra stuff that had lost its usefulness; Rapidan Master Gardeners volunteer maintenance and landscape design efforts to renew our landscaping; acquisition of cushioned chairs in the auditorium; repairs to the front porch columns and their masonry pedestals; contracting for additional custom shelving for books; and installation of new fire extinguishers, new lighting in the vault, and towel holders in the restrooms.

#### Collections Committee (Hilarie Hicks)

The Collections Committee made an overview of the materials currently stored in the Research Center, including not only items that are part of the Society collection, but also some materials that were left for evaluation or "foster care" until an appropriate repository could be identified. This prompted the first draft of a Collections Policy, which will guide the decision process for accessioning materials into the Society's collection and deaccessioning materials that are not appropriate to retain.

The Society received three significant collections as gifts this year. The Duff Green/Orange Review Collection includes thousands of negatives of images published in the *Orange County*

*See Annual Report on page 7.*



## Annual Report (*continued*)

*Review.* The Orange County Rescue Squad (now dissolved) donated its records, including clippings, plaques, and other materials. Lastly, historian Mitchell Lichtenburg donated a large collection of photocopied Orange County records (tax records, land records, census records, etc.). These materials will save future researchers many a trip to the Library of Virginia to access this information.

### Education Committee (Linda Carlton)

The Society has partnered with Orange County Public Schools to make local history more easily accessible to history teachers during the 2021-2022 school year. The Committee created an Educators Resource page on the Society website containing articles, maps, videos and stories for use in the classroom. The articles support the Virginia Standards of Learning in grades 4-12, which are required for high school graduation. Dr. Cecil Snead, Superintendent, and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction facilitated the outreach to county teachers. By making local history readily available to teachers, it can be more easily incorporated into lesson plans when appropriate. National and world history events are reflected in the rich history of Orange County and create meaning for students by helping them connect first to their immediate world, thus building a context for the history they study in class.

The Education Committee encourages anyone interested in local history to explore the articles on the teacher resources page at: [www.orangecovahist.org/educator-resources.html](http://www.orangecovahist.org/educator-resources.html).

### Outreach Committee (Phil Audibert)

The Outreach Committee produced 12 editions of the *Oracle*, our electronic newsletter, and 12 episodes of our "History-to-Go" videos that are posted on the Society's YouTube channel. Although we never promised to produce one each month, that's the way it turned out. These episodes can be accessed at the Society's web site ([www.orangecovahist.org/history-to-go.html](http://www.orangecovahist.org/history-to-go.html)). Issues of the *Oracle* briefly discuss a variety of topics of interest to members and the public, supplementing the semi-annual printed newsletter. Needless to say those two on-going projects kept committee chair Audibert plenty busy.

### Membership (Mike Saxton)

Even before this year's membership renewal period ended, we retained a much higher percentage of members (at 92%) than any year recently. As of December 2021, the Society had 189 active members with 86% from Virginia. The members from 14 other states reflect the county's importance to our nation's history. The committee conducted a member interest survey to help inform the recently completed 5-year strategic planning, and implemented a volunteer interest survey to help engage more volunteers. Lastly, to increase accountability for results to members, the general fund raising campaign was changed to specific, project based, fundraising.

### Program Committee (Ann Miller)

We continued to defer our traditional monthly meetings at the Research Center due to the ongoing Covid pandemic. We had hoped to have a summer picnic meeting at Maplewood Cemetery near Gordonsville, but this was cancelled due to an impending rainstorm. In lieu of our in-person meetings, we provided the "History-To-Go" programs. Response has been very positive, and we have actually reached a larger audience than our typical in-person meetings—with multiple hundreds of people watching some of them. For 2022, the status of monthly meetings at the Research Center continues to be uncertain and will depend on the evolving situation. However, we have tentatively scheduled a picnic meeting for early summer 2022, showcasing the impressive gardens at Waverley Farm near Somerset. We also hope to reschedule the picnic at Maplewood Cemetery. [N.B., see the Upcoming Events column on page 10 for the picnic schedule.]

### Publications Committee (Lynne G. Lewis)

The Publications Committee oversaw the production of two 12-page issues of our print newsletter, *Record*, in 2021. In addition, 12 issues of the *Orange Oracle*, the Society's occasional electronic newsletter, were sent to our membership and interested friends via email.

Work continues on producing the second edition of Garland Tyree's *Old Blue Run Baptist Church*. While we had hoped to have this fine work out in 2021, circumstances beyond our control intervened and we moved the date into 2022.

The committee welcomes inquiries from our membership and others regarding potential articles for our newsletter and the *Oracle*. We would be glad to discuss topics and our requirements and protocols. We know there is plenty of untapped talent out there!

### Research Committee (Ray Ezell)

This past year was surprisingly productive both indoors and outside. The research committee inspected a late-19<sup>th</sup> - early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Black cemetery at the Order of Galilean Fishermen lodge in the Little Petersburg community, and the Mill Research study group made visits to several mill sites to support ongoing efforts to document millscapes throughout the county. These included Brockman's/Mathews Mill, Wilhoit's Mill, and an unnamed mill on Blue Run.

Bill Speiden reported that progress of the Joint African American Land Ownership study group was hampered due to pandemic restrictions at the county clerk's office. However, about six inches worth of papers, correspondence, and some deeds going back to the 1870s have been accumulated with attention paid to Hampstead and plots of land owned by Blacks in the woods south of route 609 and a 25-acre tract between Rte. 20 and the Rapidan River one half mile west of the Somerset Center Store site.

## Annual Report (*continued*)

### Five-year Strategic Planning Committee (Bill Speiden)

This temporary committee was created as a response to discussion of possible expansion of the Research Center to increase space for collections. The committee has examined each active committee in our organization with attention paid to definition of goals and suggested action points, in conjunction with the Society's future contributions, while satisfying its mission and vision statements. To date we have written a vision statement, massaged our mission statement, and created action items. Our goal is to have the plan with an Executive Summary ready to present to the Board of Directors in early 2022.

### New and Returning Society Directors (for 2022-2025)

The Society elected a slate of Directors (two new, one returning) to serve the organization for the next three years. These are Ashley Abruzzo, Mark Hoerath, and Mike Saxton.

**Ashley Abruzzo.** Ashley was born in Des Moines, Iowa and grew up in Rockford, Illinois. She received her B.A. degree in history at the University of Illinois at Springfield and her M.A. degree in Applied History from Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania in 2011. While in Springfield, she was a Manuscripts Intern with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. During her time at Shippensburg, she was an intern with the C&O Canal National Historical Park in Hagerstown, Maryland.

Ashley moved to Virginia in 2013, working as a museum educator at Morven Park in Leesburg. She then became the Tourism and Marketing Manager for the Journey Through Hallowed Ground, a non-profit organization that brings preservation awareness to a 180-mile swath from Gettysburg to Charlottesville. In that job, she handled itineraries for domestic and international visitors, marketing and merchandising, and led their Certified Tourism Ambassador training.

She joined the Germanna Foundation in 2017 as its Membership Development Manager. Ashley focuses on fundraising and membership relations, community outreach, and event planning. She descends from one of the 1717 Germanna colonists who later moved to Madison County, Virginia. Ashley currently lives in Fredericksburg and in her spare time enjoys reading, doing copious amounts of ancestry research (she has a few ties to Orange County!), and traveling.

**Mark Hoerath.** Mark is community-oriented with significant volunteer activities and positions. He has volunteered for the Boy Scouts of America, Washington DC Region Sports Car Club of America, Rapidan River Master Gardeners, and Four County Players. He loves domestic and international travel, and he says that bicycling and home improvement are fun! He lives in downtown Barboursville in a historic house with a lovely Southwest Mountains and vineyard view. He describes himself as "always curious about lots of stuff."

Mark has a marketing and communications background with Baltimore City Public Schools, Johns Hopkins School of Health Services, Ohio University, and University Hospitals of Cleveland. Most recently he was advertising manager at the Virginia Lottery.

He has significant experience creating/producing/directing TV, radio, and print communications directed to consumers, the business community, and employees. He has demonstrated strong marketing, advertising, start-up, and project management experience.

**Mike Saxton.** Mike, a returning Director, was born in Orange County, and spent much of his youth in other parts of Virginia but returned to Orange during middle school. His early interest in history began in high school correlating Civil War maps to modern topographical maps in order to locate and photograph undocumented historic homes in Orange County on behalf of Wm. H. B. Thomas. He also served as the youth representative on the Orange County Bicentennial Commission in 1976. He earned a B.S. degree in Biology from Virginia Tech, served in the Stonewall Brigade of the Virginia National Guard, and received a M.A. degree in Education from the University of Georgia.

After Mike's career in the pharmaceutical industry and medical association world where he retired as Chief Learning Officer at the American Academy of Physician Assistants, Mike and his wife May Crenshaw Saxton (also an Orange native) returned to Orange County. They enjoy their four adult children and three grandchildren.

Currently, Mike is a volunteer with several groups including Love Outreach Food Pantry, Graham Cemetery, and serving as a trail maintainer in Shenandoah National Park. He is the current vice-president of the Orange County Historical Society and board member of the Virginia Genealogical Society. He also serves with the Orange County African American Historical Society, James Madison Museum, George Washington Carver 4-County Museum, Montpelier, Rapidan Foundation, Germanna Foundation, Madison, Greene, Louisa and Albemarle Historical Societies, Friends of Cedar Mountain Battlefield, American Civil War Museum, and the Central Virginia Genealogical Society.

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## Orange County Historical Society Members as of 1 May 2022

The Orange County Historical Society would like to thank all of our current members! Without your support, we could not continue to carry out our mission as a research, archival, and educational organization dedicated to the discovery, preservation, and dissemination of the history of the people, places, organizations, and events of Orange County and the surrounding area.

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 Ben Self  
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 Denise Shoemaker  
 Kristin Shuman  
 Michele Voorhees  
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 Hannah Zimmerman

## Upcoming Events

It's been a long time coming...but as the weather turns warmer, the Society plans to host a number of in-person programs and picnics at a variety of Orange County venues. Some of them you may know, others will be new. We are looking forward to renewing the fellowship that has served our organization so well over the years.

Save the following dates for the programs that may interest you. Watch your email for reminders with more specific information and directions approximately 2 weeks to 10 days before each event. No reminders will be sent through the U.S. Mail, so should you need more information, please call our office (540.672.5366) for more information. We hope to see you there!

Sunday, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 p.m. Matthews Mill, Lahore

Sunday, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 6:00 p.m. Old Blue Run Baptist Church, Somerset. This will be a joint picnic with the Orange County African American Historical Society.

Sunday, August 28<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 p.m. Maplewood Cemetery, Gordonsville

## PFC Charles Franklin Grasty

*Paul Carter*

Private First Class Charles Franklin Grasty, son of Charles C. and Barbara Knight Grasty, was born on 9 April 1925 in Orange County, the oldest of four children. He was 6'-2" tall and was a mechanic before entering the military, working at the American Silk Mills in Orange according to his U. S. World War II Draft Card, filled out on his birthday in 1943.

Charles was inducted into the U. S. Army infantry on 23 September 1943 and served at Camp Wheeler, Georgia, performing his basic training until 30 January 1944. He left for overseas duty on 23 February 1944, assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.

He was missing for 47 days before he was declared dead on 3 June 1944 in Italy. His body was never recovered. He was just 19 years old. Charles is one of 153 soldiers still missing from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division during World War II.

Charles's father was furious and extremely upset that his son had been killed. He was known to state that he wanted to kill President Roosevelt for starting the war. A marker was placed at Unionville Christian Church cemetery noting his death. The Bronze Star and Purple Heart were awarded to Charles posthumously. His name also appears on the Tablets of the Missing at the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery and Memorial in Nettuno, Italy.

## 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), 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.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(If business/organization member, name of business or organization)

**Street:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_

**State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Status:**  New  Renewal  Address, name, etc. update

**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 Friend Member: \$50
- Annual Sustaining Member: \$100
- Annual Patron Member: \$200
- Annual Sponsor Member: \$500
- Golden Horseshoe Lifetime Member: \$2500

## Legacy

One way to extend your positive influence on your community is to include the Orange County Historical Society (OCHS) in your Will. Whether you wish to support the Society's genealogy files, research materials, programs including the extended outreach via the "History-to-Go" series, oral histories, local history books or any combination of these, a legacy gift in your will would be an investment in Orange County's future.

When writing your will, you can include a gift to OCHS with little fanfare. And if you already have a will, you can, when updating it, add a codicil leaving what you wish to to any entity. Ask your attorney about including the OCHS in your will. As Board of Directors member Bill Speiden likes to say, "Charity begins at home."

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to seeing you at our programs this summer season and/or in the Research Center at 130 Caroline Street, Orange, perhaps researching your family's genealogy, local history, or just browsing our publications.

Private Charles Franklin Grasty, 19, son of Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Grasty, of Route 3, Orange and nephew of Mrs. R. L. Gatewood, of Stop 11, Nine Mile Rd., has given his life in combat in Italy, his family has been notified. Private Grasty, previously reported missing in action, was serving in the infantry of the Seventh Army. Memorial services will be held for Private Grasty at the Unionville Baptist Church. Besides his parents and his aunt, he is survived by two brothers, Herbert and Henry, and a sister, Virginia.



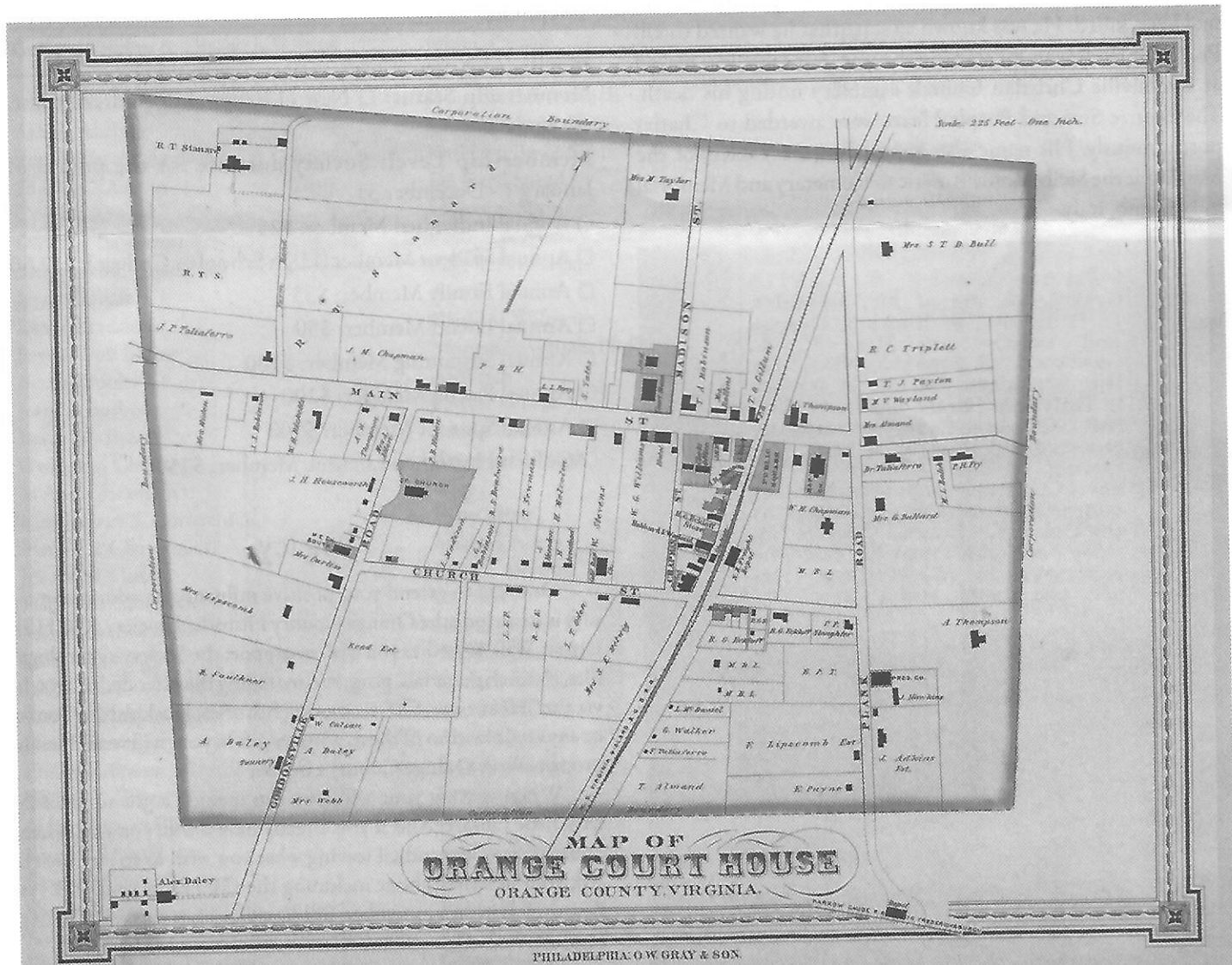
Top image: Death notice for Charles Franklin Grasty, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Richmond, Virginia, 27 July 1944.

Bottom image: Charles F. Grasty marker at the Unionville Christian Church, Unionville, Virginia. Photo courtesy of James Snyder.



Orange County Historical Society  
130 Caroline Street  
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This 1878 map clearly illustrates postbellum Orange. It is critical to our understanding of how the town recovered from the Civil War era, setting the stage for its economic success at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From the Orange County Historical Society Collections.