

Orange Oracle

An Occasional Electronic Update from the Orange County Historical Society

Newsbits

The Virginia Volunteers' Encampment by Ray Ezell-Gordonsville was selected to host the "Camp of Instruction for the 1st Brigade Infantry" during the summer of 1914. The 1st Brigade was commonly referred to as the "Virginia Militia" or the "Virginia Volunteers." A total of 1,941 members of the Virginia Volunteers mustered at the newly established camp in Gordonsville on July 21, 1914. Colonel Wilbur E. Wilder, 5th Cavalry, from Fort Myer (in Arlington, VA) was the camp commander and 1st Lieutenant Theodore M. Chase, U.S. Army Coastal Artillery Corps (and instructor at West Point), was the camp quartermaster.



Flour tent at Virginia Volunteers Encampment

Graves Mill 25 Years Ago

by Doug Graves



Photo taken by Doug Graves on horseback June 30, 1995

We had an extremely wet spring leading up to that eventful day on June 27, 1995, the result being the valley land and mountain slopes were completely saturated. Another storm approached which was heavily laden with moisture. It failed to have the altitude necessary to pass over and out of our valley and cross over the Blue Ridge Mountains. As a result, the storm remained stationary over a relatively small strip of area to include Graves Mill (and a few adjoining locations). The storm then deposited all of its rain here in Graves Mill and the immediate areas surrounding our beautiful valley. At my home in Graves Mill some 32 inches of rain fell in a 24 hour period!

The encampment occupied a footprint that extended for almost a mile southwest of the center of Gordonsville along Charlottesville Road (current Rte 231). This area is reckoned to be just north and west of the former Piedmont Association's Tabernacle Assembly Grounds inside the Louisa county line, near the present-day Tabernacle Road. After 10 days of military instruction and drills, mock battles, and regimental inspections and parades, the encampment ended on July 31, 1914 and the soldiers returned to their homes across the Commonwealth.

Buildings and Grounds Committee Chair sought

Paul Carter writes, "I am looking for someone to take over the Building and Grounds Committee in January. It will take a few months to get someone up to snuff on everything without any pressure on anyone. It is not a good move to drop the ball without a little training period. This is the way Everett Tucker did me and it has worked out fairly well." *Editor's Note- This position does not have to be filled by a Board member. It can be filled by a rank and file member of the Society. Contact Paul at pjlitterbox@verizon.net*



Lillard farm- Photo by Doug Graves

I interviewed a VDOT bridge supervisor. One of his many responsibilities was to monitor the water flow measuring devices at the primary bridges in and about Madison County. At the Rt. 29 bridge between Madison and Greene Counties, at the height of the flood, his equipment recorded 106,000 cubic feet of water per second flowing at this location.

To put this into perspective, the amount of water flowing under-over-and around this bridge was equal to "29 fully loaded tractor trailer trucks, crossing the bridge per second!"

This volume of flowing water was the most amount of water ever recorded, in a flooding event, east of the Mississippi River considering the size of the water shed drainage area.

"The Rapidan River water height peaked at 31.5 feet at this location." Those of us who experienced this event will never forget it! Personally speaking, hardly a day goes by that I don't recall that eventful day and the many months that followed June 27, 1995 until some normalcy was regained!

Doug Graves