

The Cortada Collection and Reception

Frank S. Walker, Jr. and Lynne G. Lewis

On Tuesday, July 5, a van from Wisconsin arrived at the Historical Society's Research Center, loaded with boxes of files and numerous books, all being donated to enhance our collections, courtesy of Dr. James W. Cortada. On hand to help Dr. Cortada unload this historical bounty were research historian Ann Miller, historian Frank S. Walker, Board president John Tranver Graham and Board member Paul Carter.

Dr. Cortada's career with International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) currently has him living in Madison, Wisconsin, where he is a team member at the IBM Institute for Business Value. Although much of his adult life has been spent in various places around the world, Dr. Cortada maintains a special place in his heart for the Town of Orange and Orange County, Virginia, which he adopted as his personal home upon his arrival in 1962. Many of you may remember his father, James N. Cortada, who served as Mayor of the Town of Orange from 1978-1982 and again from 1990-1994. He was a strong advocate for the creation of the Orange County Historical Society and was one of its most active members. The elder Cortada recognized the importance of knowing one's heritage, and young Jim quickly demonstrated his personal adoption of that value.

As a teenager, Jim was accepted into the membership of the Virginia Historical Society and is believed to be the youngest member that Society has ever had. Locally, Jim studied the heritage of Orange and the surrounding counties. Among his other contributions are a county bibliography to aid researchers and the editing of the 1861 diary of local resident Fanny Page Hume, both published by the Orange County Historical Society.

Both as Jim and as Dr. Cortada, he has returned often to visit friends and family and catch up on happenings. And even when away, he still kept Orange in mind.

Over a nearly fifty-year period, Dr. Cortada amassed a huge historical treasure trove of published and unpublished materials relating to Orange, Orange County, and the surrounding area. His inventory of that collection fills more than sixteen single-spaced typed pages. Looking to downsize his library in retirement, he graciously offered all but the few items he plans to keep to the Orange County Historical Society.

The Society quickly accepted. As Society President John Tranver Graham noted, "Our ability to aid and inform research-



Dr. James W. Cortada cuts the cake at the July 10 reception in his honor, while Historical Society President John Tranver Graham and Research Historian Ann Miller watch.

ers will grow exponentially. We have long been recognized as one of the best local historical societies in Virginia, and this gift of Dr. Cortada's makes us that much better." For his part, Dr. Jim says, "My challenge will be to NOT keep buying on Orange, especially every time I come home."

On Sunday, July 10, at 2 p.m., a reception to honor Dr. Cortada and formalize the gift and acceptance of his collection was held at the Research Center. This delightful event was well attended and news coverage, confirming our excitement about the collection, was excellent. Reporter Ed Sykes, from NBC29 in Charlottesville, came early to interview Dr. Cortada and stayed right through the cake cutting. The *Orange County Review* and *The Free Lance-Star* were also represented.

Dr. Cortada holds a B.A. in history from Randolph-Macon College, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in history from Florida State University. He has published over 60 books, about a dozen on American and European diplomatic history and several dozen on business history. He is a member of the American Historical Association, on the editorial board of the *Annals of the History of Computing*, Chairman of the publishing press of the Computer Society, board member of the Information Technology History Society and a frequent lecturer on history. He has published on the history of genealogy, the American Civil War, and will be publishing a book on historical research

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Cortada (*continued*)

at the end of the year that includes stories about Orange and our historical society. He has held a variety of sales, consulting and managerial positions at IBM over the past 36 years where today he advises national governments on economic development and how to improve their operations.

The afternoon began with Dr. Cortada sharing his philosophy on collecting and how he went about it, and urging everyone to be a collector. Dr. Cortada especially emphasized the importance of keeping ephemera such as programs from the county fair or telephone books, as they will become invaluable sources of knowledge and interest to future generations. He also emphasized that collecting books can be done quite satisfactorily by obtaining just one or two of the most important volumes from any given year.

Our readers will no doubt be as amused as the reception guests were when Dr. Jim took the Society's various and sundry newsletter editors to task for being unable to count. It seems that there has been a degree of inconsistency in the numbering of the newsletters, such that Dr. Cortada had to make what amounts to a concordance for his complete collection, so that no one would think he had missed an issue.

With plenty of refreshments and a marvelous cake decorated with a symbolic Orange County lion and the phrase "History Passed On," it was a most informative and enjoyable afternoon filled with memories.

The Orange County Historical Society Scanning Project

Lynne G. Lewis

Under the leadership of Bernice Walker, this year has seen great progress in the Historical Society's scanning project. With the acquisition of two scanners (one for regular documents and one for oversized items) and three hard drives for storage and backup, a team of volunteers began scanning the materials in the Family Files at the historical society's research center.

The purpose of scanning all these documents is to provide an image of each document that can be consulted by researchers without handling the original. In this way we will prolong the life of fragile paper items without restricting access to their contents. The plan is to ultimately scan all the paper holdings of the Historical Society, excluding books.

Volunteers Joyce Clark, Dick and Carolyn Durphy, Ross Hunter, Patty Parmer, Millie Tyner, and Carla Wascalus have scanned well into the 'C' family files – so much so that three additional hard drives have been purchased. One or another of these stalwarts can be found most afternoons at the Research Center, scanning away. If you are interested in joining the team, there are still a few slots available. Please contact Bernice Walker at bmswalker@gmail.com for further information.

Orange History Day

Carol Hunter

Orange County History Day was born in 2010 through the collaboration of the Orange County Historical Society, The Arts Center In Orange, and the county school system's Academic Gifted team. The purpose was to urge students in Orange County elementary schools to get involved in learning history that took place in their own backyards while supporting the Standards of Learning curriculum. History Day encourages students to walk through local history by completing a research project in which they study various historical topics such as the Silk Mill, the Civil War in Orange or Fort Germanna, or figures such as Captain John Smith and Zachary Taylor, amongst the many possibilities.

Orange County History Day is a program for students in the fourth grade. The research and topics students study are directly correlated with the Standards of Learning in Virginia Studies, a major emphasis of the fourth grade curriculum. Students work individually on a topic that must be carefully researched with primary and secondary historical sources. After completing the research, students show what they have learned, analyzed, and interpreted in a poster presentation. Entries are judged on historical quality, and clarity of presentation.

After competing at the school level, students from Lightfoot, Locust Grove, Gordon Barbour and Orange Elementary Schools had their posters on display at the Orange County Historical Society on James Madison's Birthday, March 16, 2011 and on Dolley Madison's birthday, May 20, 2011. The four schools had about 200 entries.

Receptions were held at the Orange County Historical Society to honor James and Dolley Madison's birthdays and to recognize the blue ribbon Virginia/Orange County History Day poster contest winners. The reception provided an opportunity for families to see student work on display and meet members of the Historical Society.

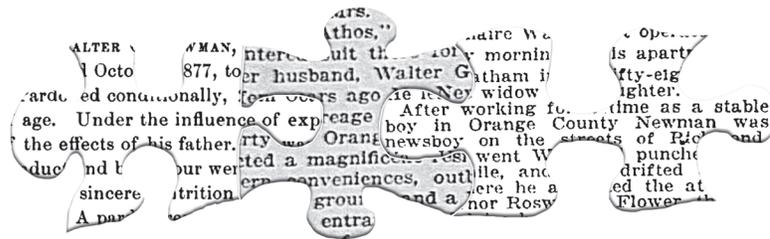


Carol Hunter

Two students study one of the many posters.

Another Piece of the Walter George Newman Puzzle

Ann L. Miller



Recent research confirmed a tenuous but interesting link between Governor James Lawson Kemper and one of the most flamboyant characters of late 19th and early 20th century Orange, Walter George Newman, the owner of the Mount Athos property near Somerset. Newman's adult life has been well chronicled—his questionable financial dealings, his promotion of a phony gold mine, his acquisition and building of the elaborate Mount Athos house and estate in the late 1890s (leaving behind a trail of unpaid contractors in the process), and other shenanigans. However, his early life is shrouded in rumor and legend. It is known that he was born in New Market on August 5, 1862, and that he came to Orange as a boy, probably to live with his Newman relatives at Mount Athos. He apparently worked as a laborer on several local farms, and as a stable boy and hack driver for Fox's Livery Stable in the town of Orange. He then apparently left Orange sometime in the mid 1870s, eventually surfacing in New York during the 1880s and embarking on a financial career before returning to Orange as a millionaire at the end of the 1890s.

A number of rumors about what happened after Walter George left Orange as a boy survive in local folklore: that he went to Richmond, that he was told to leave there and never return, and then that he either went west and worked cattle, or went to sea.

A 1937 *Richmond Times-Dispatch* article on Mount Athos noted that "there was some rumor that he got into trouble over family jewelry during his boyhood days and that his father allowed the courts to take their revenge. But Governor Kemper, the story continued, interfered in the boy's behalf and suspended sentence on condition that he join the Navy." Articles from the *Orange County Review* and the *Fredericksburg Free Lance Star* in the mid-20th century refer to Newman as "serving a stint as a Navy potato peeler" and that he "served a hitch in the Navy." In his talk on Newman presented at a 1991 Historical Society picnic, the late J. Randolph Grymes, Jr., noted that after leaving Fox's Livery Stable, Newman "supposedly went to Richmond and delivered newspapers there. I have read that he was told to leave Richmond and never return but I have not found the reason for this. Some say he then went to sea but others say that he went out west and worked with cattle."

Newman's 1918 obituary in the *New York Times* made no mention of time at sea, but rather stated that "after working for a

time as a stable boy in Orange County Newman was a newsboy on the streets of Richmond, Va. He went West and punched cows for a while, then drifted to New York . . ."

Characteristically, in a 1902 article in Philadelphia's *The North American*, Walter George put an attractive spin on his early years, indicating to the reporter that in order to make enough money to marry his childhood sweetheart, he left Orange, then "walked to Norfolk in search of work. He first shipped as a cabin boy on a ship bound for Singapore . . . studied the trade as well as the science of navigation . . . accomplished in two years what it takes an ordinary seaman five years to learn" and by the time that he was 22 years he was "the half owner and commander of a large ship."

All of these stories can be found in various articles in the Historical Society's files on Walter George Newman and Mount Athos. A number of these rumors, apparently, even had a basis in fact. As another piece of the Walter George Newman puzzle, we present, below, Number 34 on the list of pardons granted by then-Governor James Lawson Kemper in the year 1877. This material appears in both Senate Document No. XI and House Document No. III (identical pamphlets titled *Communication from the Governor of Virginia Transmitting List of Pardons and Commutations of Punishment Granted During the Past Year, With Reasons Therefore, issued from the Governor's office and dated December 31, 1877*):

34. Walter G. Newman, (white). Sentenced, by the hustings court of Richmond, 3rd October 1877, to three years in the penitentiary, for grand larceny.

Pardoned conditionally, 20th October 1877. The prisoner is a boy, 15 years of age. Under the influence of experienced criminals, he perpetrated larceny of the effects of his father. It was his first offence. He gives every evidence of sincere contrition and a determined purpose to lead an honest life in future. A pardon rescues him from the influence of the penitentiary and is calculated to confirm his reformation. But he is pardoned upon condition that he be taken directly from the jail to a merchant vessel, as it goes out to sea, under indenture to perform three years active and continuous sea-faring service, before the mast.

Orange County, Meet Thailand

Frank S. Walker, Jr.

FROM 1941 TO 1945, the world was caught up in a whirlwind of war, and Orange County residents found themselves learning geography the hard way, as their young men and women left to serve in strange, far away places with unpronounceable names. However, unless they were in a major war theater, the censorship of personal communications made it nearly impossible to learn much about what they were doing. Radios and newspapers told Americans a great deal about central Europe or islands in the Pacific, but if a loved one was elsewhere, about all their letters, with whole sentences razored out, told us was that they were safe and that they loved us.

There was little detailed news about the mean, dirty little struggles, the “wars-within the war,” that were going on in countless places around the globe. In most cases, news from such places would have been about frustrated people trying to make-do. With the major combat theaters commanding the attention and resources of the warring nations, people assigned to remote battle zones usually found themselves short of reinforcements, supplies, equipment, staff support—everything. The only thing not routinely in short supply were exhortations from remote high commands to fight on to victory. The fact that one’s foe was almost always in the same predicament did nothing to make things more tolerable.

Easily one of the nastiest of those fringe war zones was the China-Burma-India Theater, CBI for short. Technically, it began December 8, 1941, the day after Pearl Harbor, when Japanese troops entered Thailand with the intent to use that country as its base for invasions of the adjacent British and French-held colonies.

To the east of Thailand was French Indochina (today’s Laos and Vietnam), to the north was British-held Burma (most of today’s Myanmar), and to the west were the British-held Shan States (now Cambodia and the rest of Myanmar). As soon as all of these territories, including Thailand were securely incorporated into Japan’s proposed Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, India and the British and Dutch East Indies (Malaysia and Indonesia), further to the west and south respectively, would be the next targets. China was of course a huge piece of the Co-Prosperity plan, and the Japanese had been fighting a war of conquest there since 1937.

A reason for Thailand being the initial target for Japanese occupation was because it was an independent, unsupported nation. Despite the European colonizing that had taken place all around it, Thailand’s monarchs had successfully maintained their country’s centuries-old independence.¹ That meant, however, that Thailand did not have a European protector to appeal to. Another reason for Thailand’s early occupation was that Japan had already established friendly relations with the Thai Premier, who was serving in the absence of the King (away studying in Switzerland). The Premier had assumed much authority, even changing the name of the country from “Siam” to “Thailand” in 1939. After some initial, and futile, resistance by local Thai commanders was eliminated, the Premier not only agreed to cooperate with Japan but also proceeded to declare war against Britain and America. That latter act eventually involved Orange County, Virginia.

Initially effective resistance to Japanese incursions was nonexistent, but over time, the American and European allies cobbled

together enough of an army to both blunt Japanese advances and to shepherd thousands of tons of supplies to a beleaguered Chinese army far to the north. Whenever news people did mention the CBI, they usually reported romantically about the Burma Road, or Claire Chennault and his Flying Tigers, or General “Vinegar Joe” Stilwell (admittedly one of the better students of Asian history and thought for his day). It was the story of the war as it existed in the jungle swamps and bush that went unreported.

While the Japanese maintained their focus on capturing and holding territory, the Allies early on adopted a policy of trying to tie down as many Japanese troops as possible in the CBI while using the least amount of resources. The decisive battles were to be fought elsewhere.² An example was the Myitkina (pronounced “Mit-chin-ah) Campaign.

Late in 1943, Stilwell decided on a major campaign to penetrate deep behind enemy lines and to eventually capture Myitkina and its strategic all-weather airfield, about 750 miles away in North Burma. At his disposal were some 25,000 “Wingate’s Chindits,” a cobbled-together British colonial army; about 5,500 Chinese troops, the remnants of two divisions that had been plagued with desertions; and roughly 2,000 “Merrills’ Marauders,” U. S. troops trained in jungle fighting and commanded by General Frank Merrill. The composition of the Chindits helped demonstrate the Allied policy. It consisted of a collection of British regulars, some Gurkhas from Nepal, volunteer units recruited in Hong Kong, several West African regiments, a couple of semi-autonomous units (the “Morris Force” and the “Bladet Force”), and the Burma Rifles.

In February 1944, the campaign was launched. In columns of about 400 men each and in constant radio contact with each other, Stilwell’s men moved through the jungle, striking smaller targets on their own, joining to take larger objectives, coming to each other’s aid when necessary, and melting back into the jungle in the face of superior numbers. Every trail was an endless corridor of ambushes and traps. Bad weather meant delayed air drops of always desperately needed food, ammunition, and medical supplies. Even the snakes and insects seemed to have joined the enemy. Finally, the Myitkina airfield was captured in May, and in August Myitkina itself fell to the Allies.

The experience of Merrill’s Marauders was typical. In seven months, the Marauders had been in five major battles and 32 smaller engagements as they fought their way through the jungle

² According to some sources, as much as 50% of Japan’s total military manpower was committed to the CBI Theater during WWII, most of it in China.

¹ The September 21, 2009, *Wall Street Journal* reported that Thailand’s 81 year-old king was the world’s longest continuously-serving monarch.

Meet Thailand (*continued*)

at a rate of less than four miles per day. Of the roughly 2,000 Marauders who started out in February, only 1,300 were left to straggle into Myitkina. Of the survivors, 697 were immediately hospitalized to treat wounds and diseases. General Merrill himself had suffered a second heart attack just before coming down with malaria.

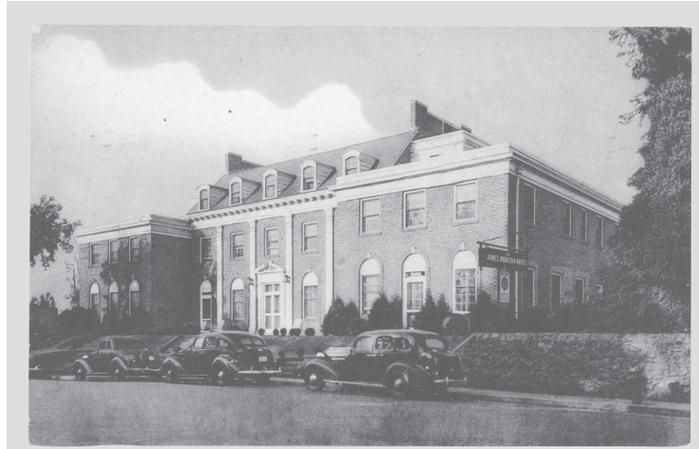
During much of the time the Allies were pursuing the Myitkina Campaign, the Japanese were conducting "Operation Ichi-go" that

more than offset the Allied gains by capturing several U. S. airbases in Southern China and elsewhere. It is no wonder, then, that local Japanese commanders were astounded when they were notified in 1945 that their country had surrendered to the Allies. As far as they could tell, they were winning the war.

When their Premier agreed not only to submit to occupation by the Japanese but also to cooperate with them, many Thais, both at home and abroad, were furious. They were not swayed by arguments that resistance in the face of overwhelming force was futile. They objected to their homeland's invasion and occupation, and they looked for some way to fight against it. The Allies naturally sought to organize and assist in ways that aided the overall war effort. In America almost all of the Thai residents were students in U. S. colleges and universities, and a large number of them volunteered to join what they eventually called the Free Thai Army. The American military, however, did not plan to train this "army" to be jungle fighting infantrymen. With their knowledge of the geography, language and customs of Thailand, these men could perform a greater service by learning to become behind-the-lines spies and guerilla fighters.

In June 1942, America's Thai volunteers were turned over to the newly-formed Office of Strategic Services (OSS) for training, and the OSS divided them among a series of small secret camps in Maryland and Northern Virginia.³ In addition to rigorous physical conditioning, training began in the use of small arms and explosives, radio operations, hand-to-hand combat, and other basic guerilla tactics. The Thais were being exposed to a world totally foreign to all but a few of them, and the training proceeded slowly. Also, the focus of their training shifted more to intelligence gathering, infiltration and undercover techniques, including the use of codes and sophisticated communications equipment. The need for trained spies had become greater than the need for guerilla fighters.

Late in the fall of 1942, the training of the first of the "Thai Spy" groups was complete, and they were ready for insertion into



The Madison Hotel hosted a contingent of Thai Spies during their visit to Orange. Postcard, postmarked 1942.

their homeland to begin operations. There was, however, a big problem; there was no way to get them there. The American military, in cooperation with the British, were deep into a buildup for "Operation Torch," the American/British invasion of French North Africa that ultimately took place November 8, 1942. Air transport for the Thais had always been out of the question, but now not a single ship was available, and none was going to be for a while.

Time began to hang heavy in the camps of the ready-to-go Thais and their OSS handlers. A January 1, 1943, deadline came and went, as did ones for February 1 and February 15. The tension was getting through to everybody. Finally the handlers at Camp D asked their commander for permission to take their twenty-one charges to New York City for some diversionary sight-seeing. That did not fit into any standard model for secret operations, but permission was granted. The Thais clambered into their trucks, and off they started.

The first stop was at the OSS headquarters in Washington D.C., just to let everybody know where they could be found when a ship finally appeared. The reception there was anything but pleasant. The High Command took an extremely dim view of some of its charges traipsing off on a lark when they were supposedly on alert to move swiftly to a designated harbor. The happy wanderers were told to get back to their camp—NOW. At this point, the story is best told by Nichol Smith, one of the OSS handlers, who in 1945 co-authored a book about their WWII experiences.⁴ Smith had remained in Washington after the trucks left on their return trip to camp D.

They had been gone perhaps half an hour when in walked Colonel Vorhees, Commanding officer of Area D.

'Well it's lucky you got the boys out to New York when you did,' he observed to Carl Hoffman and me. 'If they were at camp now, I'd have to quarantine them.'

'Quarantine them!' I repeated, startled.

'Yes, that's what I said,' he answered. 'We've got German measles at D, and who's there stays there.'

There is something of a loud and wild exchange about getting orders to the convoy to not return to Camp D, followed by a calmer, but no less wild, conversation about what now to do with the Thais. Smith's suggestions about putting them up at his mother-in-law's farm or in

3 In December 1947, the post-WWII mission and operations of the old OSS, much modified in the face of the "Cold War" with Communism, were incorporated into the just-created Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

4 Nichol Smith and Thomas Clark, *Into Siam*, (Indianapolis, Ind.:Bobbs-Merrill, 1945), 23-25.

Meet Thailand (*continued*)

his widowed aunt's house had plenty of drawbacks and no support. Then Carl Hoffman had an idea.

'Nichol,' Carl suddenly exclaimed, 'have you ever heard of the James Madison Hotel?'

'No.'

'Have you ever heard of Orange, Virginia,' He continued.

'No,' I said. 'Have you?'

'I've not only heard of it. I built a plant there—the Orange Mills.'

'What's the connection?' I asked.

'Don't you see?' he said. "A remote Virginia town. A small comfortable hotel. Few travelers. Manager and wife friends of mine. Hosiery mill for the boys to study. It's the end of their tour. They're specialists in textiles. Representatives of friendly powers in the Far East. Guests of our government. Every day they visit the plant, have the different processes explained. Perfect cover story. No one questions them. They're here for a purpose.'

Thus it was that twenty-one "Philippinos" and their American "guides" appeared in Orange, Virginia, and checked into the James Madison Hotel on Caroline Street.⁵ At the time, Orange was a railroad/mill town, and there were several mills for the "textile experts" to visit.

By 1944 there were three major textile plants in the Orange area. The biggest, the American Silk Mills on North Madison Road had been in operation since 1929. It was one of the plants of an organization that prior to WWII handled the majority of the raw silk imported into America. Japan and China, however, had been the major sources, so by 1941, the plant had switched over to working primarily with nylon. Its two best remembered products were parachutes and glider tow ropes. The Orange Knitting Mills on Byrd Street had been built just as WWII was starting, and it was most likely the one Carl Hoffman helped build. Don Waugh of Waugh Enterprises has some photographs of the mill being constructed, and possibly Carl is a distant figure in some of them. Its specialty was hosiery—socks—a desperately needed item throughout the war. Lastly, there was Specialty Weavers on Spicer Mill Road, across from Grymes Memorial School. The smallest of the three plants, it specialized in broadloom weaving. For variety, the Thais could visit Clark Manufacturing Company on Warren Street that was making fuses for artillery shells; or Snead & Co., just south of town on the Old Gordonsville Road, that was making bridge pontoons.

Carl Hoffman made the necessary arrangements, and the visits began. The Thais put their undercover training to work, and they carefully and intently studied the various textile production operations, about which they cared little, then they asked detailed questions, whose answers they received with knowledgeable expressions. One Thai probably spoke for the group when he

observed that he had never wanted to know that much about textiles, ever.

How long the charade could have lasted is a good question, but fortunately no answer had to be found. Just a few days after their arrival in Orange, the phone rang, and the "Philippinos" were gone in a matter of minutes. The next day, they boarded a ship in Baltimore Harbor, bound for Thailand.

In the weeks and months that followed, the Thai Spies were inserted into their homeland, usually by way of the various mountain and jungle trails that local resistance fighters knew and patrolled. All did not go well for some. In July, word came back that at least two of the Virginia agents had been detected and executed. The OSS continued to monitor the radio frequencies set for their agents but received nothing much of value until October. It was then that an agent made contact from Bangkok, the capital city. The information he transmitted was excellent, very valuable. Over time it was learned that the agent was transmitting from the basement of the main police station. He had been arrested and taken there for questioning. The Chief of Police turned out to be the #2 man in the Thai resistance. The #1 was the Regent of Siam that the Japanese had put into power. As Nichol Smith observed, "A lamp has been lighted in the capital of Siam."

After the war, life in Thailand slowly returned to normal, but the memories lingered on. You have to wonder how many times in the years that followed an Old Soldier would look around a room and say, "Have you ever heard of Orange, Virginia? In America? No? Well, let me tell you...."

Special thanks go to Don "Hoss" Waugh, who learned of the Thai Spies from a Harley-Davidson customer and then told me. Also to The Hon. Porter J. Goss, Orange County resident and former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, who was able to secure specific information about the Thai Spies in Orange from the OSS/CIA archives. Specific publications consulted were: E. Bruce Reynolds, *Thailand's Secret War*, (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2005), and Charles Fenn, *At the Dragon's Gate*, (Annapolis Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2004.) Interestingly, Fenn's job of rescuing downed pilots had him working with a farmer they called "Uncle Ho." During the Vietnam War we learned to call him Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the Viet Cong.

⁵ Smith described the hotel manager as having a cleft lip. As of this writing, no Orange resident has been found who remembers the Thai visit, but the odds are that sooner or later someone will appear who as a youngster saw it or heard it mentioned.

Programs and Picnics

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the fine programs and picnics that made up the last half of 2010.

On Monday, July 26, 2010, Dr. Peter G. Rainey, local historian, presented a most interesting program at Spotswood Park in Lake of the Woods. Behind him as he spoke, members could see the remains of "Orange Grove," the home of Capt. John Spotswood and his wife Sarah (Sallie) Rowsie Spotswood. A grandson of royal Lt. Gov. Alexander Spotswood, Capt. Spotswood served in the American Revolution as a member of the Continental Army 10th Virginia regiment. "Orange Grove" was situated on part of Capt. Spotswood's grandfather's original Germanna tract and their descendants lived on this land well into the 20th century.



Pete Rainey tells Historical Society members about the history of "Orange Grove" (the pile of brick behind him) and the Spotswoods.

Dr. Rainey's interest was sparked when, after years in the Navy, he was assigned to Washington, DC, in 1974. Having long known that he was a Spotswood descendant, Dr. Rainey took the opportunity to research his Virginia family roots, ultimately retiring to Lake of the Woods.

Dr. Rainey related some results of his research and then led the heartier picnickers on a walk through the surrounding area. It was a most enjoyable evening and was highlighted by the presentation to the Society of a copy of the just-published *Germanna Road: Three Hundred Year History of Lower Orange County, Virginia, with particular attention to the Alexandria Tract and Lake of the Woods*, written by Dr. Rainey. Our thanks go to him for a most pleasant and educational evening, and for the wonderful addition to our library.

The final picnic of the 2010 season was held on August 30 at Robertson Memorial Fountain, adjacent to the Orange train station/visitors bureau. The question is, did Frank Walker, presenter for this picnic, have special pull with the railroad? It seemed that way, because no sooner had he begun to speak on

the railroad history of Orange County than a passenger train came speeding through town!

Mr. Walker regaled us with stories of Orange County's railroad history and the glory days of American rail transportation, with passenger service available in several areas of the county. He noted that while railroads have been in a decline since the 1950s, they appear to be staging a comeback, most especially in the area of freight. Did you know that railroads are over three times as fuel efficient as trucks? And that a typical freight car can carry 100-110 tons of goods versus the typical truck capacity of 20-25 tons? (<http://www.regional-rail.com/faq.htm>, accessed 08/02/2011)

All of the county's five railroads have interesting histories, but probably the most interesting locally involves the Washington City, Virginia Midland & Great Southern and the Charlottesville & Rapidan railroads joining to bypass Gordonsville in 1880. That action changed western Orange County forever.

John Tranver Graham, local railroad buff, brought a wide selection of items from his extensive collection of railroadiana and everyone enjoyed hearing the talk (and the train) and seeing the items that Mr. Graham brought. It was a most pleasant evening.

For the September 27 program, Dr. Holly C. Shulman described how the death of Dolley Madison's husband made her executrix of a complicated will that included bequests to the American Colonization Society as well as to far-flung relatives. This fascinating talk on "Madison v. Madison: fulfilling James Madison's will, 1836-1838," brought to light the fact that some in James Madison's family did not hold Dolley in high regard.

Undertaking her duties as executrix seriously and tenaciously, Dolley had to learn the ins and outs of the Madison family. Dr. Shulman discussed this episode in Dolley's life and described how the associated documents revealed something about Dolley, James and their lives in Orange County.

Dr. Shulman is the editor of the Dolley Madison Digital Edition (the Papers of Dolley Madison digital editorial project at the University of Virginia), the founding director of the Documents Compass, and a research professor in the Department of History at the University of Virginia. Looking at the Madisons from Dr. Shulman's perspective was most enlightening and her presentation was thoroughly enjoyed.

Barbara Vines Little, a Certified Genealogist and Fellow of the Virginia Genealogical Society, is a member of the Board of Directors of the Orange County Historical Society, former president of the National Genealogical Society and editor of the *Magazine of Virginia Genealogy*. Her presentation, titled "Teasing the Silent Woman from the Shadows of History" was made on Monday, October 25.

Like so many others, Mary (Stuart) Fitzhugh of Orange left no written record of her life. Nonetheless, research into the

Programs *(continued)*

public and private records of those with whom she associated provides detailed evidence of what her life was like.

Ms. Little discussed the various ways to document an individual such as Mary Fitzhugh who at first glance left little apparent record of her life. Records of relatives, data from the communities where she lived, state and federal records (such as census), newspapers, and other sources can, through careful and informed research, yield additional data on such “silent” individuals of the past.



Frascati. Photo from W. W. Scott, *A History of Orange County, Virginia* (1907).

“The Landscape of Frascati” was the subject of the November 29, 2010, meeting. Frascati, located near Somerset, is one of Orange County’s most notable early 19th-century plantation houses. It was completed in 1823 for Philip Pendleton Barbour, Virginia jurist, statesman, and ultimately Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Virginia Landmarks Register describes the house as one of Piedmont Virginia’s best-documented 19th-century dwellings. However, the surroundings were not as well documented until 2009, when the landscape associated with the house was extensively researched under a Garden Club of Virginia fellowship. At our November 2010 meeting, William D. Rieley, CLA, landscape architect for the Garden Club, presented a fascinating program on the research into the historic landscape elements at Frascati, as well as Frascati’s place in the context of American gardens of the era.

As a follow-up to this program, Molly Barrow, owner of Frascati, graciously offered the Frascati gardens as a future picnic site. We are delighted to be able to tell you that this picnic is now scheduled for August 29, 2011, weather permitting.

Research into this significant property continues, so watch for a related article in a future newsletter!

The new year began with the annual membership meeting held on Sunday afternoon, January 23. After a brief business meeting and the election of Joan Hebrance and Carol Hunter to the Board of Directors, Jayne E. Blair, herself a Board member and the author of *Tragedy at Montpelier* and the 2006 *The*

Essential Civil War, made a special presentation on the sesquicentennial of the Civil War. Ms. Blair posited the question of why this anniversary is so important, then shared her answers to that question.

Ms. Blair began by discussing the years and months leading up to secession and the ultimate declaration of war. She noted that there were many older, established leaders who could see the disaster of disunion, beginning with James Madison. Only two years before his death in 1836, he wrote in a note found among his papers, “The advice nearest to my heart and deepest in my conviction is that the Union of the States be cherished and perpetuated. Let the open enemy to it be regarded as a Pandora with her box opened . . .”

Ironically, 150 years ago, to the day of our meeting, January 23, 1861, Robert E. Lee wrote to his eldest son, “Custis” (George Washington Custis Lee) saying: “I can anticipate no greater calamity for the country than a dissolution of the Union. It would be an accumulation of all the evils we complain of, and I am willing to sacrifice everything but honour for its preservation.”

Unfortunately, these admonitions were ignored by the hotheads in both the North and the South. Ms. Blair concluded that for the next four years, “. . . we will honor our ancestors, those men who lined up shoulder to shoulder to answer their nation’s call. Whether Union or Confederate, the men who fought, the women who waited or those who toiled in the fields, all helped to make this nation indivisible and with liberty for all.” She gave her audience a great deal to think about.

Following the presentation, the Board met briefly to elect officers for 2011. John Tranver Graham was elected president. Barbara V. Little, vice president; Carol Couch, treasurer; and Lynne G. Lewis, secretary were re-elected to those offices.

Harold R. Woodward, Jr., author of a several books on Virginia history, including *Major General James Lawson Kemper, C. S. A.: the Confederacy’s Forgotten Son* and *For Home and Honor: The Story of Madison County, Virginia During the War Between the States 1861-1865*, spoke to the membership on Monday, March 28. His topic was James Lawson Kemper and Post-Reconstruction Virginia. Kemper, who lived in Orange County for a time at Walnut Hills, was the first native-born Virginian to be elected Governor of Virginia after Reconstruction.

Mr. Woodward discussed Kemper’s battle against corrupt politics, his emerging leadership in the new Conservative party, and his term as Governor, including his creation of a political coalition of people of diverse backgrounds, his new financial and credit policies, and his concern for education and civil rights.

The meeting was well attended, and there was considerable interest in both Harold’s presentation and his previous books (some of which he had on hand). A sizable number of people

Programs (*continued*)

remained after the program for more detailed questions and discussions.

On Monday, April 25, members sailed “The Inner Reaches of the Northwest Passage” with Russ Roberts, airline pilot, former announcer and music director at WJMA in Orange and intrepid sailor. In a thrilling and beautiful presentation that included audio and video clips as well as slides, Roberts related his adventures aboard the *Fiona*, a 42-foot fiberglass pleasure boat with a 77-year-old skipper, during the summer of 2009.

For well over 300 years, the Holy Grail of explorers was the “Northwest Passage,” an imagined sea route around North America to the riches of the Orient. A few even hoped to reach the Passage through areas once within the bounds of Orange County. For ships of those times it did not exist, but in recent years melting ice has opened up some perilous travel routes along the fabled Passage. As he described the voyage, one could almost feel the cold, smell the crisp salt air and share in the excitement and sometimes frustration and fear of this adventure. Although Russ Roberts had to leave the *Fiona* before the cruise ended, he was there long enough to see that it would be a success.

It was a wonderful evening and the audience peppered Roberts with questions while enjoying the remaining refreshments. Our thanks to Mr. Roberts for sharing his adventure, and letting us in on why a supposedly rational man would choose to spend a frozen summer in ice-choked waters on a boat with a quirky crew, no hot water, little heat and less than a 50% chance of success.

Following those excellent programs, picnic time was upon us before we realized it. We kicked off the season by holding the “May Meeting in June” as a picnic for the first time. A large crowd gathered on Monday, June 6 at the Waddell Memorial Presbyterian Church in Rapidan. Built in 1874, and widely acknowledged as one of Virginia’s finest examples of Carpenter Gothic style architecture, Waddell Church is listed on both the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. The church was named in honor of James Waddell, the blind preacher made famous by William Wirt in one of his widely-read *British Spy* articles.

With the congregation and the Reverend Charles ‘Mac’ McRaven and Deacon Alan Knewstep as hosts, the picnickers enjoyed dinner and the beautiful evening, then adjourned to the sanctuary. There Rev. McRaven and Deacon Knewstep gave a history of the church and the story of the long, excellent restoration project that started in 1998. Now in the second round of fundraising and restoration, the project is nearing completion, and this important church has been preserved for generations to come.

The beautiful church, the excellent presentations and the opportunity to stroll the churchyard and cemetery were a special treat for our members. Everyone greatly appreciated the shared knowledge and kind hospitality of our hosts.



Waddell Memorial Presbyterian Church, site of our June 6 meeting.

Our second picnic meeting of 2011 was held at Willow Grove on Monday, June 27. After enjoying their dinners beside a sparkling fountain, some forty attendees heard a presentation on the property by Historian Ann Miller. Willow Grove is on the state and national registers of historic places and is actually a combination of two residential structures built together. The frame portion was built by Joseph Clark in the late 18th century, then ca. 1848 his son William built the masonry portion and blended the two with a Tuscan portico that diverts the viewer’s eye from their junction.

Willow Grove had been operating as a bed and breakfast inn and was exhibiting both age and neglect when David and Charlene Scibal bought it a few years back. They closed the B & B and dedicated themselves to an extended period of restoring the exterior and remodeling the interior. In addition, they implemented a bold and imaginative landscaping plan. They reopened the property as the Inn at Willow Grove, a destination property. The Scibals were introduced and enthusiastically applauded. The evening concluded with tours of the mansion, the outbuildings, and the grounds.

A small band of the incurably optimistic gathered at Montpelier’s Madison family cemetery on Monday, July 25, despite the mumblings of nearby thunderstorms. There they were treated to a lovely cooling breeze and a most informative talk by C. Thomas Chapman, Executive Projects Manager at Montpelier and Historical Society Board member.

See **Programs** on page 10.

Programs (*continued*)

Mr. Chapman spoke about the establishment of the family cemetery, noting that when Ambrose Madison, grandfather to the President, moved to his new plantation he little expected that he would be the first resident of that cemetery. Mr. Chapman went on to tell the story of Lt. Edgar Macon, James Madison's great-nephew, who was killed at the first Battle of Manassas on July 21, 1861 and was subsequently buried at Montpelier. He also related some of the diary entries and letters from visiting Civil War soldiers that mention visits to Montpelier and the Madison family cemetery in particular.

Two interesting items from Tom's excellent presentation may not be widely known. First, President Madison's grave went unmarked until 1857, when the present-day obelisk was erected. Indeed, most of the markers in the cemetery post-date the death of Mr. Madison in 1836, meaning that there are many unmarked graves. Second, for many years it was thought that Frank Carson, who along with his brother owned Montpelier from 1857 to 1881, was the only non-Madison family member to be buried in the cemetery. Mr. Chapman, however, discovered that Gen. Winfield Scott's young son, who died at Montpelier while the family was visiting, was interred in the cemetery.

The rain finally arrived about 7:30, shortening the presentation by only a few minutes. One and all thoroughly appreciated Montpelier's hospitality as well as Tom Chapman's comprehensive knowledge and good humor in dodging those raindrops.

Query

For an upcoming Orange County Historical Society presentation and continuing research, Antoinette W. Roades seeks (for scanning) images made by photographer William Roads (not to be confused with photographer W.P. Rhodes). After working as a daguerreotypist in Fredericksburg between 1855 and 1858, William Roads lived briefly in Orange County before establishing himself in Charlottesville in 1860. In 1873, he returned to Orange County and continued to work in Gordonsville until his death in 1890. Call (434) 293-3148 or e-mail awroades@cs.com or contact the Orange County Historical Society office if you have any of Mr. Roads' work.

Historical Society Board 2011

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The Civil War 150 Legacy Project

Lynne G. Lewis

The Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission and the Library of Virginia have partnered to create an online collection of documents relating to the Civil War and emancipation. They seek original documents that to date have not been available to researchers. As part of that ambitious project, teams of scanners are going from county to county in Virginia, seeking documents that reflect the social, political, military, economic and religious life of individuals and families during the years 1859-1867.

The Legacy Scanning Project came to Orange County on July 15 - 17, providing the opportunity for owners of documents such as letters, journals, diaries, photographs, etc., to share their treasured items with Virginia and the world at large. The documents were scanned and immediately returned and it was a most successful weekend indeed.

Twenty-four people turned out and 1,145 scans were made over the course of the three days. One of the most exciting items brought forward was an autographed photograph of Gen. Robert E. Lee. If you missed the project in Orange and have something you would like to share, check the Legacy Project's web site www.virginiacivilwar.org/legacy for a list of upcoming venues. It was noted that scanning teams will be in Culpeper County on August 27 and in Louisa and Madison Counties on September 20 and 22 respectively.



Laura Drake Davis and Callie Lou Freed of the Library of Virginia spent a day at the Historical Society Research Center scanning Civil War era documents.

John Strader

2010 Annual Fund Donors

The Board is deeply grateful to the members and friends of the Society for continuing support of the Historical Society's programs, publications, and heritage-based services to members and the general public.

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The Orange County Historical Society is a non-profit organization. Your membership fees are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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Would you be willing to receive meeting notices via email in lieu of a postcard? Yes No

Membership Level: Society dues are for the period of January 1 - December 31, 2010.

- Annual Individual Member: \$20
- Annual Student Member (High School or College): \$12.50
- Annual Family Member: \$30
- Annual Sustaining Member: \$100
- Annual Patron Member: \$200
- Annual Sponsor Member: \$300



Friday evening, September 17, 2010, noted artist Mort Künstler at a reception in his honor at the Holladay House Bed and Breakfast, with hosts Sam and Sharon Elswick. After enjoying excellent refreshments, Mr. Künstler spoke about his career as an artist, his inspirations, and cheerfully answered the many questions posed by his fascinated audience. The next day Mr. Künstler unveiled and signed his newest creation, *Unconquered Spirit*. Since the painting is set in front of the courthouse, it was appropriate that the signing took place in the foyer of the 1859 courthouse while period music was provided by Keith Walters and the Virginia Serenaders.

Please Don't Forget . . .

To renew your membership! Did you know that membership dues make up almost 20% of our annual income (another 20% coming from the kindness of our annual fund drive donors)? You can see why your membership is so important to us. Thank You!