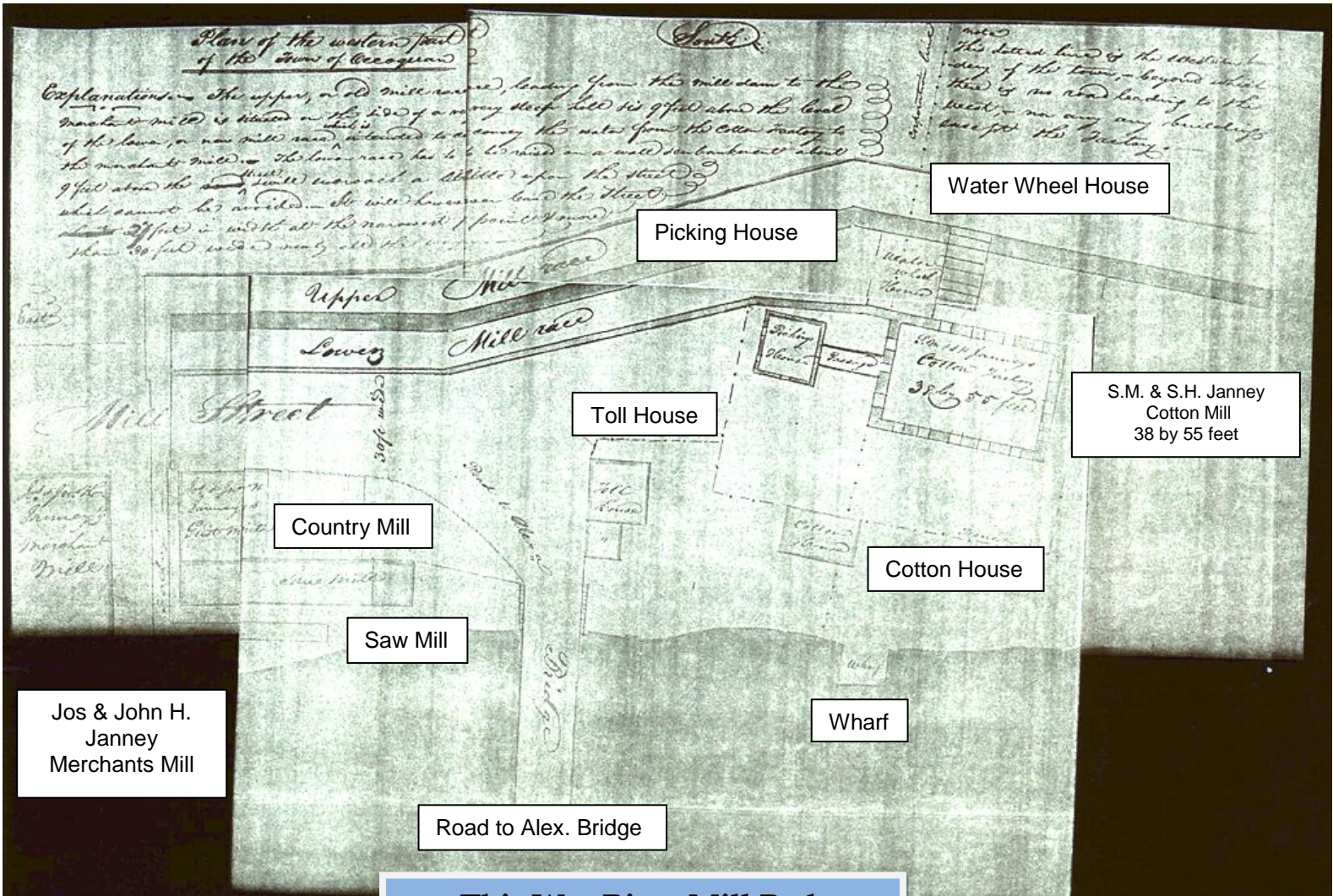


The Mill Racer Winter 2016



This Was River Mill Park
Dolores Elder

Plan of the western part of the Town of Occoquan

Explanations- The upper or old mill race leading from the Mill St Merchants Mill is situated on the side of a very steep hill & is 9 feet above the level of the lower or new mill race which is intended to convey the water from the cotton factory to the merchant mill. The lower race has to be raised as a wall & embankment about 9 feet above the street & will encroach a little upon the street which cannot be avoided. It will however leave the street 27 feet in width at the narrowest point & more than 30 feet wide nearly all the way.

Note

The dotted line is the western boundary of the town-beyond which there is no road leading to the west, nor any buildings except the factory.

Above are the map and explanations included with the petition Samuel M. and Samuel H. Janney, owners of the Occoquan cotton mill, presented to the Virginia Assembly on December 12, 1828. The cotton mill built in 1828 was destroyed by arson in 1862. It stood on the property where **River Mill Park** is located. The bridge to Alexandria is where our **Nathaniel Ellicott** footbridge is today. Joseph and John Janney's Merchant's Mill was adjacent to the west side of our museum.

I have labeled some of the indistinct map features for ease in reading. Joseph and John H. Janney owned the country mill as well as the Merchants Mill. In between the picking house and the cotton factory was a passage. The forebay, between the two grist mills, is the section of mill race crossing the street to the mill wheel. Interestingly the saw mill is located on the north side of the country mill. That was probably the most convenient location to share the water wheel power.

The bridge was built by Nathaniel Ellicott in 1797 as a toll bridge and was purchased as such by the Janney's who advertised the grist mills for sale several times through the 1800's along with the profitable toll bridge. The toll house at its location would allow the toll keeper easy access to travelers.

The original mill race in the map drawing was most likely a wooden race that crossed over Mill Street above ground, allowing for traffic to flow underneath.



On the left is a painting titled, "Termination of a Mile Race on the Occoquan, State of Virginia". It was signed by the artist Luke Robbins and dated 1823. It sold at auction¹ in 2005 for \$4,780. Based on the terrain in the painting it may be the Town of Occoquan mill race. We know from descriptions of the race that it was extensive in length.

Below is the petition that included the above map and explanations that were presented to the Virginia Assembly. Listed are signatures gathered from supporters of the new mill race. Mason Weems is the son of Parson Mason L. Weems, author of "The Life and Memorable Actions of George Washington".

To the Senate and House of Delegates of the State of Virginia

The petition of S.M. & S.H. Janney respectfully requests-

That your petitioners are now erecting a Cotton Manufactory at Occoquan Prince William County Virginia, and that owing to the peculiar situation of the ground through which the water course passes, it is found necessary in making a race to convey the water from the factory to the Merchants and Country Mills of Joseph and John H. Janney, to encroach a little upon one of the streets of the said Town of Occoquan which was laid out in conformity with an Act of Assembly passed the 5th of January 1804.----- This location of the mill race will however produce no inconvenience to traveling in the said street, as the distance is very short and the street is more than wide enough for the waggons to pass each other.

The inhabitants of the Town of Occoquan and the neighbors in Prince William & Fairfax County have given their consent and approbation to the making of the within mentioned Mill Race as is shown by their signatures hereunto annexed-

Your petitioners would therefore respectfully pray that a Law may be passed, authorizing the location of the said mill race.

Sam M Janney

Sam H Janney

¹ Shannon's Fine Art Auctioneers, Milford, CT.

We the undersigned Inhabitants of Prince William & Fairfax Counties & neighbors or residents of the Town of Occoquan-hereby certify that we give our consent and approbation to the making of the mill race in the forgoing petition.

Michael Cleary
 Jos. Janney
 Thomas
 Mason L. Weems
 Jos. Foster
 John Morgan
 Peyton Reid
 W.R. Selecman
 William Selecman
 Saml H. Fisher

James B. Blys
 Peter Thimmon
 Jos. M. Skinner
 Jos. Reeves
 Daniel C. Lee
 Warhburn Arrington
 Gaylor Arrington
 John H Jackson
 Thompson W. Brotett
 Sanford Beach

Hancock Lee
 B Haislip
 Henry Selecman
 Wm Maddox
 Isacerdi Cox
 John A Copeland
 H Wood
 William Beach
 John Woodyard
 Wm Lindsay

John D. Mills
 James Peter?
 John Bryant
 Thomas
 John Selecman
 James Douran
 George Selecman
 John Underwood
 Wm. B. Lynn

The above article originally appeared in the June/July 2007 OHS newsletter. It is edited as necessary with explanations about the park property. When *River Mill Park* opens this spring we can imagine the noise of the cotton mill, ships at the wharf and the roar of the water wheels as we walk the path along the beautiful and historic Occoquan.

Cotton Factory Day Book
Dolores Elder

A few years ago my husband and I stopped at the Library of Virginia on one of our road trips. My ever patient husband held open the 1836-1841 daybook² from Samuel M Janney’s cotton works and turned pages as I took over 100 digital photos. The daybook included transactions related to the cotton works and copies of some of Janney’s correspondence. Below are a few selections from the daybook pages.

On October 22, 1836 Janney paid an insurance premium of \$201 to the Franklin Insurance Company of Philadelphia. This covered the cotton works for \$10,000 and Samuel paid 50¢ to the Bank of Potomac for issuing the check.

10 Mo. 22nd 1836

S M & S H Janney
Remitted to Franklin Ins. CO. Phila. For prems Ins. On Factly 10,000\$

	201
<i>Pd. Bk. Potoc. \$ for check</i>	.50
	201.50

A reoccurring theme through the daybook is Samuel’s concern over his finances. We know from his memoirs he never felt he was meant to be an entrepreneur and was happy to finally sell his cotton works to Joseph Janney Jr., president of the Occoquan Manufacturing Co. Below are excerpts from a letter to creditors W Fowler & Son dated May 24, 1837. Listed within the correspondence are the assets and debts of the cotton works. I wasn’t able to decipher all of the entries but included those that I felt fairly confident about. Towards the bottom of the daybook page Janney also writes about some of the charges he wasn’t aware of that were connected to new machinery.

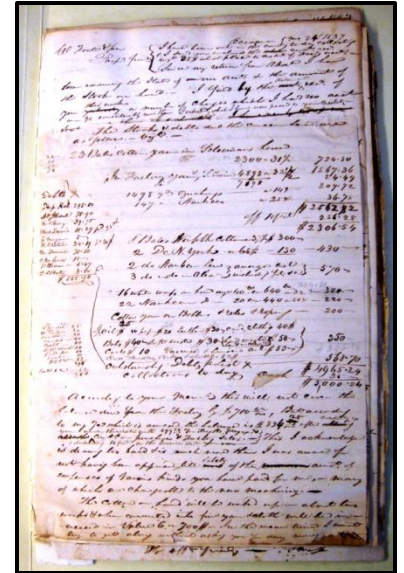
Occoquan 5 Mo 24’ 1837

W Fowler & Son

² Library of Virginia Call # 24678

Respected Friend

I have been out in the county today collecting & I send you enclosed the amount rec. 35\$ which place to credit of Factly. Acct. Since my return from Alex. I have been examining the state of our accts. And the amount of the stock on hand. I find by the statement rcd of you this week a number of charges which I had no acct. and considerably more than I expected which I have never posted to your credit. The stock and debt and the corrections are as follows-



One of the assets Janney lists are 23 bales of cotton yarn stored at the Selecman warehouse valued at \$724.50. In the factory some of his assets are cotton yarn on bobbins worth \$200, 8 bales of Norfolk cotton worth \$300, and factory yarns and twine valued at \$2306.54. There are 147 yards of Nankeen (cotton cloth buff in color) cloth valued at \$36.75 and 1498 yards of Osnaburg (coarse fabric made from flax or flax and jute mix) cloth worth \$209.72.

Among the unpaid accounts he lists are M. Cleary \$39.75, Deep Hole Plantation \$295.80, B. Brawner \$6.47, M. French \$75.50 and A & J Russell for \$78.90.

Several of Samuel's costs for the month were whale oil \$25, w paper \$20, leather \$30, cards \$40, bats \$40, coal \$10, varnish and linseed oil \$53. Separately listed were the costs for reeds, needles, shuttles and pickers for \$52. These combined costs came to \$350.

In summary Samuel listed his total debts at \$568.70, his assets \$4965.24 and cash collected that day \$35, for an asset total of \$5000.24.

At the end of the ledger page Samuel Janney writes;

According to your ?? this will not cover the balance due from the factory by \$710.40.... but the cotton on hand will be worked up in about two weeks and when converted into fine yarn & cloth will be increased in value 6 or 700\$- In the mean time I will try and get along without asking you for any money.

An entry from August 29, 1837 was a letter concerning longtime Occoquan resident and businessman, Hugh Hammill. Over the ensuing years Hugh's endeavors would include wheelwright, ship builder and sawmill operator.

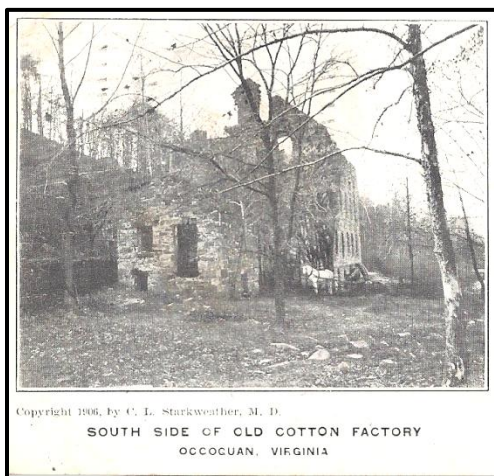
Occoquan 8 Mo 29' 37

John Brooks
Esteemed Friend

My neighbor H Hammil goes to Balt. To buy Iron & may not have funds enough with him to buy all he will want. I consider him very safe. He is an industrious man and is doing a good business. He does all the smith work of the factory & if thou feels any hesitation about letting him have the iron I will be responsible to the amount of 50\$ if required.

Your Friend,
S M Janney

In 1837 Occoquan resident Hugh Hammill was 27 years old, his son Edward was just an infant. Edward would grow up to open the Commercial Hotel (206 Union Street) after the Civil War. From the 1850 census we know where Hugh lived in Occoquan. The Underwood family lived at 314 Mill Street (Town Hall's location), then following east down the south side of Mill Street we have the Hugh Hammill family, the Robert Allen family and next Maria Selecman at approximately 306-308 Mill Street. Unrelated to the cotton mill but an interesting fact from the 1850 census was that the Selecman property was operated as a hotel. Maria's son Joseph, aged 15, was listed as a landlord. It was surprising to see this family property operated as a hotel at this early date. Maria is the only adult living at the property. Could she have lost a spouse and turned to operating a hotel or boarding house to support the family? In the mid 1870's-1900 time frame the property was the Alton hotel operated by Lycurgus Ledman.



Copyright 1906, by C. L. Starkweather, M. D.
SOUTH SIDE OF OLD COTTON FACTORY
OCCOQUAN, VIRGINIA

On the left, a 1906 postcard of the cotton mill ruins.

To the right is the top of the cotton mill ruins. The country mill, merchant's mill and miller's office (museum) are on the north side of Mill Street.



Remember When... The Garden Kitchen

The Garden Kitchen, café, restaurant & bakery was located at 404 Mill Street in historic Occoquan from 1990 until 2013. Housed in an old dwelling built about 1860, this structure has been a store, home and meeting place ever since. The old house is a notable example of tongue and groove construction and has held together without nails for over 150 years!

Mr. Hammill, the building's owner in the late 1800's, use to regale his customers with fascinating stories of the Civil War. Around the turn of the century in addition to dispensing medicine from Occoquan's first pharmacy located on the main floor, Dr. Frank Hornbaker lived and practiced in the building. He married his wife Grace Clarke Hornbaker in 1914. Here they raised a family and Grace continued living in the house after the doctor's death in 1937.



Marie-Claire and Shara in 1993

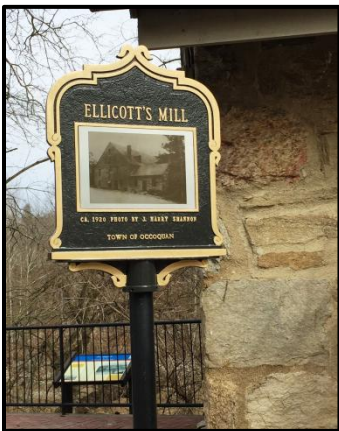
In the heart of Occoquan's old district, the Kundus, Sharadindu (Shara) originally from Kolkata, India and Marie-Claire, originally from Chicoutimi, Quebec, Canada, owned and operated the Garden Kitchen. Having three distinct seating areas, the upper dining room overlooked Mill Street and was furnished with white wicker and colonial furniture. The main dining area was white and yellow and

had an early American flair. The third gathering room had intimately arranged seating in the style of a French café. The narrow stone and brick stairway entrance opened to a beautiful tiered outdoor terrace that was bordered by colorful azalea bushes and flowering dogwood trees. Hidden at the top of the lovely aged brick passage, the Garden Kitchen was a delightful discovery for everyone!

Under the stewardship of the Kundus, the original sandwich & pie shop turned into a bona-fide café, restaurant, bakery and fine catering enterprise. Southern Living magazine wrote that “owner Marie-Claire bakes so many pies that she dreams about baking pies”. The Garden Kitchen where dessert was the best part of the meal, Marie-Claire’s sinful chocolate cake, fruit and cream pies, brownies, cookies, cinnamon rolls and many other delectable’s were main attractions! Cream of broccoli soup & the chicken salad sandwich with crunchy bacon and juicy tomatoes on homemade bread were signature items for lunch. A very popular breakfast & lunch spot for more than two decades, the Garden Kitchen was frequented primarily by local residents and business people. The restaurant provided more than 50 meals to the White House Press Corps during President Barack Obama’s 2012 visit to Pfitzner Stadium, in Prince William County. Well known visitors included Virginia Governor Tim Kaine and Hollywood actor Jimmy Smits.

For 23 years a sense of history and community existed at the Garden Kitchen under Shara and Marie-Claire’s stewardship. In April, 2013, the Town of Occoquan presented the Walter D. Bailey Volunteer Award to Shara & Marie-Claire Kundu for their service to the community!

Ellicott’s Mill Historical Marker



Our Ellicott’s Mill historical marker has returned. In November the marker was sent off to Lake Shore Industries in Erie, PA for restoration. LSI was the original manufacturer of this style of informative markers you see through Occoquan. Dating from 2000, the markers are showing wear. OHS adopted this marker that sits by the corner of the museum, covering the costs of the restoration. The marker once again reflects the pride we feel in the richness of Occoquan history!

If you are interested in adopting a marker for restoration contact OHS for information at: curator@occoquanhistoricalsociety.org

Reading is Fundamental

Reading is Fundamental or RIF provides free books to many children in Northern Virginia, including our own PWC. In the 2015-16 time frame they have provided 7,176 free books in PWC alone.

To bring awareness to the program and raise funds RIF is sponsoring a 5K fun run, *Book it for Books*, on April 30 at Burke Lake Park. OHS is happy to be one of the sponsors for the event.

This excerpt from the RIF material provides a little more background on the program: “In our 40 year history RIF of NOVA has supplied more than one million books to children. As part of the

nation's largest children's literacy non-profit organization, RIF of NOVA provides motivational activities to encourage a passion for reading at book distribution celebrations where children also pick the perfect book from a display of carefully selected books chosen specifically for that site. Book ownership and the promotion of literacy are instrumental to the future educational and life success of children....."

Consider signing up for the 5k fun run or the 1 mile walk in support of RIF. Let's have a team Occoquan and show our support for reading and fitness. Visit the RIF web site at <http://www.rifnova.org/> for all the details. Hope to see you on April 30!

Mill House Volunteer

We are delighted to have Bethany Shoop, a George Mason University student working with us at the museum. Bethany is developing an educational program for children that will include discovery bags that can be signed out at the Mill House Museum. Through activities children will have fun learning about the various birds and plant life along the river, studying the river tides and becoming familiar with a compass. These discovery totes should be available at the museum when *River Mill Park* opens this spring.



Occoquan River, February 25, 2016
After the rain

New at the Mill House

At the museum shop is a new ornament featuring a Boyd Alexander photograph of the Christmas tree in the gazebo at Mamie Davis Park. Also new is a ball cap with the Occoquan Historical Society logo. Both items make great gifts or you can treat yourself!

The museum will be open until 5 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays, Memorial Day to Labor Day. These new hours are to accommodate visitors to Occoquan during the summer months.



Mill House Museum
PO Box 65, 413 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125
www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org
703-491-7525
Open Sunday through Saturday 11-4
Saturdays & Sundays 11-5 Memorial Day-Labor Day

*June 2016
Mill House
Monthly News*



May 24, 2016

Occoquan Town Hall, 314 Mill Street

On Tuesday May 24, *DB's Plumbing & Drain* excavated an area in front of the Occoquan Town Hall, uncovering an old sewer line that had cracked and needed to be replaced. As they trenched an area parallel to the sidewalk that runs along Ellicott Street, they came upon a wall of bricks buried about 12-15 inches deep. These bricks were part of the original home that was constructed circa 1800.

In 1805 Benniah Willet insured the house at 314 Mill Street for \$1800 with the Mutual Assurance Co. The house is described as a two story brick home 30'x20' and covered (roofing) with wood. The policy is reissued in 1827 and it now includes a 14'x12' addition on the rear of the house. (The house on Lot 22 on the 1804 plat shows a house with an addition so it's surprising that it's not included on the drawings for Benniah Willets policy)

On May 29th, 1829 John Underwood and his wife Ann purchased the property and it was owned by the Underwood family through the years until the 1916 fire in Occoquan destroyed the home.

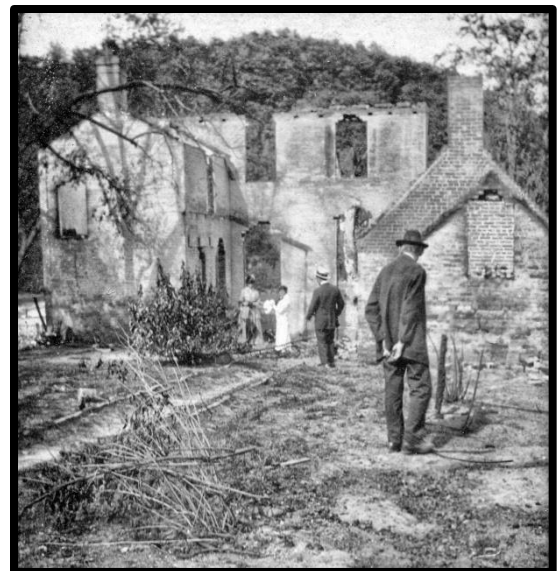
In 1839 the heirs of John Underwood insure the property and it now includes a detached bake house, constructed of wood and brick, on the rear of the property. Below is an Underwood family photo showing the rear or south side of the property at 314 Mill after the 1916 fire. You can still see the main house, the addition to the rear and the detached building that was used as a bake house.



Above: On the right, 314 Mill Street at the corner of Mill and Ellicott Streets.

Below: Another view of the home at 314 Mill Street when it was owned by the Underwood family.

Both photos are circa 1900.



Below is a picture of the unearthed section of the building wall at 314 Mill Street, adjacent and running parallel to Ellicott Street.



The exposed section of wall was collapsing as work was being done to replace the pipes. It was quite amazing that the trench was adjacent to the brick wall and we were able to preserve two sections of it.

Occoquan Explorer

On June 2, 2016, Jackson, from Kansas, became our first "Occoquan Explorer". Jackson will enter kindergarten next year and completed two discovery sheets to earn his explorer pin. He had fun but wanted harder questions! We are proud of you Jackson!

Below: Jackson at the Mill House proudly wearing his "Occoquan Explorer" pin.



Above: The area being trenched.
Below: One of two sections of brick that were removed to preserve for display.

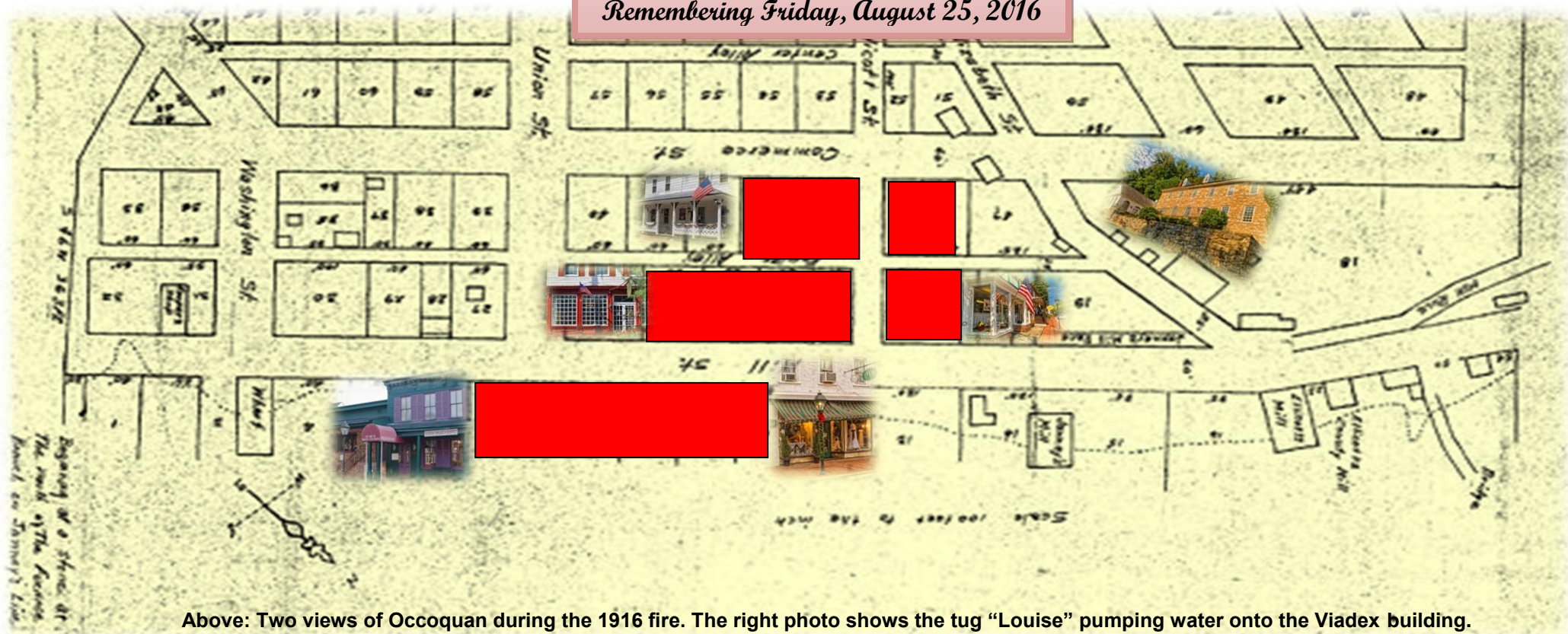


Mill House Museum
413 Mill Street, PO Box 65, Occoquan, VA, 22125
www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org
703-491-7525
Museum daily, 11a.m.-4p.m.





*The Mill Racer
 Summer, 2016
 Occoquan, Virginia
 Remembering Friday, August 25, 2016*



Above: Two views of Occoquan during the 1916 fire. The right photo shows the tug "Louise" pumping water onto the Viadex building.
 Below: The 1804 Occoquan plat showing surviving structures that rimmed the basic fire area, which is blocked off in red.

Washington Post, August 26, 1916

\$50,000 Occoquan Fire

**Business Section Wiped Out and
One Person Hurt**

**Many residences Destroyed
Flames Started by Oil Stove in Absence of
owner from Home. Beyond Control of
Citizens' Bucket Brigade, Until Arrival of
Alexandria Automobile Engine.**

Historic Occoquan, at the head of Occoquan Bay, 24 miles south of Alexandria, VA, was visited by a fire yesterday afternoon that wiped out the business section of the little town with a loss of \$50,000, on which there is an insurance of probably half that amount. The big new automobile fire engine of the Alexandria fire department went to the scene in response to a call for aid and making the run at a new record speed, saving the town from being wiped out entirely.

The fire was started by an oil stove in the house of Mrs. J. Hood Weedon, in the center of the business section adjoining the Occoquan Bank, during Mrs. Weedon's absence. When the fire was discovered the entire populace of the village turned out, men, women and children, to fight the fire. With a swift wind blowing from the burning building toward the bank, the flames quickly destroyed the Weedon house and its contents and began to eat up the bank building.

Businesses' houses and residences in the path of the fire were emptied of their stocks and furnishings, which were placed in the middle of the narrow streets, only to be consumed by the fire as it progressed. When it was seen the bank building was doomed, all the valuables were placed in the vault, which was locked. The bank will only lose the building, on which there is a good insurance.

One Person Injured

During the fire James M. Barbee, cashier of the bank; N.C. Davis, W.S. Lynn, W.H. Hammill, Milton Botts, W.H. Smoot, H.G. Leary, George W. Hunter, Tyson Janney, and other business men and property owners led the fight against the flames. Mr. Botts, who had one of his feet badly cut in a manner he could not explain, was the only person injured.

As there is no fire department in Occoquan, the citizens formed a bucket brigade to fight the flames, which were beyond control from the beginning. When the Alexandria automobile engine arrived the flames had jumped the creek at the old wooden covered bridge and partially destroyed a building.

The destruction of her home is the second misfortune that has befallen Mrs. Weedon in less than two weeks. On August 13 her daughter, Miss Virginia Weedon, after being rescued from drowning in Occoquan Bay, had her entire scalp torn from her head by the shaft of the motorboat that saved her from the water.

List of Burned Properties

The fire destroyed the following properties in the order in which they are named: Weedon residence and contents, Occoquan Bank building, residence and general store of W.S. Lynn, the latter containing between \$4,00-\$5,000 worth of general merchandise, farm machinery etc.

Oliver Underwood property occupied by F.B. Allen with most of its contents.

Dr. J.F. Carroll property, occupied as a residence by W.H. Hammill, and contents.

Viadex Manufacturing Company, making speedometers and route indicators for automobiles, owned by W.S. Lynn.

Two frame residences, one occupied by Mrs. Walter O'Neill and the other by Dr. F.W. Hornbaker as a garage. The Hornbaker drug store nearby caught fire, but the flames were extinguished.

Residence of Mrs. F.C. Davis and contents.

Methodist Episcopal Church totally destroyed: loss, \$3,000.

Residence of the Rev. George W. Allen badly damaged.

Residence of Carl Lynn damaged, as were the contents.

Three large barns filled with hay, feed, carriages, harness and other property owned by Elder William M. Smoot, H.G. Leary and George W. Hunter.

Residence of Mrs. Charles Joyce, and most of its contents.

Auto Engine Checks Flames

When the flames crossed the creek from the Viadex Manufacturing Company and communicated with the Joyce residence, the Alexandria fire engine was brought into action, quickly checking the progress of the flames. The general store owned by Tyson Janney, containing \$5,000 worth of general merchandise, caught fire several times, but the flames were extinguished by the bucket brigade the first time and later by the Alexandria fire company.

Members of the emergency fire department of the District workhouse, 2 miles away, went to the fire, but were unable to render much material assistance.

The old town of Occoquan lies at the head of the Occoquan Bay, more than one mile from the railroad station of Woodbridge. It was founded as early as 1720, and was frequented by Gen. Washington as a place of trade before and after he was President. Old Pohick Church on the Mount Vernon estate, which was attended by Washington, is not far away.

Fairfax Herald, September 1, 1916 Occoquan Swept: Fire Nearly Destroys Prince William Town; Hotel, Bank, 12 Stores Burn.

Fire which swept the western part of Occoquan, the little town near the District workhouse, in Prince William Co., Friday afternoon, completely destroyed twelve stores and houses and numerous outbuildings, and caused \$40,000 loss, partially covered by insurance.

No one was injured. Forty persons will be forced to rely on neighbors for homes.

The fire originated at 2:30 o'clock in the old Alton Hotel, now occupied by Mrs. Weedon. The explosion of an oil stove is thought to be the cause. At 6 o'clock, after the arrival of No. 6 Engine Company, from Alexandria, the fire was under control.

Swept by a stiff breeze, the fire completely destroyed the old Alton Hotel; The new two-story Bank of Occoquan, the house and store of W.S. Lynn, both frame; the two story house of Carl Underwood, the frame house of Wade Hammill, the frame M.E. church, South; the

Allen house, the brick manufacturing plant of the Viadex Manufacturing Company, manufacturers of speedometers, whose buildings were owned by W.S. Lynn, the house of Mrs. Carl Lynn, the barn of R.S. Woodward, and about a hundred frame sheds and barns.

But for the quick formation of bucket brigades, which relayed water from Occoquan Creek, nearby, and the timely arrival of No. 6 engine, of Alexandria, which made a record run of forty-five minutes from Alexandria, seventeen miles away, the whole village would have been destroyed.

The wharves and the eastern section of the town were not touched, nor was the district workhouse, more than a mile away across Occoquan creek.

The chemical engine from the workhouse and a number of trustees aided in the rescue work. About seventy-five men worked in bucket lines. The government tug Louise gave assistance by pumping water.

**Washington Star, August 26, 1916
Occoquan Visited by Serious Fire
Loss Between \$40,000-\$50,000, and Many
Persons are Homeless.
Prisoners Fight Flames.**

Occoquan, Va., August 26- Between forty and fifty residents of Occoquan last night slept in the homes of friends or in the Odd Fellows' Halle here as a result of a disastrous fire which swept away their homes and other property in the afternoon. The loss is between \$40,000 and \$50,000.

The fire originated about 2:30 o'clock from an unknown cause in the rear part of the home of Mrs. J. Hood Weedon on Mill Street, the principal thoroughfare of this little town. By the time the flames were discovered by Mrs. Weedon, who had gone to the front porch of her home a few minutes before, they had gained considerable headway. The cries of Mrs. Weedon were heard by neighbors and soon an alarm was sounding throughout the village calling for help. A bucket brigade was formed. Water was taken from nearby wells and also from Occoquan Creek, on which the town lies. The

fire-fighters, however, were unable to do much good against the flames which were fanned by a strong wind. Although Mrs. Weedons home, formerly the Alton Hotel, was built of brick, it was soon a mass of ruins.

BANK BUILDING BURNED

With the outbreak of the fire James Barbee, cashier of the Bank of Occoquan, which adjoined the hotel, placed all the money in the vault, and then went to join the fire fighters in their efforts to keep the fire from spreading to the bank building. Their efforts, however, were without avail, as the roof of the building was soon a mass of flames, and in a few minutes the interior of the institution was wiped out. It was said the money and the papers in the vault were believed safe.

The fire soon spread northward, and soon the general merchandise store and dwelling of W.S. Lynn went up in smoke. About the time this building caught fire, Ralph Whitaker, son of W.H. Whitaker, superintendent of the District workhouse, across the creek, heard of the fire and dispatched the chemical engine, stationed at the institution, to the scene. For a time the volunteer firemen used the chemicals to advantage, but the wind shifted the flames to the rear, and soon the dwelling and the Occoquan M.E. Church South were on fire.

PRISONERS RENDER AID

In connection with the sending of the fire apparatus to Occoquan, Mr. Whitaker with several guards took seventy-five prisoners from the workhouse to the scene, and they worked diligently in carrying furniture, clothing and other property from threatened buildings. They also formed bucket brigades.

After the flames destroyed the Lynn store and residence they burned through the residence of Oliver Underwood and then jumped across an alleyway and destroyed the home of Wade H. Hammill.

Calls for help were telephoned to nearby towns, and an effort was made to reach Alexandria telephone to ask for fire apparatus to be sent. Communication however, with that place could not be had and a telephone message was sent to the Washington Star asking for the fire department of Alexandria be notified. It was on

the message sent from The Star that the big motor fire engine of that town was dispatched to the scene. The run of fifteen miles over a road which is bad in spots was made in forty-three minutes. When the fire apparatus, in charge of Capt. Henry Beach, pulled into town, he said later, it looked as if the entire place would soon go up in flames. The motor engine was backed up to the Occoquan Creek and residents assisted the firemen in carrying the hose several hundred yards and soon water was being thrown, but not before the fire had jumped across the street and destroyed the plant of the Viadex Manufacturing Company, a dwelling occupied by Walter Neal and the ice house of Dr. Frank Hornbaker.

AIDED BY SHIFTING WIND

It was but a short time later that the firemen succeeded in checking the fire in the northward spread. The wind, which had shifted, also aided the firemen, as the flames were kept away from a number of buildings. Telephone wires and brick walls of some of the buildings began to fall while the firemen were working nearby and for a short time menaced them. When it was seen there was but little chance of saving the church and property on Commerce Street articles of furniture were removed to places of safety.

It was not until the church and several residences on Commerce Street had been burned down that the fire was actually under control. It was about 6 o'clock last evening before the danger of the flames spreading was passed. The firemen and residents, as bucket brigade, worked long into the night putting out the smoldering flames in the burned buildings. No one was injured during the fire, although after the flames had wiped out the places on Mill Street and several venturesome ones had narrow escapes from falling walls. As soon as it was seen that the fire was under control, preparations were being made by the more fortunate residents to care for those whose property had been destroyed. The Odd Fellows Hall was thrown open and several families spent the night there, while others were taken into the homes of friends.

ORIGIN OF FIRE UNKNOWN

Mrs. Weedon, in whose home the fire originated, is the mother of Miss Virginia Weedon. A report was spread that the fire started from a gasoline stove, but this was denied by Mrs. Weedon, who said she had not been using such a stove. Persons who reached the scene shortly after the fire had been discovered expressed their opinion that the flames were of spontaneous combustion, as they appeared to have started under the flooring in the rear of the house.

Occoquan was built in 1730. It was here George Washington traded during his residence at Mount Vernon.

**Reprinted in the Potomac News
Wednesday, September 3, 1969, Page B-1**

2:30 p.m., August 25, 1916 Fire Devastation in Occoquan

Imagine dialing 911 (911 doesn't exist before 1968) and there is no fire department to answer your plea for help. The OWL (Occoquan, Woodbridge, Lorton) fire department isn't organized until 1938 and its charter granted in 1940. Occoquan resident Fred Lynn is our first Fire Chief and 204 Mill Street was the OWL fire station from 1946-1958.

Now you and your neighbors must rely on your own resources. Grab a bucket and throw water on an already enveloped fire is the only alternative at the moment. The closest fire department that can respond is from the City of Alexandria. A plea for help in a phone call to the Washington Star newspaper office finally reaches the Alexandria fire department and an engine arrives 43 minutes later.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index Inflation Calculator, shows that the buying power of \$50,000, the amount of damage reported in the Washington Post article, in 1916, would be \$1,102,000.00 today. It's hard to picture everything on the south side of Mill Street destroyed by fire from and including Town Hall at 314, burning east and stopping just short of 302,

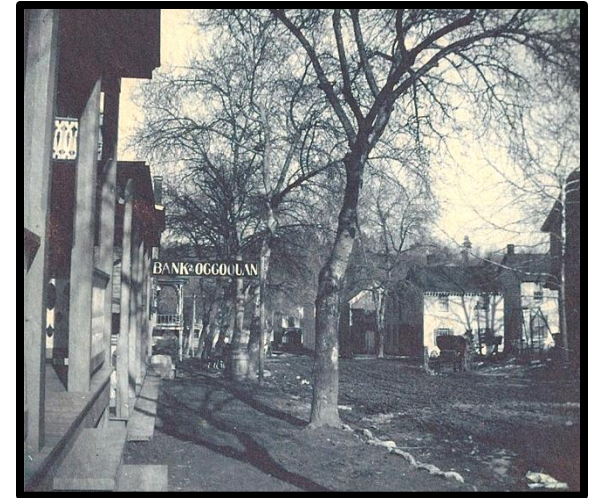
where today is the Golden Goose. The fire jumped across to the north side of Mill Street burning structures between 313, where LaBella's Bridal Shop is and 301, the Occoquan Inn location.

When the winds shifted, blowing south toward Commerce Street, several structures were destroyed on Poplar Alley. In 1916 not many people had automobiles. Several of our Occoquan photos from that era show horses and wagons and the infrequent motor vehicle. The newspaper articles covering the fire wrote about the big new automobile fire engine being sent to Occoquan. Stables for horses filled with dry hay for feed and straw for bedding were the norm rather than garages for cars and these stables would have quickly gone up in flames.

As the winds pushed the fire across Polar Alley it burnt the beautiful Methodist Church on Commerce Street and destroyed everything on the north side of Commerce Street from the corner of Ellicott and stopping before 303 where today is the Pink Bicycle Tea Room.

There are some points of confusion in the articles. The Washington Post article describes the fire crossing the "old wooden covered bridge". The bridge was an iron truss bridge, built in 1878, and the floor of the bridge was wooden. Carl Underwood was listed as the owner of the 402 Mill Street property rather than Oliver as the Fairfax Herald reported. The Fairfax Herald also exaggerated the amount of destruction, saying that 100 frame sheds and barns were destroyed.

The Washington Post article tells us the bank building adjoined Mrs. Weedon's home and the Fairfax Herald informs us that the bank building was new and two-story. In our collection of photos we have a picture showing the Bank of Occoquan on Union Street. That must have been taken soon before its move to Mill Street. After the 1916 fire the bank would eventually be located at 308 Mill Street. The night depository box can still be seen to the right of the front door, at 308, on the exterior wall facing Mill Street.



The picture above shows the Bank of Occoquan on Union Street before its move to Mill Street. This photo shows carriages and horses being the prevalent mode of travel. Our streets are dirt, rutted and muddy. Alexandria's fire truck would have been dealing with dirt roads on their speedy trip down to Occoquan in 1916. It's amazing they covered the 15 miles in 43 minutes as the Washington Star reports.

Nancy Mooney, who has lived in or very near Occoquan all her life, was told by older residents how they hung wet sheets out of windows to cover walls, hoping to prevent sparks from the fire taking hold.

Occoquan residents, the Alexandria Fire Department and volunteers from the District Workhouse and Reformatory all pulled together to keep the fire from being more devastating than it was. The Lynn store soon reopened across the street in the portion of the Viadex building that stood after the fire. W.S. Lynn added on to the structure for his business and family home. It would be 1926 though before the Methodist Church is rebuilt and dedicated. The fire destroyed many historic buildings in Occoquan, the old brick Alton and Occoquan hotel buildings along with the Underwood property dated from the early 1800's. Some things just can't be rebuilt but our instincts keep us moving forward. *Dolores*

Major Structures Destroyed in the August 25, 1916 Fire

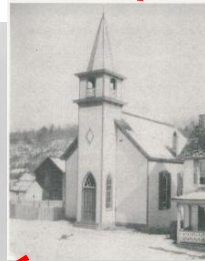


Methodist Episcopal Church South

Hammill home (Previously the Occoquan Hotel & Dr. Powell's Home & Infirmary)

Bank of Occoquan

Weedon home (Previously the Alton Hotel),



Viadex Manufacturing Company
(The brick portion of the structure survived the fire)

Left: W.S. Lynn store and home on the left, Underwood home on the right.



Occoquan Historical Society June Membership Meeting

OHS met at the Occoquan Town Hall on Thursday, June 16, for the annual membership meeting. The following were elected to the OHS Board; Boyd Alexander, Stewart Christiano, Kim Deal ,Rose Destefano, Jim Drakes, Dolores Elder, Bobbie Frank, Alice Gardiner, Angelee Mehta, Earnie Porta, June Randolph, Annette Riley, Martha Roberts and Marge Shaffer. Officers will be elected at the next monthly meeting.

July Happenings

July 12- The Leadership Prince William Youth Summer Academy visited Occoquan. Approximately 40 future leaders had a short visit to the Mill House and groups worked together to complete a history scavenger hunt. There are some great leaders in our future!

July 14- Occoquan Minnieland Daycare visited the museum for an early morning milling exhibit conducted by our” miller”, Stewart Christiano. Twelve 4-5 year olds had fun using a mortar to pulverize wheat seeds and then grinding the grain with a hand turned mill. The boys and girls also decorated a cup planter and planted wheat to take home to watch the wheat grass develop.

Volunteer Award

The Occoquan Historical Society congratulates OHS Board member, Barbara “Bobbie” Frank, on receiving the Town of Occoquan annual Walter D. Bailey Volunteer Award on July 20. Bobbie has given service to many groups in the community including all the work she has done for our historical society. Thank you Bobbie!

Membership Renewal

Thank you to everyone who has renewed their Occoquan Historical Society membership!
If you have not had a chance to do so, membership can be renewed at: www.occquanhistoricalsociety.org
Or a check made to OHS for \$20 can be mailed to: Mill House Museum, PO Box 65, Occoquan, VA 22125.

Mill House Museum

413 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125

Open Daily 11a.m.-4p.m. Saturdays and Sundays 11a.m.-5p.m. Memorial Day-Labor Day

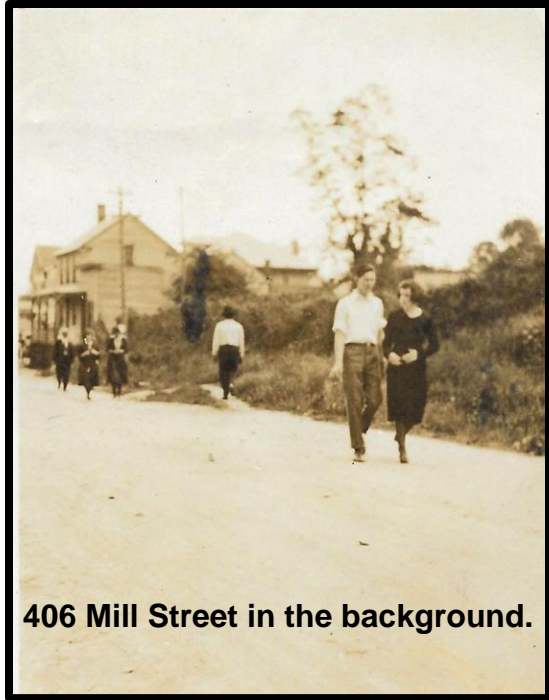
703-491-7525

www.occquanhistoricalsociety.org





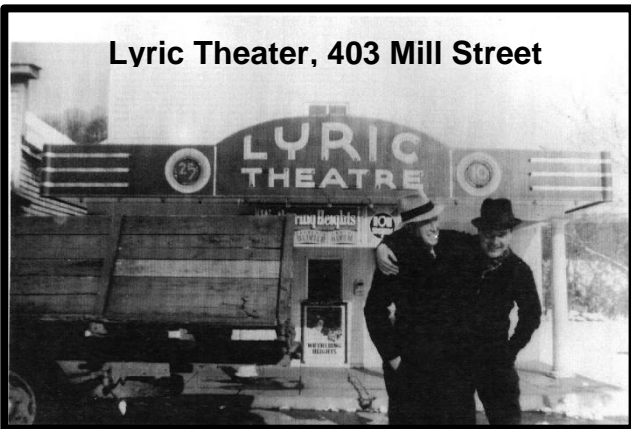
*August, 2016
Mill House Museum
Monthly News*



406 Mill Street in the background.



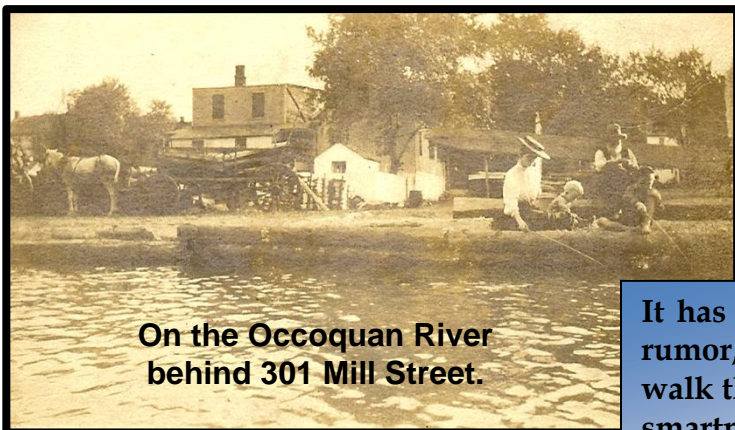
Occoquan River Fun!



Lyric Theater, 403 Mill Street



Elementary school at 310
Commerce Street



On the Occoquan River
behind 301 Mill Street.



Occoquan cotton mill ruins

It has been said, and pictures seem to confirm the rumor, people used to talk to each other and even walk the streets of Occoquan without holding a smartphone or tablet. It's so hard to believe!

Pokémon Go

“Get up, Get Out, and Explore!” That is what the Pokémon.com web site tells us to do. It says, “Get on your feet and step outside to find and catch wild Pokémon. Explore cities and towns where you live-and even around the globe-to capture as many Pokémon as you can. As you walk through the real world, your smartphone will vibrate to let you know you’re near a Pokémon.”

Those wild Pokémon are storming all through the streets of Occoquan. Who would have thought when our historical markers were placed, that down the path Pokémon would flock to learn about our action filled past!

According to the Pokémon Go information, PokéStops are frequently found at historical markers. So how many historical markers do we have in Occoquan? At the Mill House we distribute a history timeline to our visitors. One section of the timeline lists all our historical markers and their location in town. The total number of markers is 22!

Our museum desk is located by a window facing Mill Street so I’m observing Pokémon activity on a regular basis. I’ve been able to converse with enthusiasts of the game. Surprisingly gamers don’t mind explaining some of the facets of the game to the museum lady. Now I know why people are sitting in the flower planters. There is a gym located outside the Mill House door. A gym reminds me of the Jetson’s house. (Remember when cartoon’s were prime time TV fare?) I digress; teams can battle for control of the gym and earn points. This battle involves sitting on any available spot including fence rails and planters with once thriving flowers. You don’t need to be walking for this part of the game as

your wild Pokémon’s are in for the fight as long as your thumbs are operational.

Pokémon’s should not be captured while driving. That is one rule not everyone has grasped. I can spot cars cruising past the museum once, twice, thrice..... well you get the idea.

Honestly though, I have seen families having fun together and couples out walking who said they are getting exercise instead of sitting idle at home. If it gets people out the door and moving, discovering our world and occasionally communicating to other humans, it’s a good thing! *Dolores*

Museum Closed

During the intense heat of August our AC gave us it’s last breath of cool air. We were closed from Friday, August 12 and reopened Monday, August 22. The town replaced our unit and had an electrician in to install a new outlet. We can’t thank them enough!

River Mill Park



This beautiful view of the Occoquan River was taken by Boyd Alexander, from River Mill Park. Come visit!!





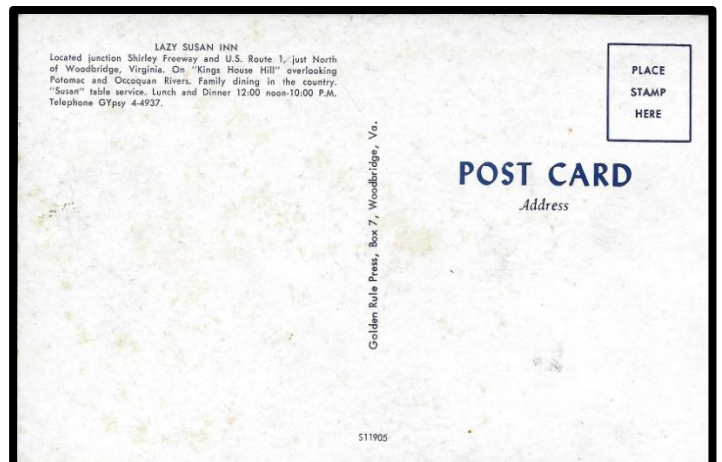
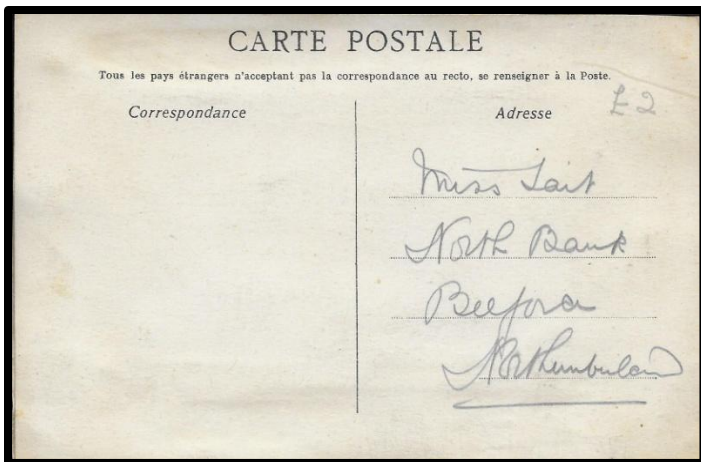
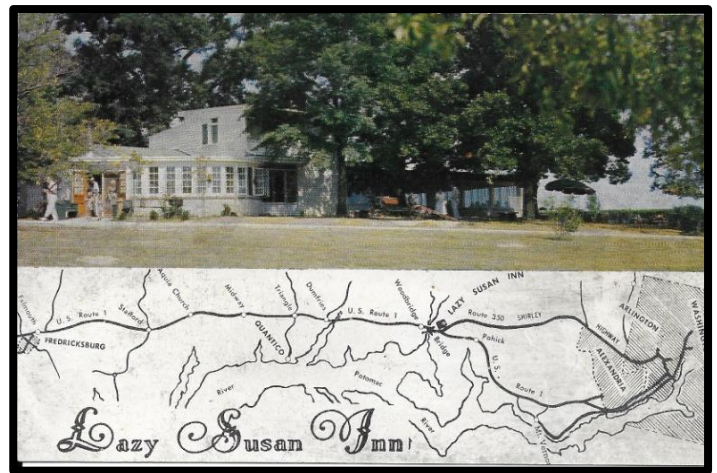
Mill Racer December, 2016

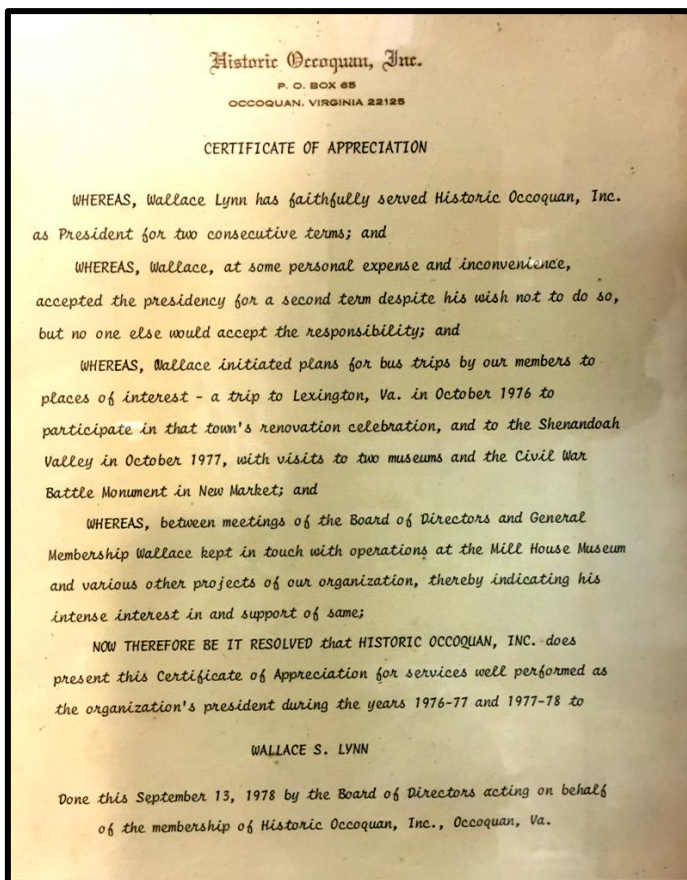


New Collection Items

Two postcards were recently donated to the Mill House by Letty Lynn. Pictured below left is a WWI silk postcard. These cards were embroidered by French and Belgian women as a source of income and sold to the soldiers as souvenirs. The silk design contained a small pocket that might hold a miniature handkerchief that a wife or sweetheart could carry with them to remember their loved one so far away. The embroidered emblems represent the British, French and Russian Empire. Though not many cards survived, the designs were unique and numerous. The back of the card can be loosely translated as "All foreigners not accepting the correspondence on the front are to ask about it at the post." Usually the card would be inserted into an envelope to mail. Now the mystery is to find who Miss Tait was and who mailed the card!

Our other card is from the Lazy Susan Inn which opened in 1955. The Inn evolved into the Lazy Susan Dinner Theater and it operated for many years. On the map, the road from Washington D.C. is the Shirley highway, Route 350. The I-95 system construction began in 1965. This helps us date our postcard between 1955-1965.





Two other items donated by Ms. Lynn belonged to her uncle, Wallace Lynn. The first is his 1944 Knapp-Monarch Co. mess kit from WWII and the other a certificate of recognition for his service as president of Historic Occoquan. The certificate is shown above on the left and the kit to the right.

About the same time these donations connected to Wallace Lynn came in, a visitor to the museum was looking for information about a relative who attended Occoquan High School. While researching that I came across the article below about a school field trip and Wallace was one of the students.

Manassas Journal, March 27, 1930, Page 1

Occoquan Class at Gettysburg, American History Class Visits, National Battle Ground

The American History Class of Occoquan District High School, accompanied by a few other pupils and several members of the faculty, left early Saturday morning, March 22, by bus for the historical battlefield of Gettysburg, Pa., there to see and receive first hand information about a decisive battle of world history.

The party which included about 25, viewed with interest our National Capitol, the beautiful country of Maryland, the historical Fredericktown, and finally crossed the Mason-Dixon Line into Pennsylvania, and finally reached the historical park.

After a delightful lunch, the group set out by aid of a guide to view the battlefield. It was two long hours that it viewed the beautiful statues and markings and heard related the story of how two opposing armies clashed on the field of battle.

Early in the afternoon the party left for Virginia, and several hours later arrived again at Occoquan, full of historical information that would require pages of printed text to tell.

Those that made up the party were as follows: Miss Elizabeth Vaughn, principal of the school; John M. Kline Jr., instructor of History; Georgie Brockett, instructor at Alexandria; Frances Brunt, Jane Selecman, Thelma Austin, Katharine Brawner, Louise Brawner, Burnetta Brockett, Ann Bubb, Dorothy Hoyt, Janet Russell, Maxine Rison, Ellen Selecman, Malissa Lacey, Katharine Keys, Robert Bryant, Dudley Dawson, Lester Malcolm, Wolford Reid, Wallace Lynn, Billie Sanford, Elwood Davies, Mr. Keys, bus driver.

Note: Occoquan School opened in 1927 at 12915 Occoquan Road and housed all 12 grades. In 1953 the high school students moved to the first Gar-Field (now the Ferlazzo Building) and the original building became Occoquan Elementary.



Video Display

On Friday, December 2, our new video display began operating here at the Mill House. Thanks to a wonderful donation we were able to purchase a large TV, laptop computer and the necessary items to complete the connection.

The TV sits in the upper part of the alcove across from the museum door. It is one of the first things visitors to the museum notice as they arrive. We can now show one of our history power points featuring photographs from the collection, historical maps, oral history DVD's and reenactment videos. The possibilities are endless now that we have this system.

If you haven't been to the museum lately please stop and see us and enjoy the many facets of Occoquan history!

WinterFest 2016

The Mill House joined the fun for Occoquan's WinterFest on a chilly Saturday, December 10 from 3p.m.-7p.m. In between visits with Santa, roasting marshmallows and other fun activities, children could stop by the museum and make a festive decoration. Woven yarn ornaments, beaded candy canes and snowflakes were among the choices. As you can see, young and old both had fun at the craft tables!



History Note: December 18, 1862

CSA General Wade Hampton raids Occoquan, reportedly capturing 20 Union supply wagons attempting to cross the river by ferry. Hampton arrested local resident, John Underwood, as a traitor to the south.

2016-2017

As 2016 comes to an end the Occoquan Historical Society wishes everyone a wonderful *New Year* as 2017 rolls in.

Thank you to everyone for your monetary donations, collection additions and your continued interest in our endeavors.

Happy Holidays!



Mill House Museum
 PO Box 65, 413 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125
www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org
 703-491-7525
 Open Sunday through Saturday 11-4