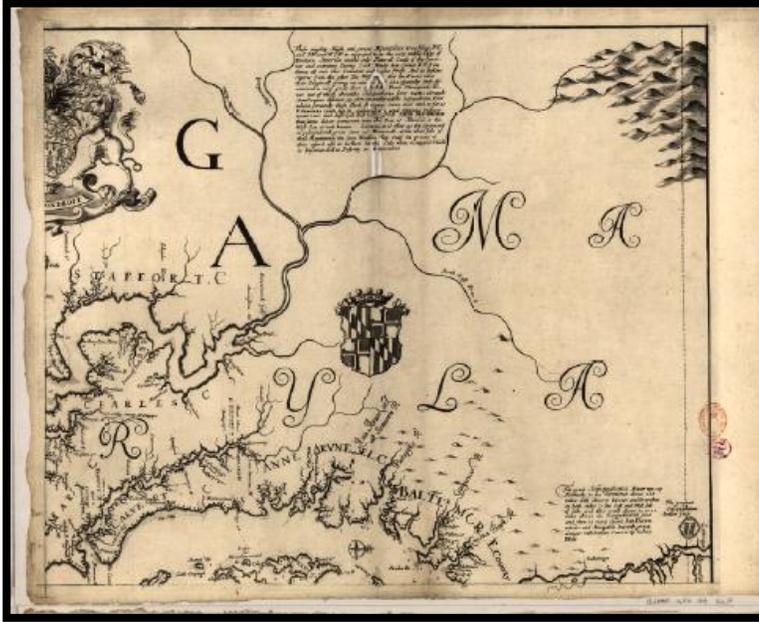
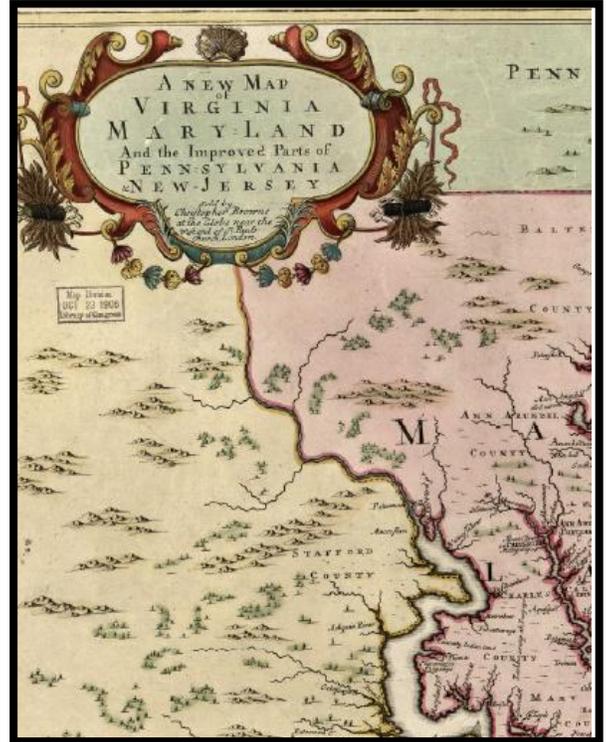


*The Mill Racer*  
 Summer, 2018  
 A Publication of the Occoquan Historical Society

Achquin...Achaquin...Occoquan  
 Dolores Elder



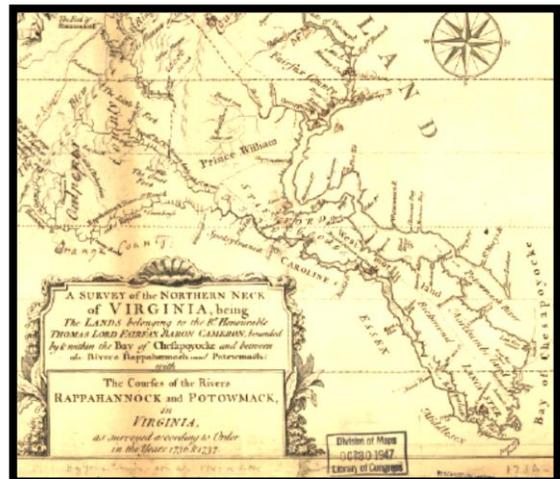
Virginia and Maryland as it is planted and inhabited this present year.  
 Augustin Herrman 1673



New Map of Virginia, Maryland and the improved parts of Pennsylvania and New Jersey  
 Christopher Browne 1685



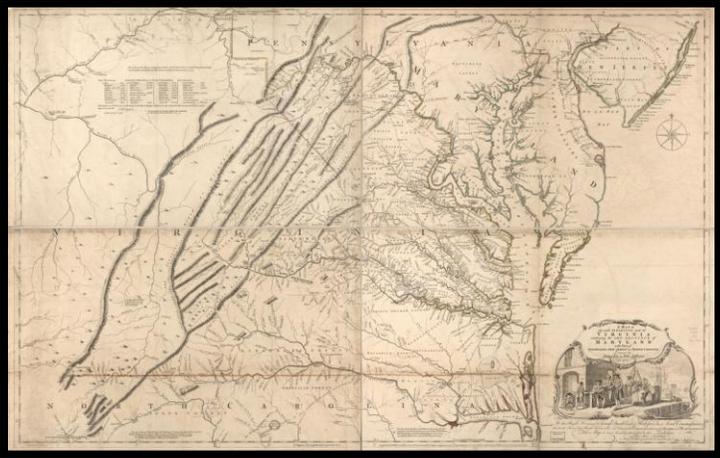
New Map of Virginia, Maryland and the improved parts of Pennsylvania and New Jersey.  
 John Senex 1719



A Survey of the Northern Neck of Virginia  
 John Warner 1747



A new and accurate map of Virginia & Maryland.  
Emanuel Bowen 1752



A map of the most inhabited part of Virginia containing the whole province of Maryland with part of Pensilvania, New Jersey and North Carolina.  
Fry, Jefferson 1757

Virginia, John Smith 1612



Several sections of early maps are pictured above. All of these maps can be found on the Library of Congress web site. The citation information can be found at the end of this article.

“Occoquan, appears in the English records as Achquin, Aquoconde, Aquacond, Ohoquin, and Occkaquann.” From Mike Tivnan, *Early Settlers on the Occoquan*, Occoquan Historical Society Newsletter, September, 2006

**Visitors** to the Mill House Museum all have a common question. What does Occoquan mean and where does that word come from? The definition we have provided for years is that it means the end of the water.

The Town of Occoquan is located just below the fall line of the Occoquan River. This fall of water provided the power for the large grain, cotton and saw mills, and the iron works located here in the years circa 1755-1924. The river’s rocky terrain makes it un-navigable through the falls, hence the end of the water.

That still does not tell us where the word Occoquan or its definition comes from. The Virginia map from John Smith of Jamestown fame was published in 1612. Sadly, Smith does not label the river, only the Dogue village, Tauxnet, that was located at the mouth of the river.

William Strachey, an English writer, came to the Virginia colony in 1610 and lived at Jamestown for a year, recording life at the fort and descriptions of the Powhatan Indians. Strachey attempted to record the Virginia Algonquian dialect as best he could. His writings along with those of John Smith have been the basis of study for many linguists attempting to recreate the lost language.

In *Landmarks of Old Prince William* published in 1924, Dr. Truman Michelson of the Bureau of Ethnology,<sup>1</sup> provided author Fairfax Harrison with the definition of Occoquan as the end of the water.<sup>2</sup> This seems to be the first time this definition is used. There are many examples in early deeds spelling the word Occoquan as we do today. However, Harrison also provides us some of the old spellings of Occoquan. Taken from land patents we have Ohoquin in 1654, Acquaconde in 1657, Occkaquann in 1694, and finally Ocaquon in 1694.<sup>3</sup> What doesn't exist is a source of the word in a Native American language with the definition, end of the water.

Other references I found to the definition of Occoquan came from Washington Post articles. The Post ran an article on March 28, 1909 that contained a list of American Indian words and their definitions provided by Judge J. Upshur Dennis, a local historian.<sup>4</sup> Judge Dennis gave Occoquan's meaning as the cooking ground. A later Washington Post article from August 17, 1934 offered the definition curved expansive bay.<sup>5</sup> This came from Dr. Titus Ulkes, a Washington D.C. naturalist and scientist. The interpretation of the word's definition is in equal correlation to the number of people providing the explanations.

The maps of Augustine Herrman in 1673, Christopher Browne in 1685 and John Senex in 1719, label the river Achquin. John Warner's 1747 map of the Northern Neck spells the river Occoquon, the closest we have to today's spelling of Occoquan. The 1752 map of Emanuel Bowen spells the river Achaquin, a closer spelling to the original Achquin but adds the extra vowel sound to the pronunciation. The Fry, Jefferson map of 1757 spells Occoquan as we do today.

So what is happening from 1608, when Smith sailed up the Potomac until 1757, when the Fry, Jefferson map is published? Water is what it's all about. Navigable travel allows for the transportation of people and goods no matter if you are a Native American or a colonist.

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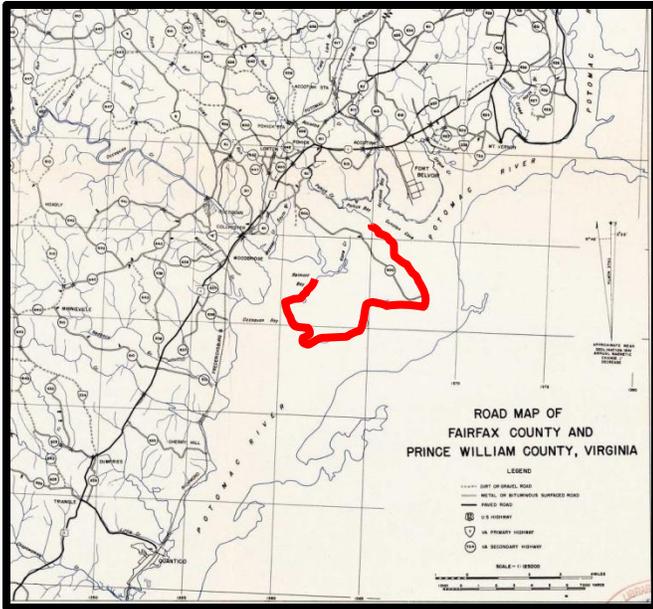
<sup>1</sup> Now part of the National Anthropological Archives

<sup>2</sup> Harrison, Fairfax, *Landmarks of Old Prince William*, Prince William Historic Commission, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1987, page 52

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, page 54

<sup>4</sup> [Baltimore Sun.]. (1909, Mar 28). INDIAN NAMES. *The Washington Post* (1877-1922) Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/144911407?accountid=4154>

<sup>5</sup> By, R. S. (1934, Aug 17). Wanderbirds to visit scene of chief powhatan's villages. *The Washington Post* (1923-1954) Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/150594041?accountid=4154>



The length of the Potomac River from Point Lookout on the Maryland shore to the docks of Washington D.C. is about 100 miles. A river craft traveling from the mouth of the Potomac River towards the Great Falls area might need a landmark to identify what is today the Occoquan River. The map on the left has outlined in red Mason Neck. This is an area of land between Occoquan and Belmont Bays to the south, which is the entrance to the Occoquan River, and Gunston Cove to the north. The land of Mason Neck forms a natural hook.

Okhucquoan is a Native American word meaning hook<sup>6</sup> or anything bent in the form of a hook. Achquin, the first spelling of the name given to the Occoquan River and the changes of spelling to Achaquin and then Occoquon to finally Occoquan over an approximate time period of 150 years is no doubt the result of putting into English spelling a word that was being heard by colonists for the first time in the 1600's.

The spelling of Occoquan and all the derivatives of that word didn't apply just to maps. Below is a letter written by George Washington's secretary, Tobias Lear to Oliver Evans, who invented and patented the automated grain milling process. In the letter Lear, a Harvard College graduate, spells Occoquan, Ochoquan, which is close spelling to Okhucquoan. Lear used this spelling in 1791, 34 years after the publication of the Fry and Jefferson map.

Philadelphia  
August 29, 1791

Sir;

*The President has been informed by his manager at Mt. Vernon that works of his mill is in such a stage as not to admit any delay in erecting improvements without stopping the whole progress of the work, which at this time would be a serious inconvenience. The mill-wright who has been employed in the repairing of the President's mill has been to view your improvements at the Ochoquan Mills, and with the insight he has obtained from that view aided by a plate of the improvements, he has no doubt of his being able to execute the work completely, and he has the character of being an excellent workman, - but, as the President is desirous of having it done in*

<sup>6</sup> Heckewelder, John, and William C. Reichel. "Names Which the Lennie Lennape or Delaware Indians Gave to Rivers, Streams and Localities within the States of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland and Virginia, with Their Significations." *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society*, vol. 1, no. 6, 1872, pp. 227-282. JSTOR, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/41179548](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41179548) (page 275)

*the most perfect manner without a hazard of its not answering the purpose fully, he wishes to know if you still hold your determination of going into that part of the country as you mentioned your intention of doing so, and in case you should and would go on immediately, he will give directions to the Mill Wright to wait your arrival before any thing is done to the improvements. –But if you do not go on immediately the President must give orders for the person now engaged to go on with the work himself, as the season will admit no delay.*

*Let me know whether you go to Virginia directly or not – that if you should a letter might be sent to you on Wednesday for Mt. Vernon.*

*I am Sir,*

*Tobias Lear*

(Secretary to George Washington)

Another example of inconsistent spelling is found in an Act of the Virginia General Assembly “authorizing Nathaniel Ellicott and Isaac M’Pherson to build a toll bridge across the river Occaquan, at the place therein mentioned.” The act for the first bridge across the Occoquan River at Occoquan passed on December 17, 1795.

In the naming of the river, there isn’t an established community at the falls until 1734 at the earliest. That year a tobacco warehouse was established for the “ease of the inhabitants of Prince William County residents at the north shore or Copper Mine Landing upon Occoquan.”<sup>7</sup> This location was at the end of Ox Road. Two years later Valentine Peyton was authorized to establish a second tobacco warehouse on the south side of the Occoquan River (this warehouse is drawn on the 1758 survey requested by John Ballentine) close to today’s Mamie Davis Park and the town dock.

The town on the river more likely develops when the industries are established. That first mill being an iron works in 1755. Grain and saw mills quickly follow and now there is a reason to move up the river from the hook shaped section of land at the bay. Now people will come for employment and build homes, ordinaries, general stores and churches at a place named for the river, not the river named for the town.

The word Okhucquoan meaning “hook or anything bent into a hook shape”, as a description for Mason Neck’s natural formation resembling a hook, and the variety of spellings over the years to Occoquan makes sense when you think of it as the description of the entrance to the river and not a town that won’t develop until over 100 years later.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://vagenweb.org/hening/vol04-20.htm>

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"Compiled from Virginia State highway road map, U.S. Army tactical maps (Fort Belvoir & Quantico sheets), U.S. Coast & Geodetic survey map (Virginia, Fairfax quadrangle).

## Mill House Museum Scrapbooks

Boyd Alexander completed scanning articles and memorabilia from the final scrapbook in the museum collection. This book contained newspaper articles from 1988-1999 that were collected by museum docent Marcia Pendleton. Thank you Boyd!

The article below is about a print hanging on the museum wall. This museum curator found it in the museum basement and brought it upstairs to better preserve it. Without a collection number I never knew how we happened to have it. Now with the

information from the Potomac News, November 1992 article, the P. Buckley Moss print 72/1000 can be formally added to our catalog collection, #2018-1-8. Visit the museum and see the rich fall colors Pat Buckley Moss used in the *The Little Stone House* print!

## Moss to present painting of Occoquan's Mill House

Nov. 1992

By ALEXANDRA B. STODDARD  
of the Potomac News

Sleepy Occoquan will come alive on Tuesday night when internationally acclaimed artist Pat Buckley Moss, whose depictions of Amish and Mennonite people have earned her a worldwide following, comes to the Frame Up to present a painting she recently completed of the Mill House museum.

Last year Moss' appearance at the Frame Up attracted nearly 400 people, according to owner Marlene McManus.

Tuesday night more than 50 shops and restaurants will remain open to accommodate the hundreds of expected Moss enthusiasts who will wait in line for a number to have up to two previously purchased works signed.

The popular works of P. Buckley Moss are carried by approximately 500 dealers across the United States and are available in prints, dolls, plates, watercolors and range in price from a \$25 print to more than \$12,000 for an original.

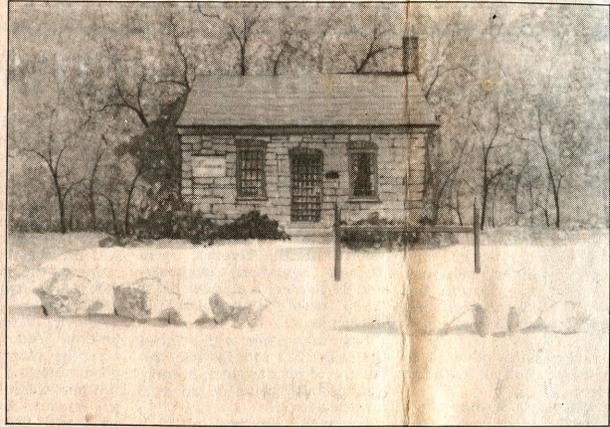
Moss exhibits regularly in Japan, Canada, Germany and the United States. In May 1989, she built the P. Buckley Moss museum in Waynesboro. In a large 18,000-square-foot brick building, archives of originals and a permanent retrospective exhibit are kept and tours are given, including one by Moss' mother who is 88 years old.

Waynesboro is special to Moss, who changed her style of painting when she moved there in 1964. Having previously painted religious themes, she switched to painting the Mennonite and Amish people she came to know and admire after moving to the Shenandoah Valley.

The artist also has spent much of her time speaking to children with learning disabilities, because she is dyslexic.

Her P. Buckley Moss Collectors Society, which boasts 14,000 members at more than 40 chapters around the nation, raises funds for charities by arranging the donation of some of her work for raffle or auction.

McManus said Moss is very person-



Pat Buckley Moss will be in Occoquan at the Frame Up Tuesday to sign prints and present her painting of the Mill House.

able and through her charities she gives back. The appearance on Tuesday is expected to be very crowded, and McManus said people can line up for numbers at 4 p.m.

Last year when Moss was signing

prints at evening show at the Frame Up, she stayed until after midnight. "She will stay until the last person is signed," McManus said.

For more information, call The Frame Up at (703) 491-2838.

## Occoquan Historical Society Board

During the June 7, OHS membership meeting the following people were elected to serve on the Occoquan Historical Society Board and the officer positions were elected at the July 19, OHS board meeting.

Marge Shaffer, President  
Boyd Alexander, Vice-President  
Earnie Porta, Treasurer  
Dolores Elder, Secretary  
Kim Deal

Jim Drakes  
Bobbie Frank  
June Randolph  
Jim Walbert

## Membership Dues

**Thank you** to those members who have already renewed their membership! Dues help keep the museum doors open and continue our work in the preservation of Occoquan history.

Memberships to the Occoquan Historical Society are as follows:

**Individual \$20**

**Family \$30**

**Student \$10**

**History Enthusiast \$500**

Payment can be made at [www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org), or paid by check and mailed to the Occoquan Historical Society at PO Box 65, Occoquan, VA 22125. Think about making a charitable donation to OHS with your membership fee. We are a 501c and donations are tax deductible.

If you are local, stop in at the Mill House and say hi. We are here daily from 11a.m.-4p.m. Thank you for your continued support.

Mill House Museum  
PO Box 65, 413 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125  
[www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org)  
703-491-7525  
Open Sunday through Saturday 11-4

