

# OHS NEWS

## OCCOQUAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY (OHS)

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Occoquan Historical Society Relaunches Regular Newsletter
- Museum Open 6 Days a Week
- Help Us Name Our Newsletter
- Museum Staffing
- Museum Activities

### OHS RELAUNCHES NEWSLETTER (HELP US NAME IT)

### MUSEUM OPEN SIX DAYS A WEEK

Happy 2024 and welcome to the relaunch of the Occoquan Historical Society's regular newsletter! As you are likely aware, the last several years have been difficult ones for the historical society. Thanks to the perseverance of many, however, the Society's Mill House Museum made it through a period of complete closure during 2020 and partial reopening through 2022. Since May of 2023, the museum has been open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., six days a week, Thursday through Tuesday.

2020. That examination revealed that Wednesdays welcomed the fewest number of visitors to the museum and



Mill House Museum at 413 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA

was thus a logical time to remain closed.

It has been a number of years since we last published our

newsletter and we would like to involve you in the process by asking you to help us name it.

Think about things related to Occoquan's history, the Mill House, or something else that you think is relevant and come up with a catchy name for the newsletter. Submit your ideas by email to [millhousemuseum@gmail.com](mailto:millhousemuseum@gmail.com) (no hyphen) and use the subject line "OHS Newsletter Name."

If your submission is selected we will take some time to feature a little bit about you in a future edition. We look forward to seeing your suggestions.

### MUSEUM ACTIVITIES

Starting in the fall of 2023, we've been experimenting with ways to increase our interactions with the public. These include staying open late, increasing the staffing, and expanding outside the walls of our small museum, specifically when the town is likely to have

more foot traffic. So far this has included town festivals and events like this day in the photo on the right during HolidayFest, and selected weekday evenings and holidays when the weather is pleasant.

Following the example of larger museums today, we have

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## MUSEUM ACTIVITIES (CONT'D)

also been trying out multi-sensory interactive methods to engage potential guests.

One activity we tried this fall, for example, was leaf rubbing. Rubbings are an ancient, low-cost practice used by historians and other scientist to capture a quick view of things that might not be visible to the naked eye.

For our project we used fallen leaves from native local trees for our rubbings. Thus,

children made art while learning about history and the environment, as well as color and texture, in a way that did not require language skills in order to understand and enjoy.

Like all good experiments, not everything we tried was a roaring success, but we have learned from our experiences.

In unambiguously good news, during the second half of 2023 we welcomed nearly 10,000 visitors, grossed \$2,500 in

sales and received about \$3,000 in donations.

As we continue to move forward, please consider joining as a member or renewing your membership during our June membership drive, or perhaps volunteer to help during a town event or in another way.

Of course, donations are also always welcome. Both joining or making a donation may be done electronically on our website. The web address is

[www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org)

Historic Occoquan, Inc. (our original name) opened the Mill House Museum to guests more than 50 years ago and we are looking forward to the day, decades from now, when the youth of today will celebrate our 100th anniversary. Please consider ways that you can help make that happen.

## MUSEUM STAFFING

Over the last several years we have said goodbye to some Occoquan Mill House Museum staff and welcomed some new faces. Presently, when you visit, you will be greeted by one of our regular staff members.

**Jim Harvey** has a background in ministry and education with a focus on children. He has worked at the Mill House Museum since

2018 and is the husband of staff member Nancy Harvey.

**Nancy Harvey** worked in the medical field for many years in addition to assisting Jim in his various endeavors. She and Jim raised their family in Prince William County, where they have made their home for 40 years.

**Zoe Melpolder** has a professional and volunteer background in education, public

policy, and the environment. She has been an active member of the PWC community for more than 20 years.

**Bill Grant**, who has had a lifelong love of history was convinced to take another professional path when he was young. Now that he is retired, there's no stopping him at the Mill House Museum!

**Olivia McDaniel** is new to

PWC and has loved learning about, and sharing with visitors, the rich history of this area. She has a Masters of Arts in History from the University of North Alabama.

We want to give a special thanks to Marge Noel and Jim Harvey who kept our museum open on weekends throughout 2022.

## INSIDE THE MUSEUM

If you have not visited in some time, you will notice that some items in the museum have shifted around, and some items that may be new to you have been put on display.

Many of you are familiar with the Liberty Pole incident (and some of you may

have participated in the 2007 re-enactment!) As you can see from the photograph on the right, we currently have the replica banner and prints from the 150th year commemoration of that event on display. The bright, easy to see images provoke thoughtful questions and conversa-

tions from people of all ages and backgrounds.

Another example is an invitation for people to touch some items. These additional "Please Touch Tables" can be used inside or outside, depending on the day, and we try to incorporate new items throughout



## INSIDE THE MUSEUM (CONT'D)

the year. Although the tables (a photograph of one is on the right) and open-ended questions are geared toward children, people of all ages are drawn to and handle the items.

Over the past several months we have been rearranging many of the exhibits in the Mill House Museum. At the moment, space limitations hinder us from being able to do a purely chronological presentation, so for

the moment we have been re-organizing artifacts on a thematic basis, while simultaneously attempting to increasingly display copies of interesting documents in the collection while ensuring that they are adequately protected from damage. We have also refreshed the history exhibit space in Town Hall.

So, at the museum you may not only notice some changes, but we hope you will visit regularly and notice something new.



## WEB SITE REDESIGN



We are currently working on a major redesign of the OHS web site. Until that redesign is done, you can still find all the information about the Historical Society, the Mill House Museum, and how to join and/or donate at [www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org). To the left you can get an advance glimpse of the planned new web site home page.

## OCCOQUAN EVENTS

The town of Occoquan holds events 11 months of the year (January is the only exception) and often has multiple events a month. During the last week of March the town held its annual "Occoquan Peep Show." This is an annual spring event in town that features both a business

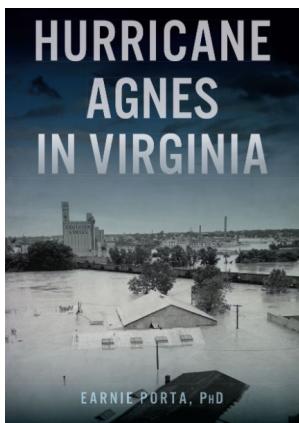
and community peeps diorama competition.

With the spring the town will host a river cleanup, trivia nights in River Mill Park, and its annual spring Riverfest and Craft Show. During the last there will be the second annual "Whatever Floats Your Boat Parade"

where contestants decorate any non-motorized craft (e.g. kayak, canoe, paddleboard), the annual Duck Splash Race, the now-annual island-naming competition, and a few historic surprises. We hope you will consider visiting the museum during one of these town events.



## NEW BOOK INCLUDES OCCOQUAN



On April 1 The History Press released a new book by OHS Board Member, Earnie Porta, PhD. The book, entitled "Hurricane Agnes in Virginia," explains the history and science of hurricanes and recounts the devastation Agnes caused throughout much of the commonwealth of Virginia during the third week of June, 1972.

Along with Richmond, northern Virginia (including Prince William County) was especially hard hit and the book contains

a good deal of detail on the devastation in the town of Occoquan and elsewhere in Prince William County.

The Occoquan Historical Society was able to secure advance copies to sell at the March 23 annual Prince William History Symposium where Dr. Porta was one of the speakers.

Copies are available for sale at the museum as well as online and at other locations.



## MILL HOUSE MUSEUM

413 Mill Street,  
PO Box 65  
Occoquan, VA 22125  
Free Admission  
Open Thursday thru Tuesday  
11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

[millhousemuseum@gmail.com](mailto:millhousemuseum@gmail.com)  
[www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org)

## Occoquan Historical Society

The Occoquan Historical Society (OHS) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization founded in 1969 and dedicated to telling the story of the town of Occoquan, Virginia. OHS operates the Mill House Museum, an historic structure containing an eclectic collection of documents, photographs, and other artifacts related to the town's history. Over 400 items are catalogued and many of these are on permanent display. Admission to the museum is free Thursday through Tuesday weekly from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. We hope you will consider dropping by.

# OHS QUARTERLY

OCCOQUAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY (OHS)

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- "Ogle Harris Way" Dedication
- OHS/Museum Year End Report
- Annual Meeting and Membership Renewal
- Expanding Mill House Museum Family
- Design a New Postcard for the Museum

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## "OGLE HARRIS WAY"

### DEDICATION

On Saturday, June 29, the Town of Occoquan held a ceremony formally assigning the 100 block of Poplar Alley the honorary designation, "Ogle Harris Way" in honor of the contributions of the late Ogle Harris and his family to the town of Occoquan.

In the early years of the 20th century, Ogle Harris began a business out of his home at 204 Washington Street, which by the end of the century's second decade had become one of Occoquan's main grocery stores, selling meat, fresh produce, fishing tackle, sodas, candy, and sundry other goods. Through his marriages to Coral L. Peyton and Lottie Bowles, Mr.

Harris helped raise seven children in Occoquan. His store became an Occoquan institution and a cornerstone of the town's commercial and African



Ogle Harris descendants and extended family at the dedication of "Ogle Harris Way."

-American communities, remaining so after his passing in 1949 under the auspices of his son Arthur and his daughter-in-law Doris, until it formally

closed in 1974. The ceremony, which was attended by several local elected officials and Harris family relatives from as far away as Kentucky, included remarks by Occoquan Mayor Earnie Porta, a musical selection by family member Tamika Joy, recollections by members of the extended family, and the presentation of resolutions from the town of Occoquan and Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger honoring Ogle Harris and his descendants. Historic photographs of Ogle Harris and members of the family are on display in the Occoquan Historical Society's Mill House Museum.

## OHS / MUSEUM YEAR END REPORT

Thanks to the return of a normal operating schedule, increased profits at the Mill House Museum, and some generous donations from supporters, the Occoquan Historical Society finished its fiscal year ending June 30 better than projected, with a modest deficit of approximately

\$3,400.

Among the particularly generous donors were Occoquan VFW Post 7916, which thanks to the efforts of board member Bob Love, contributed \$5,000, and long-time supporter, Letty Lynn, who contributed more than \$3,000 for the fiscal year. Donations at the muse-

um itself also totaled almost \$3,400. Of course, the Mill House Museum also continued to received more than \$7,000 of support from Prince William County.

During FY 2024 the museum welcomed 18,201 visitors, which is a significant increase over the last two fiscal years that were completed

## YEAR END REPORT (CONT'D)

when open at least 23 days per month. Analysis of museum operations suggests several potential reasons for this upward trend, including posting a second docent outside during peak times with a children's activities table, particularly during November and December; staying open during most federal holidays, and; small adjustments such as increased use of a "touch" table outside and simply

leaving the door open more often. Of course, some of the upswing is also likely due to a post-COVID, society-wide boost in tourism activity.

Acting Museum Administrator, Zoe Vitter, continues to analyze visitation and sales data, and has implemented a strategy of more strategic openings and closings, which in general involve expanded hours during periods of heavy pedestrian activity (e.g., during town events) and reduced hours

during very low activity periods (e.g., January and bad weather days). These will be refined as more data is gathered.

As with operating hours, the museum has also been analyzing and experimenting with sales offerings, their display, and pricing. Net profits on sales for FY 2024 totaled almost \$2,300. The highest profit margins are associated with the 22 books we have for sale, with a particular boost this year from board member

Earnie Porta's new book from the History Press, "Hurricane Agnes in Virginia," which also spurred increased interest in his earlier work, "Images of America: Occoquan." Other good sellers include "Lorton Prisons" and "Haunted Prince William." Toys and miscellaneous make up about 15% of museum sales and staff have been reevaluating the best suppliers for such items.

On the whole all the trends are positive.

## ANNUAL MEETING AND MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

The Occoquan Historical Society (OHS) held its annual membership meeting on June 6 at the Occoquan Town Hall. At the annual meeting the following individuals were elected to the OHS Board of Directors for 2-year terms: Merial Currer, Dolores Elder, Bobbie Frank, Robert Love, Earnie Porta, Marge Shaffer, and Zoe Vitter. Board members will elect officers from among

their number at a future board of directors meeting.

With the start of the new fiscal year it is also time to renew membership in the Occoquan Historical Society. OHS has 4 tiers of membership, all of which come with voting rights at the annual meeting. These tiers consist of: Individual (\$20); Family (\$30); Student (\$10), and; History Enthusiast/Organization (\$500).

We know that the benefits of membership at this time generally consist of the knowledge that you are supporting a good cause, but we hope over the coming year to develop a few more perks. In the meantime, we hope you will continue to support us as you have in the past and encourage others to do so.

The easiest way to join or renew your membership is to go to our web site at

[www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org) and do so there online. However, if you are more comfortable doing so via mail and check, simply make a check out to the "Occoquan Historical Society" and send it to Box 65, Occoquan, VA 22125.

Please do include your email address somewhere, as that is the primary means by which we communicate now.

## EXPANDING MILL HOUSE MUSEUM FAMILY

We are very pleased to report that staff member Olivia McDaniel and her husband, Cameron, welcomed their new son, Bram, on April 30th.

Bram is Olivia and Cameron's first child, and Olivia reports that he is strong and healthy and growing

exponentially every day.

The photo at right shows Bram last week, working on expanding his visual literacy, an important skill for museum docents to have.

Please join all of us in congratulating Olivia and Cameron on the new addition to their family and ours!



## DESIGN A NEW POSTCARD FOR THE MUSEUM

Stop by the Mill House Museum this summer and help us design a new postcard. While at the museum, you can view historic postcards of Occoquan and draw your own design or submit something that you have made on your own.

Entries can be any medium (e.g., pencil, crayon, paint, photograph, scan, etc.), but should be no larger than 4"x6". Please include your name and email address.

You can also email entries to [millhousemuseum@gmail.com](mailto:millhousemuseum@gmail.com) or send them in hard copy to our address, Box 65, Occoquan, VA 22125. The last day to submit an entry is September 2, 2024 (Labor Day) and there is no limit on the number of entries you may submit.

Final products shall be the property of the Occoquan Historical Society, but all art work will be credited to the name provided at submission.



Occoquan River, Occoquan, Va.

## WEB SITE REDESIGN

**Occoquan Historical Society**  
The Historical Society of the Town of Occoquan, Virginia

Home   About   Visit   Learn   Support   Newsletter

The Occoquan Historical Society's web site redesign is completed. Although we will continually be adding new information, we think the new design is more user-friendly and attractive and hope you think so as well. You can find our web site at [www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org).

## OCCOQUAN EVENTS

As noted in our last issue, the town of Occoquan holds events 11 months of the year (January is the only exception) and often has multiple events a month. Among the largest during the past quarter of the fiscal year was the town's RiverFest & Craft Show. The excellent weather contribut-

ed to one of the most successful shows in recent memory. The town had a record number of vendors in terms of the last 15 years or more, and OHS had a presence both at the Mill House Museum and at a separate vendor booth.

Participation in major

events like this has enabled us to improve donations and sales results, as well as increase exposure to a wide range of people visiting town. If you were not able to attend, we hope that you will consider visiting us during the fall Arts & Crafts Show the last weekend in September.



**TOWN RESOLUTION & FLYER ON OGLE HARRIS WAY**

**TOWN OF OCCOQUAN, VIRGINIA  
RESOLUTION R-2024-05**

RESOLUTION TO ASSIGN THE 100 BLOCK OF POPLAR ALLEY  
THE HONORARY DESIGNATION "OGLE HARRIS WAY"  
IN APPRECIATION AND RECOGNITION OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF  
OGLE HARRIS AND HIS FAMILY TO THE HISTORY OF OCCOQUAN

WHEREAS, Ogle Taylor Harris was born on or about December 23, 1872, one of five children (one of whom predeceased Ogle's birth) of Arthur and Harriet Harris; and

WHEREAS, from his marriages to Cora L. Peyton and Lottie Bowles, he helped raise seven children in Occoquan; and

WHEREAS, in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he began a business at his residence at 204 Washington Street, selling handmade ice cream out of his home's summer kitchen and at the African-American Odd Fellows Hall that was adjacent to what is now Poplar Alley; and

WHEREAS, upon building a new home for his family at the corner of Washington and Commerce Streets, he converted 204 Washington Street into a store that expanded from the original ice cream business into one of Occoquan's two full-fledged grocery stores, selling meat, fresh produce, fishing tackle, sodas, candy, and sundry other goods, obtaining a Prince William County business license as early as 1918; and

WHEREAS, well known for his honesty and generosity his store became a thriving enterprise patronized by citizens of Occoquan and the surrounding Prince William County area alike; and

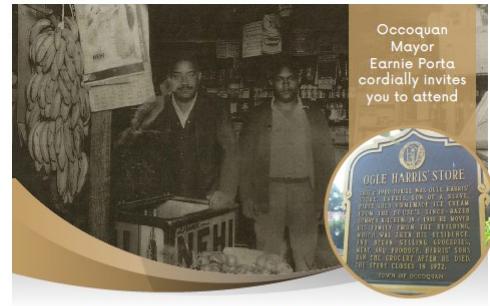
WHEREAS, upon his death on March 14, 1949, his store was run successively by his son Arthur and his daughter-in-law Doris until it formally closed in 1974; and

WHEREAS, his store served as the cornerstone of Occoquan's African-American commercial community for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, contributing in numerous ways to the vibrancy, continuity, and success of the Town of Occoquan; and

WHEREAS, in appreciation for the contribution to Occoquan's history of Ogle Taylor Harris and his

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Occoquan Town Council hereby assigns the honorary designation of "Orle Harris Way" to the 100 block of Poplar Alley and on behalf of the entire Occoquan community

Adopted by the Town Council of the Town of Occoquan, Virginia this 18<sup>th</sup> Day of June, 2024.



# OGLE HARRIS WAY DEDICATION

Ten o'clock in the morning on Saturday, June 29th, the 100 block of Poplar Alley will receive the honorary designation "Ogle Harris Way" in honor of the contributions of Ogle Harris and his family to the Occoquan community.

29 June 2024 | Washington St and Poplar Alley

## OCCOQUAN, VIRGINIA



## MILL HOUSE MUSEUM

413 Mill Street,  
PO Box 65  
Occoquan, VA 22125

Free Admission

Open Thursday thru Tuesday  
11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

millhousemuseum@gmail.com  
www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org

The Occoquan Historical Society (OHS) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization founded in 1969 and dedicated to telling the story of the town of Occoquan, Virginia.

OHS operates the Mill House Museum, an historic structure containing an eclectic collection of documents, photographs, and other artifacts related to the town's history. Over 400 items are catalogued and many of these are on permanent display. Admission to the museum is free Thursday through Tuesday weekly from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. We hope you will consider dropping by.

# OHS QUARTERLY

OCCOQUAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY (OHS)

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- The Mystery of the Chair Rows: Solved
- OHS/Museum First Quarter Report
- Annual Fundraising Campaign
- Raffle of Signed Print
- Town of Occoquan Events

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## THE MYSTERY OF THE CHAIR ROWS: SOLVED

Last August a pipe in the Mill House Museum basement broke, requiring that all materials in the basement be removed for drying and assessment. Among the items were three rows of chairs of unknown origin (photo below).

Conversations with prior members of the Occoquan Historical Society suggested that the chairs may have come from the old Lyric Theatre at 403 Mill Street, which operated from the 1920s into the 1950s. According to recollections, the seats on the main floor of the theatre were much nicer than those found in the museum basement, so some suggested that

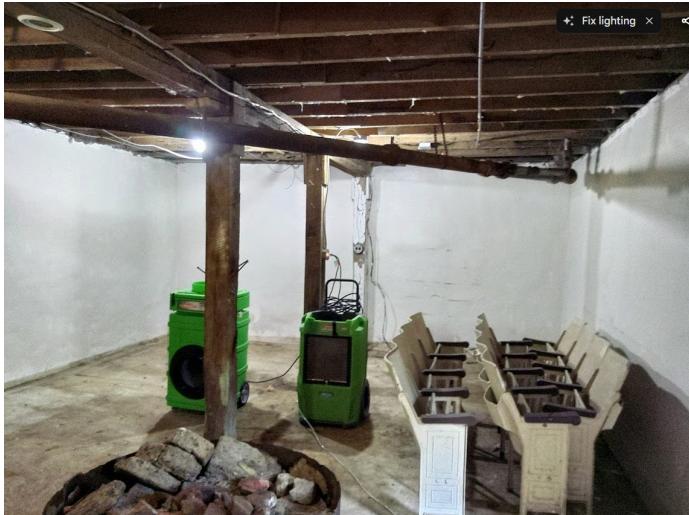
that our seats thus likely came from the more rustic balcony section.

One of our board members, however, had an all together different theory, which ultimately proved correct. A search through museum files turned up a folder referring to a theatre in the cellar of the museum. It turns out that in 1986 and 1987, the Society (then known as Historic Occoquan, Inc.) had hoped to turn our museum basement into a small theatre where the Society could show movies and slide shows about Occoquan. To that end, according to a letter dated October 10,

1986, they purchased the seats "from the upstairs of the present Town Hall which formerly served as a church." This was also confirmed by old Occoquan town council minutes.

The conversion of the basement of the museum into a theatre was an Eagle Scout project under the direction of Tom Nelson, one of our past board members who was at that time serving as our organization's scout coordinator. Unfortunately the theatre project never came to fruition as funding the Society apparently hoped to secure from the county never materialized, according to a letter dated June 18, 1987 that references the "three rows of seats from the old Town Hall."

So, the short-lived mystery of the chair rows has been solved. At the moment, the Society is considering cleaning up the seats, making minor repairs, and potentially auctioning one or more rows off at a future date. So, if you are interested in owning a unique piece of Occoquan history, stay tuned for future announcements.



## O H S / M U S E U M F I R S T Q U A R T E R R E P O R T

The Occoquan Historical Society's Mill House Museum had a strong start to the new fiscal year that began July 1, 2024. There were significant increases in the number of visitors, as well as gross sales and profit, relative to the same period last year, with only a marginal increase in operating hours.

In this first quarter of fiscal year 2025 we welcomed a total of 4,781 visitors, which represents a more than 25%

increase over the prior year. Weekends accounted for about 58% of all visitors despite constituting only about a third of the days the museum is open. There were two federal holidays and two days of town events during this period and these four days alone accounted for about 15% of all visitors. Thus at least some of the increase relative to last year is due to the 470 visitors who stopped in during the Occoquan Fall Arts & Craft Show, which was can-

celled in 2023 due to weather.

The museum was open for visitors roughly the same number of days and hours as it was last year. While we did have extended hours during the town's Trivia Nights, the Fall Arts & Crafts Show, and some weekends when visitors wished to stay longer, we also closed early for the many high heat index days, a few afternoon thunderstorm days, and some additional days needed to address the basement flood

mentioned on the front page.

Total gross sales at the museum increased over 40% compared to the same period last year, and because of improved sourcing for products, profit on sales increased more than 50%.

Finally, donations at the museum exceeded \$1,000 and OHS also received a very generous contribution of \$3,000 from Occoquan VFW Post 7916.

## A N N U A L F U N D R A I S I N G C A M P A I G N

As some of you may be aware, October 18, 2024, is the Centennial (100 year) anniversary of the fire that burned down much of the main Merchants Mill building and effectively brought milling operations in the town of Occoquan to an end. (This fire was a much smaller fire than the fire of 1916 that burned down much of the town's current historic district).

The Occoquan Historical Society (OHS) has designated the period from October 18 through Small Giving Tuesday on December 3, 2024, as the core phase of our annual giving campaign. We are hoping that during that period you and your friends will consider the Occoquan Historical Society in your year-end giving plans to assist us in the exciting projects we are planning. These

include, among other things, updating exhibits, rearranging displays in new cabinets, developing more activities for children, and sponsoring historical lectures.

None of this is possible without your support and to encourage you we have developed a new set of membership and sponsorship opportunities. Memberships (one per household) are now \$25 annually, \$70 for a three-year membership, or \$300 for a lifetime membership (we also offer a \$500 annual organizational membership). All members will receive a 5% discount on select museum retail purchases beginning in January 2025, early access to our eNewsletter, and one commemorative item per household. For those who do not wish to be members, but would otherwise like to support the Soci-

ety and the operation of our museum, we are now offering annual sponsorships at the Gold (\$100), Platinum (\$500), and Diamond (\$1000) levels. These various sponsorship levels include a range of benefits consisting of early access to our eNewsletter, a 5% discount on select retail items at the museum, invitations to special events, honorable mention with the a corporate logo in the eNewsletter, recognition on the OHS web-

site with your corporate logo, an OHS Certificate of Appreciation, a commemorative photo with the Museum Director and Board, a special lunch with OHS and town dignitaries, and an OHS recognition plaque.

We will be emailing you in the next few weeks with more information or you can go now to [www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org). Thank you in advance for your support.

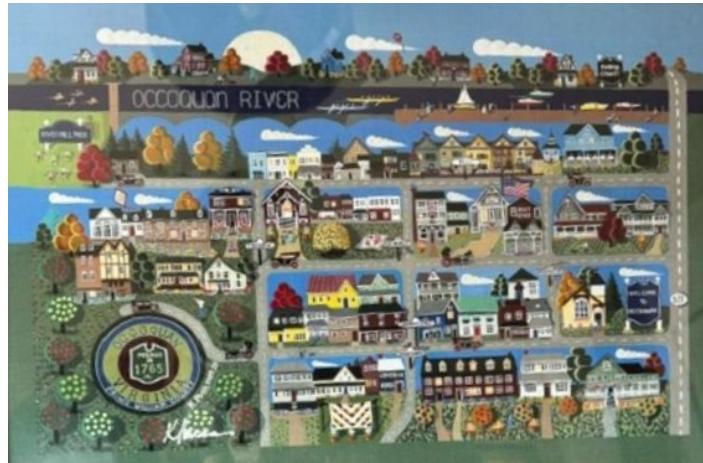


## RAFFLE FOR A SIGNED PRINT OF OCCOQUAN

If you stop by the Mill House Museum do not forget to check out the colorful Occoquan print signed by local artist Kevin Poorman. Mr. Poorman is an Air Force veteran, an artist, photographer, and puzzle-maker living in Lorton, Virginia. His puzzles and art work are available at several shops in northern Virginia, including, Puzzle Palooza and the Art A La Carte Gallery in Occoquan, The Old Town Shop

in Alexandria, The Virginia Store in Fredericksburg, and a number of historical sites, including George Mason's plantation at Gunston Hall, Tudor Place in Georgetown, and the Fairfax City Museum.

OHS is raffling off the signed print as a fundraiser. Raffle tickets are \$5 and are being sold at the Mill House Museum. You need not be present to win and the raffle will conclude before the end of the calendar year.



## TOWN OF OCCOQUAN EVENTS

The town of Occoquan really cranks out the events during the winter holidays and 2024 will be no exception.

Things will really kick off on Saturday, November 23, when the town in conjunction with Visit Occoquan holds its annual tree-lighting, late shopping, and firelight night. The always popular tree lighting will take place at 6:00 p.m. at Town Hall, located at 314 Mill Street.

Both before and after the tree lighting you can go over to the museum area and enjoy fire pits, marshmallows, s'mores, hot drinks, music, and more. With Occoquan's many unique shops open late as well, enjoy a festive evening in town.

That same day, Occoquan also begins its Letters to Santa campaign, which runs through December 15. Drop

your letter to Santa in the town's special North Pole mailboxes at Town Hall (314 Mill Street) or Tiny Supply Co. (125 Mill Street). If you include a return address then Santa will send a personalized letter back.

November 23 through December 15 is also the period for the town of Occoquan's Shop, Dine & Win! Contest. Shop and dine at your favorite Occoquan businesses for a chance to win \$100 in Occoquan business gift

cards. Over \$1,500 in gift cards to specific Occoquan businesses will be awarded. Winners will be drawn on Wednesday, December 18 at [facebook.com/visitoccoquan](https://facebook.com/visitoccoquan).

The town of Occoquan and Visit Occoquan also partner with Volunteer Prince William to participate in the Un-Trim-A-Tree Program, where members of the public can sponsor a child for the holidays by purchasing two new, unwrapped gifts valued at up to \$75 combined. Participants can chose tags with a specific child's needs from two trees, one at Town Hall (314 Mill Street) and one at the Tiny Supply Co. (125 Mill Street). Bring back the new, unwrapped gifts to Town Hall or the Tiny Supply Co. by December 2.

On December 7, come  
(continued on last page)



## TOWN EVENTS (CONT'D)

see Santa arrive by boat at the town docks. From their Santa and friends will parade up Mill Street to River Mill Park where Santa will lead a merry sing-a-long and greet children of all ages.

Last, on Friday, December 13, from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. the town will host another Firelight Night, by the museum, once again offering fire pits with beer, wine, cocktails, hot drinks, s'mores kits and snacks under the stars.

Our Mill House Museum will be open for many of these

events so please stop by. For more information on all of these go to [www.occoquanva.gov](http://www.occoquanva.gov) or [www.visitoccoquanva.com/holiday](http://www.visitoccoquanva.com/holiday).



## MILL HOUSE MUSEUM

413 Mill Street,  
PO Box 65  
Occoquan, VA 22125

Free Admission

Open Thursday thru Tuesday  
11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

[millhousemuseum@gmail.com](mailto:millhousemuseum@gmail.com)  
[www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org)

## Occoquan Historical Society

The Occoquan Historical Society (OHS) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization founded in 1969 and dedicated to telling the story of the town of Occoquan, Virginia.

OHS operates the Mill House Museum, an historic structure containing an eclectic collection of documents, photographs, and other artifacts related to the town's history. Over 400 items are catalogued and many of these are on permanent display. Admission to the museum is free Thursday through Tuesday weekly from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. We hope you will consider dropping by.