As a Historic Interpreter at Rippon Lodge, I spend a good bit of time discussing the history of the families who have called this place home. We have information about Richard and Thomas Blackburn, the builder of the home and his Revolutionary War hero son and explain their place in its rich history. What we don’t know as much about are the wives and daughters of these men, other than names, birth and death dates. I wonder about them often, as their footsteps and voices surely filled these rooms, as mine does today.

Two recent weddings on the grounds, the first a “pop-up” on the lawn in front of the boxwoods, and the other a full-fledged florist and catered affair, has had me thinking about and researching the first wedding that we know of to take place here at Rippon Lodge, that of Julia the sixteen-year-old daughter of Thomas and Christian Scott Blackburn to twenty-three-year-old Bushrod Washington.

The wedding ceremony is said to have taken place in the Rippon Lodge’s “Best Room.” Here, Julia Ann Blackburn marries George Washington’s favorite nephew on October 13, 1785. I imagine Julia Ann and Bushrod surrounded by mother and father, friends, and family. Uncle George Washington and Aunt Martha were invited to the wedding but regretfully sent their regrets due to “the indisposition of the latter and the particular engagements of the former.” It’s noted in a John Wayland book about Washington, that a week later October 19, General Washington returns to Mount Vernon and joins a wedding breakfast already underway attended by family members, celebrating Bushrod and Julia Ann’s union.

After their marriage Bushrod and Julia Ann live in several locations including Richmond and Alexandria and eventually Mount Vernon after Martha’s death in 1802. After Julia’s father Thomas’s death in 1807 they eventually sell Rippon Lodge in 1811. The sale was
necessary, mainly to settle debts accumulated during and after the American Revolution. It must have been a hard task for Mrs. Blackburn-Washington to sell the home built by her grandfather.

Julia was well known for her poor health and nervous disposition. Several Bushrod Washington biographers mention her fragile health and the devotion of her husband. As Associate Justice of the newly formed Supreme Court, Bushrod brings his wife along on his court travels, in order to read aloud to her and calm her nerves.

Not much more is known about Julia Ann, as most of the surviving information focuses on her husband and his time as a Supreme Court Justice.

A home is a collection of lives lived under a roof. Now I know a bit more about this daughter of Rippon Lodge. Born within its walls, Julia Ann passes away just two days after her husband, while traveling for his court service in 1829. While transporting his body for burial at Mount Vernon, it is said she dies of the heartbreak of losing her beloved husband. They are buried side by side in the crypt at Mount Vernon.

Vicky Mosley
Site Interpreter

Register for these online at: www.pwcparks.org/historicprograms

Upcoming Programs and Events

OCTOBER
Oct 29  Fireside Ghost Stories At Ben Lomond
Oct 30  Prince William Haunted Car Caravan
Oct 31  Historic Cemeteries of Brentsville Walking Tours

NOVEMBER
Nov 6  Early Days Of Prince William County
Nov 6  Farming The Fall Harvest
Nov 6  Historic Preservation Bus Tour: Visiting Prince William’s Fallen Veterans
Nov 13  Rippon Lodge Campfire Tales
Nov 19  American Revolution Campfire Stories

DECEMBER
Dec 4  Christmas In A Civil War Camp
Dec 11  Santa Comes To Rippon Lodge
Dec 11  Civil War Christmas & Concerts

Holidays Through The Ages
Dec 3-6, Dec 10-13, Dec 17-20

Holiday Evenings At Rippon Lodge
Dec 3-4, Dec 10-11, Dec 17-18
Staff with the Prince William County Office of Historic Preservation routinely works with the Historical Commission, a group of 16 citizens appointed by the Board of County Supervisors. The mission of the Historical Commission is to advise the Board with efforts “to identify, preserve, protect, and promote Prince William County’s historical sites, artifacts, buildings, and events.” A key component of this effort is the creation and installation of historical highway markers that highlight the diverse history within our community.

Today there are over 100 historical markers in Prince William County as a direct result of the Historical Commission. Visitors and residents can explore all the markers today by using the “Prince William Historical Marker Guide”, now in its 6th edition, published in 2017. The Office of Historic Preservation is fortunate to have a copy of the 1st edition of the marker guide, published in 1976, in our collection. In 1976 visitors could explore a total of 33 markers. Although all portions of the county were covered, the majority of the markers were located near Interstate-95, during a time in which most population resided in the eastern portion of the county. The original markers focused almost exclusively on the colonial and Civil War time periods. Over the years as new research has come available, or when the markers are damaged, they replaced with updated text. Today every few of the original 1976 Historical Commission markers are still standing. To explore the markers today stop by one of Prince William County’s historic sites and pick up a marker guide to explore our history!
These paintings are a set of the Blackburn’s who owned Rippon Lodge during the American Revolution. Not much is known about the paintings origins or the artist who painted them. The quality of the artwork suggests that an itinerant artist painted the pair. An itinerant artist was a type of artist popular and common during the 18th century. These artists were self-taught by studying the works of professional portrait artists and then using their natural talent to copy the styles of those paintings. They traveled extensively, painting the middle class and scenes of daily life in the colonies.

The following information is on the back of the painting and is all the information we have to date.

Color crayon (pastel) portrait of Lieut. Col. Thomas Blackburn  
Dated c. 1780-90 based on clothing styles and approximate age of subjects.  
Portraits are not signed.  
Hand-written note on the back of Thomas Blackburn portrait:  
This is a crayon portrait of Lieut. Col. Thomas Blackburn of Rippon Lodge near Dumfries in Prince William Co. Va and was owned at Mn Vernon by his daughter Mrs. Bushrod Washington. He was Lt. Col. of one of the Virginia Regiments (2nd Va) and afterwards an aide de camp of Gen. Washington, and was wounded at the battle of Germantown, Pa. He was one of the pallbearers of Gen. Washington. Elected Lt. Colonel of the of the Second Regiment on December 20, 1776, by the House of Delegates of Virginia “by joint ballot with the Senate.” See Journal of the House of Delegates of Va, 1776, Page 106, in Congressional Library, Washington DC.  
Hand-written note on the back of Christian Scott Blackburn portrait:  
Originally hung at Mt. Vernon and owned by Mrs. Bushrod Washington, daughter of Lt. Col. Thomas Blackburn. This is a crayon portrait of the wife of Lt. Col. Thomas Blackburn. Her maiden name was Christian Scott & she was a granddaughter of Dr. Gustavus Brown of Port Tobacco, Md.  
Dan Goldstein  
Rippon Lodge Historic Site Interpreter
Courage and Perseverance

THE SEVENTH ANNUAL PRINCE WILLIAM/ MANASSAS HISTORY SYMPOSIUM

MARCH 26, 2022

Old Manassas Courthouse, Manassas, VA

Courage and Perseverance are no strangers to Prince William County during its long history. Whether it was courage shown by soldiers in battle, perseverance in the political arena during the founding of America, to the courage shown by the first four African American teachers to integrate schools in the county. There has been no shortage of courageous deeds in our county. Come learn about these stories and more at the Seventh Annual Prince William/Manassas History Symposium.

Topics Include:
• Birth of a Legend: Stonewall Jackson at Manassas
• The Jersey Brigade at the Battle of Bull Run Bridge
• The “Courageous Four” Integration in Prince William County Schools
• USCT Troops in Prince William County during the American Civil War
• Thomas Blackburn of Rippon Lodge

$10 for all day symposium (8:30-4:00) Spaces are limited, reservations required. We are following the state of Virginia Covid-19 guidelines and a mask may be required indoors.

Release of the Fourth issue of the Journal of Prince William History, which will be on sale for the special one-day price of $5.

Symposium will take place inside the Old Manassas Courthouse Building, 9248 Lee Avenue, Manassas, VA 20110.

Co-sponsored by the Manassas Museum, Prince William County Historic Commission, and Historic Prince William.

For more information contact 703-792-4754 or register at www.pwcva.gov/history

Connect with us on social media:
Facebook: www.Facebook.com/pwhistoric
Twitter: @PWHFPF
Instagram: PWC History
The Office of Historic Preservation manages two buildings that were used as Civil War hospitals. Ben Lomond Historic Site sheltered wounded Confederate soldiers following the Battle of First Manassas. Thirteen months later, Bushy Park, originally located on Catharpin Road but since relocated to Haymarket, served the same purpose during the Battle of Second Manassas. One of the men who died at Bushy Park was the lieutenant colonel of the 1st South Carolina Rifles, Lt. Col. Daniel Alexander Ledbetter.

Daniel Ledbetter earned a favorable reputation in South Carolina before the war, which translated well into his stint as commander of the 1st South Carolina Rifles. “As soldier and officer, his love for his men was that of father to his children, and often, when on a march, he would give up his horse to some sick or broken-down private,” one memorial said of him. Ledbetter's regiment stood in perhaps the hottest part of the Second Manassas battlefield on August 29, 1862. The 6'6", 200-pound officer encouraged his men to stand against repeated Union assaults. While urging them to continue the fight, he fell with a mortal wound.

Ledbetter ended up at Bushy Park, where he “survived for two or three days in great suffering.” His wife traveled from Townville, South Carolina to help nurse her husband. When she reached Bushy Park, he was dead and buried nearby. In the early 1880s, one of Ledbetter's sons erected a monument and fence around his father's grave.

Development disturbed the area around Bushy Park. Preservationists moved the house to Haymarket. Supposedly, Ledbetter's remains were also moved to Sudley United Methodist Church, not far from where he received his mortal wound. The obelisk that his son erected was also moved and still stands in the church cemetery.

Kevin Pawlak
Ben Lomond Historic Site Manager

Bushy Park is the site of the death of Lt. Col. Daniel Alexander Ledbetter after the Second Battle of Manassas.
Staff News

This September we welcomed Victoria Mosley and Madelyne Stratten to the Office of Historic Preservation. Victoria will be joining the staff at Rippon Lodge as an interpreter and Madelyne will be joining the staff at Ben Lomond as an interpreter.

This fall we are welcoming two interns that will be working with Bill Backus and Paige Gibbons Backus. Jenna Gilbert, a rising senior from the University of Mary Washington is interning at Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre this semester for fall credit. She will be learning about many aspects of working at a historic site giving tours, helping with special programming, and developing “Adventure Backpacks” for the historic centre, inviting families to participate in hands-on activities while on site.

Also joining the Office of Historic Preservation this semester is Kate Bitely, a graduate student at George Mason University. Kate will be working with our Preservationist in reviewing and accessioning objects to the permanent collection. Kate is also working with site staff to update the museum exhibit at Lucasville School.

Awards

Congratulations to Brentsville Site Manager, Paige Gibbons Backus on being named as the recipient of this year’s Emerging Civil War’s Emory Upton Award. The Upton Award is presented to a member of the Emerging Civil War community in recognition of outstanding service to ECW. Paige, who has blogged with ECW since 2016, serves as ECW’s social media manager. Way to go Paige!

Paige was also recently interviewed for the next season of “Legends and Lies: Battles for America”, The documentary series airs spring 2022 on FOX and she will be featured in the Manassas, Antietam, and Vicksburg episodes.

New PWCS Teacher Orientations

HP Staff attended three events that PWCS held to welcome all of their new teachers and staff. Information on the HP travel trunk program and all the education programs we have to offer was distributed to many of the new staff. New teachers representing K-12 attended the events.

New Guide Education Program Brochures

HP revised and updated our Historic Preservation Education Program Brochures this past August. We use these brochures to inform folks about the trunk program we have for classrooms and about the various types of programs we can customize for their school classes and/or tour groups.
Paige Gibbons Backus and Rob Orrison featured in Hallowed Ground Magazine

PWC Historic Preservation staff are very active in their professional fields. Many staff are involved in research, writing, teaching and exhibit projects. Recently, both Historic Site Manager, Paige Gibbons Backus, and Division Manager, Rob Orrison published articles in the American Battlefield Trust’s summer issue of Hallowed Ground Magazine.

Both articles are available online, check it out! www.battlefields.org/give/membership/magazine

Ohio at Antietam

Ben Lomond Site Manager, Kevin Pawlak has published a new book about the Battle of Antietam. Kevin and fellow author Dan Welch explore the roll Ohio troops played at the battle in 1862. The book can be purchased online at www.arcadiapublishing.com/Products/9781467146913

Congratulations Kevin!

Berea Grant

The Office of Historic Preservation received a Virginia Department of Historic Resources grant for the preservation of a county owned cemetery. Prince William resident Sophia Carter lived at Berea now part of Forest Green Golf Course. Sophia Carter was the daughter of Robert “Councillor” Carter and a member of one of the wealthiest families in early Virginia history. The grant includes funds for the restoration of the Carter gravesite. Archaeologists will be determining the scope and size of the area to determine the size of the cemetery and to determine if members of Berea’s enslaved community are also nearby.

Rippon Lodge Book

Rippon Lodge Site Manager, Jessica Alicea and Rippon Lodge Site Interpreter Nate McDonald recently published a new history of Rippon Lodge. The book is now for sale at the Rippon Lodge. We have a combo deal with the book and a tour for $10. Stop in a buy one today!

2021 Holiday Programs

Check out the new Leisure magazine for the upcoming schedule of 2021 Holiday programs. We have a lot of wonderful holiday events planned for this upcoming season. www.pwcva.gov/department/parks-recreation-tourism/leisure-magazine

Foundation Update

The Prince William Historic Preservation Foundation has collaborating with various organizations and groups for the future visitor center at Rippon Lodge Historic Site. The Foundation hopes to continue working with staff to get state funding for the future center. Unfortunately the annual Foundation Gala scheduled for October at Rippon Lodge has been postponed, with the gala being rescheduled for Spring 2022.

Stay Connected & Informed

For up to date information about our programs and events check our online calendar: www.pwcparks.org/HistoricCalendar

Subscribe to our monthly email calendar which will highlight what we are offering each month.

Sign up on: www.pwcparks.org/subscribe

Learn about the Division’s many events throughout the year, see candid photos, get up to the minute accounts through Facebook Live and Twitter as well as find out interesting facts about Prince William County history.