



# Historic Perspectives

Preservation of Prince William County's Historic Resources

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## PRINCE WILLIAM

Historic Preservation

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Historic Preservation

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Born, Bill Backus, Dan Goldstein.

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## Another Year Of History In The Making – A Review Of 2023

The Office of Historic Preservation continued to build on our Division's past successes in 2023. This year, we focused on big picture items while upgrading our visitors' experiences at our historic sites. It is always fun for me at the end of the year to look back at all the great work our staff has done. It serves as a reminder of how great our staff and our community partners are at working together to provide one of the best historic preservation and museum programs in the Commonwealth. Our programs continue to touch everyone: County residents; local, national, and international tourists; and students from across the country. Our goal is to continue to diversify our offerings and reach new audiences. Nearly two hundred people attended our

successful Take a Sip of History program at local breweries this past year.

In 2023, we launched new interpretive initiatives, such as the Prince William County African American History Mobile Tour, which expanded on our original tour created in 2011. The mobile tour provides online audio and images at each stop to expand the information available to those visiting the sites on the trail. We also revised and designed the exhibit inside of Rippon Lodge. These news panels and signs coincide with introducing a "self-guided" tour at all our sites to provide a more accessible experience for our visitors. We are also revising all our interpretive markers at Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park and the King's Highway Trail in the eastern end



Staff Photo



Staff Photo

of the County. Working with the community of Thoroughfare, staff have launched a new online exhibit on Thoroughfare. This “story board” allows people to experience hours of content gleaned from our oral history project conducted in 2022. The exhibit includes maps, images, and audio from the oral histories. It is a gold mine of information on not just Thoroughfare, but western Prince William County’s history.

This past year saw the largest increase in visitation to our sites from school groups. Working with Prince William County Schools and local home school associations, teachers are finding out about the great programs we offer at our sites. We launched new traveling trunks at Lucasville School and Rippon Lodge. These trunks allow teachers to take their local history into their classrooms. We continued successful Education Day programs at Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park and Rippon Lodge, where hundreds of students came throughout the day for a rotating experience to learn about the American Civil War and the American Revolution. These days were not just focused on military history, but also the involvement of civilians, slaves, women, and Native Americans.

Those who visit our sites regularly have probably noticed a lot of upgrades and completed projects. These include paving some

of our trails at Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park that were susceptible to erosion. New historic fencing was installed at Ben Lomond Historic Site and Thoroughfare Historic Park (at Potters Cemetery via a grant from the Commonwealth Fund). The Old Manassas Courthouse windows were repaired and the whole building repainted (restoration of the courthouse clock tower will take place in 2024). Work is continuing at the old Flory Center building at Ben Lomond Historic Site. Phase one includes stabilization and phase two will include restoration of the building and conversion into our visitor services space (restrooms and gift shop).

Our Division continues to strive for professional excellence by launching our first American Alliance of Museums (AAM) Museum Assessment Program survey of our sites. This is the first step to make our organization an accredited institution with AAM, the world’s largest museum accreditation organization.

Division staff continue to be leaders in our field via board positions with the Virginia Association of Museums, Civil War Trails, Antietam Institute, The Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Muse-



Staff Photo

ums, James Monroe Museum, the Historic House Museum Consortium of Washington, DC, and the Virginia Frontier Culture Museum. Staff are regularly asked to do presentations at conferences, workshops and at other organizations.

As we plan for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of our nation, the County has created a local 250<sup>th</sup> Committee to organize events and programs. This committee is made up of local history partners, museums, and organizations to commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Revolution. We are planning our kickoff event next year on June 8 to commemorate the Prince William Resolves, the first resolves in Virginia to protest the British polices in the colonies. We also received a grant from the Virginia Foundation of the Humanities to design a new exhibit at Williams Ordinary focused on the experience of County residents during the American Revolution.

As we look towards 2024, we will continue to focus on attracting more school groups and providing community outreach through our Community Tours and Take a Sip of History programs. We will also launch an interpretive project at a local historic African American community called “The Settlement” (located near modern-day Gainesville) that will be similar to the Thoroughfare project.

There will be exciting announcements coming in 2024 about new projects and sites that we think will make next year one of our best years yet. Thank you for all your support for local history and we hope to see you soon in the New Year!

Rob Orrison  
Manager, Office of Historic Preservation

# Collections Corner

Local newspapers are a gold mine of information for historians. While major historical events are typically covered by main newspapers, these local newspapers covered, and thereby recorded, lesser-known local stories. In many cases local newspapers are the main resource for historians, genealogists, and historic preservationists. In 2013 the Office of Historic Preservation became the repository for numerous bound copies of *Manassas Journal*, *Potomac Local*, and the *News & Messenger*. Partnering with our library colleagues at RELIC, many of the late 19th and early



20th century copies were digitized. However large portions of the post-World War II editions have yet to be either digitized or microfilmed, meaning that these bound copies are often the main resource for researching mid-20th century Prince William County history, from school desegregation

to the rise of suburbanization of our community. Today they are preserved at the Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park site office, where they are available for historians and local residents to research by appointment.

Bill Backus  
Curator, Office of Historic Preservation



## PRINCE WILLIAM/ MANASSAS SYMPOSIUM

SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 2024

8:00AM – 4:30PM

Manassas Museum 9101 Prince William St. Manassas

**S**ave the date for the **9th Annual Prince William/Manassas Symposium!** Each year local historians and experts explore the many facets of County history through a wide variety of lectures. Tickets are \$10 for an all-day program. The Symposium also marks the release of the Sixth issue of the *Journal of Prince William History*, which will be on sale for the special one-day price of \$5.



For more information contact 703-792-4754 or register at [www.pwcva.gov/departments/historic-preservation/events](http://www.pwcva.gov/departments/historic-preservation/events)

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



# Image Spotlight

## Reconstructing a Civil War Log Cabin

Things are happening at Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park. One of our winter projects is to reconstruct a new Civil War log cabin to represent the structures Civil War soldiers built to survive the long, cold winters. The design for the cabin we are building is inspired by historic photographic documentation of winter huts such as the one to the left which was taken of Confederate winter quarters in Centreville in 1861-1862. After the First Battle of Manassas, winter huts began to appear across northern Virginia farmland that had been stripped of its timber to build them. These winter huts that were built were primitive, small, cramped shelters but were an improvement over Army issued canvas shelter tents. Heat sources were added, and wood plank roofs replaced the canvas cloth roofs soldiers initially used. The lack of materials and soldiers' ingenuity led to wood from supply crates being used to build furniture and much needed plant floors to cover the cold earthen floors.

Working with teams of volunteers, our park staff plan to recreate a full-scale winter hut that will be an exhibit space to highlight the life of soldiers during the Civil War. Supply crate floors, hand built hinges, a hand built door and rough cut lumber roof will all be part of the new exhibit. Where possible, we will be using historic

hand tools and primitive building techniques combined with 21st century preservation techniques to construct the log winter hut. Throughout the building process, we will be documenting our progress and sharing it with you

via our social media platforms. Please follow us on Facebook or Instagram to watch this project come together.

Lance Russell  
Site Interpreter, Bristoe Station  
Battlefield Heritage Park



Library of Congress



Staff Photo



# History Corner

## When CSI Came to Ben Lomond

In early summer of 2009, the staff of Ben Lomond (of which I was one), set out to find evidence of blood from the general hospital, known as the Pringle House Hospital in July 1861. We surmised that if we could locate blood, we would have a better understanding of the locations within the house where wounded men laid during the Confederate occupation, and use, of the hospital.

To prepare for this search, two staff members, Mike Riley and myself, removed the more recent floor boards from an upstairs bedroom, which had two doors likely meaning the one room had once been two separate rooms. Once this task was completed, the staff contacted the Prince William County Police Depart-

ment Forensic Services Section – Crime Scene Unit to request their assistance to find evidence of blood in the house, and possibly the site where the dead from the hospital were buried. We were given a date and advised how to prepare for the testing. Ben Lomond was about to be tested in the same method a crime scene would be processed. The areas to be tested would need to be dark, devoid of natural light. To prepare the rooms in the basement and upstairs, Mike Riley and I purchased black poster board to be used for covering the windows.

When the Crime Scene investigators arrived, led by Erich Junger, the staff was informed the crew would be using a chemical call 'blue star', a type of luminal,

this product would only be sure to find evidence of blood that was 50 to 80 years old. Because we were searching for blood from 150 years ago, there was no guarantee the investigators would find blood when exposed to black light. The test started in the basement. Any evidence found would be marked with an orange sticker. The investigators were successful in finding evidence of blood in all three sections of the basement, with the largest concentration of stickers under where the parlor is located. Some of the stickers are still in place today.

Next, we moved to the large upstairs room, preparing the room by placing heavy black drapes over the doors to block the sunlight. The Forensic Team then began searching for blood.



Staff Photo



Staff Photo

Despite an extensive search, no evidence of blood proteins was located.

During lunch, Erich Junger and I talked about his background and found out he ran a soils lab, which I also ran back when I was in college at Abilene Christian College. This conversation led to Mr. Junger asking if I would help him conduct the soil probe to locate possible burial sites. When using a soil probe, undisturbed soils show different strata designated by different pigments, or colors. If the soil probe shows a solid color for twelve inches or more, a disturbed soil is indicated. We probed down twelve feet in four different areas in and around the antique rose garden, which is quite flat. There was no variation in color, which indicated a large and deep area of fill. It was determined that if graves exist on the site, finding them would be extremely difficult.

I contacted the Prince William County Police Department on January 13, 2022, and spoke with Ms. Andrea Feldman, a crime scene investigator. Ms. Feldman stated she was aware of the events which occurred in 2009 at Ben Lomond, unfortunately,

the investigators who originally conducted the testing are no longer part of the crime scene unit. Ms. Feldman was very helpful and put me in contact with Mr. Ross Randelt, the Lead Investigator in 2009. Mr. Randelt is now retired, working as a consultant for the Forensic Services Section. These individuals were

extremely helpful in reminding me of information I could no longer remember, such as the chemical used in the process of discovering traces/evidence of blood.

David M. Born  
Historic Interpreter, Ben Lomond  
Historic Site

## Foundation Update

2023 was another successful year for the Prince William Historic Preservation Foundation. In the course of the year we were able to close out two projects, the Rippon Lodge Interpretation Project and the Thoroughfare Historic Park cemetery delineation project. At the end of the year, Foundation members Michael Johnson and Michael Garcia rotated off the board after fruitful service to the organization. New officer elections were also held in November. Earnie Porta was elected President succeeding Cornelia Rutherford who was subsequently elected Vice-President. Rounding out the elections were Sharon Pandak as Treasurer and Sandra Sargent as Secretary. The Foundation is

posed to have another successful year in 2024, with a focus on supporting projects in commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution.

Bill Backus  
Curator, Office of Historic Preservation

Prince William  
County Has a Past  
That is Worth  
Preserving

Become a  
Foundation  
Member!  
[www.pwhpf.org](http://www.pwhpf.org)



### Monticello Trip

In December OHP staff visited Monticello as part of our annual holiday field trip and lunch. We took a tour of Mulberry Row as well as a highlights tour inside the house. We were even able to visit the second floor and the dome room! Throughout the day, staff gathered many new ideas to bring back to our own PWC history sites and we can't wait to share them with you.

### New Phone Number for OHP

The Office of Historic Preservation has a new phone number! It would be only fitting that the Office of Historic Preservation has the same number as Prince William County's founding and so you can now reach us at 703-792-1731. We can still be reached at 703-792-4754.

*Purchase advanced tickets online for these upcoming programs at [pwcparcs.info/hptickets](http://pwcparcs.info/hptickets)*

**BEHIND THE SCENES TOUR OF RIPPON LODGE**  
 Ages 18+ | Rippon Lodge Historic Site  
 Apr 20 / 11:00a-12:00p Sat \$5

**BEN LOMOND DAY**  
 All ages | Ben Lomond Historic Site  
 Apr 27 / 10:00a-4:00p Sat FREE

**CIRCLE WEAVING WORKSHOP AT HAISLIP-HALL HOUSE**  
 Ages 13+ | Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre  
 Apr 13 / 10:00a-12:00p Sat \$10

**FIRST DAY HIKE**  
 All ages | Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park  
 Jan 1 / 1:00p-2:30p M FREE

**HISTORY HOMESCHOOL DAY AT BRENTSVILLE COURTHOUSE HISTORIC CENTRE**  
 Ages 6+ | Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre  
 Apr 11 / 10:00a-2:00p Th students \$6; adults FREE

**LUCASVILLE SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE**  
 All ages | Lucasville School Historic Site  
 Feb 10 / 11:00a-3:00p Sat FREE  
 Feb 11 / 11:00a-3:00p Sun FREE

**PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE BUS TOUR**  
 Ages 13+ | Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre  
 Feb 24 / 9:00a-4:00p Sat \$70

**RIPPON LODGE EASTER ACTIVITY TRAIL**  
 Rippon Lodge Historic Site

|               |           |     |      |        |
|---------------|-----------|-----|------|--------|
| Mar 16        | Ages 6    | Sat | \$5  | 180001 |
| 10:00a-11:00a | mos-3     |     |      | HP01   |
| Mar 16        | Ages 18+  | Sat | \$10 | 180001 |
| 10:00a-11:00a |           |     |      | HP02   |
| Mar 16        | Ages 4-6  | Sat | \$10 | 180001 |
| 11:30a-12:30p |           |     |      | HP03   |
| Mar 16        | Ages 18+  | Sat | \$10 | 180001 |
| 11:30a-12:30p |           |     |      | HP04   |
| Mar 16        | Ages 7-11 | Sat | \$10 | 180001 |
| 2:00p-3:00p   |           |     |      | HP05   |
| Mar 16        | Ages 18+  | Sat | \$10 | 180001 |
| 2:00p-3:00p   |           |     |      | HP06   |

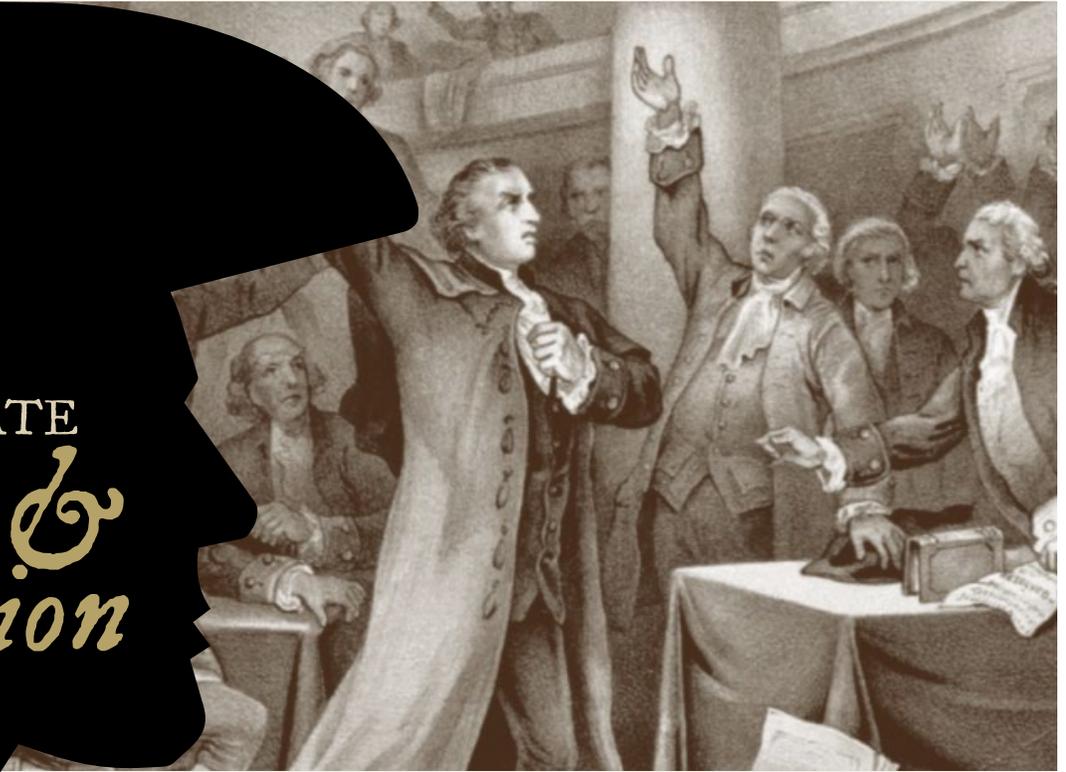
**SCRAMBLED EGG HUNTS AT BRENTSVILLE COURTHOUSE**  
 Ages 6+ | Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre

|                        |     |      |
|------------------------|-----|------|
| Mar 30 / 10:00a-10:30a | Sat | \$35 |
| Mar 30 / 11:00a-11:30a | Sat | \$35 |
| Mar 30 / 12:00p-12:30p | Sat | \$35 |
| Mar 30 / 1:00p-1:30p   | Sat | \$35 |
| Mar 30 / 2:00p-2:30p   | Sat | \$35 |

**TASTES OF HOME: AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE AND AMERICAN CUISINE**  
 Ages 10+ | Ben Lomond Historic Site  
 Feb 17 / 11:00a-3:00p Sat \$20

**WOOL DROP SPINDLE WORKSHOP AT HAISLIP-HALL HOUSE**  
 Ages 13+ | Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre  
 Jan 27 / 10:00a-12:00p Sat \$10

**THE WOMEN OF RIPPON LODGE**  
 Ages 15+ | Rippon Lodge Historic Site  
 Feb 24 / 11:00a-12:00p Sat \$5  
 Feb 24 / 2:00p-3:00p Sat \$5



SAVE THE DATE

# Resolve & Revolution

*Marking the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Prince William County Resolves*

**Saturday, June 8, 2024 ❖ 10 am – 3 pm**

**Merchant Park 3944 Cameron St, Dumfries, VA 22026**

In June 1774, Prince William County citizens protested the British parliament's passage of the "Intolerable Acts" by drafting and signing the Prince William Resolves. Commemorate this momentous step towards independence by attending a free family-friendly program marking the 250th anniversary.

Call 703-792-4754 for more information.

Events include:

- Immersive play reenacting the historic debate
- Children's activities
- Puppet Shows
- Tours of Dumfries and the Weems-Botts Museum
- Food, Music, & More!



**PRINCE WILLIAM**  
Historic Preservation

Connect with us on social media!

[www.facebook.com/pwhistoric](https://www.facebook.com/pwhistoric) X: @PWHPF Instagram: PWC History

YouTube: Prince William Office of Historic Preservation

**VIRGINIA**<sub>250</sub>  
AMERICAN REVOLUTION