



Historic Perspectives

Preservation of Prince William County's Historic Resources

Winter 2026 Contents

- 1 | More Land, More Structures:
2025 a Historic Year for
Prince William County
Historic Preservation
- 3 | Image Spotlight
- 4 | History Corner
- 7 | Preservation Corner
- 9 | HPD News

PRINCE WILLIAM

Historic Preservation

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More Land, More Structures: 2025 a Historic Year for Prince William County Historic Preservation



Ned Distiller House

Every year in my end of year article I say, "this year was a great year!" And each year I am honest about that statement! BUT this year was different than past years for the Prince William County Office of Historic Preservation. From new land, new historic sites and capital project funding, we truly have had a "historic" year.

Early in 2025, we closed on two properties in the historic village of Buckland in western Prince William County. One of the County's unique areas and preserved village, the Board of County Supervisors made the

decision to purchase two historic properties in Buckland, The Ned Distiller House and Gill House both date to the early 1800s, with the Ned Distiller House having one of the most unique histories in the entire state. Research is continuing, but it is most likely the first house an African American purchased with a mortgage in Virginia. Work has already begun on emergency repairs to the Ned Distiller House as historic structure reports are being started for both historic buildings. We will soon engage in a master plan process with the community to identify how



HP staff

New Acreage at Bristoe Station

to best use these new historic resources.

Buckland was not the only place for new additions. The County also closed on 22 acres of core battlefield property at Bristoe Station. This acreage will be added to the Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park soon, and this transaction included a 2027 donation of another 160 acres of core battlefield property. This would bring the total acreage of the battlefield park to nearly 330 acres, with possibly more land to come in the future!

This year also saw significant investment in our historic sites. This includes funding via the County budget and fundraising by the Prince William Historic Preservation Foundation to construct the Prince William County American Revolutionary War Memorial at Williams Ordinary. This memorial will serve as a

place to remember the people of Prince William County during the American Revolution, as well as an educational plaza. Thanks to the Foundation, this project will begin in early 2026.

Other projects include funding for the old Flory Center at Ben Lomond Historic Site to stabilize the building and begin the process to make it a public building. Work will continue at Rippon Lodge to stabilize outdoor garden walls as well as a detail investigation and plan to remove all the water away from the building (to fix the current issue of water in the cellar). Finally, the Board of County Supervisors agreed to “repurchase” the historic Woodlawn property in Haymarket. This house, built in stages from 1790 to 1850, sits on 9 acres in the Virginia Crossing Neighborhood. Our plan now is to stabilize the historic structure, install a new roof and



HP staff

Woodlawn

landscape the property. A decision on the property’s future will be made in the future, but this work will ensure the house will remain standing while decisions about next steps are made.

It has truly been a historic year for us in 2025. With all these projects, we also saw the LARGEST number of visitors -over 170,000- to our sites in our 24-year history as an organization. This is a direct result of our amazing staff, community partners and community at large that continues to support all our efforts. I look forward to 2026 and the 250th anniversary of our nation’s birth. There is no better way to commemorate this occasion by supporting historic preservation here locally in Prince William County!

Rob Orrison

Manager, Office of Historic Preservation



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Image Spotlight

Cold at Cockpit Point

Northern Virginia doesn't always experience snow in the winter, but it is undoubtedly cold. That was no exception 164 years ago during the American Civil War. Imagine being a soldier from the Deep South stationed in Prince William County and experiencing freezing temperatures for the first time. That is what soldiers from the 5th Alabama experienced during the winter of 1861-1862 at Cockpit Point.

We were ordered away from Manassas and went direct to "Cock Pit Point" on the Potomac River and were put in charge of some artillery planted behind some rude earth embankments on a very high point overlooking the Potomac. Here we were expected, with this artillery, to blockade the river, allowing no craft to move up or down the channel...

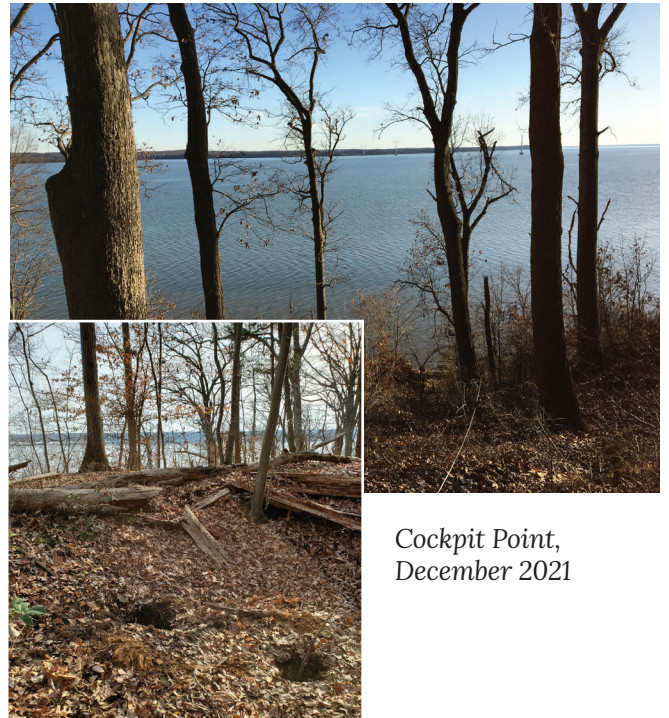
We being from Alabama where the winters are not so severe, considered this winter of 1861-1862 the coldest of our lives and this high point on the Potomac, the coldest in America. So it seemed to us, and we came near freezing and starving to death that winter. We were away off to ourselves, and the roads were impassible from the rains and freezes, and rations became an item for the first time in our war life. I put out one morning on a private foraging expedition and struck out boldly across the country in search of a farm-house, expecting to beg or buy milk, butter, and bread, but to my astonishment, the county seemed to be uninhabited... The wind along and across the river had full sweep, as cold as the north pole, and it set in every night about time for the tide to rise. We were in messes in our company, four to six in a mess. It was our custom for the messmate who went on guard to put on all the spare clothes in the mess, sometimes two or three shirts, as many drawers, coats and trousers, and this was the only way we kept from freezing.

The War Reminiscences of William Frierson Fulton II, 5th Alabama Battalion, Archer's Brigade, A.P. Hill's Light Division, A.N.V.

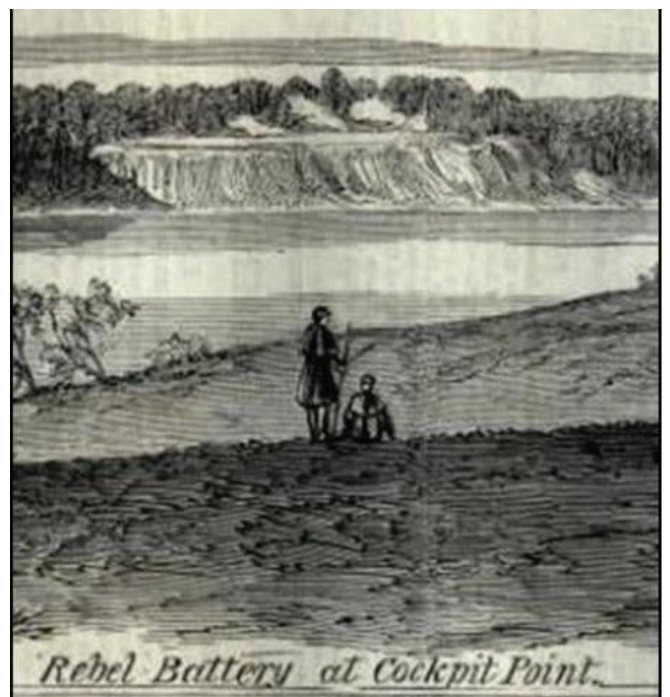
Paige Gibbons Backus

Historic Site Manager

Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre



Cockpit Point,
December 2021



A. R. Waud, Harper's Weekly, 1862



History Corner

Medals of Honor at Bristoe Station

Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park is the site of two Civil War engagements: the Battle of Kettle Run (August 27, 1862) and the Battle of Bristoe Station (October 14, 1863). Six Medals of Honor were awarded to Federal soldiers as a result of their actions at or near Bristoe Station. Often referred to as the Congressional Medal of Honor because it is awarded in the name of Congress, the Medal of Honor was established during the Civil War.

In December 1861, efforts to inspire sailors to valorous service led to the creation of the Navy Medal of Honor. Legislation soon followed authorizing a similar medal for soldiers in 1862. Over 3,500 Medals of Honor have been awarded since the medal's creation, with 1,524 awarded for actions during the Civil War. Many of these medals were not awarded until years after the war concluded, as recommendations were made by surviving soldiers and officers.

The first Medals of Honor were presented to the "Andrews Raiders" on March 25, 1863, by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. Private Jacob Parrott, a volunteer from Ohio, became the first Medal of Honor recipient for his participation in the raid on a Confederate train in Georgia on April 12, 1862. The last Civil War Medals of Honor were awarded on July 3, 2024, by President Biden to Privates Philip Shadrach



Civil War Medal of Honor

and George Wilson, two of the "Andrews Raiders" mistakenly overlooked when the first Medals of Honor were awarded in 1863.

Sergeant John H. Haight was awarded the Medal of Honor on June 8, 1888, for his actions at the Battle of Kettle Run, as well as at the Battles of Williamsburg (May 5, 1862) and Second Manassas (August 28-30, 1862). John was born in Westfield, New York, on July 1, 1841. He and his younger brother, George, enlisted in the 72nd New York Infantry, with George enlisting in Company E in June 1861 and John in Company G a month later. John was wounded at Williamsburg on May 5, 1862 and George was killed at

Malvern Hill on July 1, 1862. The citation for John's Medal of Honor reads:

The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Sergeant John H. Haight, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism on May 5, 1862, while serving with Company G, 72d New York Infantry, in action at Williamsburg, Virginia. Sergeant Haight voluntarily carried a severely wounded comrade off the field in the face of a large force of the enemy; in doing so was himself severely wounded and taken prisoner. He went into the fight at Bristol [sic] Station, Virginia, August 27, 29 and 30, 1862, although severely disabled. At Manassas, he volunteered to search the woods for the wounded.

Recalling his experience at the Battle of Kettle Run, John wrote:

On August 27, 1862, at the battle of Bristow Station, I was suffering greatly from a severe carbuncle (note: a carbuncle is a cluster of painful boils under the skin) on my neck. On this account I was ordered to the rear before the battle commenced. From my dreary position I could hear the distant rattle of musketry, and longed to be with my comrades. Soon I began to formulate schemes whereby I could rejoin my regi-



John H. Haight

ment. I gave this up and decided simply to forget my orders and join my company. Here I fought until the battle was over, when I fainted and had to be carried from the field.

John was honorably discharged due to his wounds on March 1, 1863. He returned home to Westfield, New York, and worked as a tinsmith. John died in Westfield on April 8, 1917, and is buried at East Ripley Cemetery.

Four Medals of Honor were awarded for actions at the Battle of Bristoe Station.

Corporal Moses C. Hanscom was awarded the Medal of Honor on December 1, 1864. He was born in April 1842 in Auburn, Maine, and enlisted in Company F, 19th Maine Infantry, in August 1862. The citation for his Medal of Honor reads:

The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Corporal Moses C. Hanscom, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism on 14 October 1863, while serving with Company F, 19th Maine Infan-

try, in action at Bristoe Station, Virginia, for capture of the flag of 26th North Carolina (Confederate States of America).

Moses mustered out in May 1865. He died in Auburn, Maine, on July 26, 1873, and is buried at Oak Hill Cemetery. His Medal of Honor is on display in the Maine State Museum in Auburn, Maine.

Corporal Thomas Cullen was awarded the Medal of Honor on December 1, 1864. Thomas was born in Ireland on February 26, 1839, and enlisted in Company I, 82nd New York Infantry, in May 1861. He was wounded at Gettysburg on July 3, 1863. The citation for his Medal of Honor reads:

The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Corporal Thomas Cullen, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism on 14 October 1863, while serving with Company I, 82d New York Infantry, in action at Bristoe Station, Virginia, for capture of flag of 22d or 28th North Carolina (Confederate States of America).

Thomas was captured at the Weldon Railroad near Petersburg on June 22, 1864. After his parole in July 1864, Thomas transferred to the 59th New York Infantry and mustered out in June 1865. He died in Coudersport, Penn-



Thomas Cullen



Michael Emmet Urell

sylvania, on August 17, 1913, and is buried at Saint Mary's Cemetery.

Private Michael Emmet Urell was awarded the Medal of Honor on June 6, 1870. Michael was born in Ireland on November 8, 1844, and enlisted in Company E, 2nd Regiment New York State Militia, in April 1861 (the 2nd Regiment was re-designated as the 82nd New York in December 1861). The citation for his Medal of Honor reads:

The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Private Michael Emmet Urell, United States Army, for gallantry in action on 14 October 1863, while serving with Company E, 82d New York Infantry, in action at Bristoe Station, Virginia. While detailed as Color Bearer; Private Urell was severely wounded.

After recovering from his wounds Michael returned to the 82nd New York as a 2nd Lieutenant. He was discharged in May 1864 and went to work as a War Department clerk in Wash-

ington, D.C. When war with Spain was declared in April 1898 Michael was commissioned a Major in the District of Columbia National Guard and accompanied the District's 1st Volunteer Infantry Regiment to Cuba. Arriving in July 1898 he and the 1st Infantry participated in the last stages of the Santiago Campaign.

After his return from Cuba, Michael became colonel of the 2nd District of Columbia Volunteer Infantry and retired in 1909 as a Brigadier General in the National Guard. In 1910 he traveled to Ireland and died in Cork on September 6, 1910. Before leaving for Ireland Michael had left instructions that he wanted to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery next to his wife Isabelle, who had died in 1892. His final wish was honored and today he rests with Isabelle at Arlington.

Assistant Surgeon Joseph Kirby Corson was awarded the Medal of Honor on May 13, 1899. Joseph was born in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, on November 22, 1836. While studying medicine at the University of Pennsylvania he enlisted in Company K, 4th Pennsylvania Infantry, in April 1861, and mustered out as a sergeant in July 1861.

Returning to the University of Pennsylvania, Joseph served as a medical cadet at an army hospital while continuing his medical studies. He enlisted in the 6th Pennsylvania Reserves (35th Pennsylvania Infantry) as an assistant surgeon in March 1863 after graduating with a medical degree. The citation for his Medal of Honor reads:



Joseph Kirby Corson

The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Assistant Surgeon Joseph Kirby Corson, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism on 14 October 1863, while serving with 35th Pennsylvania Volunteers, 6th Pennsylvania Reserves, in action at Bristoe Station, Virginia. With one companion Assistant Surgeon Corson returned in the face of the enemy's heavy artillery fire and removed to a place of safety a severely wounded soldier who had been left behind as the regiment fell back.

Brevetted as a Major for distinguishing himself in the Wilderness, Joseph mustered out in June 1864. In November 1864 he became medical officer at Camp Discharge in Philadelphia. Joseph mustered out in May 1865 and returned to Plymouth Meeting to join his father's medical practice. He was appointed an assistant

surgeon in the regular army in October 1867, promoted to Major in November 1888, and retired in November 1897. Corson died in Plymouth Meeting on July 24, 1913, and is buried at West Laurel Hill Cemetery.

A sixth Medal of Honor was awarded for actions near Bristoe Station.

Private Nathan Mullock Hallock was awarded the Medal of Honor on September 10, 1897. Nathan was born in Middletown, New York, on August 23, 1844, and enlisted in Company K, 124th New York Infantry, in August 1862. In June 1863 Nathan and the 124th New York were marching north through Bristoe Station in pursuit of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. His Medal of Honor citation reads:

The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Private Nathan Mullock Hallock, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism on 15 June 1863, while serving with Company K, 124th New York Infantry, in action at Bristoe Station, Virginia. At imminent peril Private Hallock saved from death or capture a disabled officer of his company by carrying him under a hot musketry fire, to a place of safety. Nathan mustered out in June 1865. He died in Los Angeles on March 21, 1903, and is buried at Hillside Cemetery in Middletown, New York.

Jeff Joyce

Volunteer
Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park

Visit our website at: www.pwcva.gov/history

Preservation Corner

Preservation in Practice

The art of preserving begins long before you reach the archives or open the door to restoration. It begins with curiosity and the willingness to learn. My name is Danielle Duffy, a 22-year-old Northern Virginia Community College student exploring the intersection between art and history. Through an associate degree in Liberal Arts and a certificate in Public History and Historic Preservation, my studies have reflected my fascination in understanding the past and sharing with the community. This fall, I had the opportunity to serve as an intern for the Prince William County Office of Historic Preservation, where I was able to connect my academic studies to hands-on experience at historic sites across the county.

The semester began with a week of getting familiar with the lay of the land and the team at Ben Lomond Historic Site in Manassas, Virginia. My primary focus in the beginning stages involved learning the procedures of accessioning and deaccessioning objects, interpreting objects to understand context and relevance, and documenting each object accurately into our database.

During my short time in the field, I discovered even the smallest objects like reproductions of Civil War surgical tools, herbs in the garden, and even the school desks can reveal rich stories



about the people who lived and worked there. When preserving history, you are forced to admire the overlooked; to meticulously consider each aspect as it's truly critical when painting the whole picture. In addition to collections management, I learned to perform site inspections to

document structural changes and requirements for the building. Observing the preservation techniques and interpretative approaches within the furnishing plans allowed me to value Prince William County's long-term commitment to relevant and accessible history.

At different historic sites throughout PWC I observed various preservation strategies to understand the different challenges associated with treatment options to ensure proper adaptive usage. From Buckland to the Williams-Dawe House, this field experience helped cultivate my understanding on the processes and preservation standards when assessing the integrity and interpretation of a property or object. My spare time was spent getting to know the history of the properties and preservation techniques, which helped me understand what kind of footprint I want to leave in the historic preservation community.

Once I completed my first project, I transitioned over to the Brentsville Historic Centre where I began working on a Historical Guide for the evolution of school desks. From sifting through the digital archives at the Smithsonian Library to reviewing patented designs within the Library of Congress, I developed the skills necessary to understand the influence that material culture has on our cultural heritage. Additionally, my work involved the removal of items that were no longer serving our collections and assisted in organization management throughout the properties. These tasks strengthened my ability to analyze material culture in order to recognize the relationship between broader historical trends.

One of the most memorable parts of my studies came from assisting field trips. Guiding elementary aged girls through Brentsville Historic Site and watching them engage in discussions about daily life prior to the Civil War reaffirmed the importance of local history to the public. Later, I had another



group of high schoolers who explored the segregation of schools between Brentsville's one-room School House to Lucasville School. I learned how the engagement of a community is just as important as the objects or structures you set to preserve. Public interest and storytelling keep history alive which is why it's necessary to acknowledge how we share and interpret our findings to the world whilst including everyone equally.

When I was little, my mom took my best friend and I to one of Brentsville Historic Centre's reenactment events down near the Haislip-Hall House. I was captivated by the old house, and it left a lasting impression. I can clearly remember how mesmerized I was with the structure and the stories embedded within the walls. Years later I found myself back in the very place that sparked my early curiosity about history, sitting across the fire whilst accessing objects from prior to the Civil War. Coming full circle, the final weeks of my internship have been devoted to examining each object and ensuring it is accurately digitized and documented into the database.

Through careful documentation, assisting with public programming, and supporting

site interpretation, my work contributed to the ongoing mission of Prince William County to maintain and share its historic resources for future generations. Every task, no matter how small or big, has contributed to the care of each site, allowing me to utilize my tools and knowledge. As someone who grew up deeply entrenched in our nation's founding, PWC can help combat the lack of educational interest and thus opportunities by continuing to advance hands-on connections to local and American history through cultural and historical material.

I believe that to become a great conservator, one must understand the fundamentals of museum work; the care of collections, the importance of public engagement, and the responsibilities of cultural stewardship – that is what this opportunity has offered me. I am grateful for the time, guidance, and knowledge shared by the Prince William County Historic Preservation team, and I hope that ongoing preservation work continues to shape both the next generation of historians and the future of our county's historic sites.

Danielle Duffy
Historic Preservation Intern



OHP News



J. Nathan McDonald and Kevin Pawlak were certified as historic artillery weapons safety officers at the course hosted by North Carolina Historic Site at Fort Macon State Park in November.

Intern Bryceson Presley, currently wrapping up his final semester at Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA), assisted Rippon Lodge Historic Site staff with drafting the boilerplate for a new exhibition on the King's Highway. Always drawn to the stories and history that shaped the world and its communities, Bryceson is pursuing a Career Studies Certificate in Public History and Historic Preservation.

A Banner Year for History: The Prince William Historic Preservation Foundation's Triumphs of 2025

2025 will undoubtedly be remembered as an important year for the Prince William Historic Preservation Foundation (PWHPF). Through dedicated effort, passionate community engagement, and a clear vision, the Foundation achieved significant milestones that will shape understanding and appreciation of Prince William County's rich past for generations to come. From the grand unveiling of an exciting new museum exhibit, to continued progress on a vital memorial project, the PWHPF demonstrated an unwavering commitment towards preserving and interpreting the threads of history that weave through this historic Virginia landscape.

The crown jewel of the Foundation's 2025 achievements was the successful completion and opening of the "Resolves to Revolution" exhibit at Williams Ordinary. This ambitious new permanent installation, meticulously curated and thoughtfully

designed, delves deep into Prince William County's pivotal role in the American Revolution. For too long, the local contributions to this monumental struggle have been underappreciated, but "Resolves to Revolution" brings them to the forefront, illuminating the stories of ordinary citizens and influential figures alike who helped forge a new nation.

While "Resolves to Revolution" marked a triumphant completion, another equally significant project continued to gain momentum throughout 2025: the Prince William County American Revolution Memorial. Located just outside Williams Ordinary, this ambitious memorial aims to create a lasting tribute to all those from Prince William County who contributed to the fight for independence.

The vision for the memorial is grand yet respectful, designed to serve as a place of contemplation, education, and remembrance.

Throughout 2025, significant progress was made on the memorial's foundational elements. Fundraising efforts for the memorial remained robust, individual and organizational donors demonstrated incredible generosity, recognizing the importance of honoring the county's revolutionary heritage.

The memorial project also emphasized educational integration. Preservation staff designed interpretive markers and plaques around the site, providing visitors with detailed information about Prince William County's revolutionary figures and events. Envisioned as an outdoor extension of the "Resolves to Revolution" exhibit, the memorial will offer a serene space for reflection, allowing individuals to connect with the sacrifices made by their ancestors. The ongoing nature of this project means that 2025 laid critical groundwork, moving it closer to its ultimate completion in the coming years.

Beyond these two flagship initiatives, the PWHPF also maintained its commitment to its broader mission of preserving historic sites. The year 2025 stands as a testament to the Prince William Historic Preservation Foundation's tireless

dedication and profound impact. The "Resolves to Revolution" exhibit at Williams Ordinary has only enriched the cultural landscape by focusing on local residents' contribution to the creation of our country. Simultaneously, the steady progress on

the American Revolution Memorial ensures that future generations will have a physical space to honor and remember those who shaped the nation's destiny.

Bill Backus
Preservationist

Prince William County Has a Past That's Worth Preserving

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www.pwhpf.org



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Disaster Pursuing
Lincoln's Killer
Rippon Lodge Easter
Egg Trail



Advanced tickets
may be purchased online
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PRINCE WILLIAM/ MANASSAS HISTORY SYMPOSIUM

Saturday, March 21, 2026
8:30 – 4:00

Manassas Museum
9101 Prince William St., Manassas, VA



Save the date for the 11th Annual Prince William/Manassas History 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 eighth edition of the *Journal of Prince William County History*, which will be on sale for the special one-day price of \$5.

2026 topics:

- Faces of Bristoe Station Battlefield
- Beltway Sniper Panel
- Photographs of 1920's Prince William County
- Buckland's African American Community
- 3rd Virginia in the 1776 New York Campaign

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

For more information about both of these programs contact 703-792-1731 or register online at: www.pwcparks.info/hptickets

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