



Historic Perspectives

Preservation of Prince William County's Historic Resources

Spring 2026 Contents

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PRINCE WILLIAM

Historic Preservation

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CSS George Page

The *CSS George Page* was a captured 410-ton side-wheeler steamship assigned to the upper Potomac River as part of the early Virginia State Navy and later transferred to the Confederate States Navy.

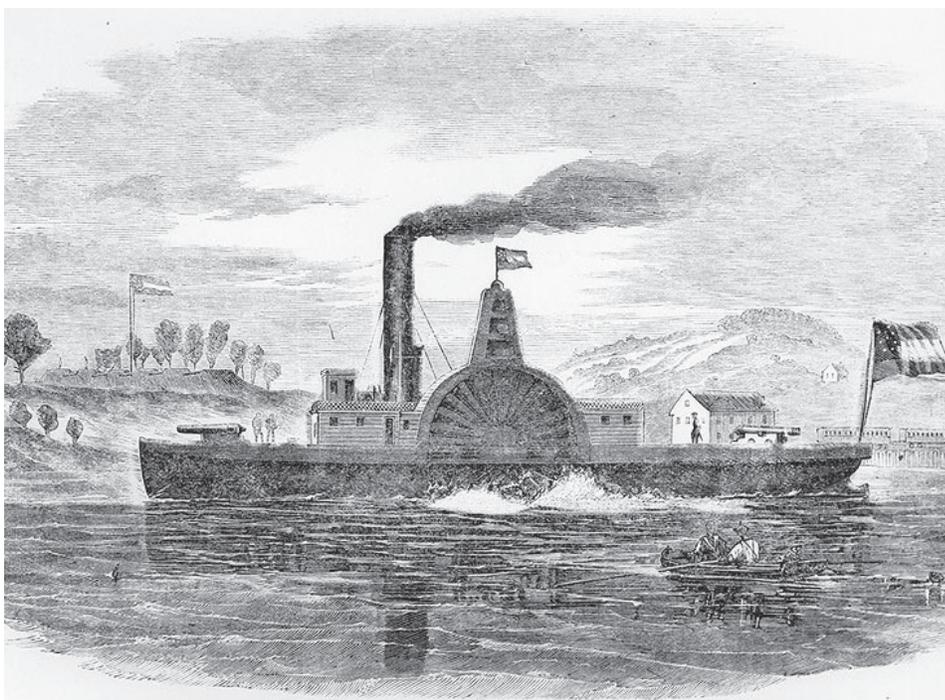
Built in 1853 for the Alexandria and Washington Steamship Company and named for her owner, the *George Page* served as a cross-Potomac ferry for most of its life. At the beginning of the American Civil War, Virginia authorities seized her at the dock in Alexandria after her evening run on April 20, 1861, and sailed her past the guns of Fort Washington to Aquia Creek for military use.

After its capture, by the Confederate States Navy, the

CSS George Page, commanded by Lieutenant Charles Carroll Simms, CSN, was modified for Potomac River defense.

The ship patrolled the river in the vicinity of Quantico Creek, off the river's main channel. The boat had a brief, but exciting career on the river. The presence of a Confederate gunboat on the Potomac was concerning to President Abraham Lincoln and federal authorities, along with shore batteries being constructed by the Confederate Army at Cockpit Point on the Virginia side of the river in Prince William County.

The *CSS George Page* participated in the blockade of the Potomac River and fired on Federal troops located across the river in



CSS George Page

THE STEAMER GEORGE PAGE.

On the arrival of the steamer George Page at Alexandria on her last down trip on Saturday night, she was seized by the Virginia authorities. Sometime during the night she steamed up and went down the river. Her destination was not known. Yesterday morning we were informed that the Page proceeded down the river, and when opposite Fort Washington she was invited to stop, by a shot across her bow. She paid no attention to the first hint, but at its repetition she came to at the wharf, immediately under the guns of the fort. Another report says the Page refused to heave to on being notified, and that a shot was fired into her, which struck her between wind and water and sunk her in the channel. Rumor says she had on board a battery for the White House (Indian Head). Another report is that her errand was to destroy light boats and other channel marks at the mouth of the river.

Evening Star, 1861

Affairs at Alexandria.

The following items are from the Sentinel, of Monday evening :

Schr. Sarah Ann, Capt. Mark Waters, from Acquia Creek, reports steamer George Page lying at the wharf there when he left. In coming by Fort Washington about one o'clock to-day, and being well on the Virginia shore, he was hailed from the Fort—not understanding what it meant, he kept on his course. A moment after the officer who hailed him lifted his sword, whereupon a half dozen men on the wall discharged a cannon shot at him, which passed just over his bow. He thereupon hauled up and was examined by a boat from the Fort, after which he was allowed to pursue his way.

Richmond Dispatch, 1861

Maryland. With the Confederate Batteries and the small flotilla lead by the George Page, the Confederates were able to close the Potomac River to traffic.

In October 1861, there was a US Navy raid on the small shipyard that was located in Quantico Creek. The CSS Mary Washington was destroyed, and the Confederates moved the George Page to a safer spot in Chopawamsic Creek below Shipping Point on the Potomac River.

Among its duties besides patrolling the river, the George Page was reported to have been used to transport an imported English Blakely gun to one of the batteries for use on shore and to move troops between battery sites.¹

Upon abandonment of the Cockpit Point batteries by the Confederate Army on March 9, 1862, the CSS George Page was set afire and blown up. The only Confederate gunboat on the

Potomac River was no more. The remnants of the George Page remain in Quantico Creek to this day.

¹ USDI/NPS NRHP Multiple Property Documentation Form: Properties Associated with Campaign's for the Control of Navigation on the Lower Potomac River, 1861-1862; Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, Prince William County Digital Library

Dan Goldstein

Historic Interpreter, Rippon Lodge Historic Site

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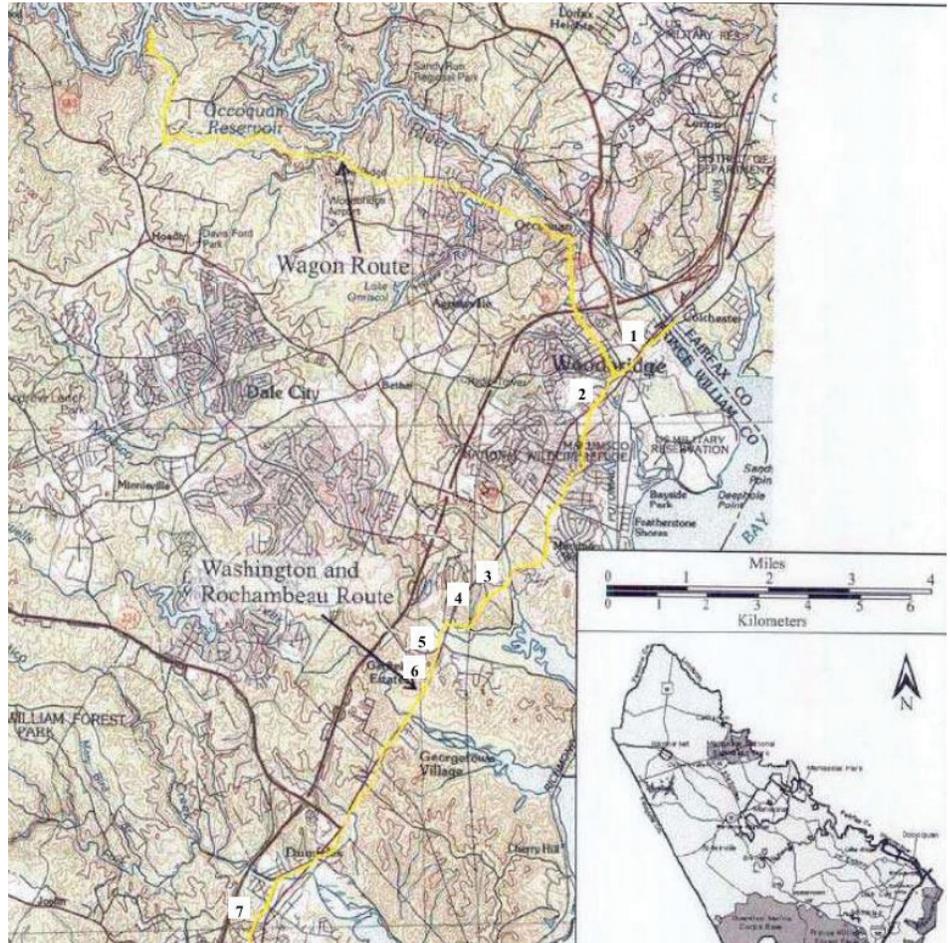


Image Spotlight

The King's Highway: Coming to a Historic Site Near You!

A new public exhibit is coming to Rippon Lodge in the near future, one that tells the story about the King's Highway. Among the oldest traveled pathways in North America, the King's Highway stretches from Boston, Massachusetts, all the way to Charleston, South Carolina. It was along the King's Highway that General George Washington and French General Jean-Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau, marched their armies to Yorktown in September 1781. This last major battle, fought on land and at sea, marked a decisive British surrender that brought about the end of the Revolutionary War in favor of the Americans. Much of the King's Highway as it passed through eastern Prince William County has been subsumed into what is today U.S. Route 1, which passes through the towns of Dumfries and Woodbridge. Yet, two portions still exist within the communities around Rippon Lodge that are available for the public to walk, a testament to the roadway's legacy.

The exhibit, written by intern Bryceson Presley this past autumn and assisted by Historic Preservation staff, will be placed in the one-room cabin across from the main house at Rippon Lodge. The cabin, built



in the 1920s by Wade Hampton Ellis and later used by Admiral Richard Black after purchasing Rippon Lodge in 1952, will serve as the space for the upcoming exhibit. Roughly seven panels will be placed on the interior walls, discussing various themes, peoples, and moments in time as it relates to the King's Highway, the American Revolution and

Rippon Lodge altogether. While the exhibit is still in the early phases, the project has a tentative completion date of 2027. Until then, visitors to Rippon Lodge will have to wait patiently until the new public space is finalized and open to all onsite guests.

Matthew Schuller
Historic Interpreter

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



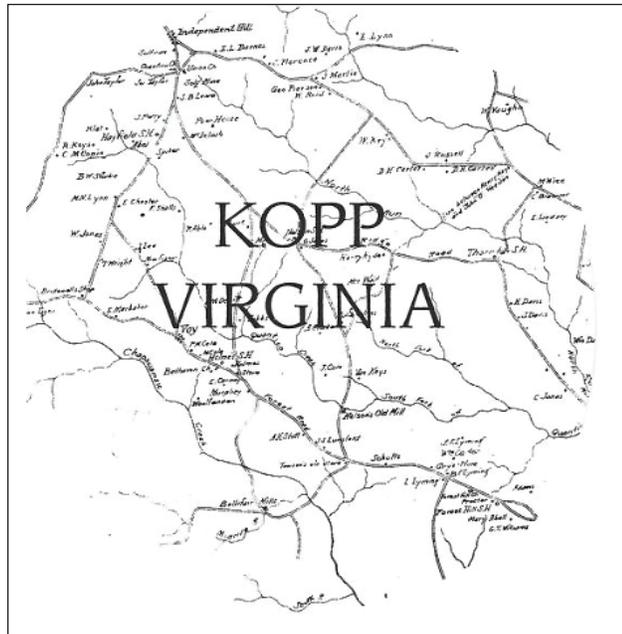
History Corner

Kopp, Virginia History Recorded Prince William County's Rural Past

A little more than 100 years ago, Prince William County was a sparsely populated county consisting largely of farms and small towns. Records from 1910 show a population of just over 12,000 souls. Newspaper columns featured all the happenings of various communities in the county. There were stories about travels around and outside of the county, birthdays, deaths, illnesses, etc. One such source of this information has been consolidated into the book "Kopp, Virginia".

Started by my father Raymond Wilson Woolfenden, Sr. and finished after his death by my sister Casmere Woolfenden Kistner with contributions from myself (R.C. Woolfenden) this publication is a treasure chest of ancestry research on many of the families of Prince William County. Although no longer in publication, it is still available to researchers.

You will find it available via the Relic Room of the Prince William County Public Library and online at <https://archive.org/details/combinedkoppbook/mode/2up>. I am including a few of the many fascinating articles that you will discover in the book. Among them, the story of my great grandmother Isabelle Jones Woolfenden's lemon tree, my grandfather Raymond Marsden



Kopp, Virginia

Woolfenden's 21st birthday party and what is believed to have been the first landing and takeoff of a civilian aircraft in Prince William County to provide a sample of these stories. Yes, I focused on my family. Take the time to dive into it and you may find amazing stories of your family too!

March 24, 1910, *The Manassas Democrat*, Independent Hill Notes and from the book, "Kopp, Virginia", page 76.

A lemon tree that deserves mention in some farm journal or fruit growers catalogue is the property of Mrs. T. Woolfenden, Sr. (Isabelle Jones Woolfenden) of Kopp. There are nine perfect lemons on it, one dropped off last week and weighted one and

one half pound, another still on the tree will weigh about two and one fourth pounds. Mr. Woolfenden says, "Tell the folks we can raise anything down here." We would not mind being "handed a lemon" every day in the week if they were like those.

Note that in 2025 you would have to purchase an entire bag of lemons to match the weight of just one of these lemons!

May 4, 1911 *The Manassas Journal*, An Echo from Kopp, as

featured in the book, "Kopp, Virginia", pages 83 and 84

"A most enjoyable event took place on Wednesday evening, April 26 (1911), in the form of a surprise party for Raymond Woolfenden, the occasion being his 21st birthday. Games and music whiled away the time until a late hour, when the guests were instructed to choose partners and march to the dining room, where a dainty lunch was served by Mrs. Woolfenden. Among other gifts Raymond received \$21 (dollars) from a few of "those who love him best." Those present besides a host of relatives were: Misses Linnie Liming, Kate Liming, Lulu Arrington,

Maud Norman, Harriet Downs, Olive Lynn, Leah Wright, Lizzie Lynn, Mesdames Annie Downs, Katie Cornwell, Pearl Sullivan; Messrs. Arthur Storke, Grag Arrington, Harry Tubbs, Elmer Dewitt, Arthur Luck, Arthur Carter, Clifton Storke, Bryan Norman, Paul Keys, Edgar Carney.

Just try to imagine anyone's 21st birthday party making the news today! And what an amazing list of the early families living in Prince William County in 1911.

The first known civilian aircraft landing and take-off in Prince William County, Virginia

November 1919, a recent Sunday. From the Kopp column of the *Manassas Journal*, November 28, 1919 and the book, "Kopp, Virginia" pages 151 and 152. See Kopp, Virginia.

Excitement reigned in the neighborhood on a recent Sunday afternoon when Capt. I. C. LeBoutiller, R.A.F., lighted with his airplane in Mr. Thomas Woolfenden's field. In a few moments automobiles, horse-back riders and walkers could be seen coming from every direction, the crowd consisting of preachers, teachers, merchants, farmers and mechanics.

Capt. LeBoutiller and E. M. Stouffacher, his mechanic, enlisted in the Canadian forces when the war broke out and went across to England, where they completed their aviation course. When the American forces were sent over they then



Bell Haven cemetery

joined the Americans and fought with them until the armistice was signed. After soaring at a height of 22,000 feet they are said to have brought down two Hun planes, made prisoners of the occupants and returned to their lines in safety, Capt. LeBoutiller receiving only a slight wound.

The aviators spent the night with Mr. Thomas Woolfenden and left about eight o'clock for North Carolina, where the plane will be delivered to a person who purchased it at the close of the war.

It is fascinating to see how folks responded to the sight of an airplane in those early days of aviation. Most of those folks most likely had never laid eyes on an airplane before this event.

June 20, 1919 The *Manassas Journal* and the book "Kopp, Virginia" page 146, Kopp (column) select items from the column.

Farmers are very busy cultivating corn.

Miss Anna Woolfenden and Mr. Walter Woolfenden motored to Alexandria Saturday.

Messrs. Walter and Kenneth Woolfenden recently visited relatives and friends in Baltimore, and were accompanied home by Mr. Thomas Woolfenden and daughter, Miss Bertha, who had spent several days there.

Imagine your next trip to visit family and friends being so newsworthy as to make the local newspaper!

I could list many more stories, but this at

least gives you an example of the fascinating records of Prince William County's history in the Kopp area. Today, all that remains of Kopp is the Belle Haven Missionary Baptist Church Cemetery and the foundation of the Holmes School across the street from the cemetery. Fifteen thousand acres of Prince William County became a part of the Quantico Marine Corps Base in early 1942 as the base expanded from about eight thousand acres to nearly fifty-eight thousand acres. It was the largest expansion of an existing military base on the east coast of the United States during World War II. The cemetery is one of six active cemeteries on the base and one of between 39 and at least 70 cemeteries on the base. Because of the rapid expansion records were imprecise and no one is really certain how many cemeteries there are on the base.

R.C. Woolfenden
Family Historian, Kopp Resident
Descendant

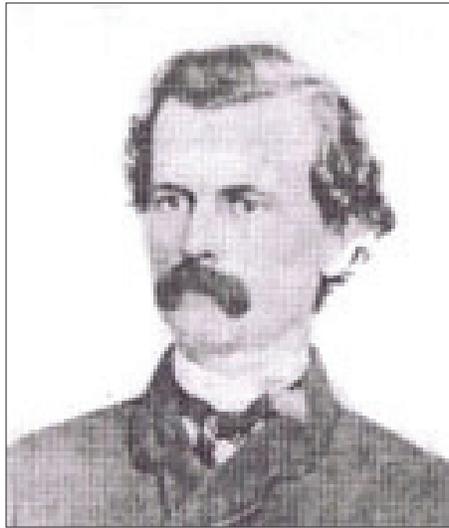
Preservation Corner

A Man in the Shadows W.W. Blackford (William Willis Blackford)

WW Blackford was a man who moved in the background of J.E.B. Stuart's operations throughout the Civil War. Here in Prince William County, he was instrumental in the Confederate success at the Battle of Kettle Run that led to their victory at Second Manassas. Blackford was J.E.B. Stuart's engineer and was well-suited to the task of fixing the switch at Bristoe Station to derail trains on the evening of August 26th. Often mentioned in Stuart's reports, we come to know him through these mundane official documents and his own words in his book "War Years with J.E.B. Stuart." Well educated and well versed, he was a man who took care of details that required technical expertise and was the man in the background of many things.

Born in Fredericksburg, VA on March 23, 1831, to a prominent Virginia family, he spent his early years in Spanish Bogotá, New Granada (modern-day Colombia) where he learned Spanish and became an expert horseman. After his family returned to Virginia, he was a railroad surveyor and graduated from the University of Virginia (UVA) as a civil engineer.

On January 10, 1856, Blackford married Mary Trigg Robertson, who was the daughter of former Virginia Governor Wyndham Robertson. They had seven chil-



dren, four of whom made it past infancy. He worked in his father-in-law's gypsum mining business and was assistant engineer on the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad, then the acting chief engineer by the completion of the railroad – an experience that suited him perfectly to his task at Bristoe Station.

On the evening of August 26th, 1862, after the first train had blown through a hastily made pile of rubble placed on the track, Confederate forces under Stonewall Jackson heard a second train approaching. Jackson wanted to ensure this one didn't get away. Blackford was ordered to fix the switch to derail the train. Jackson, Stuart, and Blackford were on a small rise on the north side of the tracks watching the train approach. In a moment that seemed to personify Jackson's

mistrust of subordinates, just before the train hit the switch, he leaned over to Stuart and questioned if he was sure that his man had properly secured the switch. Moments before the train hit the switch, Stuart ordered Blackford to double check his work. Blackford narrowly avoided being hit by the Louisiana Tiger's excited premature fire as he went to check the switch. Blackford remembered the scene as such, "Down the embankment rushed the engine, screaming and hissing, and down upon it rushed the cars, piling up one upon another until the pile reached higher than the embankment, checking further additions to its confused heap, and arresting the rear half of the train upon the track."

His work held and the train derailed, sending it careening down the embankment. As a third train approached, quick thinking Sergeant Ed Smith of the 21st Georgia (who was also a former railroad man) jumped into the overturned train engine and blew the "All Clear" signal on the whistle. Meanwhile, Blackford raced to the rear of the train and smashed out the red rear running lights on the last car that was still sitting on the tracks. In the waning evening light, the approaching third train was unaware of danger ahead. It plowed into the remaining cars sitting on the track with catastrophic results. By nightfall,

the Confederates at Bristoe Station had destroyed more than a quarter of the Orange & Alexandria Railroad's rolling stock. This work in the shadows set up the Battle of Kettle Run to be a success for the Confederates. However, not all his designs worked. Four nights prior on August 22nd, he was the engineer tasked with burning the bridge at Catlett Station as part of Stuart's Raid. Due to the heavy rain, he could not get the bridge to light. While the raid was a success, it missed the main objective, which was to destroy the bridge to deny the Union a vital route across the river. Despite minor mishaps like this, his career as an engineer drew admiration both during and after the Civil War.

Blackford's service spanned from First Manassas to Appomattox. He rose through the ranks from Lieutenant to Captain

under Stuart. He became one of the most trusted and valuable members of his staff. After Stuart's death, Blackford was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel of the 1st Regiment of Engineers. He was instrumental in the design of the Petersburg defenses.

After the war, he returned home to his family of 2 daughters, 2 sons, and his wife, Mary. She died on May 22, 1866, at 32 years old. Blackford never remarried. He moved his family to Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana, where he operated a sugar plantation that his father-in-law had given him. He returned to Virginia in 1874 after a flood destroyed most of the plantation. From 1880 to 1882, he was a professor of mechanics and drawing at the Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College (later Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University) at Blacksburg, where

he also served as superintendent of grounds and buildings and landscaped the campus.

From 1882 to 1890, Blackford worked as a construction engineer for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad on the line between Baltimore and Philadelphia. He also worked on the construction of a railroad between Lynchburg and Durham, North Carolina. W.W. Blackford retired from the railroad and moved to Princess Anne County. In the last two years of his life, he worked with the United States Department of Fisheries, unsuccessfully experimenting with means of artificially fattening oysters. Blackford died of a sudden stroke at his home in Princess Anne County on May 1, 1905, and was buried in Sinking Spring Cemetery in Abingdon.

Lance Russell
Historic Interpreter



APRIL

Scrambled Egg Hunt

April 4

Women of Rippon Lodge

April 11

History Homeschool Day

April 14

Civil War Drill Day at

Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre

April 18

Park Day at Bristoe Station

April 25

MAY

Behind the Scenes Tour

May 2

Historic Preservation Month Tour

May 2

Town Walking Tours: Bristow

May 15

Ben Lomond Day

May 16

Lees and the Cause of Liberty

May 28

JUNE

Museum Family Monday: Games and Toys of the Past

June 15

Town Walking Tours: Quantico

June 12

Juneteenth at Lucasville

June 19

Advanced tickets may be purchased online at:

www.pwcparks.info/hptickets





OHP News

In March 2026, Paige Gibbons Backus, Lauren Maloy, and Rob Orrison attended the Annual Virginia Association of Museums Conference in Williamsburg, connecting with other museum professionals and gathering ideas to bring back to our historic sites.

Historic Preservation Division Director, Rob Orrison has been named to be a participant in the four-day National Security Seminar being held at the US Army War College in Carlisle, Pa.

Foundation Update

We are thrilled to announce that, thanks to your incredible generosity, the Prince William Historic Preservation Foundation raised nearly \$40,000 during the 2025 calendar year. This support has transformed a long-held vision into a tangible reality as we prepare to honor the diverse residents who shaped our nation 250 years ago.

The centerpiece of this effort, the Revolutionary War Memorial, will be an outdoor commemorative plaza designed to tell a “fuller” story of the conflict. By rooting this memorial in Dumfries, the county’s original revolutionary-era seat, we are literally building on the ground where the Prince William Resolves first echoed in 1774.

As we move through 2026, the Foundation remains steadfast in its mission to turn these historic sites into living classrooms. Preserving a building like Williams Ordinary is about more than just old bricks and mortar; it’s about creating a space where modern

residents can stand where historical events took place. The success of our 2025 fundraising campaign has set a powerful momentum for the 250th anniversary of the United States. We are deeply grateful to every donor who recognized that local history is the foundation of our national identity.

Looking Forward: The Batestown Exhibit

The momentum continues this summer! We are excited to announce support for a brand-new exhibit at Williams Ordinary in June 2026, focusing on the historic community of Batestown. This exhibit will explore the daily lives of Batestown residents—from their work in the Cabin Branch Pyrite Mine to their eventual displacement during the creation of Prince William Forest Park. Opening during Juneteenth weekend, this installation ensures that the narrative of Prince William County remains inclusive, documenting the resilience of a community that is still a source of pride for many local descendants today.

Bill Backus
Preservationist



2026 PRINCE WILLIAM HISTORY LECTURE SERIES

May 28

**‘Better Known than Acknowledged’:
The Lees of Stratford
and the Cause of Liberty**

Dr. Gordon Blaine Steffey

Williams Ordinary
17674 Main St, Dumfries

Program is free and
will begin at 7 pm



Prince William County Has a Past That’s Worth Preserving

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