



Historic Perspectives

Preservation of Prince William County's Historic Resources

Fall 2026 Contents

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PRINCE WILLIAM

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The Office of Historic Preservation Welcomes Two Interns as Part of Prince William County Government's Internship Program

Every summer, Prince William County participates in the countywide internship program to create opportunities for students to engage with the meaningful work done in local government alongside a cohort of peers. Students work in various divisions throughout the county, while also getting exposure to different fields of work and meeting county leaders. This year the Office of Historic Preservation has two interns from this program, and we are happy to introduce them here:

Hello! My name is Matthew Brown, and I am one of the interns for the Prince William County's internship program, more specifically for Prince William County's Office of Historic Preservation. Currently, I am a rising third-year junior at James Madison University, and I am currently majoring and working towards a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. Of course, while history is something that I enjoy, I have a lot of other hobbies in my spare time. I have had a long music career and can play seven different instruments. I played the tuba in the marching band all throughout high school and with the Marching Royal Dukes in my freshman year of college! I enjoy music in my spare time, whether I am just listening, or



Matthew Brown

playing my guitar. I also really enjoy photography; I take my camera almost everywhere I go, and I have experience in street, nature, and portrait photography. I enjoy being outdoors and spending time in nature, but I especially enjoy going boating and being out on the water, sometimes I even do wakeboarding on the Potomac!

During my second semester of my sophomore year at James Madison, I was fortunate enough to work with one of my classes on a Veterans oral history project with the Library of Congress, with veterans from around the Blue Ridge and Shenandoah Valley. When I finished the project, I realized I made an impact on the local

community, and I also noticed how much I enjoyed it and how meaningful it was to me personally.

When I saw I had the chance to do meaningful work for the community around me with the internship program through Prince William County, I knew it was something that not only would also be extremely beneficial for my future, but it would also be something I enjoyed doing. During the summer of 2025, I worked at the Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre as a volunteer intern, and I loved working there. It feels amazing to be able to come back to this office through this internship opportunity.

While I do a variety of different jobs as an intern for Historic Preservation, what I am mainly doing is creating exhibits in William's Ordinary, which is the Office of Historic Preservation's main office. Being able to do meaningful work and finally do real exhibits in the public history field is an important and enjoyable project. Learning about all different types of history has always fascinated me, but studying and learning more about the area around me is very special to me.

Doing this internship has not only made me able to

show what I know about Prince William County and the surrounding areas, but it is also eye opening and I always seem to find myself learning more interesting facts and events that I had no idea about growing up here. Being able to research different topics about the county has been a really interesting experience. What makes this even more meaningful to me is to be serving the county and community with something that I genuinely enjoy doing. History is for everyone, and being able to preserve history for the community and making an impact in doing so is what makes this internship such an amazing experience. I am looking forward to seeing what I can do during this internship opportunity, as well as starting and improving new and exciting projects!

My name is Tabatha Tarman, and I am excited to have the opportunity to be one of the Office of Historic Preservation's interns over the summer! I am a William and Mary student and will be a junior at the college in the fall. I am a history major, and I hope to receive a Master's degree in education. I am a Prince William native, and I grew up checking out different historical sites within the county. It was at some of



Tabatha Tarman

these sites that I fell in love with history and decided to pursue it at college and as a career.

I am so excited to get to experience this internship at the Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre. The site has such a rich history, and I cannot wait to delve fully into its storied history. While I am interning, I will be able to learn the ins and outs of maintaining a historical site, how to give tours, and will be assisting in developing and executing various programs, including working on mock trials based on real historical ones. I am so honored that I was given this opportunity!

Bill Backus

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Image Spotlight

Saving Ben Lomond's Slave Quarter

The May 30, 1979, edition of the *Manassas Journal Messenger* painted a grim picture for those hoping to save the Ben Lomond slave quarter. Headlines such as “Saving of Slave Quarter Dims” and “County Seems Unable to Save Slave House” suggested that preservation efforts had reached a dead end. Research into the property on Sudley Manor Drive revealed no legal protection for the stone outbuilding. According to Prince William County Attorney, T. A. Emerson, although the original sales contract contained a clause allowing the seller, Weaver Brothers, to relocate the structure, that provision was omitted from the deed and therefore held no legal force.

Despite the discouraging news, a glimmer of hope soon emerged. The new property owner, Westover Baptist Church, offered the building—believed to be a former slave dwelling—free of charge to any organization willing to move it and cover the associated costs. The church had begun construction of a new facility, and the stone structure stood directly in the path of a planned 50-foot driveway. This offered renewed local interest in preserving the building.

In a June 6 article, local resident, Oswald Robinson, confirmed that the structure was indeed a slave dwelling. He identified its builders as his enslaved stone mason ancestors, James and Alfred Robinson, sons of



Relocating the Ben Lomond Slave Quarter, ca 1980

his grandfather, Jim Robinson. Momentum continued to build. A June 14 article reported growing efforts to secure funding before an impending deadline. Mrs. William Flory urged the Prince William County Historic Commission and the County Park Authority to persuade the Board of County Supervisors to contribute at least \$5,000 as a demonstration of good faith that might encourage private donations. Others argued that the County should provide the entire \$25,000 needed to move the building.

These appeals produced little immediate action. Historic Commission Chairman Don Curtis met with County Executive Robert Noe but achieved no apparent results. Undeterred, Shirley Houchin, liaison between the Prince William County Planning Department and the Historic Commission, and Historic Commission member, Ray Luce, took a more active role

in the preservation effort. Their determination, coupled with growing public support, began to make a difference. Local citizens contributed funds, including Harry French, Deputy Director of Administration for the County Park Authority, who donated \$300.

Plans called for moving the structure either to the Ben Lomond Community Center across Sudley Manor Drive or to a site closer to the Ben Lomond farmhouse, west of its original location. The latter option was ultimately selected. Through the combined efforts of preservation advocates and concerned citizens, the necessary funds were raised just in time. The building was saved only narrowly, with photographs published in November showing church bulldozers positioned alarmingly close to the structure.

Finally in January 1980, the stone building was relocated approximately 1,000 feet to its present location. Today, thanks to the dedication of these determined individuals—and many others whose names have been lost to history—the Ben Lomond Slave Quarter survives as one of the few original slave dwellings open to the public, serving as a powerful reminder of the lives and labor of the enslaved people who helped build Prince William County.

David Born
Historic Interpreter
Ben Lomond Historic Site



History Corner

Prince William County's Role in the Beltway Sniper Cases

For three weeks in October 2002, residents of the DC metropolitan area experienced a series of random shootings that became known as “the Beltway Sniper” attacks. The investigation of these attacks ultimately led to the capture and conviction of two men, John Allen Muhammed and Lee Boyd Malvo.

While these events are recent memories for many, they are now a part of history. The residents who lived through this remember it vividly; however, even those who experienced it may not know the full extent of the role Prince William County played. The Office of Historic Preservation has recently worked to document more contemporary history like the Beltway Sniper cases through oral histories and recorded lectures. The recollections gathered from these sources help to reconstruct the events from 23 years ago, ensuring that they are not forgotten.

At a panel during the recent Annual Prince William/Manassas History Symposium, moderator Sharon Pandak opened the program by asking the audience a profound question:

“As we begin, I want to ask you, how many of you stopped for gas this week? When you stopped, how many of you worried about your safety as you used the pump more than the cost per gallon?”

In October 2002, personal safety was an ever-present concern for local residents. The attacks occurred across the DC



Map of the location of the Prince William County shooting, courtesy of Charlie Deane.

region, and the snipers targeted victims doing everyday activities, such as mowing their grass, pumping gas, or reading a book on a public bench. As Judge James Willett recalled at the Symposium panel, “these were folks just like you and me. They were randomly selected. They weren’t selected because they were involved in the criminal element of society. They were selected because they were at a gas pump at the wrong time.”

The shootings occurred in Maryland, Washington, D.C., and across northern Virginia. On October 9th, 53-year-old Dean Harold Meyers was shot and killed in Prince William County at a Sunoco gas station on Sudley Road. While the county’s law enforcement

had already been involved in the investigation, this shooting cemented its role in the effort to capture the perpetrators. In his oral history, retired Police Chief Charlie Deane recalled the county’s involvement in the task force:

“Once we saw they were going on around the region, we knew that there was a high risk of we could have one because they were happening near interstate highways, etcetera. So, we put someone on the task force. I talked to the other chiefs every day. We had investigative levels talking each day about what new information—had maps in my office. Every day we would analyze what had happened the day before. Tried to gather all the information we could and then

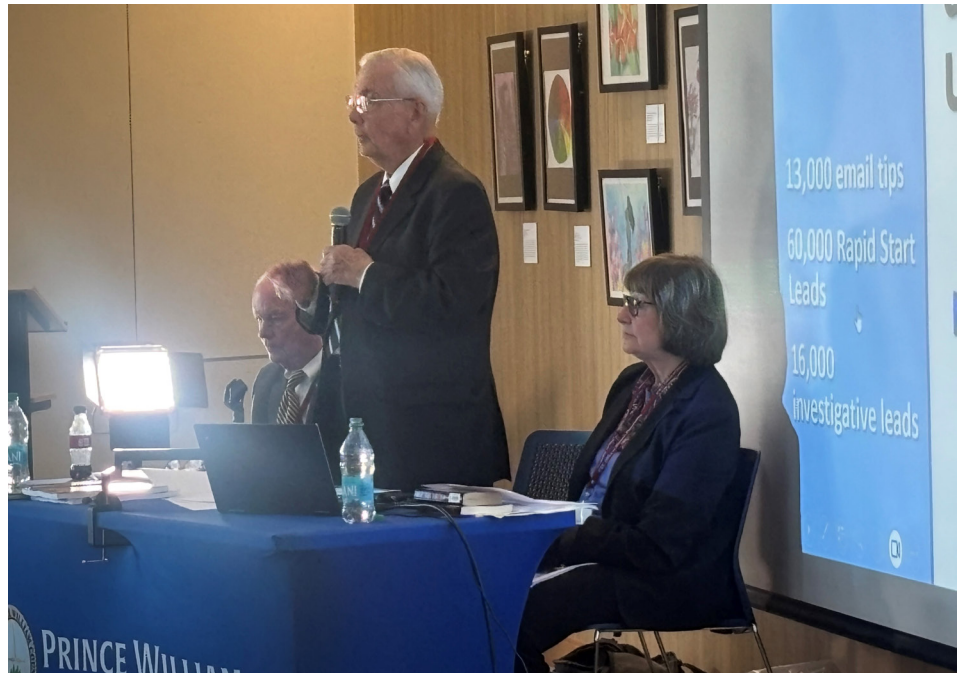
prepare for—well if it happens here this is how we're gonna handle it. So, when I got the call that evening that this—our shooting had happened, I already knew exactly what I was gonna order to be done.”

On October 24, 2002, after killing ten people in the October attacks, John Allen Muhammed and Lee Boyd Malvo were apprehended at a rest stop in Maryland. In 2023, former Prince William County Commonwealth's Attorney Paul Ebert recorded an oral history and spoke about the attacks:

“... I knew, when Meyers was killed, if the case was assigned to me, I knew it was going to be a long hard fight...But, people were scared to death, and the chances of getting hit by a car were greater than them shooting you but knowing that someone is out there at random shooting people, killing them purposefully rather than accidentally was very concerning to people. A lot of people wouldn't go to the store it changed their whole life. The night that they caught the snipers, that was a big night.”

Paul Ebert was selected as the prosecutor for the criminal case against John Allen Muhammed, both because of the killing with his jurisdiction, as well as his reputation as an experienced prosecutor in felony cases. Ebert was also known for seeking the death penalty. He noted this reputation in his interview:

“Well and I don't take any pride in it. It just, like I said, I feel in a lot of cases that qualify as death cases that are not prosecuted. But the ones that I did prosecute, those were the ones that were unusual or more violent. You didn't hear much argument about



Charlie Deane speaking at a panel at the Annual Prince William/Manassas Symposium.

Muhammed in not being entitled, in deserving of the death penalty.”

John Allen Muhammed was found guilty and was executed in 2009. His accomplice, Lee Boyd Malvo, was also found guilty and is serving multiple life sentences.

Prince William County was the location for Dean Meyer's shooting, and members of the County's law enforcement and Commonwealth's Attorney's office played an integral part in the criminal investigation and prosecution of the snipers. Through Ebert's efforts, the County was also the setting of an important gathering. At the Symposium panel, James Willett recalled this meeting:

“And when the case was over and we came back to Prince William, Paul decided he was going to get the victims of all these people together in Prince William and to answer any questions that that they had about the prosecution, about what would happen going forward with

appeals and things like that. And so they all came down to Prince William County, and we got in a courtroom in circuit court and there were probably 70 people there and they were just like us. There were 70 people there, all different backgrounds, all different races, all different ages, all different occupations. None of them were anything other than ordinary folks. and they were somewhat still in shock about what had happened to their loved ones, but they were also very grateful for how the law enforcement authorities handled the cases and that that apprehension was made and justice was served.”

The recorded memories of the essential people involved in this case humanize these events, prioritizing the remembrance of the victims who lost their lives over two decades ago.

Lauren Maloy
Historic Communities Coordinator

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Preservation Happenings

History Beyond Museum Walls: The Traveling Exhibits of Prince William County



While Prince William County is home to a spectacular array of permanent historic sites, ranging from the colonial halls of Rippon Lodge to the Civil War field hospital at Ben Lomond, the county's rich heritage is not confined behind brick and mortar. Recognizing that many residents, civic groups, and classrooms cannot make the trek to these physical locations, the Office of Historic Preservation has developed a dynamic lineup of Traveling Exhibits. These highly portable, professionally curated panel displays are designed to bring local history directly into the community. They reflect a modern approach to making the past accessible.

A primary focus of our traveling exhibit catalog is to elevate

diverse historical perspectives. One exhibit highlights the profound contributions and resilience of local the historic African American community of Thoroughfare. This exhibit traces the post-Civil War journey of free-born and formerly enslaved African Americans who established a thriving, tight-knit community near the Bull Run Mountains. Through deep genealogical research, maps, and oral histories, it explores the people, homes, and burial grounds that continue to define Thoroughfare today.

OHP's newest traveling exhibit highlights the history of the Batestown community. Located in eastern Prince William County, Batestown is a historic African American community established in the 19th century. Although large

portions of the community were incorporated into Prince William Forest Park in the 1940s, sections of the community survive today.

In celebration of the 250th anniversary of America's founding, OHP is currently working on a traveling exhibit focusing on how the American Revolution impacted five local residents ranging from children to adults, men and women, free and enslaved, soldiers and civilians, Patriots and Loyalists. This exhibit will be available towards the end of 2026. For more information on our traveling exhibits, including how you can host one, please visit our website at: www.pwcva.gov/department/historic-preservation/collections-and-exhibits.

Bill Backus
Preservationist/Curator



HPD News



On June 13th, Lance Russell and Nate McDonald represented the Prince William County Office of Historic Preservation at the City of Alexandria's Sails on the Potomac Event to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution.



Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre has a new summer intern, Arlie Munday. A rising Junior at William & Mary, over the course of the summer, Arlie will be assisting staff with the creation of traveling Brentsville program that will take civics and the history of Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre into the classroom

through multimedia and interactive activities.

"My name is Arlie Munday. I am currently majoring in Government and Environmental Policy at the College of William & Mary, and this fall I will begin my Junior year. At college, my special interests consist of constitutional law and American environmental law. I believe that to understand the law, you must understand the history that has shaped it into what it is today. To that end, I am excited to intern with the Brentsville Historic Courthouse Centre to learn more about the history of the American legal system. I hope to take this experience with me as I progress through college and eventually attend law school."

Rob Orrison attended the United States Army War College National Security Seminar June 1-5th. The course is a chance for civilians to work with college students (all officers in the US Army) on security challenges facing the country that impact local communities with a focus on leadership techniques.

"Hi! My name is Devan Waghray. I study history at William & Mary and am going into my junior year. I started volunteering at Ben Lomond during my sophomore year of high school. While it was a requirement for school, it was an easy choice to make. I'd always driven past the site but never thought about



exploring something practically in my own backyard. Once I realized what I was missing out on, I knew what I had to do. I've always loved museums and hiking through battlefield parks, so the chance to volunteer at a historic site, especially one connected to the Battle of Bull Run, was especially exciting. I vividly remember my first task of transcribing administrative records from the 'General Hospital' at the Pringle House in the summer of 1861, inspecting every letter and asking questions about every medical term I came across but didn't know. I'm proud to say that those transcriptions are now on display for tour groups. I later started working at the Bristoe Station Battlefield, volunteering on Park Day, helping kids in summer camps, and any work I could assist with. Currently, I'm developing a temporary exhibit for Ben Lomond's parlor to expand the scope of the site's interpretation.

Over the following weeks of my internship, I'm thrilled to get acquainted with the field of public history. I've always wanted to share my love of history with other people, so naturally, historical interpretation appeals to me greatly. Yet I also value the opportunity to work behind the scenes developing new exhibits and researching Prince William County's history. While I appreciate this time deepening my own knowledge, expertise, and passion for history, I am ultimately most excited for the change I can enact in my community."



This summer, the Office of Historic Preservation is hosting an intern to begin an ongoing oral history project. Marcella Circle is a rising Junior at William and Mary, a history and government major with a special interest in local government, and this summer she will focus on interviewing Vietnam

War veterans in Prince William County. The project is inspired by informal discussions between veterans on Prince William County's Historical Commission, and recorded interviews will also be filed at the Library of Congress through the Veteran's History Project.

Fritz Korzendorfer retired from service with the Prince William County Office of Historic Preservation. He had been with the county for nearly 20 years. He was involved in much of the preservation work we have accomplished in the county. He will be sorely missed.

In Early June, students from Colgan Highschool worked with staff to create and film an America 250th video series of featuring our historic sites. Stay tuned for these videos to be published on our YouTube channel over the summer!

Dan Goldstein

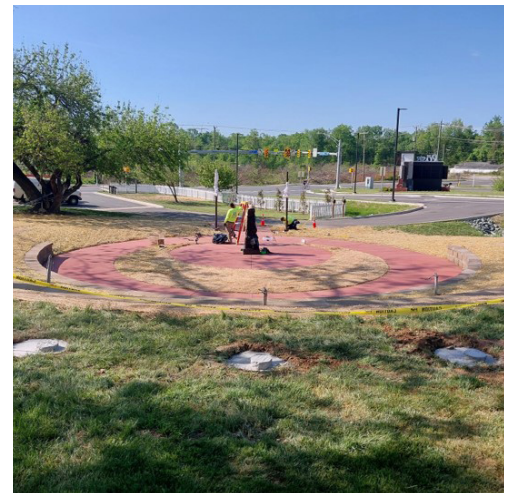
Rippon Lodge Historic Site Manager Jessica Maria Alicea completed the Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail orientation program with the National Park Service and was approved as an official Trail leader and received an official limited edition trail pin in recognition.

Foundation Update

Revolutionary War Memorial Update

Thanks to a private-public partnership between Prince William County, the Prince William Historic Preservation Foundation, local history enthusiasts, and community supporters, the Revolutionary War memorial is nearing completion at Williams Ordinary. Construction started in April 2026 with the installation of the obelisk and the concrete walkways around it. Landscaping and lighting were installed in May. The final phase will be the installation of interpretative markers around the site. The memorial will be officially dedicated and opened to the public on Saturday, August 8 at 4:00 pm. This is just one of many examples of projects supported by the Prince William Historic Preservation Foundation. To learn more about our other current projects and to donate, visit www.preservepw.org.

Bill Backus, Preservationist/Curator



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