

OHS QUARTERLY

OCOQUAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY (OHS)

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- “Ogle Harris Way” Dedication
- OHS/Museum Year End Report
- Annual Meeting and Membership Renewal
- Expanding Mill House Museum Family
- Design a New Postcard for the Museum

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Annual Meeting and Membership Renewal	2
Expanding Mill House Museum Family	2
Design a New Post Card for the Museum	3
Web Site Redesign	3
Ogle Harris Way Resolution and Flyer	4
OHS Information	4

“ O G L E H A R R I S W A Y ” D E D I C A T I O N

On Saturday, June 29, the Town of Occoquan held a ceremony formally assigning the 100 block of Poplar Alley the honorary designation, “Ogle Harris Way” in honor of the contributions of the late Ogle Harris and his family to the town of Occoquan.

In the early years of the 20th century, Ogle Harris began a business out of his home at 204 Washington Street, which by the end of the century’s second decade had become one of Occoquan’s main grocery stores, selling meat, fresh produce, fishing tackle, sodas, candy, and sundry other goods. Through his marriages to Coral L. Peyton and Lottie Bowles, Mr.

Harris helped raise seven children in Occoquan. His store became an Occoquan institution and a cornerstone of the town’s commercial and African



Ogle Harris descendants and extended family at the dedication of “Ogle Harris Way.”

-American communities, remaining so after his passing in 1949 under the auspices of his son Arthur and his daughter-in-law Doris, until it formally

closed in 1974. The ceremony, which was attended by several local elected officials and Harris family relatives from as far away as Kentucky, included remarks by Occoquan Mayor Earnie Porta, a musical selection by family member Tamika Joy, recollections by members of the extended family, and the presentation of resolutions from the town of Occoquan and Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger honoring Ogle Harris and his descendants. Historic photographs of Ogle Harris and members of the family are on display in the Occoquan Historical Society’s Mill House Museum.

O H S / M U S E U M Y E A R E N D R E P O R T

Thanks to the return of a normal operating schedule, increased profits at the Mill House Museum, and some generous donations from supporters, the Occoquan Historical Society finished its fiscal year ending June 30 better than projected, with a modest deficit of approximately

\$3,400.

Among the particularly generous donors were Occoquan VFW Post 7916, which thanks to the efforts of board member Bob Love, contributed \$5,000, and long-time supporter, Letty Lynn, who contributed more than \$3,000 for the fiscal year. Donations at the muse-

um itself also totaled almost \$3,400. Of course, the Mill House Museum also continued to received more than \$7,000 of support from Prince William County.

During FY 2024 the museum welcomed 18,201 visitors, which is a significant increase over the last two fiscal years that were completed

YEAR END REPORT (CONT'D)

when open at least 23 days per month. Analysis of museum operations suggests several potential reasons for this upward trend, including posting a second docent outside during peak times with a children's activities table, particularly during November and December; staying open during most federal holidays, and; small adjustments such as increased use of a "touch" table outside and simply

leaving the door open more often. Of course, some of the upswing is also likely due to a post-COVID, society-wide boost in tourism activity.

Acting Museum Administrator, Zoe Vitter, continues to analyze visitation and sales data, and has implemented a strategy of more strategic openings and closings, which in general involve expanded hours during periods of heavy pedestrian activity (e.g., during town events) and reduced hours

during very low activity periods (e.g., January and bad weather days). These will be refined as more data is gathered.

As with operating hours, the museum has also been analyzing and experimenting with sales offerings, their display, and pricing. Net profits on sales for FY 2024 totaled almost \$2,300. The highest profit margins are associated with the 22 books we have for sale, with a particular boost this year from board member

Earnie Porta's new book from the History Press, "Hurricane Agnes in Virginia," which also spurred increased interest in his earlier work, "Images of America: Occoquan." Other good sellers include "Lorton Prisons" and "Haunted Prince William." Toys and miscellaneous make up about 15% of museum sales and staff have been reevaluating the best suppliers for such items.

On the whole all the trends are positive.

ANNUAL MEETING AND MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

The Occoquan Historical Society (OHS) held its annual membership meeting on June 6 at the Occoquan Town Hall. At the annual meeting the following individuals were elected to the OHS Board of Directors for 2-year terms: Merial Currer, Dolores Elder, Bobbie Frank, Robert Love, Earnie Porta, Marge Shaffer, and Zoe Vitter. Board members will elect officers from among

their number at a future board of directors meeting.

With the start of the new fiscal year it is also time to renew membership in the Occoquan Historical Society. OHS has 4 tiers of membership, all of which come with voting rights at the annual meeting. These tiers consist of: Individual (\$20); Family (\$30); Student (\$10), and; History Enthusiast/Organization (\$500).

We know that the benefits of membership at this time generally consist of the knowledge that you are supporting a good cause, but we hope over the coming year to develop a few more perks. In the meantime, we hope you will continue to support us as you have in the past and encourage others to do so.

The easiest way to join or renew your membership is to go to our web site at

www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org and do so there online. However, if you are more comfortable doing so via mail and check, simply make a check out to the "Occoquan Historical Society" and send it to Box 65, Occoquan, VA 22125.

Please do include your email address somewhere, as that is the primary means by which we communicate now.

EXPANDING MILL HOUSE MUSEUM FAMILY

We are very pleased to report that staff member Olivia McDaniel and her husband, Cameron, welcomed their new son, Bram, on April 30th.

Bram is Olivia and Cameron's first child, and Olivia reports that he is strong and healthy and growing

exponentially every day.

The photo at right shows Bram last week, working on expanding his visual literacy, an important skill for museum docents to have.

Please join all of us in congratulating Olivia and Cameron on the new addition to their family and ours!



DESIGN A NEW POSTCARD FOR THE MUSEUM

Stop by the Mill House Museum this summer and help us design a new postcard. While at the museum, you can view historic postcards of Occoquan and draw your own design or submit something that you have made on your own.

Entries can be any medium (e.g., pencil, crayon, paint, photograph, scan, etc.), but should be no larger than 4"x6". Please include your name and email address.

You can also email entries to millhousemuseum@gmail.com or send them in hard copy to our address, Box 65, Occoquan, VA 22125. The last day to submit an entry is September 2, 2024 (Labor Day) and there is no limit on the number of entries you may submit.

Final products shall be the property of the Occoquan Historical Society, but all art work will be credited to the name provided at submission.



WEB SITE REDESIGN



The Occoquan Historical Society's web site redesign is completed. Although we will continually be adding new information, we think the new design is more user-friendly and attractive and hope you think so as well. You can find our web site at www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org.

OCCOQUAN EVENTS

As noted in our last issue, the town of Occoquan holds events 11 months of the year (January is the only exception) and often has multiple events a month. Among the largest during the past quarter of the fiscal year was the town's RiverFest & Craft Show. The excellent weather contribut-

ed to one of the most successful shows in recent memory. The town had a record number of vendors in terms of the last 15 years or more, and OHS had a presence both at the Mill House Museum and at a separate vendor booth.

Participation in major

events like this has enabled us to improve donations and sales results, as well as increase exposure to a wide range of people visiting town. If you were not able to attend, we hope that you will consider visiting us during the fall Arts & Crafts Show the last weekend in September.



TOWN RESOLUTION & FLYER ON OGLE HARRIS WAY

TOWN OF OCCOQUAN, VIRGINIA
RESOLUTION R-2024-05

RESOLUTION TO ASSIGN THE 100 BLOCK OF POPLAR ALLEY
THE HONORARY DESIGNATION "OGLE HARRIS WAY"
IN APPRECIATION AND RECOGNITION OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF
OGLE HARRIS AND HIS FAMILY TO THE HISTORY OF OCCOQUAN

WHEREAS, Ogle Taylor Harris was born on or about December 23, 1872, one of five children (one of whom predeceased Ogle's birth) of Arthur and Harriet Harris; and

WHEREAS, from his marriages to Cora L. Peyton and Lottie Bowles, he helped raise seven children in Occoquan; and

WHEREAS, in the early years of the 20th century, he began a business at his residence at 204 Washington Street, selling handmade ice cream out of his home's summer kitchen and at the African-American Odd Fellows Hall that was adjacent to what is now Poplar Alley; and

WHEREAS, upon building a new home for his family at the corner of Washington and Commerce Streets, he converted 204 Washington Street into a store that expanded from the original ice cream business into one of Occoquan's two full-fledged grocery stores, selling meat, fresh produce, fishing tackle, sodas, candy, and sundry other goods, obtaining a Prince William County business license as early as 1918; and

WHEREAS, well known for his honesty and generosity his store became a thriving enterprise patronized by citizens of Occoquan and the surrounding Prince William County area alike; and

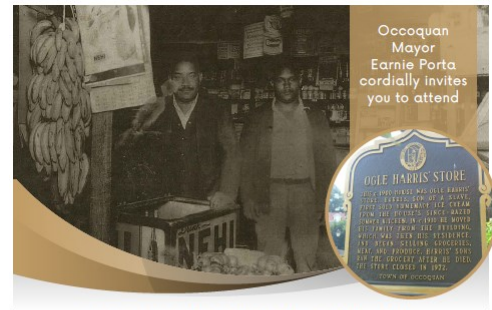
WHEREAS, upon his death on March 14, 1949, his store was run successively by his son Arthur and his daughter-in-law Doris until it formally closed in 1974; and

WHEREAS, his store served as the cornerstone of Occoquan's African-American commercial community for much of the 20th century, contributing in numerous ways to the vibrancy, continuity, and success of the Town of Occoquan; and

WHEREAS, in appreciation for the contribution to Occoquan's history of Ogle Taylor Harris and his descendants and relatives, some of whom continue to live in or visit the town;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Occoquan Town Council hereby assigns the honorary designation of "Ogle Harris Way" to the 100 block of Poplar Alley and on behalf of the entire Occoquan community expresses its appreciation to the Harris Family for their invaluable historical contributions to our community.

Adopted by the Town Council of the Town of Occoquan, Virginia this 18th Day of June, 2024.



OGLE HARRIS WAY DEDICATION

Ten o'clock in the morning on Saturday, June 29th, the 100 block of Poplar Alley will receive the honorary designation "Ogle Harris Way" in honor of the contributions of Ogle Harris and his family to the Occoquan community.

29 June 2024 | Washington St and Poplar Alley

OCCOQUAN, VIRGINIA



Occoquan Historical Society

MILL HOUSE MUSEUM

413 Mill Street,
PO Box 65
Occoquan, VA 22125

Free Admission

Open Thursday thru Tuesday
11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

millhousemuseum@gmail.com
www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org

The Occoquan Historical Society (OHS) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization founded in 1969 and dedicated to telling the story of the town of Occoquan, Virginia.

OHS operates the Mill House Museum, an historic structure containing an eclectic collection of documents, photographs, and other artifacts related to the town's history. Over 400 items are catalogued and many of these are on permanent display. Admission to the museum is free Thursday through Tuesday weekly from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. We hope you will consider dropping by.