

OHS NEWS

OCOQUAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY (OHS)

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Occoquan Historical Society Relaunches Regular Newsletter
- Museum Open 6 Days a Week
- Help Us Name Our Newsletter
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OHS RELAUNCHES NEWSLETTER (HELP US NAME IT)

MUSEUM OPEN SIX DAYS A WEEK

Happy 2024 and welcome to the relaunch of the Occoquan Historical Society's regular newsletter! As you are likely aware, the last several years have been difficult ones for the historical society. Thanks to the perseverance of many, however, the Society's Mill House Museum made it through a period of complete closure during 2020 and partial reopening through 2022. Since May of 2023, the museum has been open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., six days a week, Thursday through Tuesday.

The decision to remain closed on Wednesdays was made after reviewing visitor statistics for the most recent years prior to

2020. That examination revealed that Wednesdays welcomed the fewest number of visitors to the museum and



Mill House Museum at 413 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA

was thus a logical time to remain closed.

It has been a number of years since we last published our

newsletter and we would like to involve you in the process by asking you to help us name it.

Think about things related to Occoquan's history, the Mill House, or something else that you think is relevant and come up with a catchy name for the newsletter. Submit your ideas by email to mill-housemuseum@gmail.com (no hyphen) and use the subject line "OHS Newsletter Name."

If your submission is selected we will take some time to feature a little bit about you in a future edition. We look forward to seeing your suggestions.

MUSEUM ACTIVITIES

Starting in the fall of 2023, we've been experimenting with ways to increase our interactions with the public. These include staying open late, increasing the staffing, and expanding outside the walls of our small museum, specifically when the town is likely to have

more foot traffic. So far this has included town festivals and events like this day in the photo on the right during HolidayFest, and selected weekday evenings and holidays when the weather is pleasant.

Following the example of larger museums today, we have



MUSEUM ACTIVITIES (CONT'D)

also been trying out multi-sensory interactive methods to engage potential guests.

One activity we tried this fall, for example, was leaf rubbing. Rubbings are an ancient, low-cost practice used by historians and other scientist to capture a quick view of things that might not be visible to the naked eye.

For our project we used fallen leaves from native local trees for our rubbings. Thus,

children made art while learning about history and the environment, as well as color and texture, in a way that did not require language skills in order to understand and enjoy.

Like all good experiments, not everything we tried was a roaring success, but we have learned from our experiences.

In unambiguously good news, during the second half of 2023 we welcomed nearly 10,000 visitors, grossed \$2,500 in

sales and received about \$3,000 in donations.

As we continue to move forward, please consider joining as a member or renewing your membership during our June membership drive, or perhaps volunteer to help during a town event or in another way.

Of course, donations are also always welcome. Both joining or making a donation may be done electronically on our website. The web address is

www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org.

Historic Occoquan, Inc. (our original name) opened the Mill House Museum to guests more than 50 years ago and we are looking forward to the day, decades from now, when the youth of today will celebrate our 100th anniversary. Please consider ways that you can help make that happen.

MUSEUM STAFFING

Over the last several years we have said goodbye to some Occoquan Mill House Museum staff and welcomed some new faces. Presently, when you visit, you will be greeted by one of our regular staff members.

Jim Harvey has a background in ministry and education with a focus on children. He has worked at the Mill House Museum since

2018 and is the husband of staff member Nancy Harvey.

Nancy Harvey worked in the medical field for many years in addition to assisting Jim in his various endeavors. She and Jim raised their family in Prince William County, where they have made their home for 40 years.

Zoe Melpolder has a professional and volunteer background in education, public

policy, and the environment. She has been an active member of the PWC community for more than 20 years.

Bill Grant, who has had a lifelong love of history was convinced to take another professional path when he was young. Now that he is retired, there's no stopping him at the Mill House Museum!

Olivia McDaniel is new to

PWC and has loved learning about, and sharing with visitors, the rich history of this area. She has a Masters of Arts in History from the University of North Alabama.

We want to give a special thanks to Marge Noel and Jim Harvey who kept our museum open on weekends throughout 2022.

INSIDE THE MUSEUM

If you have not visited in some time, you will notice that some items in the museum have shifted around, and some items that may be new to you have been put on display.

Many of you are familiar with the Liberty Pole incident (and some of you may

have participated in the 2007 re-enactment!) As you can see from the photograph on the right, we currently have the replica banner and prints from the 150th year commemoration of that event on display. The bright, easy to see images provoke thoughtful questions and conversa-

tions from people of all ages and backgrounds.

Another example is an invitation for people to touch some items. These additional "Please Touch Tables" can be used inside or outside, depending on the day, and we try to incorporate new items throughout



INSIDE THE MUSEUM (CONT'D)

the year. Although the tables (a photograph of one is on the right) and open-ended questions are geared toward children, people of all ages are drawn to and handle the items.

Over the past several months we have been rearranging many of the exhibits in the Mill House Museum. At the moment, space limitations hinder us from being able to do a purely chronological presentation, so for

the moment we have been reorganizing artifacts on a thematic basis, while simultaneously attempting to increasingly display copies of interesting documents in the collection while ensuring that they are adequately protected from damage. We have also refreshed the history exhibit space in Town Hall.

So, at the museum you may not only notice some changes, but we hope you will visit regularly and notice something new.



WEB SITE REDESIGN



We are currently working on a major redesign of the OHS web site. Until that redesign is done, you can still find all the information about the Historical Society, the Mill House Museum, and how to join and/or donate at www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org. To the left you can get an advance glimpse of the planned new web site home page.

OCOCOQUAN EVENTS

The town of Occoquan holds events 11 months of the year (January is the only exception) and often has multiple events a month. During the last week of March the town held its annual "Occoquan Peep Show." This is an annual spring event in town that features both a business

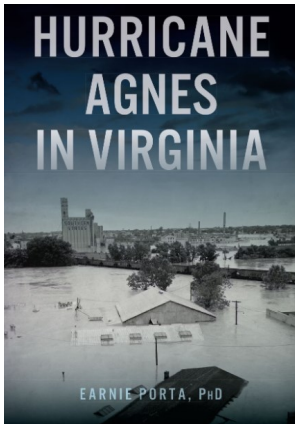
and community peeps diorama competition.

With the spring the town will host a river cleanup, trivia nights in River Mill Park, and its annual spring Riverfest and Craft Show. During the last there will be the second annual "Whatever Floats Your Boat Parade"

where contestants decorate any non-motorized craft (e.g. kayak, canoe, paddleboard), the annual Duck Splash Race, the now-annual island-naming competition, and a few historic surprises. We hope you will consider visiting the museum during one of these town events.



NEW BOOK INCLUDES OCCOQUAN



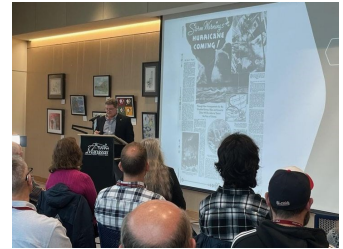
On April 1 The History Press released a new book by OHS Board Member, Earnie Porta, PhD. The book, entitled "Hurricane Agnes in Virginia," explains the history and science of hurricanes and recounts the devastation Agnes caused throughout much of the commonwealth of Virginia during the third week of June, 1972.

Along with Richmond, northern Virginia (including Prince William County) was especially hard hit and the book contains

a good deal of detail on the devastation in the town of Occoquan and elsewhere in Prince William County.

The Occoquan Historical Society was able to secure advance copies to sell at the March 23 annual Prince William History Symposium where Dr. Porta was one of the speakers.

Copies are available for sale at the museum as well as online and at other locations.



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

Occoquan Historical Society

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.