

Mill House Monthly *March, 2018*

A Publication of the Occoquan Historical Society

Golden Goose

Google Definition for Landmark:

1. An object or feature of a landscape or town that is easily seen and recognized from a distance, especially one that enables someone to establish their location.
2. An event, discovery or change marking an important stage or turning point in something.

After 42 years both definitions of the word landmark apply to 302 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA, the site of the Golden Goose shop from November 1, 1976 until February 24, 2018, owned and operated by Pat Bowen and LaVerne Carson. The anchor solidly placed at the corner of the building and the yardarm where the business sign hung for all those years, both are landmarks of Occoquan. That it is an important event that the shop is now closed is unquestionable.

We've lost some wonderful Occoquan establishments in 2017 & now 2018, but none more recognizable or loved by so many. At the Mill House Museum I will often mention that we aren't telling the story of the items in the collection but the story of the people those items belonged to. That applies to a well loved shop like the Golden Goose. While we all love the magic of Christmas that was featured year round at the Golden Goose it was the ladies who brought the magic to life.

At the retirement dinner hosted by LaVerne's family, story after story was told about LaVerne and Pat and how they nurtured and encouraged the women who worked for them and around them over the years. Finish school, surround yourself with quality people and embrace your family were a constant mantra.



LaVerne Carson was elected to the Occoquan Town Council in 1986, served on the Architectural Review Board from 1986-1989 and elected mayor in 1990 and 1992. Her service to Occoquan included many years as president of the Business Guild.

Most recently LaVerne worked to keep our Prince William County Visitors Center open. At exit 160 off of I-95, Occoquan is a gateway into PWC. The center has been located in Occoquan since 1988. LaVerne attended countless meetings related to the visitor center. Reaching out to local residents and friends, she recruited some wonderful volunteers to keep the visitor center open during a time when the center's continuing operation was in question.

Remembered as owners of the Golden Goose, LaVerne and Pat also owned and managed the Country Kitchen from March 20, 1976, located at 404 Mill Street until 1990 when Shara and Marie Claire Kundu purchased the property and opened the Garden Kitchen.

So we say goodbye to a landmark, thank these ladies for all their service to the town we love, and wish them a well deserved R&R.



Pat Bowen & LaVerne Carson
Closing the doors of the Golden Goose
February 24, 2018

Adopt a Historic Marker Program

The Town of Occoquan's, March, 2018 newsletter thanked OHS Board Member, Bobbie Frank, for adopting the historic marker in front of Town Hall and donating the funds to have it restored.

There are a total of 14 black and gold historic markers through town. The cost to ship and restore a marker is \$750. (\$900 if a picture on a marker needs to be replaced.)



These markers help tell the story of Occoquan to residents and visitors alike.

OHS paid for the restoration of the marker located by the corner of the Mill House. There are still 12 markers that are faded and badly in need of restoration. Please consider adopting one of these signs. The list and information pertaining to the program can be found at www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org

Off to Wales!

Crystal Alavez came to the Mill House as a volunteer in the spring of 2016 and helped us record much of our collection into our Past Perfect software program. "Crystal, can you help me at the craft shows and during Winterfest?" The answer was always yes! Holding a full time job, Crystal also filled in as an employee when our staffing required it.

This fall Crystal will be starting a new adventure at the University of Aberystwyth, in Wales. There Crystal will work on a program of study that will earn her an MA in Archive Administration. Congratulations Crystal and we wish you the best in your future!



Here Crystal demonstrates a craft for a group of children during Winterfest, 2017.

Scanning Project

OHS Board Member, Boyd Alexander, recently took on a huge scanning project for us. Scrapbooks were kept since the organization of Historic Occoquan Inc. (now The Occoquan Historical Society) in 1969, through the early 1990's. Much of the scrapbook contents are newspaper articles. The best way to preserve the history of these newspaper articles is to scan them and save them digitally. Boyd has been spending countless hours on this project. Thank you Boyd! Look for a selection of these articles relating to the June 22, 1972 flood that resulted from Hurricane Agnes to appear on our www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org web site in the future. Below are sections of an article celebrating Occoquan's 100th birthday. The article is undated but the town was incorporated in 1874. Many articles in the

scrapbooks were from the "Washington Post" and the now defunct "Potomac News".

Occoquan town 100 tomorrow

By ANN HOLIDAY

Water has been the life—and once was feared to be the death—of Occoquan, the pocket of Victoriana on the Occoquan River which celebrates its 100th year as a town tomorrow.

Occoquan's roots go back more than 100 years before its incorporation in 1874. The streets were platted in 1804, and the first buildings were erected in the 1750's when Occoquan was one of several towns being established along the Potomac River and its tributaries.

Boat and barge traffic carried trade to and from Occoquan, and the town boasted several mills during its early years. The business office of one mill still stands, and is now a museum in which Historic Occoquan, Inc. stores and displays relics of the town's past.

The other early building is Rockledge, the old stone house on a ledge above the Mill House, built in 1758 and now being restored by Don Sonner, owner of Blackbeard's Inn.

Commerce was lively in the late 1700's and early 1800's, until the shifting river bottom threatened to cut off passage completely. A move on the part of the businessmen to dredge a channel never came to pass.

However, the town's shops and stores served the people of Occoquan and

surrounding area. Woodbridge became a railroad stop in the late 1800's, but Occoquan had the grocery stores, hardware stores, lumber yards, and the other shops which served the scattered farms and homes outside the town.

The town continued to grow until the fire of 1916, which burned 22 buildings and threatened to wipe Occoquan from the map. Before the fire, the town had two grist mills, two hotels, three bars, a small manufacturing shop, a theatre, a drug store and Lynn's General Store.

Only a few buildings were saved, but Lynn's Store rebuilt at its present location and the town began to grow again.

Lynn's Store remains. Another grocery store, operated for more than 55 years by Ogle Harris and his family, closed this year. At one time, both stores did a thriving business, but the automobile and the supermarket spelled the end of the grocer store in Occoquan.

Ogle Harris and Son had been open only in the summer during the past few years existing on soda pop, penny candy and fishing supplies. Lynn's Store still has its butcher's block where chunks of cheese will be cut to order, but hunting and fish supplies take up far more space than

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Town's changing scene

— Continued from Page B-1
groceries.

Lynn's Store came close to being destroyed by water in 1972, as tropical storm Agnes inundated the riverfront area of the town and brought torrents of water down Union Street from the hills above.

Most of the town's businesses were damaged; some never came back. Water covered much of Mill Street, where boats and caskets floated free from the marina and the funeral home.

Two mornings later, a large contingent of Lake Ridge residents marched into town to help clean up and the merchants began gearing up to go back into business.

Now the town is back stronger than ever, with more shops than before and a highly successful craft show having taken place on its sidewalks Saturday and Sunday.

The flood brought an end to one controversy which had raged from the time the Highway Department announced plans to replace the one-land iron truss bridge at one end of town with a high, four-lane bridge crossing over the other end of Occoquan.

The old bridge had been there for 94 years

when it was swept away by the flood. Before the bridge was built, a ferry boat carried Route 1 travelers over the Occoquan River. Route 1 was later rerouted through Woodbridge.

Now the water which helped create and almost destroyed the town is used mainly by boaters, fishermen and barges from the quarry, whose blasting still annoys town residents.

The quarry was another rallying point for town activities, who appeared month after month at meetings of the Fairfax County Board of Zoning Appeals attempting to stop renewal of the quarry's use permit in 1972. The town scored a partial success in having a number of limitations put on the quarry's operations.

Occoquan enters its second century as a quiet residential town, an oasis of Victorian buildings and usually-quiet streets in the midst of suburbia. It is this atmosphere which has attracted numerous sightseers every weekend and which encourages the small shops which now form the core of the business community.

Birthday party!

Country music will fill the air and shopkeepers will be garbed in long dresses to help Occoquan celebrate its centennial tomorrow.

A variety of crafts will be demonstrated around the center of the day's activities, the vacant lot next to the Town Hall. The festivities will last from 12:30 to 5:30 p.m.

A flea market, free pony cart and hayrides and tours of the Mill House Museum and Rockledge will be offered by Historic Occoquan, Inc., sponsors of the celebration.

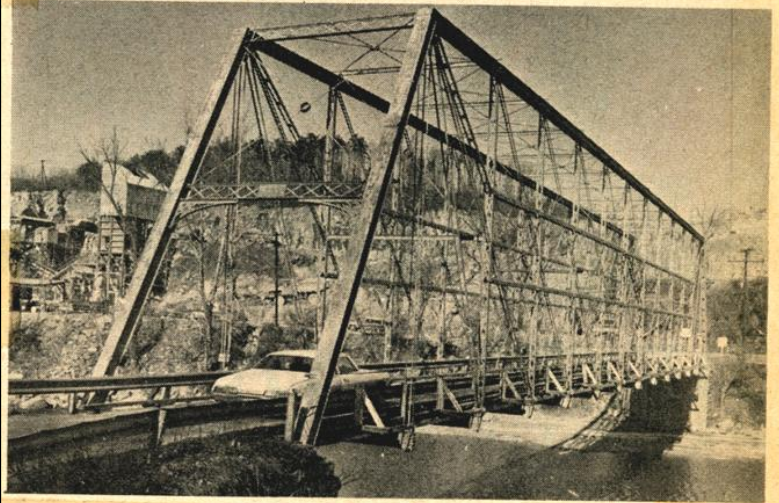
Mayor H. L. Mooney will deliver brief remarks on the past and future of the town at 3 p.m.

Hot dogs, cole slaw, coffee and soft drinks will be

available during the day.

The Woodbridge High School Band, by a vote of its members, has scheduled a visit to the festivities.

Saturday will also mark the opening of a new business. Mountain Valley Handicrafts, featuring crafts from seven mountain states, will open in the old theater building.



Old Occoquan bridge, knocked down by Agnes

Margaret (Peg) Williams Diary

Following is the next group of excerpts from the hand written journals of Margaret Williams. Peg, if you remember, was an early member of OHS and served as our president for several years

This selection again pertains to PWC history and the development of the Lake Ridge community and the closing of the airport. Please visit Historic Prince William at www.historicprincewilliam.org for history and pictures of the airport.

Book 5: October 1, 1982-November 10, 1984

October 2, Saturday, 1982

A gorgeous Saturday. Took the boys to watch hay baling by Lynn crew. Martha on tractor pulling rake to turn alfalfa (Buddy cut Tuesday 28) for last drying before Carl picked it up with baler he pulled with another tractor. Tabb drove pick-up truck pulling flat trailer on which Pat and several boys from point loaded 150 bales for Buddy and took to his barn. Other bales picked up in field by several buyers with pick-up trucks. Buddy supervised the whole operation. Boys rode on trailer or in back of truck. A neighbor girl on a horse gave Matt a ride behind her all around the edge of 12 acre field. We were there about 2 hours. Will & Celia arrived home about 5:15 so I came on home.

November 23, Tuesday, 1982

At Historic Occoquan meeting Andy (Lynn?) spoke on Virginia Wildlife in area, dwelling at length on owls, specifically the barred owl which Nellie presented for display in the museum. Killed by roadside and prepared by taxidermist after HOI secured a permit from Federal Government to prepare such birds, many of which Nellie has in her freezer.

June 5, Sunday, 1983

Matt & I arrived at Museum about 1:00 for afternoon's activities. Sno-cone and cookie sales. Again roaming around craft show.

October 9, Sunday, 1983

In afternoon we took almost 2-hour walk to see houses going up across road in Mr.

Stoneturner's former pig farm; then along bulldozed road to Beaver Dam Creek where park is being built; a large gravel area (I assume a parking lot), several picnic pavilions in patches of wood on rough paths, concession building (to be completed) on point overlooking creek; nearly a large play area where boys tried out all the equipment. Amazing what's been done to the ups and downs, huge underlying boulders, and many trees= and attempts to control erosion of earth dug up and piled elsewhere!

March 6, Tuesday, 1984

Across the road new mountains being created by earthmoving machines. And several new houses in various stages of construction, one immediately across from me has not had any work done for a couple weeks, at least. Only insulating sheets on outside, some doors missing, roof on, no chimney built. And deep pools of water all around.

June 1, Friday, 1984-Baked cupcakes and bread for HOI bake sale tomorrow.

June 2, Saturday, 1984- Took boys to Occoquan 11-4:30. Historic Occoquan Bake Sale & Sno-cones. Poor sales in both departments as out of stream of traffic tho many crossed on footbridge and passed Museum. Quite cool in the morning, but warmed up in full sun of late afternoon. Boys spent time along river bank catching minnows by hand and finding treasures=a piece of pottery, and a gear shaft from mill machinery, which they gave to Museum. We walked to high dam, water so beautiful coming over dams, lacy veils that fell down on the ones proceeding, to a rolling pool at bottom. The lake between dams very lovely, rocks sticking out here and there, mallards sunning on some rocks, or swimming in seemingly calm water tho a current very evident when breaking around obstructions; a blue heron fishing along edge, an eagle flying.

June 3, Sunday, 1984- HOI booth sales. Bought fishing line, hooks, sinkers and bobbers and boys spent afternoon fishing from rocks under footbridge=didn't catch anything.

June 16, Saturday, 1984- Kept museum 10-4; quite a few interesting visitors came in out of the rain. Set petunias in flower barrel.

September 29, Saturday, 1984- Cloudy and chilly all day. HOI didn't try sno-cones as there'd be no sale for anything but hot coffee.

November 10, Saturday, 1984- Some men in late afternoon busy gathering wood from airport corner of my lot and pine logs in ditch or along edge, told him it was my property=he said he didn't think I wanted it! Asked him not to take any more and I don't believe he did, but who knows? Had a young red haired boy with him. (Peg noted this as stealing wood in the margins)

Book 6: November 11, 1984-June 20, 1987

June 1, Saturday, 1985: Gone by 8:30 to Occoquan to help with bake and sno-cone sales at museum all this bright, strong-breezy day that several times defied ones efforts to put up the tarpaulin to shield ice machine from hot sun=but finally success. Heavy crowd in town for Occoquan Days, to see/buy wares of some 265+ exhibitors and food and drink stands.

September 28, Saturday, 1985- A gloriously bright moderate day for craft show in Occoquan. Historic Occoquan's bake sale, coffee and sno-cones.

September 30, Monday, 1985- Opened museum for a Cub Scout group. 2:45-3:30.

October 19, Saturday, 1985- A good day for HOI's yard and bake sale in the park in Occoquan, 10 to 3; made a total of \$136 and could have done better; some baked goods as well as "cast-aways" left, too warm for hot coffee, evidently. But all is welcome for our last fund-raiser of the year.

January 28, Tuesday, 1986-HOI potluck supper at Town Hall was a great success, 39 in attendance.

February 13, Thursday, 1986-HOI Board meeting at Jessie Payne's, 7:30-9; several absent due to illness etc.

April 29, Tuesday, 1986-HOI meeting-Janney family talking of early Occoquan (40 people in Town Hall!)

May 13, Tuesday, 1986- By museum to see progress on steps FC WA (Fairfax County

Water) building behind for access to river shore.

September 27-28, Saturday & Sunday, 1986-A wild day in the booth selling soft drinks=finally ran out of gas to activate the canisters at 3, closed down till after show over at 6. Sunday cooler, cloudy all day, more coffee sales. Had coffee and donuts or Danish pastries for crafters. They didn't buy much so we had to peddle on street, at \$1 per dozen 37 dozen donuts (out of 50) Saturday to crafters as we were closing and dispose of some 9 cases of Danish at 24 per case, \$10 each. Had steady sales of soft drinks Sunday till we closed at 5:00.

October 29, Wednesday, 1986- Met Nellie at museum to mark her items to be moved, then met with LaVerne Carson, checked town shed to store HOI basement items while scout prepares our theater.

December 3, Wednesday, 1986-Went to open museum for merchants to put in some poinsettias; I placed some greens around, to supplement huge wreath on gate outside, smaller ones on two front windows, also cleaned out spiders and other debris, and cleaned glass expanses, in preparation for house tour, including museum, December 7, 11-5.

February 25, Wednesday, 1987-Across airfield a huge crane in housing area looks like a long-necked prehistoric monster dipping down and up for a load to be moved.

May 27, Wednesday, 1987-Counted 33 planes still here, Charlie says more in hangars, and all must be gone by Sunday. 7 left today.

May 28, Thursday, 1987- By 7:30 was on my way to dig up rose in airfield, put in bucket to plant at Martha's.

May 30, Saturday, 1987-15 planes still on the field this morning, 13 still at dark.

May 31, Sunday, 1987- 13 planes left this morning, 3 at 5:30 when I left for the hospital. All gone, gates to the parking lot open, on return at 9:15.

Monday June 1, 1987- First day in over 30 years of no airport=strangely empty and silent there.

June 7, Saturday, 1986- To Occoquan by 8:30 to help Betty Jo set up for sno-cones and bake sales. Then so hot all day 90+ until we closed at 5.

June 8 Sunday, 1986- Parked at Betty's house and walked to museum to begin day's activities by 10:30. No bake sale=too hot for sweets. Sno-cone sales rather brisk. But overall the crowd small and not spending.

June 6, Saturday, 1987- A wonderful day for craft show in Occoquan. I got to museum about 8:30 but Betty Jo Had already been there with 12 blocks of ice she put in coolers in cellar, came back and we set up tables and machine. Others came for various shifts. Sold out baked goods before 3, \$143.30. Quit sno-cones at 5 to move things inside museum for overnight.

June 7, Saturday, 1987- in Occoquan, parked at Miss Mammie Davis' at suggestion of Madeline Bell by 9, then to open museum and helps set up for sno-cones. Did well, closed at 5.

June 19, Friday, 1987-Martha and Buddy planning to get in 250 bales of oat and alfalfa hay they made yesterday.=hoped to find some help=wish I could do something. Workers at airport with rig, looks like well driller, maybe a soil tester. Near old office/hangar. Light at Hedges Run Rd activated at noon=not when I passed at 11 but on at 1.

June 20, Saturday, 1987- Equipment at big hangar. Windows boarded up.



Aerial View of Occoquan
March 11, 2018

Mill House Museum
PO Box 65, 413 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125
www.occoquanhistoricalsociety.org
703-491-7525
Open Sunday through Saturday 11-4

