



CASCADE OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS TRIGGERED BY GRANT

The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation (TOBCF) is excited to report that in early 2021 that they were officially awarded a grant which has “jump-started” a cascade of accomplishments. This grant was funded in part by the Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund (ESHPF) and is administered by the National Park Services (NPS) Department of Interior in partnership with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR).

As result of the first part of this two-part grant process, TOBCF was award \$199,605 for the **Dromgoole House** to:

- Complete the nomination process to have the Dromgoole House listed on the Virginia Historic Landmark Register and the National Register of Historic Places
- Obtain a Historic Structure Report
- Obtain an Engineering assessment
- Stabilize the chimneys
- Restore and reinforce the foundation

The second part of the grant awarded TOBCF funds targeted for our **Randolph Macon College and Boydton Institute site**. These funds will finance work done by the VDHR to contract for and manage a:

- Historic Resources Survey and to
- Complete a National Registration of Historic Place nomination to have this site and several other properties associated with this historical campus designated as an historic district.

TOBCF Learns the Art of the Press Release

Calling on her twenty five years of experience in tourism and marketing, our new board member Patricia Ellis Archer has headed up a much needed Publicity Committee for the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation. Joined by Rev. Dr. Art Thomas and Ann Keeling, this committee has taken on this new challenge. With a profusion of writing and rewriting Pat has patiently guided the committee through their steep learning curve and together they produced four press releases, developed a fact sheet, updated our letterhead and created and put together press kits. As a result of these efforts our press releases were successfully published in Southside Virginia newspapers, *Emporia News* and *The Mecklenburg Sun*. For the benefit of those who may have missed seeing these articles, much of what was published has been incorporated into this newsletter.

We are also excited because the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation has been approached by the editor of the *Cooperative Living Magazine*. This lifestyle magazine is published by the Virginia, Maryland and Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives. It reaches more than 580,000 customers--the largest circulation of any Virginia publication. They are interested in publishing an article about our historic Dromgoole House in their March 2022 issue.

Kenyan Family Makes Pilgrimage to the Boydton Institute

The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation was thrilled to be contacted recently by Mr. Josh Gray. Josh lives in Falls Church, Virginia but was born in Petersburg, Virginia. Josh spent many weekends, holidays, and summer weeks in Lawrenceville, Virginia, where his mother's family lived. He met his wife, Sheila at a professional networking event in Gaithersburg, Maryland in 2012. Sheila was born in Nairobi, Kenya and her late mother was a member of the Maasai pastoral society in the Rift Valley area of Kenya, East Africa.



Molonket Olororinya Ole Sempele

Sheila is the great-granddaughter of Molonket Ole Sempele through her late mother Mary Naisho. Molonket Ole Sempele was the son of a Maasai chief in Kenya. A person of high

standing in his own community, he sold his precious cattle to pay for his trip to America for an education. As the first Kenyan to study abroad Sempele attended the Boydton Institute.

The Boydton Institute was a school for African Americans that was founded in 1879 by a faith-based group from Boston, Massachusetts. Located on the outskirts of Boydton, Virginia, it was opened on the abandoned campus of Randolph Macon College after the latter institution relocated to Ashland, Virginia. The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation owns and is currently working to preserve two of the Boydton Institute's remaining historic buildings on 12 ½ acres of this original campus. Sempele enrolled in the Boydton Institute in 1909 and graduated in 1912. The "Jim Crow" treatment of blacks that he witnessed while in America made a lasting impression on him. When he returned to Africa as a Christian missionary, educator and leader, those impressions and the experiences he had in America influenced the future politics of his community and his country.

During a recent visit to America from Kenya by Sheila's brother Selelo Naisho and her aunt Joyce Naisho, the family was determined to make a pilgrimage to Boydton to see the place where their esteemed ancestor studied, more than a century ago. So on June 24th, 2021, Josh, Josh and Sheila's 5 year old son Aisim, Joyce and Selelo

hit the road from Falls Church headed for the Old Boydton Institute. On the way there, Josh stopped in Colonial Heights, Virginia to pick up his mother Patricia Coleman since this trip was taking her back to the land of her grandparents as well.

An interesting twist to the story is that Josh Gray's mother's paternal grandparents were born to freedmen in Boydton in the 1880s and lived there during the time Sempele was attending Boydton Institute. Josh believes that his great-grandparents and his wife's great-grandfather may have met due to the novel status of Sempele's presence in Boydton.



From left to right -- names with relationships to Sempele: Joyce Naisho (granddaughter); Aisim Naisho (great grandson); Selelo Naisho (great grandson); Josh Gray (husband to Sempele's great granddaughter and Aisim's father)



Patricia Coleman (Josh's mother and granddaughter of Boydton native), Aisim Naisho and Joyce Naisho

After stopping at the historical site marker on the side of highway 58 in Boydton, the family proceeded to drive around looking for the old college site. They asked people at the gas station who said, "Oh, it's right over there". "Right over there" turned into a full town tour of Boydton still in search of the site. That led us to the sheriff's office where we asked for directions. The directions led us to an old Confederate cemetery and shortly to the road right back near the gas station.

After the intrigue of exploration fully wore off and the family was on the precipice of frustration, Patricia



Joyce Naisho, granddaughter of Sempele, dressed in traditional Maasai garb & standing near the ruins of the Randolph-Macon College & Boynton Institute main campus building

shouted, "Stop the car! Look in the woods to the right!" There it was! It was like something out of a movie. This was a relic of the past that the forest had overtaken but for both Joyce and Selelo the respective granddaughter and great-grandson of Sempele, it was a very emotional moment to step on that site.

Bynum Presents: Edward Dromgoole, Sr: Emancipator and Enslaver



Bill Bynum, archivist from the Library of Virginia, gave a scholarly Zoom presentation on the topic "Edward Dromgoole, Sr.—Emancipator & Enslaver" to the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation and guests on Saturday, November 13, 2021. His presentation expanded on the topic presented last year by Dr. Art Thomas. Mr. Bynum

has published an article on Edward Dromgoole, Sr. and during this presentation he shared the results of his detailed research gleaned from the Dromgoole Papers at the Library of Virginia. Approximately 30 people tuned in to this presentation. Several of the attendees and a number of others who could not attend requested copies of his talk. Bynum has generously provided his script and we have posted it on our website with a direct link at: <https://vaumc.org/edwarddromgoolesr/> as well as on its own page under the Edward Dromgoole House listing in the Historical Society menu at:

<https://vaumc.org/historicalsociety/>.

GRANT HELPS SAVE "HISTORIC GEM" IN BRUNSWICK COUNTY, VA

Located in Brunswick County Virginia, Canaan was the plantation home of The Rev. Edward Dromgoole Sr., a traveling minister of the Revolutionary War and early national periods. This "historic gem" is situated in Valentines, Virginia conveniently located just off the Christanna Highway (route 46) -- a road that Brunswick County is developing as a major tourism corridor. Once restored, this plantation home will be an additional historical site for visitors to enjoy along this corridor. The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation, as a 501(3) c non-profit organization and the owner of this historic building, will use the grant which they have recently been awarded to help save it from potential collapse.

As proven by dendrochronology, Canaan was built between 1796 and 1799. This home had solidly stood for over 200 years but after Hurricane Michael in the fall of 2018 inundated the county with rain, a dramatic tilt was noticed in its east chimney. Given that this chimney is timber-tied into the house, if the chimney should fall so would the house.



Braced East Chimney of Dromgoole House

Local resident and builder, Tom King, completed the necessary emergency structural work to brace the chimney in its tilting position and to pour concrete to unify and support its base. Although the stress on the bracing and on the west chimney remained evident, the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation (OBCF), could not do the work needed to permanently stabilize and repair the chimneys and foundation until they could raise the necessary funds.

A solution came in the form of financing from the Emergency Supplemental Historical Preservation Fund (ESHPPF). Administered by the National Park Service, 4.7 million dollars of these funds were awarded to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR). These

monies allowed VDHR to offer sub-awards to historic sites located in 52 counties and cities in Virginia that had been negatively impacted by Hurricane Florence and Michael. The OBDF applied for this grant because-- as board member Ann Keeling said, "It was the type of grant opportunity that was ideally structured for a small non-profit organization like ours". Having made an application for the grant, the OBCF recently got the news for which they anxiously awaited: the National Park Service in partnership with the VDHR had awarded the OBCF an initial grant award amount of \$199,605. For Canaan, this grant will fund the stabilization and repair of its chimneys and foundation as well as the acquisition of a Historic Structure Report and an Engineering Assessment. Both of these planning documents will inform the construction needed.



Dromgoole House as it appeared when purchased by the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation

Canaan is the only surviving home in Virginia of an 18th century itinerant minister or Methodist "circuit rider", Rev. Edward Dromgoole, Sr. Dromgoole was influential in spreading John Wesley's Methodist movement in America. It was in this home that Dromgoole and his wife, Rebecca Walton Dromgoole, hosted class meetings and worship services. This house also served as an important hospitality and educational stop for Methodist preachers, notably Francis Asbury, one of the two first Methodist Bishops in America. Dromgoole died May 13, 1835 and is buried on the property. Canaan later became the home of his son, Hon. George Coke Dromgoole, who represented his region of Virginia, first in the state legislature for 13 years, then in Congress for 10 years.

18th Century Methodist Circuit Rider Home Added To Two Historic Registers



Dromgoole House after being covered in protective covering (Photo courtesy of Lea Beazley)

Throughout the summer of 2021 the TOBCF worked in conjunction with the VDHR on the first task to be accomplished under our newly awarded grant—namely to complete the nomination process to have the Dromgoole House listed on the Virginia Historic Landmark Register and the National Register of Historic Places. The **Virginia Landmarks Register** is the Commonwealth's official list of places of significant historic, architectural, archeological, and/or cultural significance. On June 17, 2021 the Commonwealth of Virginia's Board of Historic Resources voted to add Canaan, the house of the Methodist minister, The Rev. Edward Dromgoole, Sr. (1751-1835), to this honorary register.

Following the listing on the Virginia Landmarks Register, the Department of Historic Resources forwarded the nomination to the National Park Service. Approved by the National Park Service, the property was **listed on the National Register of Historic Places** on August, 9, 2021. At this point Canaan became one of only twelve historic sites in Brunswick County, Virginia so recognized for its historical importance by being listed on both of these registers. This property is considered significant for its historic associations with Reverend Edward Dromgoole and his son, Congressman George Dromgoole, as well as an excellent example of Federal Period architecture in Brunswick County, Virginia.



*Southeast oblique view of the Dromgoole House in 2006
(Courtesy Harvey Moseley from the DHR archive Collection)*

Based on Edward Dromgoole's contribution to Methodism and the fact that Canaan is the only extant home within Virginia that had once belonged to an 18th century Methodist circuit rider, the General Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church had already designated the property as a worldwide Methodist Historic Site in 2020.

Built between 1796 and 1799 as indicated by dendrochronology, Canaan was the plantation home of Edward Dromgoole, Sr. and his wife Rebecca Walton Dromgoole. As one of America's pioneering circuit riding preachers, Edward Dromgoole helped spread John Wesley's Methodist movement in America during two significant religious revival movements called the First Great Awakening (1740-1777) and the Second Great Awakening (1785-1830). This led to the establishment of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784 under the leadership of Bishop Francis Asbury and Bishop Thomas Coke.

Edward Dromgoole, Sr. immigrated from Ireland to Baltimore in 1770 with a letter of introduction to Robert Strawbridge, the founder of American Methodism. After preaching for the newly formed Methodist movement in Maryland from 1772 to 1775, Dromgoole moved to Virginia in 1775 where he remained for the rest of his life ministering on the Brunswick Circuit in Southside Virginia and adjacent North Carolina counties spreading the Methodist revival to those in the Church of England. The Brunswick Circuit is called "the Cradle of Methodism in America" because of the phenomenal growth of this movement during the First Great Awakening.



Dromgoole House -- east chimney braced after it began to tilt in 2019

Dromgoole served as a Methodist travelling preacher from 1775 to 1786, then became a local preacher who settled to preach in his neighborhood and to farm. In 1815 Bishop Asbury ordained him as a Methodist Episcopal Church elder. Asbury often stayed at Canaan to enjoy the hospitality of the Dromgoole family.

After his death in 1835, Edward Dromgoole's son, George Coke Dromgoole, resided at the property until 1847. George represented his region of Virginia in the state legislature for 13 years, then in Congress for 6 terms--dying in the first year of his sixth term.

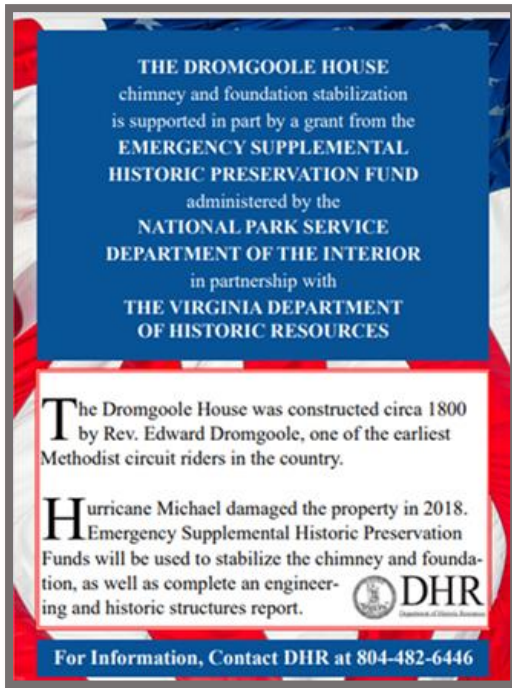
Canaan, a two-story, mortise-and-tenon timber frame dwelling, embodies Federal-period vernacular style. The property also features the remains of the kitchen's stone foundation, a family graveyard where Edward Dromgoole, Sr. is buried, and a spinning house or workhouse dating to at least 1803. The property sits on 16 acres of land near Valentines in Brunswick County.

The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation purchased the Dromgoole House in 2008 to preserve and restore the house and grounds. It plans to develop the site for meetings, cultural activities, pilgrimages, and retreats. Visitation will be available by appointment after restoration.

Carol Corker of Bracey, Virginia, did the lion's share of research and writing for this nomination process. She is hopeful that the listing of this property on these historic registers will bring more attention to this important Brunswick county historical resource. She anticipates that it will highlight its value as a local platform from which to teach about the development of religion in early America and about life in general in southern Virginia during that period.

Grant Sign Posted By TOBCF President

As a requirement of the grant, TOBCF was expected to install a sign on the Dromgoole property. This sign serves to provide information about the grant and the historical significance of the property and to give appropriate credit to the NPS and the VDHR for obtaining the funding we so desperately needed for our Dromgoole Stabilization and Study Project.



Sign posted on the Dromgoole property informing visitors about the grant and the historical significance of the house.



We were very appreciative when the VDHR artfully designed the sign for us. We were equally thankful when Jim Mott, president of TOBCF, identified a vendor who could produce a sign on material sturdy enough to withstand the elements over the duration of the project. Having personally engaged the use of a posthole digger, Mott can attest to the hardness of the ground on this property as he was the one who, under the heat of the summer sun, installed the posts for this sign

Historic Structure Report & Engineering Assessments Under Development

Construction to stabilize the chimneys and foundation of the Dromgoole house cannot begin until TOBCF has in hand the architectural studies and engineering assessments needed to guide this work. These reports were funded under our grant. We identified several architectural firms in the area who had the expertise required and who could provide the necessary engineering consulting work. We sent them a request for their proposals and invited them to join board members, and VDHR representatives for an on-site visit to the Dromgoole house on August 12, 2021. Mr. Tom King, who has done much of the work on this historic home, diagrammed and discussed preservation work that he had already done and he answered their questions during a tour of the house.



Touring the upstairs of the Dromgoole House during site visit.

The architectural firms submitted their proposals and participated in Zoom interviews. As a result we are pleased to announce that our selection committee chose the Richmond based firm Glavé & Holmes to be the firm to provide TOBCF with a Historic Structures Report and an engineering assessment for our Dromgoole House grant project. The final reports are scheduled to be delivered in February 2022.



More Photos from the Site Visit



HISTORICAL DETAILS: IN THE DAFFODILS

If you have been to Boydton, Virginia in the spring and visited our Historic Randolph-Macon College and Boydton Institute site, you have seen the lovely stands of yellow daffodils growing around the Helensha Cottage. The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation plans to restore the Cottage. In anticipation of bringing in large equipment to the site for that purpose, we raised the question of how that would impact the daffodils bulbs and the future proliferation of these vibrant yellow flowers.



Mr. Lewis Turner and his wife Sylvia are energetic advocate for the preservation of the Boydton Institute. Turner is championing the effort to save these beautiful daffodils and in the future possibly to replant them in a community meditation garden near the Helensha Cottage. We envision a simple garden planted in slow growing boxwood and small crepe myrtles. The meditation garden is to honor Helen Sharp, Headmistress of the Boydton Institute, who was a lady of Prayer. When she had an answer to prayer, she would put a stake in her garden to remember that answer.

To begin this project Turner sent a photo of these daffodils to Dr. Janet Hickman, who is on the Board of the American Daffodil Society and lives in Lynchburg, Va. She is also an expert on historic daffodils.

Dr. Hickman thought that our daffodils were surely an historic variety. She complimented our plans to preserve them. In order to get additional opinions on a name for this variety, she then forwarded the photo to Sara Van Beck, the head of the historic daffodil section of The American Daffodil Society and author of *Daffodils in American Gardens, 1733-1940*.

Ms. Van Beck responded quickly reporting that she believed "our" daffodil to be the variety named **Golden Spur**. This variety was introduced around 1885, which would put it in the time frame contemporary with the Boydton Institute.

This past spring, four large clumps of daffodils were relocated to a safer location on the grounds of the cottage—away from future heavy construction. If this proves successful, more flower bulbs will be moved later. This will enable the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation to save this beautiful piece of historical horticulture and to add another delightful detail of authentic history to our Boydton Institute site.

Rooted in our History: Looking to our Future

On May 2, 2021 the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation participated in an online event sponsored by the Chaplain's Office of Randolph-Macon College.

Laurie Preston, Associate Professor and Head of Reference at the college's McGraw-Page Library and Ann Keeling of the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation shared the podium. They gave a presentation titled "Rooted in our History, Looking to Our Future". This presentation and discussion that followed were done with the focus on speaking the truth about the past but doing so because we want to do better in the future.

Ms. Preston opened the presentation with a history of the Randolph-Macon College for the period in which its campus was located just on the outskirts of the town of Boydton, Virginia. Due to circumstances precipitated by the Civil War, this college relocated to Ashland, Virginia. Ten years later a faith-based organization from Boston purchased a large part of its abandoned campus in Boydton. They opened the campus once again-- but this time it was opened as the Boydton Institute--a school for African American students. Ms. Keeling concluded the presentation with a history of the Boydton Institute

giving examples of the accomplishments of its leaders, instructors and students.

Rooted in our History/ Looking to our Future

<https://rmc.zoom.us/j/97308590694>
Or email kendragrimes@rmc.edu to request the link by email

Join Laurie Preston
Assoc Professor & Head of Reference, McGraw-Page Library
and Ann Keeling
Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation
**To explore R-MC history
& the Boydton Institute
and its historic impact**
This event is free and open to the public.

**Sunday, May 2
3:00-4:00 p.m.**



Thanks to Chaplain Grimes for arranging this event. The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation looks forward to partnering with Randolph-Macon College in a range of similar events in the future.

ABOUT US



More information about The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation and our three historic sites can be found at:
<https://vaumc.org/oldbrunswickcircuit>

To support the preservation efforts of this foundation, tax-deductible donations payable to The Old Brunswick Foundation may be sent to P.O. Box 385, Lawrenceville, Virginia 23868-0385 or payments can be made via PayPal at The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation page at: [Facebook.com/OBCFVA/](https://www.facebook.com/OBCFVA/).



PHOTO SPOTLIGHT

This year TOBCF accepted a local offer to purchase a single-wide mobile home at a price that was hard to resist. This mobile home satisfied TOBCF's need for an on-site "Caretaker's Station" to be placed on our somewhat remote and isolated Dromgoole property. Carol Corker did all the work to get the obligatory county approvals, make plans for utilities and arrangements to move the trailer. John Edwards of W.W. Edwards & Sons Inc. brought in large equipment to clear a second temporary entry way that would accommodate bringing in this 60 foot long trailer as well as to clear a spot on the northwest wood line on which to set it up.



Equipment at Work



New Temporary Entrance

The trailer has now been successfully moved to the wood line behind the Dromgoole House, properly leveled and mounted on cinderblock piers. We still need to install a septic system, connect to electricity, add skirting and build on steps and/or a porch. Work continues into 2022 toward making this a full-service "Caretaker's Station" which will provide added site safety and security, a command center for restoration work, and "creature comforts" for visiting consultants and guests.

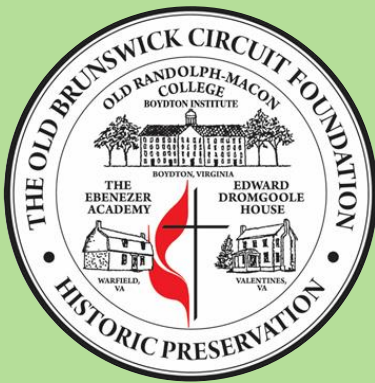


Trailer Successfully Installed on Site



MUCH DESERVED THANK YOU TO ALL OUR CONTRIBUTORS

From its very conception the preservation work of The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation has been sustained due to the generosity of its contributors. Our contributors donate their time and/or their money. They often quietly cover cost of materials out of their own pockets and provide the needed services themselves. To all of those who have helped us in so many ways—both big and small--**we say THANK YOU!**



THE OLD BRUNSWICK CIRCUIT FOUNDATION (TOBCF) is a 501(3)c tax-exempt, non-profit organization formed in 2004.

While seeking to preserve and interpret key historical sites along the 18th and 19th century Methodist Brunswick Circuit, it shares its legacy of faith, history, and education with the public.

TOBCF emphasizes this diverse local heritage by using these sites as learning laboratories and cultural facilities for education and social interaction.

TOBCF strives to research, preserve, and develop historical interpretations of these three properties:

EBENEZER ACADEMY MEMORIAL PARK—site of the first Methodist school in America

CANAAN—THE DROMGOOLE HOUSE -- home of an early Methodist circuit rider, the Rev. Edward Dromgoole, later home of his son an early 19th century U.S. Congressman

THE ORIGINAL CAMPUS OF RANDOLPH-MACON COLLEGE in Boydton, VA -- the oldest Methodist-related college in continuous operation in the United States. After the college relocated to Ashland, the campus was opened in 1879 as **THE BOYDTON INSTITUTE**, an impactful school for African Americans.