

Annual e-Newsletter for Friends of The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation

NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Of the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation (OBCF)

Looking back over the year 2023, we see that we had a productive year of grant implementation-- negotiating with general contractors and working with an archaeologist from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Research by our trustees has uncovered historical photographs and information that builds a richer story about our Randolph Macon College & Boydton Institute site. We sponsored a Community Workshop and professional storyteller performances to help us engage and partner with the local community. We publicized our organization through submission of press releases for these events and by developing a new brochure for one of our sites. For this and for the many projects currently under development for 2024, I want to say thank you to all our supporters and board members for making this all possible.

Sincerely, James H. Mott, Jr., OBCF President.

2023 GRANT UPDATES:

SELECTING A GENERAL CONTRACTOR

The historic Dromgoole House is located in Brunswick County near Valentines, Virginia and is over two hundred years old. It is owned and under the stewardship of the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation (OBCF). The Dromgoole House often called Canaan is historically significant as the home of the Rev. Edward Dromgoole, Sr. one of the very early Methodist itinerant ministers in America.

In 2021 the OBCF was awarded a grant that we have come to refer to simply as the "Hurricane Grant". This grant was funded in part by the Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund (ESHPF). It is

administered by the National Park Services Department of the Interior in partnership with the Virginia Department of Historic Preservation. As a result of that grant, the Dromgoole House was successfully listed on both the Virginia and the National Historic Registers in 2021. In 2022, the grant funded the completion of a Historic Structure Report and Engineering Assessment of this structure in preparation for future construction toward its preservation.

The main focus of the OBCF's historic preservation work under this hurricane grant in 2023 was obtaining the services of a qualified general contractor to do the construction needed to stabilize the foundation and chimneys of this historic building. Toward this end, the OBCF accepted and funded a proposal submitted by the architectural firm, Glave and Holmes, for them to help us prepare a request for proposal (RFP) to solicit suitable candidates, provide construction and contract administration services and develop basic foundation engineering and framing repair designs needed for the job. Once the RFP was sent out, a site visit was arranged for interested contractors at which time they examined the house, asked questions and subsequently submitted their proposals. Glave and Holmes provided these contractors and the OBCF with engineering foundation design specifications to guide the required preservation work. Presently the OBCF is negotiating with the general contractor who is the strongest contender for the job to determine the scope of work that can be completed within the budgetary constraints of the project. As we go into 2024, there are a number of important construction decisions that the OBCF must still make but all are excited about finally moving into the actual preservation phase with this grant.

ARCHAEOLOGIST'S VISIT TO THE DROMGOOLE HOUSE

In compliance with a grant requirement from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the OBCF made arrangements for their staff archaeologist, Mr. Michael Clem to visit the Dromgoole property. The main goal of his visit was to confirm the areas of archaeological significance on this site that contractors should avoid during preservation related-construction. This took place on December 14, 2023 with advisor Barry Carter; board members, Jim Mott and Ann Keeling; and previous board member and subject matter expert, Carol Corker being present. Everyone walked the premises with Mr. Clem including the cleared and wooded areas while he inspected and all discussed the different areas of potential archaeological interest.

They reached consensus on the preferred placement of a graveled construction staging area. This graveled area will be later used for visitor parking. All agreed that all construction activities should stay away from what remains of the foundation of a building thought to have been an outside kitchen located on the west side of the main house. Mr. Clem offered the possibility that with a student and/or volunteer workforce and his guidance, this kitchen's foundation could be a site of a future archaeological dig.

Carol Corker had noticed that in the History of Valentines by Mr. Willie Wright, a slave cemetery was mentioned as being on the Dromgoole property. She had flagged an area in the woods northeast of the house that appeared to contain unmarked graves. Upon inspection Mr. Clem concurred with Carol's findings and he suggested substantiating this in the future using ground penetrating radar. Discussions ensued about the benefit of hunting for additional old but local maps of the area. Such maps would support future archaeological investigations by more precisely identifying the locations of other structures that had existed on this property over time.

It was a beautiful, fun and engaging day so much so that we forgot to take photographs until the very end when the participants stood together in front of the house for this closing group picture.



Mr. Michael Clem (right), VDHR archaeologist with OBCF representatives at the Dromgoole House (above)

A GREAT AND SORROWFUL LOSS

Long-time trustee of the Virginia Methodist Conference Historical Society and one of the early trustees of The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation (OBCF), Dr. William "Bill" Olson, passed away on June 15, 2023 from cancer following months of declining health.

Dr. Olson was a humble, dedicated Christian and a successful business man, who generously supported many conservation, preservation, historical interpretation and mission projects over the years. His mission work included work in Haiti where he funded the building of the Depestre School of Music, the expansion of the Carrefour Secondary School and two micro-credit projects. In Virginia he mentored over 50 Boy Scout Eagle Projects. Because of his work as the chairman of the Prince William County Cemetery Committee overseeing the proper upkeep of approximately 500 cemeteries, he became known throughout the county as "Mr. Cemetery". He was passionate about environmental preservation and with the help of others formed the Prince William Conservation Association. This association assisted in the preservation of Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area in Prince William County. Bill was deeply involved in the life of his Grace United Methodist Church in Manassas, VA.



Shown above (second from the right) with other early trustees of the OBCF in front of his beloved Canaan, Bill Olson was a source of warm encouragement to all who knew him.

The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation has been fortunate to have a small yet passionate group of trustees at its helm. These trustees treasured the history embodied in the three historic sites over which this foundation eventually became owner and steward. . We were lucky that Bill Olson was one of these trustees. Trustees often kept their contributions—both of their time and money—anonymous. However, we know that it was with the resolute guidance, work and generous contributions from Bill, that the preservation work of the OBCF was kept on track-- especially in those agonizing times when we were facing what appeared to be insurmountable obstacles. He left a lasting imprint through his work on the preservation of the Randolph Macon College & Boydton Institute, the Dromgoole house named Canaan, and the Ebenezer Academy Memorial Park. For this we are forever grateful.

ICONIC BUILDING DEMOLISHED

Emblematic of the great loss that occurred with the passing of Bill Olson, on that same day one of the iconic buildings on the original Randolph Macon College campus, namely the President’s Home, was unexpectedly demolished by its private owner.

The President’s House was constructed on two acres of land purchased from James Bruce in October 1830. This house was located on what is now the north side of Route 58, northwest of and facing the main campus

building. In February 1833 the trustees of the college ordered its construction requesting that it be completed by August of 1834. This one-story brick structure was built in a Flemish bond pattern and its detailing was quite unusual for such a modest dwelling. The Jeffersonian nature of its design and the similarity in design and execution to the main campus building suggests that both were built by Dabney Cosby.

Most likely the last photos taken of the President’s home before it was unexpectedly razed were among those taken by the Environmental Research Group as part of their work to develop a package to have the Randolph Macon College and Boydton Institute campus be surveyed for nomination as an historic district. A sample of those photos are below as part of our “last look”. Bill Olson and the President’s Home were both irreplaceable and one-of-a-kind. Their loss will be strongly felt by all for a long time.



Photos courtesy of Becky Yousef & Anna Maas of the Environmental Research Group

ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITY

The Boydton Institute was a school for African Americans that operated between 1879 and 1935 on the outskirts of Boydton, VA on the campus of what had previously been the original campus of Randolph Macon College. This campus is one of the three historical sites that The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation (OBCF) owns and with the help of the community is working to preserve. The Boydton Institute was not your typical two-room school but rather often had an enrollment of over 100 pupils including both residential and day students. Many students came from nearby towns in Virginia and North Carolina but some came from as far away as Florida, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. The Institute's curriculum evolved over time from elementary to secondary studies with the central goal focused on producing well educated teachers and preachers.

Within its first 25 years of operation the Boydton Institute had graduated 158 pupils and it's easy to deduce that hundreds more were enrolled there over the lifespan of the school. Our research to date has uncovered the names of approximately 300 of these students in addition to the names of over 60 staff members who taught or worked there. With more research and help from the community we hope to identify many others.

Every year the town of Boydton celebrates Boydton Day. This year on October 28, the OBCF joined in these festivities by setting up an informational tent on the Boydton courthouse square. Our tent functioned as an interactive Community Workshop to engage with the local community in order to re-discover, save, and celebrate the history of the Boydton Institute. We also wanted to find and join forces with others who are interested in this discovery process and in saving the history and legacy of this school

Over the years, local historians and advocates for the Boydton Institute have generously contributed to these archives include a number of class photos-- some with and some without student names. More recently with the use of online databases and sophisticated search tools, technology has provided us with the ability to quickly search millions of records. However, much information about the Boydton Institute was never put in writing and those who had firsthand knowledge of this school are no longer with us. The OBCF was hopeful that

some stories had been passed down to the next generation and when visitors to our community workshop viewed the photos from our archives and read student names, perhaps they would recall bits of these stories so that this information can be captured and saved.

We received support from Randolph-Macon College in Ashland. Ms. Laura Preston, Head Reference Librarian at the college's McGraw Paige Library and trained oral historical interviewer joined us at our tent to schedule future interviews with visitors that had such stories. Rev. Kendra Grimes, Chaplain and Director of Church Relations at Randolph-Macon College and Mr. Carter Walton, Special Assistant to the President for Diversity & Opportunity came as well. They brought two Randolph-Macon students to visit their college's original campus and soak in the history at our Community Workshop tent.



*Front row: Guests from Randolph-Macon College, Ashland
Photo courtesy of Rev. Kendra Grimes*

In the afternoon, board member Walter Beales took the visitors from the Ashland campus with our newest board members, Carl and Linda Ennis and Betty Ann and Bobby Spiers for a tour of the original Randolph Macon College and Boydton Institute site.



There was a steady stream of visitors to our community workshop all day. It was nice to see these guests lingering so long at our display--some even bringing other family members back to show them. We got an unsolicited and much welcomed donation from one of the visitors. Another Boydton guest offered the OBCF a set of wooden and copper plate printing blocks that were used at the Boydton Institute to produce their community newsletter "Our Helper". These printing blocks were used to reproduce --among other pictures-- photos of campus buildings on both the Boydton Institute and the Thyme Institute in Chase City, VA.



Printing block above and the photo it produced below

Two other Boydton residents, Mrs. Sally Brown and Mrs Rebecca Ratliff, also came by to see our photo display and cheer us on. These two ladies have supported the OBCF's work at our Boydton site since the early days of our organization. Much to our delight, Mrs. Ratliff identified for us the previously unknown location of an on-campus building. (See the following article *Researcher "Hits the Mother Lode"*)



Visitors to our Community Workshop tent. Mrs Ratliff in the pink jacket.

Another visitor, Rev. Edgar Young, a robust elderly gentleman, came by and quietly studied our displays at length and later returned with his two granddaughters. He graciously shared with us that his father was born in 1863 and recounted some amazing first-hand historical stories about African American life in Boydton.



Rev. Edgar Young and granddaughters at our display

It is from encounters such as these that the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation is encouraged that if we continue this type of outreach that we will be successful at building partnerships with and even greater enthusiasm from the community. Only through their engagement can we all work together to create a full, authentic and multidimensional story about and in appreciation of the Boydton Institute.

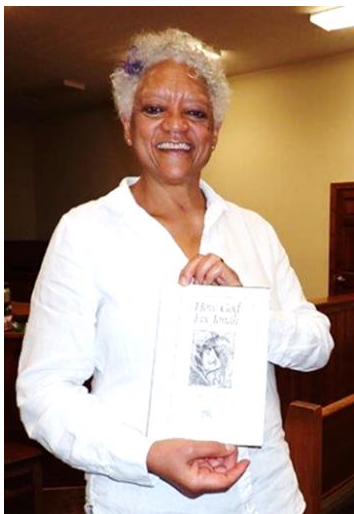


OBCF's display at Boydton Day

STORYTELLER BECKY STONE: FUN FOR ALL WHILE CREATING COMMUNITY

Stories create community. In the spirit of maintaining a strong community and for everyone's enjoyment, the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation was very appreciative when storyteller Mrs. Becky Stone graciously agreed to perform on October 28, 2023 as one of the many activities scheduled in the town of Boydton VA as part of their annual Boydton Day celebration.

Stone earned her B.A. in Drama from Vassar College and her M.A. from Villanova in Elementary Educational Counseling. She and her husband moved from Philadelphia to the western mountains of North Carolina in 1983 where she fell in love with storytelling. For more than two decades she has been sharing her calling as a storyteller at schools, libraries, universities and festivals across the region. She has presented at North Carolina and Colorado Humanities Chautauqua festivals and Black History Live tours portraying characters such as Maya Angelou, Harriet Tubman, and Rosa Parks. She incorporates into her storytelling a wide array of tales interspersed with songs and playful audience participation.



Storyteller Mrs. Becky Stone, holding book "How God Fix Jonah" by Lorenz Graham from which she drew her stories on Boydton Day.

For Boydton Day Stone's repertoire included stories written by Dr. Lorenz Graham a prize winning author of children's books. Graham served as a Methodist missionary in Liberia, Africa. One of his earlier stories "Every Man Heart Lay Down" is a telling of the nativity story as retold in the idiom of Liberians newly acquainted with the English language. In this story Graham captures

the beautiful cadence of the Liberian storytellers wherein their stories become poems, or spoken songs. This story was one of several similar pieces written by Dr. Lorenz Graham included in Stone's performances.

As a local historical note of interest, while in Africa Graham met and fell in love with another young missionary named Ruth Morris. Ruth Morris had previously lived in Boydton, Virginia. Her father, Dr. Charles Satchell Morris, was the first African American president of the Boydton Institute. The Boydton Institute was a school for African Americans that operated for sixty years on what previously had been the original campus of Randolph Macon College. The Morris family lived in the wooden board house locally referred to as the Helensha Cottage. This cottage which recently underwent historic renovation by the OBC F, still stands in the shadow of the large brick ruins of what had served as the main campus building for both the Randolph Macon College and the Boydton Institute. Ruth joined the progressively mixed-race staff of the Boydton Institute as a teacher before starting her missionary work. When she returned from Africa she married Lorenz Graham. Like her husband, Mrs. Ruth Morris Graham



Mrs. Ruth Morris Graham & Dr. Lorenz Graham

became a social worker, teacher and author. She wrote and published a number of books for young readers including "The Happy Sound," about family life in Haiti; "Big Sister," about an African girl; "Penny Savings Bank," a biography of Maggie L. Walker, and "The Saga of the Morris Family,". This last book includes a chapter

about her family's time in Boydton and chronicles the work of her accomplished father, Dr. Charles Satchell Morris. Similarly, Lorenz Graham used his family's experiences while in Southside Virginia as background material in a set of fictional novels that he wrote called the "Town Series". In this series he even mentions the Boydton Institute and Dr. Charles Morris by name.

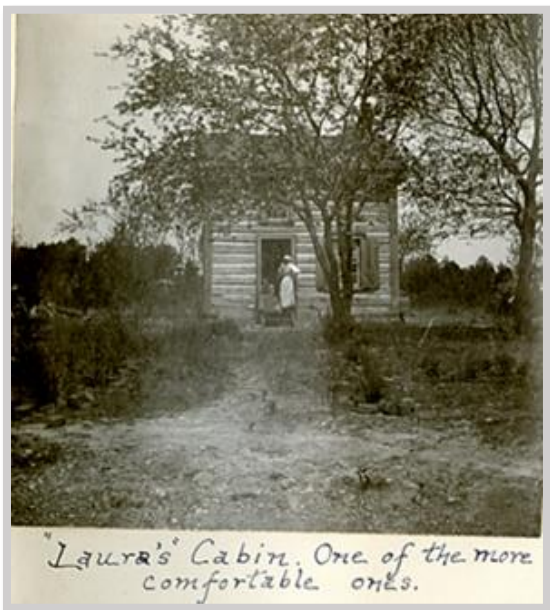
Sponsored by The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation in partnership with the Boydton Library, this storytelling event was enjoyed by all who attended. Many lingered after the performances to talk with Mrs. Stone, ask questions and take pictures – all a testament to how they were pulled to her and her stories, to her accomplished storytelling and acting skills, and to her show of warmth and kindness.

RESEARCHER "HITS THE MOTHER LODE"

Board member Lewis Turner and his wife Sylvia "hit the mother lode" in their historical research in 2023 at the Morristown and Morristown Township Library in Morristown, New Jersey. They made an overnight trip from their home in Walkersville, Maryland to Morristown. After a number of hours of research on the history of the Boydton Institute, they did not walk away disappointed. With the friendly help of the Morristown library staff, they uncovered a scrapbook of Miss Adeline "Ada" Wooster Owen. Ada was the adopted daughter of Dr. Frederick Wooster Owen and Mrs. Louise Graves Owen. This is the couple, along with Louise's sister, Miss Mary Ella Graves, who funded the purchase of the original Randolph Macon College campus in Boydton for the establishment of the Boydton Institute.

Ada's scrapbook was dated 1898 - 1899 and contains forty-one labeled photographs. Twenty of these photos are images of Boydton Institute's buildings, leaders, students, and staff. From these photos we can glean some interesting and helpful details about the day-to-day life around the campus during that time.

For example, contained in Ada's scrapbook is the photograph below labeled "Laura's Cabin—One of the more comfortable ones."



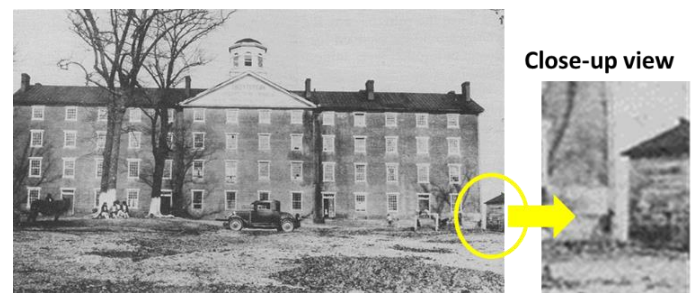
From the collection of the Caroline Rose Foster
North Jersey History & Genealogy Center
The Morristown & Morris Township Library

Mrs. Helen Sharpe was the long-standing headmistress of the Boydton Institute and Miss Clara Belle Hatch was one of its dedicated teachers and supporters. The following is an excerpt from a letter written by Miss Hatch to her niece:

One of the four little daughters of Mrs. Sharpe became such an invalid as to require constant attention and what money could not buy was given in overflowing measure when God put into the heart of "Laura" her colored nurse such love and devotion as are rarely seen even in a mother for her own child . Nothing was too hard to do, nothing too hard to bear that might add to the comfort of the one she loved so unselfishly. A friend at the North gladly paid her wages year after year until at the age of sixteen her young charge was called to the land where sickness and sorrow are unknown.

When combined with the newly found photo, this excerpt gives us the information needed to grasp the significance of Laura and her cabin while also helping us better understand the trials and tribulations of Mrs. Sharpe's life while working at the Institute .

Mrs. Rebecca Ratliff is a long-time resident of Boydton, Virginia and has a remarkable memory. The photograph of Laura's Cabin was on display at our community workshop during Boydton Day. Upon seeing it and without hesitation, Mrs. Ratliff said that she remembered it as being near the main brick campus building. She immediately pointed it out as being the small building- part of which is visible on the right edge of the picture below.



The Virginia Magazine of History & Biography , Harold S. Forthsythe, *But My Friends are Poor* vol. 105 No. 4, p. 426, 1997.

Virginia Museum of History & Culture (F222.V81 M27 v.105 no.4)
www.virginiahistory.org , cropped to better fit page and overlaid with circle to point out cabin location as shown in close up view.

By blending this information all together, we now know both the significance and one possible location of Laura's cabin.

Another wonderful photo from Adeline's scrapbook shown below was labeled "Old College Well –Miss Ware and her bag".



From the collection of the Caroline Rose Foster
North Jersey History & Genealogy Center
the Morristown & Morris Township Library

From an April 27, 1893 issue of The Midland Express, a newspaper published and printed at the Boydton Institute, we found the following excerpt describing the Institute's commencement exercise for that year: "It was already 7:30 when Miss Ware, the accomplished organist of the Institute, who presided at the organ, struck up a lively march from Berthier".

The September 12, 1942 issue of the New Journal and Guide contains the obituary of a Haywood W. Goode, eldest, son of Professor Allen J. Goode and "noted educator of Virginia". From this obituary we learn that Haywood Goode "was a native of Boydton VA and clerk in the General Post Office of New York" and that "he was graduated from Boydton Institute at an early age and became a distinguished pianist having studied under the famous English music teacher, Miss Ware." Combining these fragments of information with the photo fills in some of our knowledge gaps about Miss Ware as the music teacher at the Boydton Institute. It also gives us insights into the future impact that her teaching had on the life of one of her students.

In addition, by combining this photo of Miss Ware with another photo from a local Boydton resident, we are also given some important clues about a water well that was once on the campus. Based on the words in the label "Old College Well" it would be logical to assume that this well was used when this campus operated as Randolph Macon College. In his book *Randolph-Macon College –A Southern History 1825-1967*, Scanlon mentions some mischievous behavior of the Randolph Macon College students where they would "fill up the well with pine logs in order to have it cleared of rats, cats, and hares".

Dominion Energy discovered one such water well on the OBCF's property line while they were installing underground electrical lines along Jefferson Street. It is fifty feet deep and is believed to be hand dug. This raises questions. First, was this the same water well shown in Adeline's scrapbook photo? If so, this would be beneficial to the OBCF because it gives a historically accurate image of this campus well house -- at least at one point in history-- should the decision ever be made to replicate it. Secondly, is the well house in the first photo the same small building in another photo as shown below? If so, this gives us significant clues as to the location of this well and could guide future archaeological exploration on this site.



The Main Randolph Macon College & Boydton Institute Campus Building: Photo courtesy of Mrs. Ruth Allen Crowder

These are just a few examples of the historical information that can be gleaned from Ada's photos. We remain optimistic that by likewise studying other photos in this collection even more previously unknown historical details will come to light. The OBCF remains thankful for the research of Lewis and Sylvia Turner and the archival work of the Morristown Library for making this happen.

HENRY WARD BEECHER:

EARLY CATALYST FOR THE BOYDTON INSTITUTE?

After the Randolph Macon College had relocated to Ashland, Virginia, Dr. Charles Cullis came from Boston, Massachusetts to Boydton, Virginia to purchase a large piece of its original Boydton campus. He turned this campus over to a mission organization which he had founded called *Faith Missions at Home and Abroad*. It was on this campus a year later that this organization opened the school for African Americans commonly known as the Boydton Institute. The funds for that purchase were contributed by Dr. Frederick Wooster Owen, his wife Mrs. Louise Graves Owen, and her sister Miss Mary Ella Graves. At the time the Owens and Graves families lived in Morristown, New Jersey where they were members of the South Street Presbyterian Church. In addition to these family members, the congregation of this church also became dedicated supporters of the Boydton Institute.



Miss Mary Ella Graves

*Photo courtesy of a descendant,
Linda Hammersley-Aparo*



Mrs. Louise Graves Owen & Dr. Frederick Wooster Owen

*From the Collection of the Caroline Rose Foster
North Jersey History & Genealogy Center,
The Morristown & Morris Township Library*

Mrs. Louise Graves Owen and Miss Mary Ella Graves were daughters of Mr. Rufus Rowe Graves a wealthy New York cotton broker. Mr. Rufus Graves and his family had been members of the Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, New York. While attending the Plymouth Church, Mr. Graves had served as church treasurer under the pastorship of its famed anti-slavery preacher, Henry Ward Beecher, brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe who wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Plymouth Church was built in 1849–50 and under the leadership of Rev. Beecher as its first minister, it became the foremost center of anti-slavery sentiment in the mid-19th century. Documentary evidence lends support to the belief that Plymouth was also a site of active participation in the Underground Railroad and as such was known as Brooklyn's "Grand Central Depot." See more about this church's involvement in the Underground Railroad in the opening video narrated by Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. at <https://www.plymouthchurch.org/history>.

Among his many other lifetime philanthropic contributions, Rufus Graves made financial donations to the Hampton Institute, which funded the building of one of the campus dormitories namely the "Graves" Cottage. At his death the bulk of Rufus' estate was given to his wife and children and although he also bequeathed funds to a number of other charities, the largest amount of \$100,000 he designated "to be applied for the education of the colored race in the South".



Rufus Rowe Graves

*Photo courtesy of a descendant
Linda Hammersley-Aparo*

Based on this information we can better understand how Mrs. Louise Graves Owen and her sister Miss Mary Ella Graves and other family members became so dedicated to the work of the Boydton Institute and the possibly source of those funds that they used to support it.

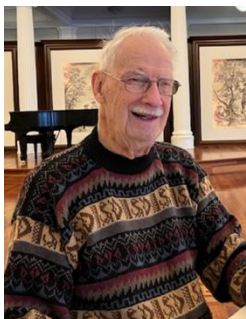
The video *Chanceman's Brothers and Sisters* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1e0ah8SMAVw> recounts how the supporters from the South Street Presbyterian Church and the Morristown community worked together to create a network such that students would come from the Boydton Institute to spend summers in Morristown where they could get higher paying jobs. Many of these students eventually ended up taking up their future residences in Morristown, others returned to Virginia bringing new spouses with them from there. This explains the connections between Boydton, Virginia and Morristown, New Jersey in relation to the Boydton Institute. It also explains why Lewis and Sylvia Turner found photos of life at the Boydton Institute so far away in the archives of the Morristown and Morristown Township Library.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS: BRINGS TALENT & ENERGY

The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation was fortunate to gain four new and talented board members in 2023. They have submitted the following short biographies to help us get to know them better.

Rev. Richard Carl Ennis

Rev. Richard Carl Ennis, born in 1932 in Dumfries Va. (the "oldest continuously occupied town in Va."), graduated from Randolph Macon College, and then the seminary at Drew University in Madison, N.J. His interest in the original Randolph Macon site began when the college glee club bus stopped there to sing the alma mater song while on tour.



Richard Carl Ennis

After his appointment to start a new church, St. George's United Methodist Church in Fairfax, and having served for eight years, he began an appointment in the Ecumenical Institute where he worked in church renewal and community development in Montana and California. (Hispanic communities)

He returned to Virginia in 1986 where he served several churches and as chair of the Education Commission of the Conference Board of Discipleship. His wife, Margaret, of forty-seven years died in 2005. He later married a longtime colleague, Linda Crawford. Linda and Carl have been married seventeen years. They live in the Village of Tinker Creek, Roanoke County and have been instrumental in strengthening ties between their community and Hollins University.

Should readers of this document need more information, I refer to my memoir, "An Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times," available from Amazon.

Linda D. Ennis

I was born in Pensacola Florida to a very Methodist family. Mom and Dad, Aunts and Uncles, cousins, and if family folklore is to be believed, my grandfather and his brother even felled trees and built a Methodist church near the old home place. My Grandfather was the Sunday School Superintendent there for 50 years. (A bit too long, some people said.) That church is still there.

I was practically raised in the Methodist church near my home in Pensacola. Every time the doors were open it seemed that I was there.

I became involved with our Methodist Church Conference, Blue Lake Camp, as a camp counselor over the summers and began to become more involved in Methodism at the conference level. In 1968, I was a Youth Delegate at the Alabama-West Florida Conference where the vote was taken to form the United Methodist Church.



Linda D. Ennis

I attended Judson College and received a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. While I was attending there, I worked as the Youth Counselor at the First United Methodist Church in Selma Alabama, and enjoyed the many service projects that we did in the community. After graduation, I married a young Staff Sergeant in the Air Force and was transferred to Washington DC in the 80s. After several years as an Air Force wife, we divorced and went our separate ways.

In 1996 I joined Cokesbury United Methodist Church in Woodbridge Va. where Rev. Carl Ennis was Pastor. I started taking classes at George Mason University and graduated with a master's degree in Education and Instructional Technology. Carl must have sensed that I had lots of experience working with youth because he asked me to be one of the youth counselors for Cokesbury. I worked as a youth counselor for the next 13 years. However, it was not enough to be a youth counselor. I decided to go to Wesley Seminary in DC for the Certification program, and in 2007 I was awarded the Certification in Youth Ministry at the Virginia Conference. Also, during this time I became a Delegate to Annual Conference for the Alexandria District

For my day job I worked in the federal government where I worked on curriculum development for the Navy, and later as a Registrar for the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency's college.

I married Carl Ennis in 2006, and in 2020 we moved back to VA and joined Northside United Methodist Church in Roanoke. In December I was elected as the church's Lay Delegate to the Annual Conference.

Robert Jarratt Spiers, Jr. "Bobby"

Bobby was born and raised in Roanoke, VA. His father was R. J. Spiers, Sr. of Jarratt, VA; his mother was Helen Virginia Hankla of Radford. Bobby graduated from Shenandoah College and Conservatory of Music, valedictorian of the Class of '69, with a Bachelor of Music Education degree, majoring in french horn and minoring Bobby spent three years in the United States Army Band at Fort Monroe, VA.

A month after graduation Bobby married Elizabeth Ann Rex of Charlottesville, VA and they spent their first fourteen months of married life in Morgantown, WVA, where they each earned the Master of Music Degree in Music Education. Betty Ann's instrument was and is piano.

Their first teaching job was in Roanoke County where they made their home in Vinton and where their two boys were born. After ten years they took jobs in Henrico County; Bobby also taught the last part of his career in the public schools of Hanover County. They have always been active in church music (Thrasher Memorial Methodist in Vinton, River Road UMC and Reveille UMC in Richmond).



Bobby and Betty Ann Spiers

Elizabeth Ann Rex Spiers ("Betty Ann")

Betty Ann was born in Farmville, VA, lived three years in Culpeper and entered first grade in Charlottesville at Venable Elementary School. As a genealogist she has discovered that she was descended from the Venables in Prince Edward County (her father's line). Her father was George Lehman Rex, Jr. and her mother was Sarah Lewis Button, both of Farmville. Her mother's ancestors were among the early settlers of Jeffersonston, VA (Little Fork near Germanna).

Betty Ann graduated from Lane High School and attended Longwood College, where she held many leadership positions and graduated with a Bachelor of Music Education degree with Honors. She began her

teaching career in Henrico County, supervised by her future mother-in-law, Helen Spiers.

In addition to public school teaching, Betty Ann has maintained a private piano studio in her home and joined organizations where she served as a judge of competitions. These organizations have provided venues for performance, with which she is active in retirement.

EBENEZER ACADEMY BROCHURE DESIGNED

Directions
Get off I-85 at Warfield, Exit 34. Go north on S.R. 630 past mini mart, 0.5 mile to U.S. Hwy 1 at Warfield Post Office. Turn left on U.S. 1 and go 0.6 mile. Access dirt road is on left, 0.1 mile past S.R. 648 intersection on right.

About Us
The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation is a tax exempt 501 (c) 3 organization formed in 2004 to identify, preserve and interpret significant sites on the old Brunswick Circuit—the first Methodist circuit in Virginia and one of the oldest in America. The Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation works cooperatively with the Virginia Conference Historical Society of the United Methodist Church.

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History
Ebenezer Academy, said to be the oldest Methodist school in America, had its genesis in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Some of the brightest lights of early Methodism such as Bishop Francis Asbury and Edward Dorrigois had a hand in its establishment, and though the exact date of construction is not known, it is thought to have been established sometime between 1783 and 1788. Raised in the twentieth century, the building was photographed in its last years. It was located along Clayton Park road near Menzies Chapel in Brunswick County, Virginia today near Warfield.

Layout
The first building on the 57 acre site was a 207 by 40 two-story building. The general layout of the site was a second story enclosed within a gambrel roof. The two end walls were each centered with an integral stone chimney. At the second story level the end walls were of dressed stone sheathed with veneer masonry. An 805 portion to the Virginia Conference Academy for funding describes the academy as "a good, plain, unadorned building of stone. Having four rooms, with a fireplace in each, a few mathematical instruments, globes, and a small library."

Within this enclosure a pyramidal monument was erected of stones salvaged from the walls. In this state the site has continued under the auspices of the Methodist Church. At one time the grounds were considered as a possible location for construction of housing for retired clergy.

One of the Old Brunswick Circuit Foundation's three historic sites, the Ebenezer Academy is said to be the oldest Methodist School in America. While recently visiting this site, board member Walter Beales, took the opportunity to talk to the owner of a nearby convenience store. During this conversation, he learned that their customers frequently inquire about the Ebenezer Academy and many are looking for directions to the site. The store owners offered to make brochures available to those who inquired if the OBCF would provide them.

Armed with that information and kind invitation, the board voted to develop a new brochure with contents focused solely on the Ebenezer Academy. Walter Beales provided two pictures of the academy and route description while another board member contributed a recently discovered third photograph. Jack Martin had connections to an outstanding artist, Denver Martin, and the two of them developed the wonderful Ebenezer Academy brochure seen above for distribution at the convenience store and elsewhere as needed. Thanks to Denver for his artistry.

GREAT TEAM WORK & END PRODUCT!!!