



Historic Perspectives

Preservation of Prince William County's Historic Resources

Spring 2025 Contents

- 1 | "The Standard of Work was Excellent": WPA Sewing Room Project
- 3 | Image Spotlight
- 4 | History Corner
- 6 | Preservation Corner
- 7 | HPD News

PRINCE WILLIAM

Historic Preservation

Prince William County
Department of Parks & Recreation
Office of Historic Preservation

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(703) 792-5546

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Historic Preservation

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"The Standard of Work was Excellent": WPA Sewing Room Project in Prince William, 1935-1942



Batting to fill mattresses at Brentsville, in concert with the Home Extension Service and ladies of the community.

New Deal projects came and went with available funding or work that needed to be done. Starting with a small base of prior funding from the Hoover administration, President Franklin D. Roosevelt quickly expanded the government's relief to the poor and rapidly increased employment programs. The famed Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) began to recruit less than a month after he took office, while other programs were wrangled over in Congress. Relief for adults of employment age took longer to hammer out, evolving from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and Civil Works Administration until 1935 when the

Works Progress Administration (WPA) went into operation. Rather than provide direct payments, these programs were intended to put unemployed men to work on mostly manual jobs that needed to be done, from sewer and sidewalk construction to parks and airports. It eventually evolved to include programs for the arts, theatre, and historical research.

From the earliest days of the Works Progress Administration through the end of the program, however, women were also included. Some were employed in clerical positions or with reading and art programs. The WPA also created sewing rooms all across the country. The



Miss Emma Wolfe's finished work was selected for display in Washington, DC.

projects were intended to employ out of work women in making clothing for local relief agencies to distribute to people in need, especially children.

Prince William County was no exception! A geographically large county with only 17,000 people in 1940 (compared to 482,200 in 2020) it hosted several sewing room projects to be close the homes of the women it employed, most of whom lacked cars. Manassas was the project headquarters, as the county seat. Other sewing rooms operated in Brentsville, Waterfall, and Triangle. The county allocated \$25.00 (\$571.75 today) a month for expenses, later adding \$35.00 a month for travel expenses and sundries for the project superintendent.

Work was done by hand and with a sewing machine. Most clothing made was for women and children from popular patterns of the day. Mary Celestine Brown of Brentsville was employed as Superintendent from 1935 until project closure, with 17 employees in 1940. Workers specialized

at some rooms; Brentsville made mattresses and at Triangle quilts, in addition to clothing. A WPA inspector in 1937 complimented the Prince William project, "The standard of work was excellent, the room was orderly, there were adequate machines and material and the wall charts were well kept. I think that the standards in this sewing room could well be a model for your others."

In 1936 when the program was challenged, an anonymous sewing room employee wrote the Journal and summed up her experience thus, "when a woman will walk for several miles in all sorts of weather to work in a W. P. A. Sewing Room, for the prevailing wage, even the most critical must admit that it is not

merely a matter of recreation and spending money."

For almost seven years until the WPA programs ended in 1942 these women labored not only to take care of their own families, but to help others in the community have new, sturdy clothes when they could not otherwise afford them. It is not known exactly how many women worked for W.P. 7169-2985 over its lifetime but these are a few names of these hard-working ladies.

Martha Brown, Mary C. Brown, Ida Carr, Mary Downs, Rosie Keys, Grace McDonough, and Edith Moore.

J. Nathan McDonald
Historical Interpreter, Brentsville
Courthouse Historic Centre

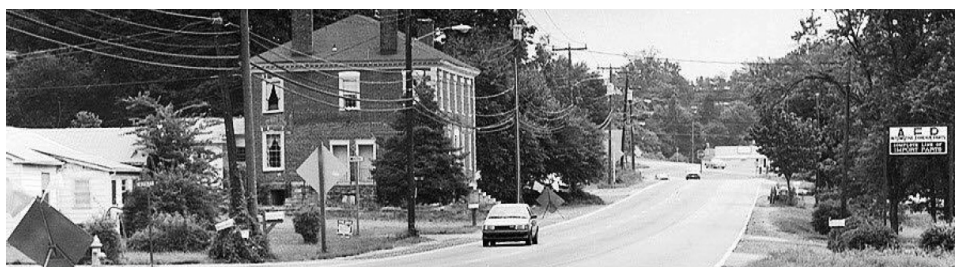




Image Spotlight

Written in Stone: Headstones at Cedar Run Cemetery

Every cemetery holds a multitude of buried stories, and Cedar Run Cemetery on Fleetwood Drive is no exception. Cedar Run is a unique cemetery because most of the people buried here were not originally interred here. It was created after the U.S. government expanded the Quantico Marine Corps base in 1942 by over 50,000 acres. Over fifty cemeteries had to be moved because they were in what is known as the “Guadalcanal area,” which was designated for shelling and artillery. Cedar Run Cemetery incorporates multiple small cemeteries from Stafford, Fauquier, and Prince William Counties. The relocation was segregated: Cedar Run was established for White burials, and African American graves were reinterred down the road at Carver Cemetery.

The best way to begin to understand any cemetery is to identify notable headstones, of which Cedar Run Cemetery has quite a few. Detailed written records exist that note burial names and locations. However, headstone inscriptions add depth to these records. For instance, Charles Allegar’s headstone reveals that he was “Killed on the PB & W Railroad as brakeman near Baltimore, Maryland on December 30, 1905.” His obituary revealed that he had only worked for the railroad for two weeks prior to his death.

One burial has a direct connection to a Prince William County historic site. James F. Clark’s headstone is unfortunately now difficult to read. However, his epitaph has been transcribed:

IN MEMORIAM
JAMES F. CLARK

Died Sept 2. 1872

From a wound received by
the hands of an assassin
Aged 28 years

Though young in the legal
Profession, yet he attained a
Respectable position at the bar
Generous, noble, spirited and a
True friend. Loved in life and
Mourned in death by all
Who knew him.
Requiescat en pace

Clark was a Commonwealth Attorney for Prince William County who caused a scandal when he was accused of eloping with Miss Fannie Fewell, who was only 16 years old. After he was arrested for alleged kidnapping, he was imprisoned at the Brentsville Jail, where he was murdered by Fannie Fewell’s brother. You can learn more about Clark’s death by visiting Brentsville and touring the exhibits inside the Jail.

These are just two of over two hundred markers at Cedar Run. The cemetery is maintained by the U.S. Marine Corps and is open to the public.

Lauren Maloy
Historic Communities Coordinator



Allegar headstone



James Clark headstone



History Corner

Michael Emmet Urell – Bristoe Station

The American Civil War left its mark on Prince William County in a very tangible way. Two major Civil War battles were fought in Manassas, and eight other notable battles and countless skirmishes and raids took place in Prince William County. Within the larger stories of those battles are thousands of individual accounts that contributed to our understanding of what happened. One of those personal stories was that of a Medal of Honor recipient, Michael Emmet Urell.

Urell was the color bearer of Company “E” of the 82nd New York Volunteers at the Battle of Bristoe Station on October 14, 1863, in western Prince William County. He was born on November 8, 1844, in Nenagh, Tipperary County, in south-central Ireland. He immigrated to the United States and when the Civil War broke out he enlisted on April 19, 1861, in the New York State Militia which amalgamated into the 82nd New York Volunteers, a regiment raised in New York City.

Urell fought in some of the biggest battles of the Civil War, including First Bull Run, and he was wounded at Fair Oaks. He later fought at the Seven Days Battle, where Urell was at the Siege of Yorktown, West Point, Peach Orchard, Savage Station, Malvern Hill and more. Urell was also at Second Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Gettys-



Portrait of Michael Emmet Urell USWV by Louis B. Gebhard, 1904

burg before he arrived at Bristoe Station in the fall of 1863.

Bristoe Station on October 14, 1863, was the defining moment of Michael Emmett Urell’s life. He carried the colors as his regiment raced towards the safety of the railroad embankment at Bristoe Station. In this life and death foot race between Union and Confederate soldiers, Urell was simultaneously shot twice. His wounds were so severe that he was left for dead. In 1866, Urell wrote,

“I received two wounds at the same time. One through the right arm and the other through the body entering my right side and coming out the left, injuring me severely for life.”

However, this was the tame version. Urell later described his wounds in more detail. *“One of the wounds is through the body the bullet passing through the right lung and left kidney...”*

Miraculously, Urell survived his wounds and returned to service on April 1, 1864. Seven and a

half months after his wounding at Bristoe Station, Urell fought in the Battle of the Wilderness, where he was wounded for a third time. In a post-War letter referring to the wound he received at Bristoe, Urell stated, *“The wound through the body did not heal up for nearly two years, but [I] returned to the front where the wound was discharging badly, against the advice of the surgeon and relatives. Was wounded slightly at the Wilderness, but the old wound getting worse and being unable to travel with the army, the surgeon put me in charge of the wounded who were unable to walk and told to go to the rear there was some six hundred slightly wounded...”*

Urell’s last act of service was to lead a group of 600 wounded soldiers to safety. He led them over 40 miles from the Wilderness to Aquia Creek. As they approached Fredericksburg, Urell organized those who could still fight into a marching column four abreast, with the rest of the

wounded falling in behind. The bluff worked and it drove the Confederate cavalry from the city. Urell’s men turned north and followed the railroad north to Aquia Creek, repulsing several skirmishes with Confederates. Upon reaching Aquia Creek, Urell had hoped to find boats, however, there were none. With the Confederates closing in on the wounded Union soldiers, Urell ordered rafts to be built using whatever could be scavenged. The exhausted and wounded Federals climbed onto logs and lumber to float into the Potomac and escape the Confederate cavalry closing in on them. Urell and his fellow soldiers were rescued by Union boats and taken to Washington D.C. hospitals that night.

Michael Urell was honorably discharged from the service on May 23, 1864, on account of his multiple wounds. For his actions at Bristoe Station, Urell was awarded the Medal of Honor on June 6, 1870. The citation reads:

“The President of the United

States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Private Michael Emmet Urell, United States Army, for gallantry in action on 14 October 1863, while serving with Company E, 82d New York Infantry, in action at Bristoe Station, Virginia. While detailed as Color Bearer; Private Urell was severely wounded.”

After the Civil War, Michael Emmet Urell remained active in the veteran’s community, making friends in Washington, D.C. before going on to volunteer in the capital’s National Guard. In 1898, at 54-years-old, Urell went off to war a second time, this time to fight in the Spanish-American War as a Major in the 1st District of Columbia Infantry. Urell returned from the war and continued to serve his country before dying in Ireland on September 6, 1910. Today, Urell is buried in Arlington Cemetery.

Lance Russell

Site Interpreter, Bristoe Station
Battlefield Heritage Park



Register Today For Our Upcoming Programs
Advanced tickets may be purchased online at: www.pwcparks.info/hptickets
www.pwcparks.org/HistoricPrograms

Rippon Lodge Easter Egg Trail

Ages 6 mo.-11 • Rippon Lodge

| | | | |
|------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 4/12 | 10a-11a | 3 and under | \$5 per person |
| | 11:30a-12:30p | ages 4-6 | \$10 per person |
| | 1:30p-2:30p | ages 7-11 | \$10 per person |

All those over 12 must pay \$10 regardless of time slot.

Scrambled Egg Hunt at Brentsville Courthouse

Ages 6+ • Brentsville Courthouse Historic Site

| | | | |
|------|-----------|-----|------|
| 4/19 | 10-10:30a | Sat | \$35 |
| 4/19 | 11-11:30a | Sat | \$35 |
| 4/19 | 12-12:30p | Sat | \$35 |
| 4/19 | 1-1:30p | Sat | \$35 |
| 4/19 | 2-2:30p | Sat | \$35 |

History Homeschool Day at Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre

Ages 6-18 • Brentsville Courthouse Historic Site

| | | | |
|------|---------|-----|------|
| 4/29 | 10a-12p | Tue | \$10 |
| 4/29 | 1-3p | Tue | \$10 |

Williams-Dawe House Hard Hat Tours

Ages 10+ • Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre

| | | | |
|------|---------------|-----|------|
| 5/17 | 11:00a-12:00p | Sa | \$25 |
| 5/17 | 1:00p-2:00p | Sat | \$25 |
| 5/17 | 3:00p-4:00p | Sat | \$25 |

Prince William Lecture Series: “Northern Virginia Luminaries” by Joe Motheral

Ages 10+ • Occoquan Town Hall, 314 Mill St, Occoquan

| | | | | |
|------|-------------|----|------|---|
| 5/22 | 7:00p-8:30p | Th | FREE | h |
|------|-------------|----|------|---|

Behind-The-Scenes Tour of Rippon Lodge

18+ • Rippon Lodge Historic Site

| | | | |
|------|---------------|-----|-----|
| 5/03 | 11:00a-12:30p | Sat | \$5 |
|------|---------------|-----|-----|

Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park Guided Tours

6 Months+ • Bristoe Station Battlefield Heritage Park

| | | | |
|-----------|--------------|----------|------|
| 5/10-5/11 | 11:00a-3:00p | Sun, Sat | FREE |
| 5/24-5/25 | 11:00a-3:00p | Sun, Sat | FREE |
| 6/14-6/15 | 11:00a-3:00p | Sun, Sat | FREE |
| 6/28-6/29 | 11:00a-3:00p | Sun, Sat | FREE |

Juneteenth at Lucasville School

6 Months+ • Lucasville School Historic Site

| | | | |
|------|--------------|----|------|
| 6/19 | 11:00a-3:00p | Th | FREE |
|------|--------------|----|------|

Museum Family Day at Brentsville Courthouse: Life In a 19th Century Town

Ages 4-9 • Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre

| | | | |
|-----|---------------|-----|-----|
| 6/9 | 10:00a-12:00p | Mon | \$5 |
|-----|---------------|-----|-----|

Preservation Corner

The Lost Manassas Cyclorama

After the American Civil War ended, there were several cyclorama paintings created for the public to view and learn about some great battles of that war; Gettysburg, Manassas, and Atlanta. Cycloramas were huge entertainment hits in the period after the war.

Cycloramas are large circular paintings that are painted to focus on certain subjects in as much detail as possible and are housed in specially built circular buildings. These buildings were needed to create the desired illusion: viewers saw the painting from a central platform, around them a three-dimensional diorama helped disguise the point at which the painting ended and the foreground began. Visitors are said to have felt like they were in the middle of the battle action when viewing these huge paintings up close. They were like our IMAX theaters today. The paintings seemed so realistic that some veterans were moved to tears.

In 1886, Washington, D.C. gained a sensational new attraction when a cyclorama depicting the August 30, 1862, Battle of Second Manassas opened to the public. The Manassas Panorama, as it was called, won praise from many Civil War veterans. This massive painting, housed in a large circular building a short distance from the Washington



National Park Service

Photos of the lost cyclorama

Monument, was the work of Frenchman Theophile Poilpot and a team of 13 other artists, some of whom had spent an entire summer making field sketches on the actual battlefield. Many of the cycloramas were painted by European artists as the type originated in Europe.

In 1901, as the novelty of the cycloramas began to wear off in the United States and attendance declined, the Manassas Panorama was sold. The new owner, entrepreneur Emmett W. McConnell, took the 20,000 square foot canvas on the road.

It was seen at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904 and at the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition in 1907. After that the Manassas Cyclorama disappeared. At the time he acquired the painting, McConnell owned nearly 30 other cyclorama paintings and had become known as "The Panorama King." At a sale of other paintings after his death, the Manassas Cyclorama was

not among those listed. No one knows exactly what happened to the painting and most historians assume it was destroyed at some point in the 20th century. (Courtesy of Manassas National Battlefield NPS)

Today, only two of these magnificent works of art survive, Gettysburg and Atlanta. In the 2000's both paintings received new housing and were restored to their full glory. Both paintings needed to be repaired and have missing components added back, while some early 20th century additions were removed. Even in this digital world they are popular tourist attractions. They are enduring teaching tools for future generations on not just the history of the Civil War, but art conservation, political history, historic preservation and how we portray U.S. History regionally and nationally.

Dan Goldstein

Historic Site Interpreter, Rippon Lodge Historic Site



HPD News

Staff News and Notes

HP staff spent their pre-Christmas office luncheon outing visiting a newly acquired piece of historic farm property in Henrico County, VA. The site in Varina, along the James River, has been recently purchased by the county. Many people tied to Virginia's early history have passed through the farm including Pocahontas and Thomas Jefferson's daughter Martha. The farm will become a county park and historic site.

HP staff attended and presented at the Virginia Association of Museum's Conference at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA in March.

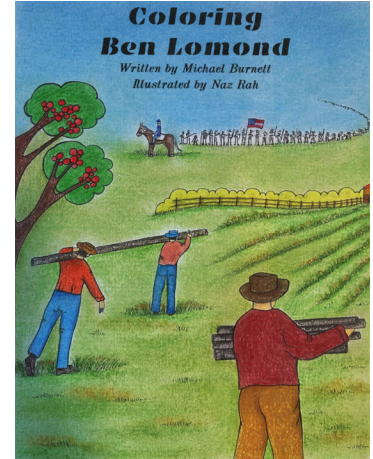
The Office of Historic Preservation hosted the 10th Annual Prince William/Manassas History Symposium on March 22, 2025. The Prince William Journal was released. Copies can be purchased

at any of our historic site gift shops for \$10.

Historic Interpreter Michael Burnett, completed *Coloring Ben Lomond*, a coloring book designed to highlight the history of Ben Lomond Historic Site in an engaging way for children. The coloring book is for sale in the historic site gift shops for \$7.

Dan Goldstein

Historic Site Interpreter, Rippon Lodge
Historic site



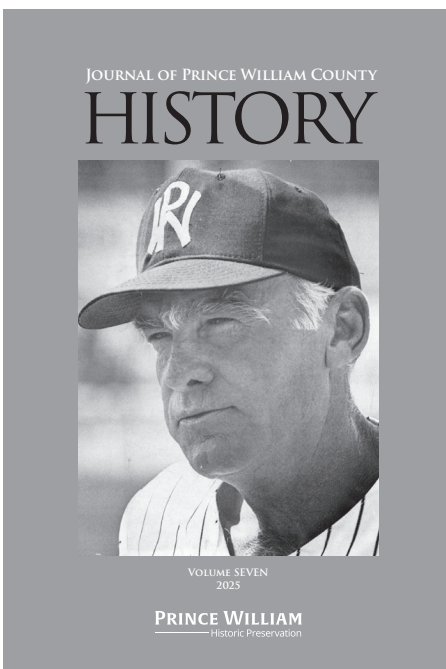
Foundation Update

The PW Historic Preservation Foundation works to increase awareness of the fifteen (15) historic properties owned by the county and assist in raising funds to supplement support for those resources beyond what can be allocated through the traditional county budget process. Currently, the foundation is focused on raising funds to support the Prince William County Revolutionary War Memorial project, historic interpretation at the Bushy Park site, restoration of the Williams-Dawes House, and the design of the Museum and Environmental Education Center at Rippon Lodge. Although all of these projects are important, our county Revolutionary War Memorial project is particularly timely as we move into the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the American War of Independence. Contributions of any magnitude in support of foundation projects are welcome, and the public may conveniently

donate online by going to hwww.preservepw.org. We appreciate in advance everyone's support.

Earnie Porta

President, PW Historic Preservation
Foundation



Prince William County Has a
Past That's Worth Preserving

Become a
Foundation Member!
www.pwhpf.org



PRINCE WILLIAM HISTORIC PRESERVATION 2025 LECTURE SERIES

Each program is free and will begin at 7 pm.

MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE RETURNS

Elizabeth Reese
January 23
Old Manassas Courthouse
9248 Lee Avenue, Manassas

GEORGE WASHINGTON IN THE FRENCH & INDIAN WAR

Scott Patchan
March 27
Old Manassas Courthouse
9248 Lee Avenue, Manassas

NORTHERN VIRGINIA LUMINARIES

Joe Motheral
May 22
Occoquan Town Hall
314 Mill Street, Occoquan

ATROCITIES AT BULL RUN

Harry Smetzer
July 24
Pat White Center at Ben Lomond
10501 Copeland Drive, Manassas

POTOMAC MARBLE: HISTORY OF THE SEARCH FOR THE IDEAL STONE

Paul Kreingold
September 25
Old Manassas Courthouse
9248 Lee Avenue, Manassas

VIGILANTE JUSTICE IN PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY

Kate Bitely
November 20
Occoquan Town Hall
314 Mill Street, Occoquan

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www.historicprincewilliam.org

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YouTube: Prince William Office of Historic Preservation

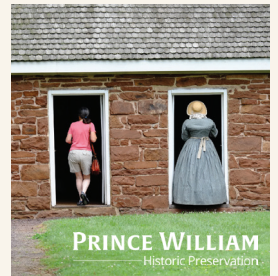
BEN LOMOND DAY APRIL 26 11AM-4PM

Free, \$5 Suggested Donation

Ben Lomond's history spans centuries, from a Civil War hospital to a presidential retreat to a working farm.

Historical activities throughout the day include:

- musket firing • cooking • crafts • farm animals • tractors • games • and more!



Ben Lomond Historic Site 10321 Sudley Manor Drive, Manassas 703-367-7872

www.pwcva.gov/history
HistoricPreservation@pwcgov.org

Connect with us on social media!
www.facebook.com/pwhistoric

X: @PWHPF Instagram: PWC History
YouTube: Prince William Office of Historic Preservation

Walking Tours of Historic Prince William Towns

Join local historians once a month this summer for FREE special walking tours of historic towns in Prince William County.



Walking Tours of Historic Prince William Towns: Dumfries May 16 • 6 - 7 p.m.

Visit Dumfries, a bustling and diverse community founded on tobacco and witness to the American Revolution. This tour will focus on Dumfries' Main Street, and will depart from Williams Ordinary, located at 17674 Main Street, Dumfries, VA 22026.



Walking Tours of Historic Prince William Towns: Sudley Springs June 20 • 6 - 7 p.m.

Explore the remnants of Sudley Springs, which at one time was a bustling hamlet, home to a church, a mill, and a mineral spring. This tour is co-hosted by the Sudley Springs United Methodist Church and Manassas National Battlefield Park. Tour will depart from the Sudley Springs United Methodist Church, located at 5308 Sudley Road, Manassas, VA 20109.



Walking Tours of Historic Prince William Towns: Haymarket July 18 • 6 - 7 p.m.

Tour Haymarket, the second town in the county to be incorporated in 1882 with a rich history spanning as far back as the 18th century. The group will depart from the Haymarket Museum located at 15025 Washington St, Haymarket, VA 20169.

For more information visit www.pwcva.gov/history or call 703-792-1731.

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Take a Sip of History: Cemeteries of Prince William County April 23 6:30-8 p.m. FREE Donations Welcome

There are hundreds of cemeteries in Prince William County, ranging from small family graveyards nestled in the woods to the prominent National Memorial Cemetery at Quantico. Join local historians and archaeologists for stories about some of the most unique burials and final resting places that hold the secrets of Prince William County's past.

This is a joint program between Water's End Brewery and Prince William Historic Preservation. Historic Prince William is an event sponsor for Take a Sip of History programs. For more information, call 703-792-1731.



Water's End Brewery
12425 Dillingham Square
Lake Ridge, VA 22192

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