

# Goochland County Historical Society Newsletter

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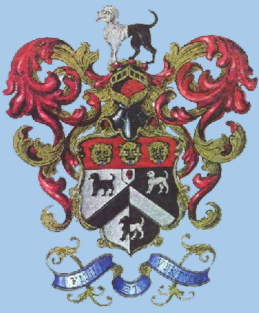
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OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS  
Pictured at right: Richard Toler, Robin  
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Mark Wittkofski, and Eve Barenholtz;  
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## GOOCHLAND COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Catherine Southworth  
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### Visit Goochland County Historical Society

The Society's History Center is located next to the Goochland Courthouse Green at 2924 River Road West (Route 6)

#### Office hours:

Wednesday–Friday, 10:00–3:00  
2nd Saturday of the month, 10:00–3:00

Note: Those travelling long distances should call the society to confirm it will be open the date of your visit.  
Phone (804) 556-3966.

#### Email the Society:

[goochlandhistory@comcast.net](mailto:goochlandhistory@comcast.net)

#### Visit us online:

[www.goochlandhistory.org](http://www.goochlandhistory.org)  
[www.goochlandhistory.wordpress.com](http://www.goochlandhistory.wordpress.com)  
[x.com/GoochlandCHS](http://x.com/GoochlandCHS)  
[YouTube/@goochlandcountyhistoricals3250](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGoochlandcountyhistoricals3250)

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Family lore can be a most useful resource when it comes to historical research. In the preparations for the commemoration of the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of General Lafayette's visit to Goochland County on November 2, 1824, I vaguely remembered my own family's connection.

Two centuries ago, that epic visit was part of a multi-year celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. As the last surviving officer of General Washington's staff, Lafayette toured the country at the invitation of President Monroe. People lined the streets and roads everywhere he went. Old men told stories of having seen him as a young man. Young children and babes in arms were told they had been seen by him. It was the Taylor Swift "Eras Tour" of the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. People would never forget it. And yet...I could not quite remember our Lafayette connection. November 2, approached, as did the event, superbly organized by the Goochland 250<sup>th</sup> Commission, but that memory refused to come forth.

During my youth, a miniature horseshoe framed with a letter from a French general, had hung on the wall in my godfather's house in Orange County. Could that be it? The family story was that age seven, my godfather had presented the horseshoe to a visiting general in Richmond. My childhood memories grew clearer. I now recalled that my godfather was chosen for this honor because his own grandfather's great-grandmother had been presented to General Lafayette on his tour in 1824. "Taken" by her beauty, he had presented her a lock of his hair.

Still, I needed proof. A call to a first cousin and family historian in Pittsylvania County, confirmed the existence of that miniature horseshoe. Her father had made the presentation on Armistice Day in 1921 to the French General, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, Marechal Ferdinand Foch. Alas, she had no memory of a connection to Lafayette. One of the many advantages of coming from a large family is that other cousins are also custodians of historical treasures.

"Why of course," my second cousin in Albemarle said when I called. "I have the lock of hair in my safety deposit box."

As she told me, General Lafayette was smitten by the beauty of Maria Ward Randolph, daughter-in-law of his former comrade-in-arms, Edmund Randolph. He presented the lock of his hair as a token of friendship and admiration. The hair, preserved in a small glass case, has been passed down through generations and is now proudly held by her great-great-great granddaughter.

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Left: Maria Ward Randolph who captured Lafayette's eye.



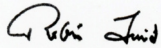
MARIA WARD

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So it was, on November 2, 2024—200 years after his visit to Goochland County—a lock of General Lafayette’s hair was displayed at Tuckahoe alongside a portrait of the renowned beauty who had caught his eye.

History is a tapestry of many threads woven into a complex and colorful story. Every generation learns from the previous one. It is important to preserve the “lore” for the generations to come.

Sincerely,



Robin Lind, President

Right: Lock of General Lafayette’s hair presented to Maria Ward Randolph in 1824.



## TIME TO RENEW

Hello, members and friends! Greetings from the Goochland County Historical Society. This past year, we welcomed more than 48 new families to our membership. We held genealogical workshops in the spring and had several well attended lectures. We helped the Sampson family locate their ancestral burying ground and led a clean-up of a cemetery known as Locust Grove where we uncovered a well-preserved 1844 grave marker. This past fall we participated in a commemoration of Lafayette’s 1824-1825 Grand Tour at Historic Tuckahoe and had a historical marker erected across from the Courthouse green to mark the occasion of his visit.

This coming year we hope to continue to celebrate the U. S. Semiquincentennial. This 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our democratic republic will provide a unique opportunity to reflect on its origins and evaluate its evolution to the present day. The Goochland County Historical Society is planning our county’s commemoration through the Goochland County 250<sup>th</sup> Commission by creating exciting experiences in which people can engage with history as part of the American story; and learn how the events, ideas, and ideals of the Revolution continue to be relevant. At the same time, a grant from the Roller-Bottimore Foundation will allow us to create an exhibit on the Revolutionary War that will be shown at the History Center.

We at the Society embrace our responsibility as stewards of Goochland County history and all of the resources that it holds in trust for the public. We hope you will continue to support our mission to provide opportunities for the community to learn about the history of Goochland and its people. Please renew your membership today or join us if you are not yet a member!

## NEW OFFICERS ELECTED

New officers and directors were elected unanimously at the annual meeting on December 8, 2024, held at the Chapel at the Elk Hill Campus in western Goodland. The nominating committee proposed a slate of Robin Lind, president; Manny Alvarez, first vice president; Robin Hillman, second vice president; and Suzanne Keesler, Recording Secretary for the 2025-2026 term. J. Mark Wittkofski and Sally K. Graham were nominated for a three-year term on the board.

Lind is a journalist and author who has served as president for the past two years. He was first elected to the board of directors in 1984, succeeding founder Elie Weeks as a representative from Dover District.

First Vice President Manny Alvarez is chair of the Goochland County 250<sup>th</sup> Commission. He is a former county supervisor, who also served as interim county administrator. He succeeds Richard Toler who has served since 2022.

Second Vice President Robin Hillman is a native of the county. She is Goochland County Emergency Management Coordinator and serves as Vice Chair of the Goochland County 250<sup>th</sup> Commission. She succeeds Scott Johnson who has also served since 2022 and as President in 2016-17.

Suzanne Keesler continues as Recording Secretary, serving a second term.

The new directors are Mark Wittkofski, a retired archaeologist who has worked with both Virginia Department of Transportation and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and Sally Graham, former executive director of Goochland Cares. Longtime Treasurer Kitty Kimmel retired at the end of 2024. On the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Board of Directors unanimously approved the appointment of Eve Barenholtz to succeed her.



# SEARCHING FOR FAMILY ROOTS



Searching for the Sampson family burying ground. (L. to R.) Richard Toler, Serena Harris, Lennard Johnson, Jowanda Sampson and Junius Sampson [Not pictured: Wilford Robinson Sr., Delora Houston, and Robin Lind].

In 1951, with pick and shovel, 20-year-old Wilford Robinson Sr. hand-dug the grave for Julian Sampson on the side of old Three Chopt Road on the Sampson farm in far eastern Goochland County.

The grave was in the family burying ground at the edge of the woods, alongside an open field. The body was carried in on a mule cart, and it joined those of as many as a dozen other family members who had been interred in that fertile soil for almost a century. No headstones marked their final resting place as was common for graves in the county from the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The short rows of rectangular depressions were etched in memory. The names of the departed were listed in the Family Bible, their stories told at the kitchen table.

Fast forward 73 years: the location of the family burying ground had faded from local knowledge, so the Goochland County Historical Society assisted members of the Sampson family in trying to find it.

Much had changed over three-quarters of a century. The Sampson farm had been sold out of the family. Route 250 had greatly reduced traffic on old Three Chopt. Interstate 64 had obliterated local landmarks. The development of the stone quarries on the Ashland Road had severed the property so that it could now only be accessed through Henrico County.

With the kind assistance of current landowner Dr. Khaled Moustafa, members of the family assembled on November 22, 2024, and went in search of the burying ground. Guided by Wilford Robinson Sr., (now 93), Julian Sampson's son Junius, was accompanied by his niece, Delora Houston, cousin Jowanda Sampson, her husband Lennard Johnson, and Wilford's daughter Serena Harris.

In a biting wind, with weak sunshine and the scent of snow in the air, they looked in vain for the burying ground alongside the field, in the row of trees. The deep wide depression of the old Three Chopt Road confirmed the location. The presence of periwinkle discovered by GCHS First Vice President Richard Toler gave some encouragement, but no definite gravesites were found.

It was only when Dr. Moustafa explained that he had created the current field himself 15 years ago that all became clear. This was not the field that Wilford Robinson had remembered. In fact, most of the trees in the woods were less than 40 years old. The landmarks of 1951 were largely gone.

But then, walking along a trail that paralleled the old Three Chopt trace, first Junius, then Jowanda, then others spied a series of what seemed to be depressions that lined up east-west, near one surviving, much older gum tree. Was this the Sampson family burying ground? Junius didn't know, and we don't know. But that afternoon, the little group reverently placed some flowers on this sacred ground and offered up prayers for ancestors who are buried here or very nearby.

A definitive answer might be had one day with the use of ground penetrating radar. For the moment, however, there is a strong suggestion that this is the location.

Our mission at GCHS is to preserve, protect and present the county's history. We plan to continue to do so in the years and decades to come.

-By Robin Lind



# GOOCHLAND'S NEWEST MARKER

On November 2, 1824, General Lafayette stayed the night at Goochland Courthouse on his tour of the United States. On November 2, 2024, we commemorated the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this stop by dedicating a new historical marker near the location of Anderson's Tavern, where it is believed Lafayette spent that night. The GCHS would like to thank The Lafayette Trail and the Goochland County Board of Supervisors for helping bring this marker to fruition.

Right: GCHS member Suzanne Keesler, The Lafayette Trail's Julian Icher, and Lafayette reenactor Charles Wissinger unveil the marker.



# ROLLER-BOTTIMORE GRANT

The Roller-Bottimore Foundation has awarded to the GCHS a \$2,000 matching grant for the evaluation, preservation, and conservation of several of our military uniforms and the procurement of a replica of a Continental Line uniform for future display.



Among the textiles scheduled for conservation is a World War II bomber jacket (left) that belonged to Robert Rollo Richmond. The hand-painted jacket was returned to his mother after he was killed on a bombing mission in 1945. The Spanish-American War uniform (right) worn by Alpheus John Houchins will also be conserved as part of the grant.

The Roller-Bottimore Foundation, located in Richmond, Virginia, was established in 1981 by Elizabeth Roller-Bottimore to serve her family's interest in history and historic preservation. Since its origin and original corpus of \$100,000, the Foundation has provided grants to hundreds of organizations. These funds have promoted historic preservation and renovation, major capital projects, publications and archives, archaeology, and other projects and programs in keeping with the Foundation's original mission.

The GCHS will be collaborating with Colleen Callahan of Costume & Textile Specialists, a historian with experience in conservation and as a theatrical costumer.



Please keep an eye on our Facebook page and our blog where the conservation project will be updated.

Pictured are textile specialist Colleen Callahan (left) and Director James Richmond (right) looking at uniforms considered for conservation.





Many folks tracing their roots want to know more about their ancestors than just milestone dates and who is related to whom. Questions often asked are what did they look like and do I resemble them?

Prior to the late 1830s, when the first commercially successful photographic process was introduced by Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, images of our ancestors were captured in paintings or drawings which were typically reserved for the wealthy or the infamous. By the mid 1800s portrait photographs were popular and many families had a collection of photographs from that time or later.

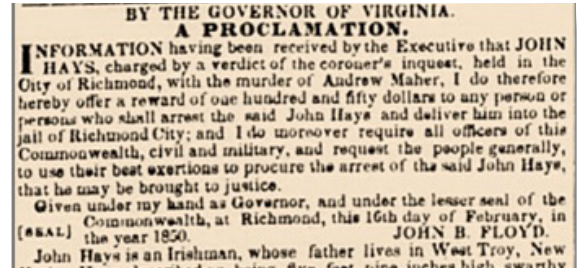
But what about ancestors of modest means who lived prior to the advent of affordable, modern photography or for whom no photographs exist? Fortunately, all is not hopeless. Prior to the advent of modern photography, **written descriptions** of a person's appearance were reported in records where it was important to know what the person looked like.

**Passports**—The U. S. State Department began issuing passports in 1789. These documents were generally a single page that included, among other information, the bearer's age, and a physical description of their height, and facial features. (Photographs have been required with applications since December 21, 1914.)

This copy of the 1891 passport application for **John S. Patton**, from Charlottesville, VA describes him as 34 years old, 6' 2" tall with blue eyes, dark hair, and a fair complexion; his face is described as long and bearded with a high forehead, a Grecian nose (straight bridge and slightly flared narrow nostrils), a small mouth, and a square chin.

The index and images of U. S. passport applications from 1795-1925 are available online on Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org.

**Newspapers**—Physical descriptions of persons wanted for real or perceived crimes were often printed in early newspapers. This entry for **John Hays**, charged with murder, printed in the February 19, 1850 edition of the *Richmond Enquirer*, describes him as an



Irishman 5' 9" tall with a "swarthy complexion, smooth face, fair hair, and a thin light colored beard."

Several searchable online resources can be explored for newspaper descriptions of "wanted" felons:

- newspapers.com (Owned by Ancestry, this is the largest online newspaper archive, with over 300 million pages from more than 11,100 newspapers).
- virginiachronicle.com (Digital newspaper archive from the Library of Virginia - Free)
- chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/newspapers/ (Digital newspaper archive from the Library of Congress - Free)

**Military records**—Beginning in the early conflicts, branches of the military often included a description of the soldier. Some resources to explore for that information are:

- **Revolutionary War Soldier Size Rolls** reported the soldier's height and appearance, and often occupations and place of birth and residence. One notable size roll compilation is the "Chesterfield supplement" available online at <https://rewwarapps.org/b81.pdf>. It includes records for noncommissioned officers and privates who were processed into the Continental Line of Virginia at Chesterfield Court House, Powhatan Court House, Carter's Ferry, Albemarle Old Court House, Cumberland Old Court House, and Winchester Barracks. Rolls include some men from Goochland County.
- **Civil War Enlistment Records** sometimes included a physical description of the soldier. Resources that provide compiled service records of Civil War soldiers include this information. They can be found in the printed Virginia Regimental History Series and online on Ancestry.com and Family Search.org.
- **World War I and II draft cards**, found on Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org, offer a physical description of the soldier. By the time of these conflicts, photography was common, but physical descriptions were still included on the draft cards.

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Image source: Ancestry.com. U.S., Passport Applications, 1795-1925 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2007. Original data: Selected Passports. National Archives, Washington, D.C. (Accessed November 3, 2024.)

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**Family Documents**—Family histories, dairies, and other written family records often comment on a relative's appearance, especially if it is memorable. In a book published in the early 1900's about one branch of my family, a great uncle born in 1758 is described as

"a large broad shouldered man (a characteristic of that family)...His hair was light and hung down around his shoulders...the top of his head was bald and he kept his face cleanly shaved, he always wore a red waist coat."

From this description, along with other information about his ancestry and character, I can almost envision g-g-g-g uncle Frederick.

**What lies ahead?** These brief descriptions provide scant, frustrating insights into our ancestors' appearances. With the advent of Artificial Intelligence, the generation of images from written descriptions is entering the realm of possibility. The Library of Virginia is using AI to generate "imaginative depictions" of ancestors from physical descriptions. To learn more about their work in this area go to: <https://uncommonwealth.virginiamemory.com/blog/2024/06/17/ai-ancestors/>.

~ By Linda Toler

## CEMETERY CORNER: ANN K. HAMNER

The first *Gravesites and Cemeteries in Goochland County, Virginia* was edited and published by Mrs. Ann K. Hamner. It became an instant bestseller and today, in its fourth edition, it remains so.

Ann came to Goochland after she married John Tyler Hamner, Jr. Born July 2, 1912 in Elliott City, Maryland to William F. and Blanche Kerger, Gladys Ann was living with her husband in the Lickinghole District of Goochland by 1950, according to the U.S. Census of that year. Ann, as she was known in the county, worked for the Bank of Goochland for 26 years, first as a bookkeeper and then as Head Cashier. The building she worked in still stands; it is almost directly across River Road West (Route 6) from the current home of the GCHS.

When the GCHS was established in 1968, Ann soon joined as a life member. In the late 1980s, she began to collaborate with other GCHS volunteers to collect the names of those individuals buried in the county. While this was certainly a big job—some would say an overwhelming task, the group was dedicated and Ann



served as their mover and shaker. Certainly her organizational skills honed at the Bank of Goochland served her well. In 1990, she published *Gravesites and Cemeteries in Goochland County, Virginia*. This first edition showed 5,452 names.

In 2004, she granted the GCHS permission to update her work and publish a new edition; the second edition premiered in 2013. Today the fourth edition (2024) includes 9,971 names. Over the years, a number of dedicated volunteers have contributed their time and effort to expand upon Ann's original work. They follow up on leads, troop through woods and fields in an effort to spot gravesites, photograph tombstones, and diligently record their findings in an effort to produce an accurate as possible record of gravesites and cemeteries in the county.

Ann K. Hamner passed away on July 2, 2008, shortly after turning 98 years old. She is buried beside her husband who predeceased her, in the cemetery at Smyrna Baptist Church, 1470 Rock Castle Road, in Goochland. She would be pleased to know that her seminal work *Gravesites and Cemeteries in Goochland County, Virginia* continues and is still a bestseller.

~ By Richard Toler





## Goochland County Historical Society

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# Goochland County Historical Society by the Numbers 2024

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[Facebook.com/goochlandhistory](https://www.facebook.com/goochlandhistory)



[x.com/GoochlandCHS](https://x.com/GoochlandCHS)

## Welcome New Memebbers

Harry W. Baldwin, III • Robbin Bryce • Nancy Denby  
Edward Dunn • Heather Gillespie • Joshua Gillespie • Bettie Kienast  
Charles Strickler