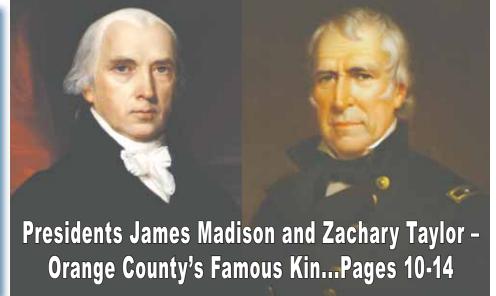
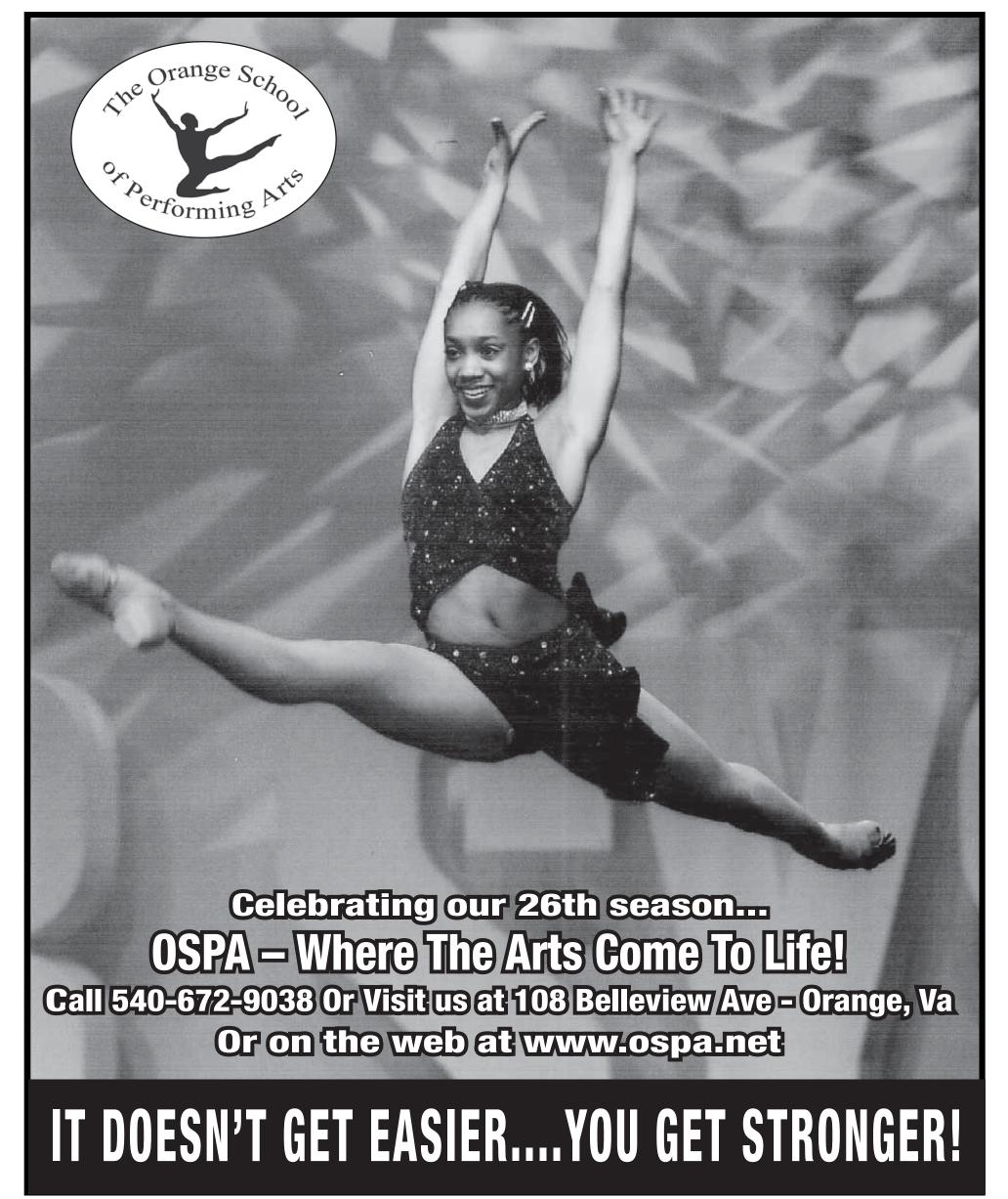
# OCNAGAZINE

ORANGE COUNTY, VIRGINIA









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A 1968 photo of Renate and her horse, "Contessa," an outstanding jumper and dressage horse. Photo courtesy of Renate Ruzich

# The Story of Renate Ruzich -A Tale of Survival and Triumph

By Barbara Wimble Correspondent

uring my interviews for articles for Magazine, I have met so many delightful people who have wonderful stories to tell of their lives. I have become especially inspired to know more about some of our "mature" residents whom I call "sparkling gems." I was told about one

The Cover

such gem – a woman who wrote a book called Jumping Off the Devil's Shovel about her 1945 refugee journey in Europe. After reading her book, I was amazed at her story and couldn't wait to meet her. Who is this woman who survived challenges beyond imagina-

I recently had the pleasure of spend-

ing several hours with this great lady, Renate von Kuenheim Ruzich, in her apartment at Dogwood Village of Orange County. I instantly took a liking to this affable woman. Renate's German accent and mannerisms brought me back to listening to my own grandmother, who left Germany to come to the United States after World War I, a generation before Renate did, and experienced her own adventures and challenges.

Although her eyesight may now be clouded, Renate's memories are sharp, and as vividly as she recalled the horrors of her flight, she also remembered the happy times and told those stories with humor and a twinkle in her eye. As she related her story, I could see the tenacity, strength, and adventurous spirit that saw her through the hardship and adversity she endured. Listening to her talk about her life was living history. How many opportunities do we get to talk to those who have experienced such a journey?

#### Renate theatrically posing for pictures in her apartment at Dogwood Village. Her good humor and zest for life shows through. She has worn a braid most of her life and at one time, it was so long

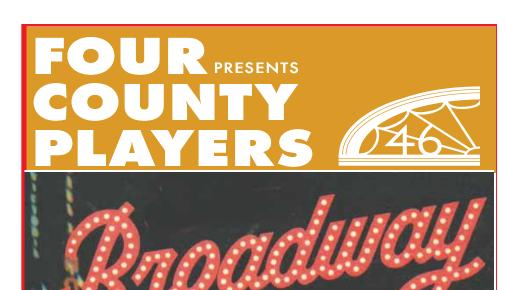
Cover designed by Marilyn Ellinger

she could sit on it!

Photo by Barbara Wimble



#### **See Renate Page 4**





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**Orange County Review** 

### Renate from page 3



Renate with Anna Marie DiMio Dowen, Outreach Director of The Arts Center in Orange, at Dogwood Village, where Renate exhibited some of her art for the Art Adventures program. Photo courtesy of The Arts Center in Orange

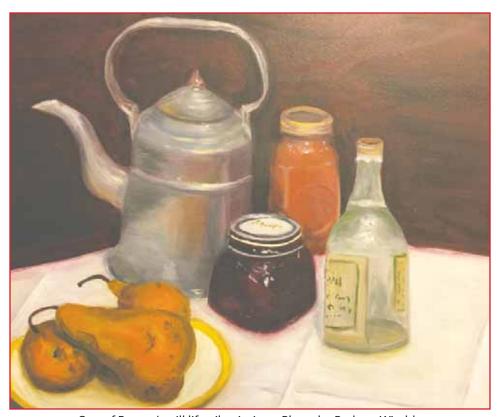
#### Background

Renate instructed me to "Google" the East Prussians' evacuation of 1945 to learn more about it. I did when I got home and was embarrassed about how little I knew about the history of this part of Germany near the end of World War II. Between January and March 1945, two million German civilians and military personnel from East Prussia were evacuated west in an effort to avoid the approaching Soviet army. This is considered the largest human exodus in history. The refugees feared the Soviets because of the atrocities they were rumored to have inflicted. It was the coldest winter on record, and the refugees were exposed to the elements and starving along the way. It was reported that almost 32,000 civilians died during the

I recommend that you read her book, and I won't spoil it by sharing too many details. Renate was on her own for the majority of her journey, with only her horse "Tasha" as a companion. Tasha was an integral part of her survival. In addition to transportation, Tasha gave her warmth, and they cared for each other and shared a special bond. Imagine a girl of 17 – a teenager – surviving such a journey. She did it with skills she learned as a child at home on their farm. She and her brother, Gert, were taught about plants, how to take care of animals, including farrier skills from the blacksmith, and how to shoot a pistol. On the road, Renate was resourceful and knew what to look for in the abandoned farms and houses, the tools that would be helpful, and where the food might be hidden. She said that raw potatoes were not at all good to eat, but raw turnips were not so bad. Tasha was picky about dirty hay but of course adapted, too. Using these skills, combined with the kindness of some strangers and a little luck, she survived.

#### The Interview

To my question about how she remembered so many details of her flight, Renate responded that her memories of 1945 are a "constant picture behind my eyes. I don't forget it. I might have forgotten little incidents from that time – unimportant things – but not the things that happened to me directly. I'll never forget those memories. They're like a movie in front of my eyes...That part of my life is not like



One of Renate's still life oil paintings. Photo by Barbara Wimble

a stamp; it's like an engraving in my mind."

When I asked her who would play her in a movie of her life, she modestly replied, "I have no idea who would play me in a movie. Someone not so pretty. I was only 17. Someone who has been there in some way." (Actually, Renate was quite beautiful and did some modeling later. In fact, she modeled the first bikini in Berlin!)

See Renate page 6

# BAXTER IS MISSING!!!!



Our boxer, Baxter, has been missing since January 10.

He ran off that morning with our lab, but the lab returned home and Baxter did not. He was last seen on Shannon Hill Road in the Kents Store/Columbia/ Louisa area.

He was wearing his green reflective collar with our number on it.

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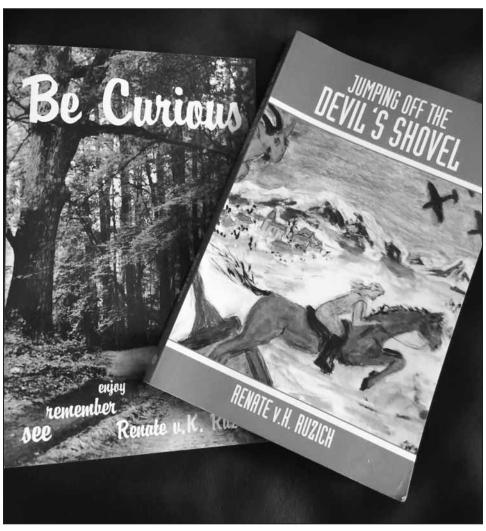


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Photo of East Prussian refugees on the road. Image from Wikipedia and the German Federal Archives.



Jumping Off the Devil's Shovel and Be Curious. The title of Renate's first book comes from a German saying of escaping a dire situation. The cover was painted by Renate.

Photo by Barbara Wimble

She left some of the details of what she saw and experienced to the readers' imaginations. Why? She decided that, "I would not make the book a horror story. I will write down what I did, what I faced and how I came out of it. In the beginning, I was tempted to be as vicious and as exact as possible. By the end, I didn't want it to be just another murder mystery."

Renate went on to talk about her journey, "Not until the end of it did some sunshine come out. It is so hard to explain when you don't know where to go. You're alone with your animal. You get up in the morning, you dig yourself out of a snow-drift. There is no sunshine. You look for tracks – I came from there, so I guess I'll go that way." After the war, "I adjusted to a world I had never known. This may be exaggerated, but it was do or die. Get up and do something or sit in a corner and rot." We all could take Renate's words as inspiration when we are discouraged.

#### Aftermath

Renate met her husband on a blind date "to spite my German boyfriend." Rudolph "Rudy" Louis Ruzich was in the U.S. Navy stationed in Berlin at the end of the War. Renate said that Rudy, "was understanding and refused to even talk about those days. The less talking about it, the better. He was right."

When Renate came to America with Rudy, she said that she was "totally amazed that the American population knew nothing about the war in Europe. They couldn't find Germany on the map. Coming to the U.S. was a big shock. Later on, when I was working, people would say, 'Aren't you happy that Germany is unified?' Berlin was in the middle. Now it's on the border. It's not the same country," she explained to them.

Rudy was career military, and Renate loved Army life. They lived in Oklahoma, Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. In addition, Rudy's tours took them overseas to Taiwan and Turkey, where she was exposed to a variety of cultures. Although proud of her German heritage, Renate appreciated the beauty of other countries and her curiosity and thirst for learning kept her busy and led her on many adventures.

She said that she had a talent for learning languages. Starting in the fifth grade, she studied English, French, and Latin, and later learned Chinese and Turkish, which were spoken in the countries where she and Rudy lived. She said, "These are fascinating countries when you make an effort to learn the language."

When I asked if Renate visited her hometown in Germany, she said that her brother Gert had, but she never did because she did not want to see the damages inflicted to her beloved home. However, she can still remember every square foot of their house and yard. Renate spoke fondly of the trees, including an ancient oak tree estimated at being 1,000-years-old that was cut down after the war. She said that a book could be written about that tree and what it saw.

#### **Renate from Page 6**

#### **Passions**

Renata has been a lifelong learner and curious about many subjects, but horses have been a passion her whole life. She became accomplished in the art of dressage - the highly skilled art of riding and training horses - and performed in exhibitions and competitions. She later judged dressage nationwide in nearly every state, including Hawaii. Unfortunately, in 1968, she was thrown from her horse, and broke her back. Although she recovered, she was no longer able to compete or teach, but was still able to judge

While she was in Taiwan, she had "serious art lessons. My Chinese art teacher even exhibited some of my scrolls. I felt at home there." She also learned to paint with oil and watercolors, but humbly said that she was "not talented in the way I would want to be." Renate is an accomplished artist and sketched the cover of her first book. Her beautiful artwork is exhibited around her apartment.

She enthusiastically described her photographs and many collections and treasures from around the world, including crystals, rocks, Turkish copper, and artwork. She impressed me with her quiet demonstration of the copper "finding wires" she received from a Cherokee Shaman. She has used the finding wires to locate water lines to houses - similar to a divining rod. The Shaman also taught her about the healing power of crystals.

#### Moving to the Area

Rudy's last station was in the Pentagon. After his retirement, they bought a 43acre farm in Culpeper near the mountains they loved and lived there for 37 very happy years. Her beloved husband died in 2010 after a long illness. They enjoyed 67 wonderful years together.

Renate has had a number of health challenges, surviving four cancer surgeries, a broken back, two hip replacements, and a devastating car accident and feels very blessed that she was able to come through it all. After her car accident, Renate moved to Dogwood Village, where she is one of the resident celebrities.

#### **Be Curious**

Renate's second book, Be Curious, has recently been released. Renate said, "it is completely and wholly positive. The new book is short stories with the highlights of my life. Out of a 1,000 memories, these are the 50 that stand out from previous flashbacks. The second book came up when I remembered that my father always believed that there are more beautiful things than bad. It's true, and the stories are all positive. They could be read by kids. Two completely different sides of life, sometimes side-byside, sometimes two halves.

There are several lessons we can all take from Renate. First, when you learn about history, you appreciate and understand better where people come from, including the challenges of being a refugee. Second, every person has an interesting story to tell. We should all ask senior citizens about their stories. Third, I so much admire Renate's attitude of not focusing on the anger and negative.



Photo of Renate taken in 2016 for her first book signing event. Photo courtesy of The Arts Center in Orange

Instead, she focuses on the people who helped her and their cultures and goodness that led to her rich and amazing life. She challenges us at the end of her second book to see the wonders in our own lives, to seek out new experiences, and not to rush through the years.

At the end of our interview, I told Renate that she is an interesting lady, and she responded, "The world is interesting. Be Curious!" Thank you, Renate. I will!

Renate will be giving a talk about her new book a the Arts Center in Orange in the coming months. In the meantime, both of her books are available at the Arts Center, Dogwood Village, and online.

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The first 50 individuals to register for the event will receive swag bags upon arrival. During the event, raffles will take place every half-hour. Registeration automatically enters you into the grand prize raffle for a 50/50 drawing. Central Virginia is home to many unique venues and is a sought-after destination for weddings. The Culpeper Wedding Fair is an experiential bridal show highlighting the area's many talented vendors.

Culpeper Wedding Fair, 2-5 p.m. at The Refinery, 120 West Culpeper Stret, Culpeper, VA 22701.

Tickets are \$5 and available at https://weddingfair2019.eventbrite.com.

The Clupeper Wedding Fair is an event jointly hosted by Joy Orr of the Refinery, and Dawn Peters and Deb Manzari.

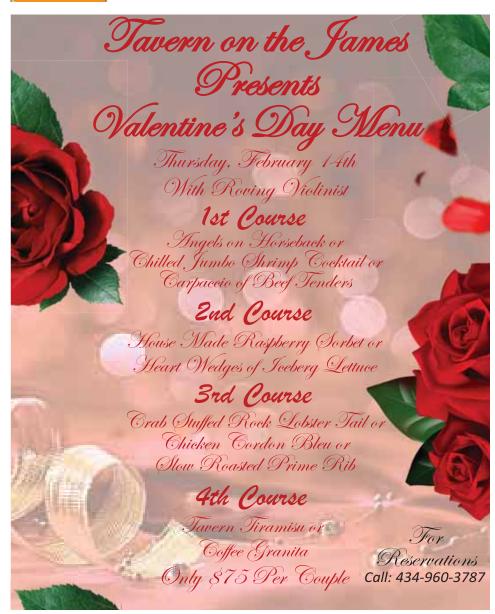
For more information: call 540-219-1559 or www.therefineryat120.com/wedding-fair/



# Lake of the Woods Lioness Lions Spring Craft Sale Seeking Vendors

The annual Lake of the Woods Lioness Lions Spring Craft Sale will be held on Saturday March 23rd from 8:30 am -2:00pm at the Locust Grove Middle School at 6368 Flat Run

Spaces are 10' x 8' for only 25.00. We ask that vendors pro-



vide their own display tables and chairs. There are about 49 vendor spaces including arts and crafts, pottery, jewelry, cosmetics, authors, Flea Market items, a food concession and a wonderful bake sale. We also have a photographer to take Easter pictures.

Call Lioness Gail Stoner at 540-388-2540 to reserve your space soon. All Lioness profits benefit our Lioness Foundation which supports local charities including Wilderness Food Pantry, ChildHelp, SAFE House, scholarships for local students, Orange County Free Clinic, Bridges Outreach and more. Vendors receive all of their own profits. Call soon for your space as they are filling quickly.

Annual 2019 Meeting Orange County African American Historical Society Presents: The History of African American Boy Scouts in Orange County Sunday January 27, 2019, 2:00 PM

at The Art Center in Orange Presenter: Bruce Monroe

Bruce Monroe is a native Orange County resident and was a member of Boy Scout Group 111

Business Meeting for members is from 1:30-2:00pm

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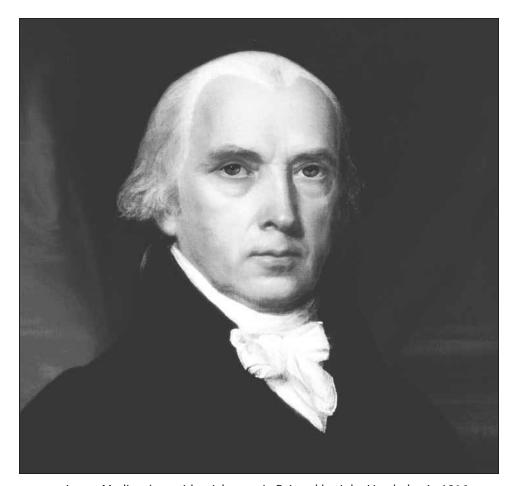
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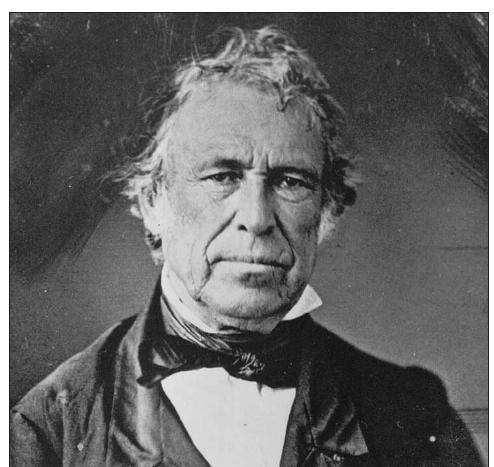
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James Madison's presidential portrait. Painted by John Vanderlyn in 1816.

Photo courtesy of wikipedia.com



Daguerreotype of President Zachary Taylor taken by Mathew Brady in 1849 about the time of Taylor's inauguration. Photo courtesy of the Orange County Historical Society

# Presidents James Madison and Zachary Taylor – Orange County's Famous Kin

By Barbara Wimble Correspondent

s we celebrate Presidents Day on February 18, it seems like a fitting time to revisit the stories of two of Orange County's most famous kin.

One of the reasons Virginia is noteworthy in United States histo-

One of the reasons Virginia is noteworthy in United States history is because we boast the most presidents born in any state – eight: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, Zachary Taylor, and Woodrow Wilson. Remarkably, two were from Orange County – James Madison and Zachary Taylor. I'd say that is something in which Orange County residents should take great pride!

There are five pairs of presidents who were related to each other – John Adams, #2, father of John Quincy Adams, #6; William Henry Harrison, #9, grandfather of Benjamin Harrison, #23; Theodore Roosevelt, #26, cousin of Franklin D. Roosevelt, #32; George H.W. Bush, #41, father of George W. Bush, #43; and probably the pair

whose connection is least known, Orange County's James Madison, #4, and his second cousin, Zachary Taylor, #12.

What was the relationship between these two cousins from Orange County? What were their family ties? Did they ever meet? What did they think of each other? When researching answers to these questions, I found, as I did when doing my own family research, that even though I had access to wonderful resources, there are gaps and conflicting information. However, I did find some very interesting stories about their lives.

#### **Family Ties**

James Madison and Zachary Taylor were descendants of a long line of prominent Virginia planters. They shared great-grandparents, Col. James Taylor II and Martha Thompson, for whom Orange's Taylor Memorial Park is named. Col. Taylor was one of Governor Spotswood's "Knights of the Golden Horseshoe," who explored the Virginia frontier in 1716. He acquired several thousand acres in the future Orange County, and divided the land between his four sons, James III (Bloomsbury), Zachary (Meadowfarm), George (Midland), and Erasmus (Greenfield). He later acquired an additional 5,000 acres and divided it between his two daughters as dowries. One of those daughters, Frances, married Ambrose Madison, and they were the future president Madison's grandparents. The Taylors' son Zachary and his wife Elizabeth Allerton Lee were the future president Taylor's grandparents. This makes Presidents Madison and Taylor second cousins.

#### Rirths

James Madison's parents, Col. James Madison, Sr. and Nelly Conway, lived in Orange County with Col. Madison's mother Frances in a four-room log home at their Mount Pleasant plantation (which was located next to the present Madison Family Cemetery at Montpelier). Nelly went home to be with her mother, Rebecca Catlett, for her first child's birth. The future president Madison was born on March 16, 1751 at Nelly's family's plantation, "Belle Grove," which is located on the Rappahannock River in King George. Ten years later, James, Sr. began construction on the first phase of the house we know today as "Montpelier." The Madison family depended on the labor of slaves to run the plantation.



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Photograph of Margaret Taylor, wife of Zachary Tay lor, taken about the time of his inauguration. Photo from Google images

Thirty-three years after James Madison's birth, Zachary Taylor was born to parents Col. Richard Lee Taylor and Sarah Dabney Strother on November 24, 1784 in Orange County. The exact location of his birth has been a subject of debate for years. One of Washington's aides-de-camp, Col. Taylor was rewarded with a tract of several thousand acres east of Louisville, Kentucky. The Taylors were preparing to leave Orange County for Kentucky with their wagon train, but a measles outbreak caused a delay.

According to one account, while waiting out the six-week quarantine period at a friend's plantation named "Montebello" in Barboursville, Zachary was born. Montebello is located on Route 33 between Gordonsville and Barboursville. According to another account, President Taylor was born at "Hare Forest Farm" located between Rapidan and Orange. That farm was once owned by William Strother, President Taylor's maternal grandfather. According to this account, Mrs. Taylor returned to their former home at Hare Forest, a day's ride away from Montebello, to wait out the quarantine, and President Taylor was born there. In any event, he was definitely born in Orange County. The Taylors then moved to Kentucky where, with the help of slaves, they raised tobacco on the plantation they named "Springfield."

As Frank Walker so aptly quipped in his book Remembering: A History of Orange County, "Orange County was James Madison's home, not his birthplace. Conversely, Orange County was the birthplace, but not the home of Zachary Taylor."

#### **Early Lives and Education**

As a son of a wealthy Virginia plantation owner, Madison had the best education available at that time. He attended boarding school from age 11 to 16, then studied with a private tutor for two years in preparation for college. He graduated from The College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) in 1771, and stayed for a semester of graduate studies before returning home.

In contrast with his cousin James's elite education, there were no schools on the Kentucky frontier for Zachary Taylor. However, both of his parents were educated and Zachary 's mother taught him to read and write, just as James's mother Nelly did. Taylor had some schooling, but

very little formal education.

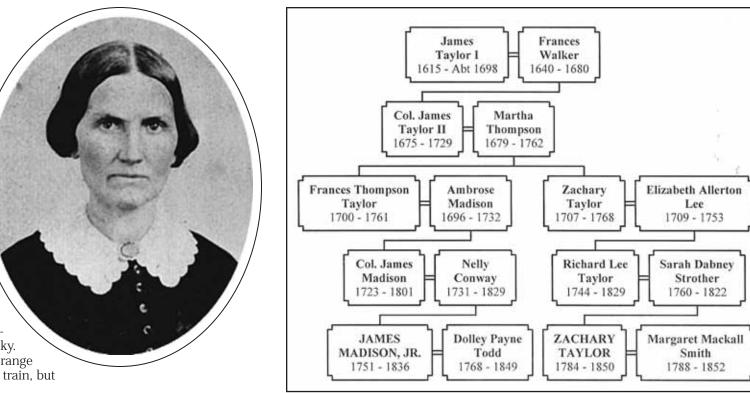
#### Marriage and Family

In 1794, when he was 43, James Madison married a 26-year-old Quaker widow from Philadelphia, Dolley Payne Todd. She had a son from her first marriage, John Payne Todd, but she and James had no children together. When the Madisons were not in Philadelphia or Washington, they were home on Madison's Montpelier plantation, which was described as "a squirrel's jump from heaven."

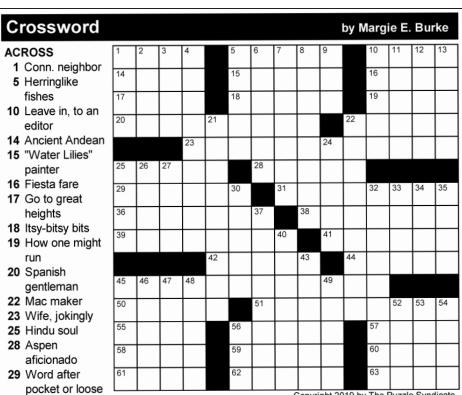
In 1809, while home in Kentucky on leave from the Army, Taylor met Margaret "Peggy" Mackall Smith, who was visiting her sister, a neighbor of the Taylors. They married the following year when he was 25 and she was 21 years old. Taylor received as a wedding present a 324-acre farm in Kentucky from his father. They had six children. One of their daughters,



Dolley Madison portrait engraving.



The Madison and Taylor Family Tree. Compiled by Barbara Wimble



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58 Clothing line 59 Certain exams

60 Frank Herbert sci-fi series

61 Nothing but 62 To the point

63 A whole bunch

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- 2 Forest ox
- 3 Wound covering
- responsibility 4 Minuet-like 50 Unaccompanied dances
- 51 Weatherman 5 Clothing size offerings 6 Monopoly
- 55 Lose steam purchases 56 Parlor piece 7 Polar parkas
- 57 Beat badly

Deliberate

36 They may be

workspace

41 Early English

comedy,

42 "Get lost!"

44 Minuscule

45 Accept

Gurton's Needle"

pulled

38 Dilbert's

39 Erotic

destruction

- 8 Possessed one
- 9 Ave. crossers
- 10 Kind of infection 11 Buccaneers'
  - home 12 Reason for a
  - food recall 13 Representative

  - 21 Spiny lobster 22 Like Cirque du Soleil performers
  - 24 Fix, in a way
  - 25 Plays a part
  - 26 Quaker's "you"
  - 27 "Death in Venice" author
  - 30 Son of Cain
  - 32 They're punched at work

- 33 Top of the heap
- 34 Secluded valley
- 35 Mysterious: Var.
- 37 Guaranteed 40 Russian urn
- 43 Diego Rivera
- creations 45 Weighty put-
- down 46 1979 sci-fi
- classic 47 Snorkeling sight
- 48 Hostile force
- 49 Have a hunch
- 52 Music category
- 53 Spotify selection
- 54 Hearty dish
- 56 URL punctuator

Crossword Answers page 15

#### **Presidents from page 11**

Sarah Knox Taylor, was briefly married to the future president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, but she died of malaria three months into their marriage.

Peggy was a dutiful military wife and followed her husband on his assignments. They lived in military outposts in rustic forts, cabins, and tents on the frontier for most of their married life. Taylor said in his memoir that "my wife was as much a soldier as I was." The hard living, traveling, and births on the frontier took their toll on her health, and some reported she was a semi-invalid by the time Taylor was elected president. It was said that she "bitterly opposed" her husband's running for president and prayed that he would lose the election. Unlike Dolley Madison, Peggy avoided the limelight and rarely left the second floor of the White House. Their daughter, Elizabeth "Bess" Bliss, took over the First Lady duties in her absence.

#### Careers

Those of us in Orange County know about James Madison's illustrious 35-year political career. Volumes are written about him; therefore, I'll include just some of the highlights. He did not set out to be a politician; instead, he considered the cler-



# Victorian Mourning Elegance

For those of means to afford mourning wardrobes, deepest mourning clothes were black, symbolic of spiritual darkness. Garments for deepest mourning were usually made of non-reflective paramatta silk or the cheaper bombazine (a worsted silk or wool, a firm, napless fabric). Dresses were trimmed with crepe, a hard, scratchy silk with a peculiar crimped appearance produced by heat. Crape was linked with mourning because it did not wear well with any other fabric. Satin, velvet, lace or embroidery did not mix well with crape. At the end of deepest mourning, crape would be removed from the wardrobe, a procedure called "slighting the mourning". Fabrics lightened to grey, mauve, lavender and even white for a period of half-mourning. Jewelry was limited to jet, a hard, black coal-like material, or Mother-of-Pearl jewelry fashioned for mourning. Often, the deceased's hair would be woven into or incorporated into the jewelry, feathers or other accessories. Unlike women's special mourning wardrobe, men simply wore their usual dark suits along with black gloves, hatbands and cravats. Black crape armbands were worn from the 1770s into the early 1900s. Children were not expected to wear mourning clothes, though girls sometimes wore white dresses. This temporary exhibit will be up through Spring 2019.



www.thejamesmadisonmuseum.net 129 Caroline St, Orange, VA 22960 (540) 672-1776

Tuesday - Saturday: 11:00 am - 5:00 pm \$5.50 per Adult • \$2.50 per child (6-17) gy at one time and also studied law. In 1774, he became interested in politics because of the persecution of the Baptists in Culpeper County. It was the Baptists in Orange County who were influential in convincing Madison to include religious freedom in the Bill of Rights (a subject for a future article).

In 1775, President Madison's father was the chairman and James a member of the Orange County Committee of Safety. His father was also the commander of the local militia, and James participated in practicing marksmanship and drilling and was made a colonel. His career took off in 1776, when at 25 years old, he was elected to represent Orange County at the Virginia Convention in Williamsburg. When he was 36, he was one of the youngest members of the Constitutional Convention. He was a tireless scholar, writer, and advocate for democracy and the American experiment, and he earned the titles "Father of the Constitution" and "Architect of the Bill of Rights."

Madison was Secretary of State for two terms under Thomas Jefferson, and when he was 57, elected President of the United States. He served two terms from 1809 to 1817. His presidency was clouded with conflicts with England that culminated in the War of 1812, often called "Mr. Madison's War." The conflict helped the young United States gain credibility on the world stage.

Madison suffered with delicate health his entire life that kept him from active military duty; however, he displayed his mettle during the War of 1812 at the Battle of Bladensburg. On August 24, 1814, in harm's way and armed with two borrowed dueling pistols, he toured the ranks of the militia, watched the battle, and narrowly avoided capture.

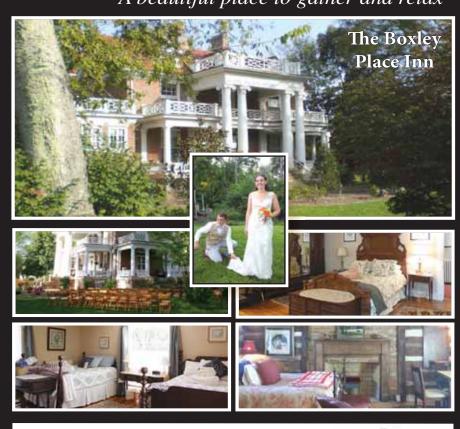
Zachary Taylor was a career military officer for four decades – most of his life. His military career began in 1808, when at the age of 28, he was commissioned as a first lieutenant in the infantry. He was soon promoted to the rank of captain and posted to the western frontier of the United States to "police" Native Americans. He remained there for the duration of the War of 1812 and distinguished himself defending Fort Harrison in Indiana.

While Zachary Taylor was one of the most celebrated heroes of that war and was promoted to major, in peacetime his rank was reduced to captain. He then resigned his commission and returned to his farm in Kentucky. He was not happy about his demotion and was disappointed that President Madison supposedly failed to intervene on his behalf. In a letter to Gen. Thomas Jessup in 1820, Taylor wrote that Madison, his own second cousin, was "...perfectly callous and unacquainted with the noble feelings of a soldier..." Within a year, however, Taylor accepted the offer

#### **See Presidents Page 14**

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#### Presidents from page 13

to return to the Army with the rank of major. He went on to achieve the rank of Brigadier General, and was the hero of the Mexican-American War (1846-48). His military assignments took him to New Orleans, Indiana, Wisconsin, Alabama, Minnesota, Mississippi, Florida, Arkansas, and Texas. He was popular with his men and acquired the nickname "Old Rough and Ready" for the comradery he shared with the enlisted men and his willingness to get his boots dirty. Taylor was a national war hero and was considered to be "America's most popular figure" at the time he was nominated for the presidency.

As a career soldier, Taylor had not considered political office, never mind the office of the presidency, but he was nominated and elected president in 1848 at the age of 64. The first time he ever voted in a presidential election was for himself! When asked why he did not vote in a presidential election, he supposedly responded that he did not want to vote against a potential commander-in-chief. It is also said that because he moved around so much during his assignments to the United States territories, he could not register to vote. He was the first professional military man elected president and the first president who had not been elected to any office previously. He served only 16 months before he died, and his term was fraught with the question of slavery in the new territories. While he owned slaves, he did not support slavery in the new territories.

#### **Deaths**

Madison died peacefully at his home of natural causes on June 28, 1836 at the age of 85. The last of the Founding Fathers to die, he lived far longer than anyone expected. He is buried in the Madison Family Cemetery at Montpelier.

In 1850, President Taylor attended a July 4th celebration at the construction site of the Washington Monument. It was a scorching hot day and according to one account, he "consumed iced milk and cherries" and suffered from severe stomach pains. He died five days later on July 9 at the age of 65 and the cause was listed as cholera. Abraham Lincoln delivered his eulogy at his service. President Taylor is buried near his home at the Zachary Taylor National Cemetery in Louisville, Kentucky, next to his wife who died two years after her husband.

**Interaction Between the Madisons and Taylors** 

I could find no evidence that James Madison and Zachary Taylor ever met. Taylor grew up in Kentucky, 500 miles away from Montpelier, and Madison was already in Congress by the time his cousin was born. It is conceivable that the Taylor family returned to visit Orange County at some point. We know that the extended Madison and Taylor families in Orange County frequently visited each other's homes and attended weddings and other local events together. In addition, the Taylor family brought their grains to be ground at Madison's mills.

While I could find no correspondence between Madison and Taylor, Dolley Madison and President Taylor did meet. Soon after Madison passed away, Mrs. Madison returned to Washington and spent most of her 13 remaining years there. In 1844 after she sold Montpelier, she was still in financial difficulties but that did not affect her social status. She remained the toast of the town and never lacked an invitation to parties and Washington events.

She penned a letter to Gen. Taylor on June 8, 1846 when he was stationed in Matamoros, Mexico during the Mexican War. The purpose of her letter was to introduce the Reverend John McElroy, a Jesuit priest whom she had known. (Mr. McElroy went on to be a military chaplain during the duration of the Mexican War.) She also praised Taylor for his "mercy" and his "Patriot's glory." (This most likely references his victories in the Battles of Palo Alto and of Resaca de la Palma, where he was noted for providing medical care to the wounded Mexican soldiers left behind.) She wished him well and signed the letter, "your friend and relation."

Mrs. Madison received an invitation to Taylor's Grand Inaugural Ball. We do not know if she attended, but we know that she attended a levee (party) at the White House soon after Taylor became president.

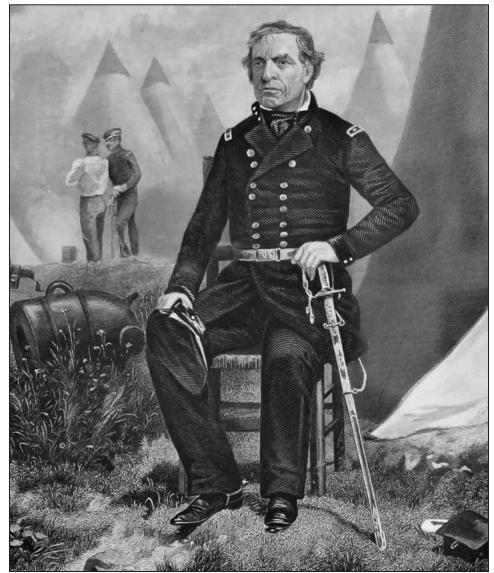
Both Mrs. Madison and President Taylor posed, at different times, for the soon to be famous Civil War photographer, Matthew Brady. James Madison did not live to see the advent of photography; however, Dolley, who was 17 years younger, had her photograph taken in 1848, the first "First Lady" to be so commemorated.

President Taylor's photograph was taken about the time of his inauguration in 1849. A few months later, Dolley Madison passed away on July 12, 1949 at the age of 81. She was honored with the largest funeral Washington had seen to that point and the procession included President Taylor and his cabinet. Taylor is often credited with eulogizing Dolley, saying that she was the "First Lady." I could find no primary source to support this claim, but, in Dolley's obituary in the Raleigh Times on July 27, 1849, she is referred to the "first Lady in the land." Regardless of who said it, Dolley Madison was the first First Lady to be called "First Lady."

#### **Similarities**

Although very different in many ways, Madison and Taylor share some similarities. Both future presidents lived in log homes as children. Both grew up on plantations with slave labor and owned slaves themselves. Slavery was a contentious issue for both of their presidencies and lives. They both began their careers in their midtwenties, and both served their country for approximately four decades.

At 5'4" or 5'6", Madison was our shortest president. His supporters, including his secretary, Edward Coles, said he was 5'6', but his foes denigrated him by saying he was shorter. In a newspaper article announcing his death, the writer said of Madison, "never have I seen so much mind in so little matter." Taylor wasn't much



General Zachary Taylor.
Photo courtesy of the James Madison Museum of Orange County Heritage

taller at 5'8". The average height for men at that time period was 5'9". Regardless of their physical statures, both men were giants.

There is so much interesting history in our Orange County – subjects for many more articles! I hope that you take advantage of the wonderful resources in our backyard to learn more about our two presidential cousins and the history of our county, including James Madison's Montpelier, the James Madison Museum of Orange County Heritage, the Orange County Historical Society, and our local library branches.

I would like to thank Helen Marie Taylor, a member of both the Madison and the Taylor families; Hilarie Hicks, Senior Research Historian at James Madison's Montpelier; Bethany Sullivan, Director of the James Madison Museum of Orange County Heritage; and Jayne Blair of the Orange County Historical Society; for their help with my research for this article.



Bloomsbury Farm, ancestral home of the Taylor family.

Photo courtesy of the James Madison Museum of Orange County Heritage



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# In the Theater

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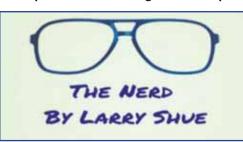
Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962) was at one time the most loved woman in the world, and the most despised. She was an aristocrat who championed the rights of workers, a mother who believed in "vision and bigness of soul," the author of books and magazine columns, the wife of four-time President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and a



diplomat and tireless worker for universal human rights. Nevertheless, she began life as an "ugly duckling," painfully shy and lonely. Our play tells how she ultimately achieved greatness, "across a barrier of fear." Written by Sharon Whitney.

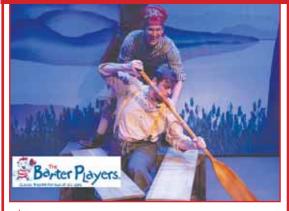
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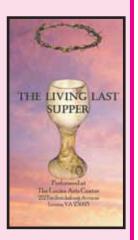
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