



# Goochland County Historical Society Newsletter

FOUNDED MAY 1, 1968

VOLUME 48 • NUMBER 1 • JANUARY 2024



## HAPPY NEW YEAR

FREEDOM OF CHOICE  
MARKER CEREMONY

PAGE 3

DABNEY CARR AT SPRING FOREST:  
THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION

PAGE 4

FOLLOW CORNWALLIS THROUGH  
GOOCHLAND TOUR

PAGE 5

REVOLUTIONARY WAR SOLDIER:  
HENRY COCKRAN

PAGE 6



GOOCHLAND COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**James Richmond**  
*Executive Director*  
*Editor*

**Catherine Southworth**  
*Office Administrator*

#### Board of Directors 2024

Robin Lind, President  
Richard Toler, 1st Vice President  
Scott Johnson, 2nd Vice President  
Suzanne Keesler, Secretary  
Kathleen Kimmel, Treasurer

Knight Bowles, Cheryl Childress,  
Carol Salmon Coe, Steve Fleming,  
Gerald Hagen, Robin Hillman,  
Virginia Olsen, Edie Salmon

#### Visit the Goochland 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)  
[www.twitter.com/GoochlandCHS](https://twitter.com/GoochlandCHS)  
[YouTube/@goochlandcountyhistoricals3250](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3250)

Copyright 2024 by the Goochland County  
Historical Society. All rights reserved.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

So much occurred in 2023, it is hard to recall that the year began quietly with genealogy classes offered by the indomitable Richard Toler. In spring, we offered a History Walk at West View to examine the remains of the long-lost Lock 11 on the James River and Kanawha Canal, uncovered by member Eric Krause. The walk was narrated by Richard Toler. A second History Walk at Byrd Presbyterian Church was held in the fall. Knight Bowles presented the history of the church, with cemetery talks by Christina Dunn, Richard Toler, and Michael Trowsell. In between, were lectures on such topics as 19th century medicine and the homes of the eight presidents from Virginia. We celebrated in summer with a delightful ice cream social and our annual meeting in December took place at Historic Tuckahoe.

Outreach to Goochland communities stepped up during the year thanks to Richard Toler who gave history talks to a variety of civic groups, including Dover Baptist Church, Readers Branch Homeowners, Avery Point Retirement Community (twice), Mosaic Homeowners, and the 25th class of the Goochland Leadership Enterprise. He even gave an abbreviated version to fourth graders at Randolph Elementary School. If you have not heard his "Goochland History in 30 Minutes or Less," I urge you to do so soon and not dawdle. I learn something new every time I hear him speak.

While these are the public events offered by the Society, there are the day-to-day operations carried out by staff and volunteers. I wish to thank the board (listed at left); our treasurer Kitty Kimmel who pays the bills, files our taxes, and keeps track of income and expenditures; the Finance Committee, consisting of Gerald Hagen, Kitty Kimmel, Al Rider, and Dave Southworth who developed a balanced budget for 2024 (I would like to note that the Society's finances are in better shape than they have been in for some time.); and the volunteers who are crucial to keeping the doors of the Society open on a daily basis. They include Cheryl Childress, Cheryl Copper, Christina Dunn, Carol Salmon Coe, Will Henson, Kay Higgins (who retired in 2023 after many years of service), Scott Johnson, Suzanne Keesler, Margaret Lindner, Jess Lockhart, Ginny Olsen, Suzanne Taylor, Linda Toler, Richard Toler, Michael Trowsell, and Sandie Warwick. All are crucial to our operations. However, there is always room for more volunteers; if you really want to have some fun, give volunteering a try. Contact the Society for further information.

In addition to the everyday running of the Society and History Center, our staff, James Richmond and Catherine Southworth, are responsible for making every task look effortless, every achievement look inevitable, and every accomplishment look predestined. It is their unstinting effort, uncompromising standards, and zeal for history, genealogy, historic preservation that burnish the Society's reputation far and wide. My hat is off to them.

As you may know, I was elected president of the Society in December 2022. However, I have been a member of the Society for many years, served on its board, and was president-elect in 1987. There have been many changes in the Society's operations over those intervening years and I am indebted to Immediate Past President Christina Dunn for patiently holding my bridle and occasionally tugging at the bit, as I learned my way around new and old pastures.

It has been fun. The fun continues. Come join us for even more exciting adventures in 2024!

Sincerely,

Robin Lind, President



# FREEDOM OF CHOICE MARKER CEREMONY

In February, Goochland's newest historical marker will be unveiled in front of the County Administration offices. The marker commemorates the students who made history when Goochland County schools were officially desegregated through the "Freedom of Choice" program. Ronald Jewell (grade 12), Frances Copeland (grade 11), Priscilla Copeland (grade 10), Aretha Robinson (grade 10), John Jewell (grade 9), Patricia Diane Lewis (grade 9), Jacqueline Carroll (grade 8), Rose Ellis (grade 8), Linda Glover (grade 8), Diane Holland (grade 8), Michaelle O. Johnson (grade 8), Darnell McCowin (grade 8), Eva J. Miles (grade 8), and Sarena Robinson (grade 8) were the fourteen students who with the support of their parents, community, and the NAACP, obtained equal access to education. Keep and eye on our website for more details.

---

## 2023 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

At the annual meeting of the Goochland County Historical Society, held at Historic Tuckahoe on Sunday, December 3rd, 2023, Robin Lind, president of the Society, recognized Richard Toler, 1st vice president as Volunteer of the Year. He was presented with a cutting board made from heart pine salvaged from old Forest Grove church for his many contributions. As 1st Vice President, he is responsible for planning all GCHS programs, including history walks and genealogy workshops. In addition, he serves as coordinator of volunteers; and provides many of the Society's presentations to churches, civic organizations, and retirement communities. He is well known for his talk "Goochland History in 30 Minutes or Less." If your group wishes to schedule Richard for a presentation, please contact the Society at 804-556-3966 or [goochlandhistory@comcast.net](mailto:goochlandhistory@comcast.net).



---

## BEGINNING GENEALOGY CLASSES OFFERED



The Erastus H Henley Family (GCHS Collection)

Topics to be covered include finding information on births, deaths, burial locations, and marriages of family members; identifying lost ancestors; using the U.S. census; judging information when two or more sources conflict; determining date ranges and resolving conflicting dates; online and local information sources; and genealogy programs for use on your computer.

Once again, the Goochland County Historical Society is offering Beginning Genealogy classes. This is a must if you have ever wanted to discover your family's history, but didn't know how or where to begin. Classes will provide the basics you need to get started. There will be four sessions; each will be two hours long, for a total of eight hours of instruction. All classes will be held in the meeting room of the Goochland Branch of the Pamunkey Library from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm. The first two sessions are scheduled for Saturday, January 20 and Saturday, February 24; the final two sessions—one in March and one in April—are yet to be scheduled, but they also will be held on Saturdays. We are also planning an extra session on Goochland County records, but no date has been set for this extra session.

To register, call or email the GCHS at 804-556-3966 or [goochlandhistory@comcast.net](mailto:goochlandhistory@comcast.net).

# DABNEY CARR AT SPRING FOREST: THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION

Does the name Dabney Carr mean anything to you? If not, you are not alone. While he was an early activist in the patriot cause, he died during the lead up to the American Revolution. Unlike other patriots who became well known, he never did. In fact, seldom do you find his name in history books on Virginia. However, he left a lasting legacy that helped unite the colonies and contributed to their success against the British. He should not be forgotten.

Dabney Carr lived in Goochland County following his marriage in 1765 to Martha Jefferson, sister to his best friend Thomas Jefferson. The son of Col. John Carr and Barbara Ann Overton, he grew up at his family's home Bear Castle in Louisa County. As an adult he practiced law and represented Louisa County in the Virginia House of Burgesses, being first elected in 1771 and re-elected in 1772. On his character, Jefferson wrote "the number of his friends and the warmth of their affection were proofs of his worth, and of their estimate of it." Carr did not complete his second term, dying in May 1773 of a "bilious fever" at his wife's family home Shadwell in Albemarle County; he was not quite 30 years old. He became the first burial at Monicello. When Jefferson died, he was buried next to Carr. It is unclear why he and his family elected to rent Spring Forest, built around 1730, from Humphrey Parrish, but following Carr's death, the family did not return to Goochland.

The year 1773 marked the beginning of the end of British control of the colonies. It was also the time when Dabney Carr's political career was beginning to gain traction. When Virginia's royal governor Lord Dunmore called a special session of the House of Burgesses that year, Carr introduced a resolution creating inter-colony committees of correspondence. The resolution was in response to what is known as the Gaspee Affair involving a group of Rhode Islanders who burned a British customs ship, the Gaspee, in June 1772. The British Parliament ordered a commission to investigate the event and to send the perpetrators back



Spring Forest as it appeared shortly before it was demolished in 1969. Located in Sandy Hook, it was the property of Dr. James Bowles. (GCHS Collection)

to England for trial. The House of Burgesses considered this an alarming act of imperialism.

Following the resolution's passage, the governor dissolved the House, but the next day a standing committee was formed to maintain correspondence with the other colonies and to obtain intelligence on actions by the British Parliament concerning the colonies. Along with Jefferson, Richard Henry Lee, Francis Lightfoot Lee, and Patrick Henry, Carr was named

a member of Virginia's Committee of Correspondence, but two months after its creation, Carr was dead. The committees of correspondence became the key system of communications during the early years of the American Revolution, from 1772 through 1776. They acted as emergency provisional governments; allowed for the exchange of ideas, information, and debate; helped to organize and mobilize patriotic resistance at the community level; and built the foundation for the Continental Congress.

It is estimated that by 1774, networks of committees of correspondence, involving about 7,000 people, had been established in 11 of the 13 colonies. The committees provided the structure for selecting delegates to represent each colony at the First Continental Congress which convened in Philadelphia in September of that year, demanding the end of British repression. Later the committees collaborated with the committees of safety which organized, trained, and armed provincial militias. With the outbreak of war in April 1775, the committees became the de facto government of the rebellious colonies until they were replaced by provincial congresses during the war. As with any initiative, communication is the key to success. Dabney Carr may have realized that when he offered his resolution. While he did not live to see its impact, it is generally agreed that the committees of correspondence were key to uniting the colonies and helping to launch the formation of the Continental Congress in 1774.

-By Christina J. Dunn



# FOLLOW CORNWALLIS THROUGH GOOCHLAND TOUR

**W**hat? General Charles Cornwallis was in Goochland in June 1781? Who knew?

It is a rare thing for an article in the Goochland County Historical Society Magazine to have both accolades at the time and an afterlife of accolades 15 years later; one might say it is the “Greatest Compliment Imaginable.”

The fascinating and extraordinary tale told by historian Dr. John Maas in Volume 40, the 2009 issue of our Society’s magazine – “The Greatest Terror Imaginable: Cornwallis brings his campaign to Goochland, June 1781” – detailed the British general’s march through Hanover, Louisa and into Goochland. Here he turned east and headed to Yorktown, ignominy and defeat. He is now remembered as the general who surrendered British North America to the “rebels.”

The story long resonated with Society Members Bruce and Lynn Venter who had moved to Goochland the year before. The Venters have organized an annual conference on the American Revolution for the past decade, based in Williamsburg, but this year moved the venue to Glen Allen to provide better access to historic sites in central Virginia.

In addition to their weekend conference, (March 15-17) they have created a bus tour to retrace Cornwallis’s route and enlisted as tour leader author Dr. Maas, now an historian at the National Museum of the U.S. Army at Fort Belvoir.

The tour will stop at Hanover Court House, do a drive-by of Patrick Henry’s Scotchtown, make a stop at Ground Squirrel Bridge over the South Anna River, and briefly halt at Mount Brilliant where Cornwallis and his officers camped in early June. From thence to the site of the Bates plantation just west of Goochland Court House which was ravaged by the British. The highlight of the tour will be a stop just west of Columbia to see “Point of Fork” where the Baron von Steuben briefly engaged Lt. Col. John Graves Simcoe’s Queen’s



Detail from MARCH of the ARMY under Lieut: General EARL CORNWALLIS in VIRGINIA, from the JUNCTION at Petersburg on the 20.th of May, til their arrival at Portsmouth on the 12.th of July 1781, British Library Collection

Rangers before retreating, leaving an American arsenal and supply depot to the British. Another stop is planned at the site of Thomas Jefferson’s Elk Hill plantation where Cornwallis rested his troops before burning the house, barns, and outbuildings, and slaughtering the livestock. A final stop will be in the east end of the county at Historic Tuckahoe one of the few 18th Century structures in Goochland to escape British depredations.

What’s included: motor coach transportation, lunch, beverage and snack breaks, a map and materials package, all gratuities, and the services of an experienced tour leader. Tour goes out rain or shine. There is some walking, so wear comfortable shoes.

For more information about the tour and conference, go online to [AmericasHistoryLLC.com](http://AmericasHistoryLLC.com) or call 703-785-4373.

~By Robin Lind & Bruce Venter



Charles, Second Earl and First Marquess Cornwallis (1738-1805) - Thomas Gainsborough (1727-88) - RCIN 400748 - Royal Collection (Wikipedia)

# REVOLUTIONARY WAR SOLDIER: HENRY COCKRAN

A diverse group of men made up the ranks of colonial soldiers fighting the British during the Revolutionary War. The troops from Goochland County were no exception. The well-to-do, poor, black, white, mulatto, free, enslaved, young, not so young, experienced soldier, and new recruit—all—joined forces in an attempt to defeat the enemy. Today, as we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, we are curious to learn more about the men who defended us. Often we know little beyond their names. However, we know somewhat more about one soldier from Goochland County, Henry Cockran.

Henry Cockran was identified as one of the county's "freemen" when he was sent off to fight in the war. He is believed to be the son of Mary or Molly Cockran who was recorded as taxable in Goochland County as a "free Indian." She probably was born around 1745 and is believed to have had at least four children.

We know few specifics about Henry's military service, other than he was a private serving in the 2nd Virginia Regiment. It appears that he did not request a pension for his service. As such requests often provide a wealth of details, without one, information can be sketchy. However, records show that he, together with a number of other soldiers in his regiment, was "sick at White Plains [New York] on 8 September 1778" and that he was on the payroll of Captain Augustine Tabb's Company, 2nd Virginia State Regiment, in August 1779. The regiment had been sent by Governor Patrick Henry to join the Continental Army; by May of 1778, the 2nd Virginia was at Valley Forge and camped at Middlebrook during the winter of 1778-1779, participating in the Battle of Monmouth [New Jersey] in June 1778. In that battle, the regiment provoked a rear action and held the field at the end of the day. In September 1778, the 2nd Virginia was consolidated with the depleted 6th Virginia Regiment at



Illustration is from *Black Courage 1775-1783: Documentation of Black Participation in the American Revolution* by Robert Ewell Greene (Washington, D.C.: National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, 1984), 115.

White Plains. It was there that Henry Cockran fell sick.

Following the war, Henry returned to Goochland; he was taxable in the county from 1787 to 1816. In 1798, he signed a lease with Joseph Woodson for a plot of land which he held until 1803. For the lease, he gave "a red heifer of Half one hundred weight of nett meet fifty of beef and fifty of pork." He was described as a "Mulatto" living near Duval Carroll's in 1804. He was head of a Goochland County household of eight "other free" individuals in 1810. He registered as a "free Negro" in Goochland County on August 12, 1815; in the county's Register of Free Negroes, he was described as "a free man of color of Yellow complexion about five feet eight inches high, about fifty-three years old, short black curled hair...free born." Also, he appears on the 1810 census as a resident of the county and he signed marriage documents for his three daughters: Elizabeth who married Bartlett Hoomes in 1812,

Polly who married Randolph Cooper in 1813, and Ruth who married Roger Cooper in 1814. He does not appear in the 1820 Census. That, coupled with the fact that he did not pay property taxes after 1816, indicates that he probably passed away sometime between 1816 and 1819 when the Census was taken.

This article is based on research conducted by Kara Larson who spent the summer of 2023 as a student intern at the Society. Kara, a native of Goochland County, was a history major at Liberty University in Lynchburg; she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 2023. Her research identifies an excellent resource: *Free African Americans in the Revolution: Virginia, North Carolina, Maryland and Delaware* by Paul Heidegger @www.freeafricanamericans.com.

~By Kara Larson & Christina J. Dunn



# RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS

- An oil painting titled “Sir William Gooch,” donated by Matilda Haynsworth Spessard’s family. The painting (pictured at right), copied from an original portrait believed to be that of Sir William Gooch, Lt. Governor of the Virginia colony and for whom Goochland County was named, is by 20th century artist David Silvette (1909-1992). According to James Richmond, the portrait will serve as an excellent teaching tool for the importance of accurate identification and proven provenance.
- A late 19th or early 20th century swing butter churn and silver flower vase from Ben Dover, donated by Louisa Preston.
- A collection of photographs, papers, and artifacts, donated by the Garfield Randolph family. As you may know, Randolph Elementary School is named in honor of the Randolph family. James A. Randolph donated a house to serve as a school for black students more than a century ago.
- Eighteenth century court records, donated by the families of Elie Weeks and Forrest Sheets, both of whom worked tirelessly to establish the GCHS. Coincidentally, both donations arrived at the GCHS on the same day, almost 50 years after they were rescued from the trash as records were being transferred from the old clerk’s office to the new. The earliest document in the collections, dates to 1757.
- Photographs and papers related to James Cobb, donated by his brother Richard Cobb. James died in a plane crash during the Korean War, as he and other soldiers were being transported.
- A large digital collection of photographs, donated by past president of the GCHS Wayne Dementi.
- A digital collection of photographs of the Haden/Layne/Smith families of Goochland, donated by Jessica Stanley. (A photograph of Bill Haden on horseback at Mt. Bernard is shown below)



## In Memoriam

We would like to recognize Charlie Shannon of Hadensville who, together with Sam Piazza, donated computer equipment and printers to the GCHS over the last couple of years. Sadly, we lost Charlie to cancer in September 2023.



## **Goochland County Historical Society**

P.O. Box 602  
Goochland, VA 23063

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Goochland, VA  
Permit No. 19

## **Goochland County Historical Society by the Numbers 2024**

Facebook Followers 1,900   Books Cataloged 1,621   Photographs Cataloged 6,350



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



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

## **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

Florence & Burt Brooks • Debra Loving • James Morton

David Preston • Elise Ott • Jessica Stanley

Susan Young • Robin & Sallie Wells

Virginia Museum of History and Culture