

The CHRONICLE

Friends Annual Meeting Features Oral History Tribute to Historian Wynne Saffer and Installation of 2023 Board of Directors

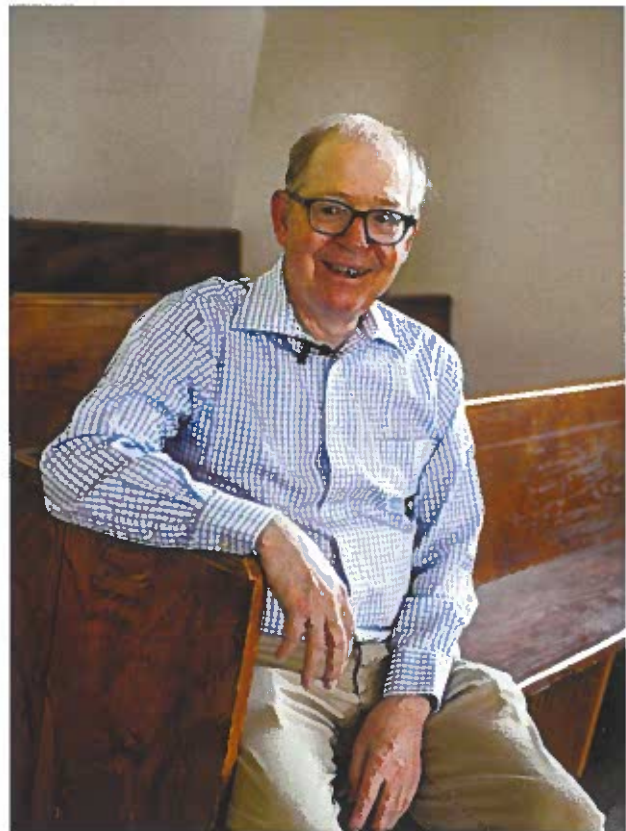
Interviewing Wynne Saffer

Loudoun native Wynne Saffer of Aldie is one of Thomas Balch Library's greatest supporters and frequent patrons. Several times a week you can find him in the Library, often researching deeds and chatting with staff. Raised in Middleburg and just east of Aldie, son of a Leesburg miller, Wynne has not only learned an enormous amount about Loudoun's history as a student and researcher but also has spent a lifetime living its story.

So Saffer seemed like a good observer to interview for the Friends of Thomas Balch Library annual meeting Oral History film, thought Rich Gillespie. Fellow Oral History Committee members Patty Rogers-Renner and filmmaker Sarah Huntington agreed. On a hot June day in 2021, during a lag in Covid, Rich set to interviewing Wynne as Patty directed and Sarah filmed at historic Mt. Zion Church, where Wynne's people once attended and where he now interprets monthly for NOVA Parks.

The question for the Oral History Committee has been, of course, whom to interview. What are we looking for? In this choice, Gillespie said, wit, personality on camera, Loudoun experience, historical understanding, involvement with a variety of organizations, and ability to put seven decades into context made Wynne Saffer a good choice. During the December 11th showing at Balch Library, attendees could be seen nodding their heads as they listened to Wynne's tales and observations, laughing at his wry witticisms.

Wynne Saffer would say he has lived an ordinary life—kid, student, college student, auditor *(continued on page 5)*



Wynne Saffer. Photograph by Sarah Huntington.

Learn how to research the Northern Neck Land Grants with Wynne Saffer on Thursday, June 1, at 10 AM at Thomas Balch Library. He will discuss the history of the land grants of the Northern Neck Proprietary and how to locate the grants using resources available at the Library.

Ulster Historical Foundation Seminar Is March 22—See Page 7

**FRIENDS OF THOMAS BALCH
LIBRARY, INC.**

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www.balchfriends.org

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Walking Tours of Historic Leesburg

Richard Treat Gillespie's Civil War Walking Tour Saturday, March 25, 2023 at 10 AM



Located just two miles from the Potomac River that divided the Confederate and United States, Leesburg saw a lot of action. Take historian Richard Treat Gillespie's Walking Tour of Civil War Leesburg and watch the conflict develop over the surviving Civil War townscape. In a circuit of the historic district, Gillespie focuses on the way the 1,500 residents of the Loudoun County seat would have experienced the struggle from 1861 through 1865. Included in the two-hour chronological tour are three skirmish sites, outside stops at two churches, the Courthouse lawn, "the best street in town," and Harrison Hall where General Lee stayed.

Former executive director for Northern Virginia's Mosby Heritage Area (now known as Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area) Association, Rich Gillespie taught U.S. History and Economics for 30 years at Loudoun Valley High School in Purcellville, VA. A graduate of the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, he is a strong believer in melding the classroom, the community, and historic sites through heritage education. The tour leaves from Thomas Balch Library parking lot at 10 AM.

An Insider's Tour with James P. Roberts Saturday, May 6, 2023 from 9 AM - 12 PM



James P. Roberts, a native of Leesburg, former member of Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission, 2008 recipient of a Loudoun History Award, and 2011 honoree of the Loudoun Laurels Foundation, treats the guests on his walking tour of Leesburg to an insider's commentary of local people, places, and points of interest.

He places particular emphasis on how Leesburg has grown and evolved through the years architecturally, economically, and racially. Factual, historical, and anecdotal information is intertwined and presented in storytelling fashion as only someone who lived through it and thoughtfully observed it can do. This unique tour leaves from Thomas Balch Library parking lot at 9 AM.

Both tours require good walking shoes.

Black History Committee Update

By Donna Bohanon, BHC Chairperson



Partnerships and Outreach

Preservation Equity Initiative (PEI) – The PEI is a BHC-initiated project to identify African American resources,

especially those that are endangered, and to support community oral history projects in partnership with local history and preservation organizations. Committee members are Donna Bohanon, Phyllis Cook-Taylor, Lori Kimball, Gem Bingol, and Martha Mason Semmes. An update of PEI projects follows:

• **2004 African American Architectural Survey**

Update: PEI members met with contractor EHT Traceries, Loudoun County Planning and Zoning, and George Mason University staff to plan survey activity scheduled to start the end of January.

• **Oral History:** The BHC-supported the Village of St. Louis Historical Society's successful effort to preserve the historic Banneker Elementary School. The school will be remodeled rather than torn down. We continue our support of the oral history project, initiated last year, in partnership with George Mason University.

• **Mount Pleasant Baptist Church (MPBC):** Funds were raised to hire a structural engineer to evaluate the church. The Friends of MPBC will decide on next steps upon receiving his report. An application to add trustees was submitted to the court a week ago. An oral history with long-time congregation member and trustee Arthur L. Davis might be conducted soon. BHC member Gertrude Evans did a painting of the church and will offer it for sale with proceeds going to MPBC Friends.

• **Heritage Farm Museum:** The museum will unveil Nokes family artifacts in the new exhibit "Just Country Living: Nokesville and the Nokes Manure Spreader" on February 19. The BHC, as an organization, donated \$1,000 toward the restoration of the manure spreader; some members made additional donations to support the preservation of the artifacts and exhibit of this unique eastern Loudoun County history. Per the museum's

request, BHC members Donna Bohanon, Lori Kimball, and Alicia Cohen reviewed the exhibition narrative, and the committee will support and promote the exhibit opening.

• **Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS):** LCPS requested BHC assistance to review the research on the list of school names associated with slavery and the Confederacy, compiled by History Matters, the company contracted by LCPS to conduct the study. BHC members Steve Hammond and Larry Branch conducted the review and presented comments to the LCPS administration and school board. In December, LCPS held community comment sessions for two schools identified by History Matters: Reid and Mercer. The board is currently looking at these schools. After a decision is made in April, the board will decide whether to look at Belmont Ridge, Belmont Station, Hutchinson, Selden's Landing, and Sully between May and September. Per board approval, Ball's Bluff and Emerick would be studied in September through December.

Genealogy Meeting Segments

The BHC finished 2022 with a segment on Lineage Societies, what they are, and the value of membership. Alicia Cohen provided examples such as Sons and Daughters of the United States Middle Passage, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, the Society of First African Families of English America, among others. We have BHC members who are also members of these societies. In January, Donna Bohanon started us off with the Story of Resistance and Genealogy associated with the Delegates of the 1883 Mass Meeting in Leesburg. This segment set the tone for the 2023 Black History Theme: Black Resistance. For her February segment, Gertrude Evans has taken a very artistic method of creating a book for her family based on an oral interview by Betty Moorefield of her aunt's life growing up in Leesburg over a 20-year period. This will be a story with original art by Gertrude. We look forward to many other history and genealogy topics that will include Black Patriots and Loyalists during the Revolutionary War.

Friends Annual Meeting Features Tribute to Wynne Saffer and Installation of New Board of Directors



2023 Friends of Thomas Balch Library Board of Directors

Mike Napper, Don Cooper, Ron Rust, James Lucier, Alex Patton (behind James), Judy Gerow, Lewis Leigh, Jr., Denise Mo. Directors not present: Jeff Bolyard, Murray Bradley, Pauline Clark, Perry Epes, Suzi Worsham, and Kacey Young.



Lewis Leigh, Jr., left, and Rosalie Leigh, right, with guest



Don Cooper, Friends president



From left, Donna Bohanon, Mike Napper, guest, Alex Patton, and Jim Hershman



Rich Gillespie interviews Wynne Saffer in Mt. Zion Church near Aldie for the Friends Oral History film. Photograph by Sarah Huntington.

(Continued from page 1) for the Commonwealth of Virginia, retiree, volunteer, and researcher. But he was able to share exquisitely with Balch patrons growing up rural in Loudoun, a life based on agriculture, milling, small town volunteer firemen's carnivals, riding your bike, heading miles to the new white consolidated high school at Leesburg (Loudoun County High School), and knowing most everyone in the community, by proximity or blood.

But it was also a life of change—not only by his own maturity but by societal change such as desegregation, the arrival of Dulles airport, the urbanizing of eastern Loudoun, the inundation of the rural landscape around him with new homes, and a more anonymous existence in a rapidly evolving demographic. He put into sharp relief just what has made Loudoun *Loudoun* and how that is evolving as he continues to observe.

The Friends of Balch Oral History Committee is devoted not to the extraordinary but to the ordinary, plumbing it with an emphasis on how the modern county of Loudoun has come to be through change, evolution, and the involvement of its people.

—Rich Gillespie, Taylorstown

Loudoun History Awards Presented

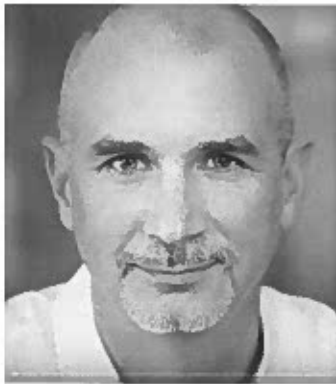
On November 6, 2022, Thomas Balch Library hosted the Loudoun History Award ceremony for both the 2021 and 2022 awardees.

For 2021, Michael R. Napper and The Family and Friends of the Mount Sinai Cemetery; Claudette Bard, Ron Campbell, Edward W. Spannaus, and Howard Gilbert Timbers, Jr., were recognized. The Black History Committee of Friends of Thomas Balch Library, having previously received a Loudoun History Award (2016), received special recognition for their commemorative efforts in connection with Frederick Douglass School.

For 2022, Susan Pemberton Webber was recognized for her many contributions to the advocacy and furtherance of history through participation in and support of Thomas Balch Library, Friends of Thomas Balch Library, Black History Committee of Friends of Thomas Balch Library, and membership in heritage organizations.

Charles A. Johnston was recognized for his many contributions to educational outreach and the preservation and documentation of Leesburg and Loudoun County history.

Mastering the Art of Command: Admiral Chester W. Nimitz and the Victory in the Pacific - Trent Hone - Sunday, March 5 at 2 PM



Mastering the Art of Command is an examination of Admiral Chester W. Nimitz's leadership during World War II. It describes how he used his talents to guide the Pacific Fleet following attacks on Pearl Harbor to win crucial victories against the Imperial Japan

forces and seize the initiative in the Pacific. Once Nimitz's forces held the initiative, they maintained it through an offensive campaign of unparalleled speed, overcoming Japanese defenses and creating conditions for victory.

In ***Mastering the Art of Command***, author Trent Hone explores how Nimitz used his leadership skills, command talents, and strategic acumen to achieve decisive results. Nimitz's "strategic artistry" is a pattern worthy of study and emulation for today's military officers, civilian leaders, and managers in large organizations.

Hone is an award-winning naval historian and vice president of Solution Architecture with ICF International, based in Fairfax, Virginia. He is the author of ***Learning War: The Evolution of Fighting Doctrine in the U.S. Navy, 1898–1945***, which explores how the U.S. Navy developed learning mechanisms before World War II that accelerated victory during the conflict. His article "U.S. Navy Surface Battle Doctrine and Victory in the Pacific" was awarded the U.S. Naval War College's Edward S. Miller Prize and the Naval History and Heritage Command's Ernest M. Eller Prize. His essay "Guadalcanal Proved Experimentation Works" earned second place in the 2017 Chief of Naval Operations Naval History Essay Contest.

Reagan's War Stories: A Cold War Presidency Benjamin Griffin - Sunday, April 2, 2023 at 2 PM



Reagan's War Stories: A Cold War Presidency examines the relationship between Ronald Reagan, the public, and popular culture. From an overview of Reagan's youth and the pulp fiction he consumed, we get a sense of the future

president's good/evil outlook. Carrying that over into Reagan's reading and choices as president, author Benjamin Griffin situates his narrative at the center of Reagan's political formation and leadership, providing a compelling account of Reagan's life, his presidency, and a lens into his non-strategy formulation.

Griffin, a U.S. Army officer who earned a Ph.D. in history from the University of Texas and now teaches at West Point, tells three stories about an American president who ushered in the end of the Cold War. A survey of Reagan's youth and the fiction he consumed and created as an announcer and actor reveals how the future president's worldview developed. A look at the rise of fiction and popular culture rife with pro-Americanism in the 1980s details a uniquely symbiotic relationship between the chief executive and popular culture in framing the Cold War as a struggle with an "Evil Empire" in the Soviet Union. Finally, Griffin outlines how presidential personality and reading preferences shaped President Reagan's pursuit of the "Star Wars" initiative and belief in the transformative combination of freedom and technology.

Reagan treated fictional portrayals seriously, believing they shaped public views and offered valid ways to think through geo-political issues. Griffin notes that Reagan identified with certain stories, and they shaped him as a political leader and influenced his approach to complex issues.



THE ULSTER HISTORICAL FOUNDATION LECTURE TOUR - MARCH 22, 2023

Join experts Fintan Mullan and Gillian Hunt from the Ulster Historical Foundation for a full day of learning to get the most out of Irish resources and records. Whether you are just beginning your Irish research or have been at it for years, you won't want to miss this workshop!

Presented by Friends of the Thomas Balch Library



Fintan Mullan



Gillian Hunt

REGISTRATION:

In advance: \$30.00 for members of the Friends of Thomas Balch Library
\$40.00 for non-members

At the door: \$60.00

Morning Sessions (10am – 12:30pm)

- Introduction to Irish and Scots-Irish Family History Research
- Using Printed Resources for Irish Family History: Newspapers, Street Directories, Ordnance Survey Memoirs and British Parliamentary Papers on Ireland
- Irish Poor Law and Local Government Records: Board of Guardians, Workhouse Registers and Grand Jury Records, etc.

- Lunch on your own -

Afternoon sessions (1:30 – 4pm)

- Using Irish Wills and Testamentary Records: A Hugely Valuable Resource for Irish Family History
- Worked Examples of Successful Irish Searches – based on Ulster Historical Foundation Research Files
- Solving Your Brick Walls – Q&A.

Number attending: _____

Name (s) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Registration fee payment: Check payable to Friends of the Thomas Balch Library

Credit card [Visa or Mastercard *only*] fill out information below:

Name on Card: _____ Amount: _____ CVV _____

Credit Card Number: _____ Expiration date: _____ [Day/Month/Year]

Please include mailing address and phone number of card holder above.

Mail or deliver your registration to: **Thomas Balch Library, 208 West Market St. Leesburg, VA 20176**

Attendance is limited to 65 – advance registration is encouraged to ensure a spot. Lunch not included in registration. For registration information or questions contact 703-737-7195 or balchlib@leesburgva.gov.



**Friends of Thomas
Balch Library**
THE CHRONICLE
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www.balchfriends.org

Programs, Classes & Exhibits

Programs & Events

*Mastering the Art of Command: Admiral
Chester W. Nimitz and the Victory in the
Pacific* - Trent Hone
3/5/2023 2 PM

*Reagan's War Stories: A Cold War
Presidency* - Benjamin Griffin
4/2/2023 2 PM

Blow Up - Ellen Crosby
5/7/2023 2 PM

The Burning Land! - David O. Stewart
5/21/2023 2 PM

**The Ulster Historical Foundation
Genealogical Seminar**
Presented by Friends of Thomas Balch Library
3/22/2023 10 AM - 4 PM

Exhibits

Margaret Mercer Room Exhibits

Black History Committee—February 2023

**Student Artwork from Tuscarora High
School**—April 2023

**Highlights of 100 Years of Collecting at
Thomas Balch Library**

Lower Level Meeting Room Exhibits

Photography by Heather Lynn Overheu—
through March 29, 2023

Visions From My Soul—Art by Gertrude
Ashton Evans — April - June 2023

Programs are held in the downstairs room and are free unless otherwise noted. For program updates, visit the Friends' website at balchfriends.org or the Library's website at <http://www.leesburgva.gov/government/departments/thomas-balch-library/library-events>