

# Orange

by  
Louisa Barrett

Photos by Hay Hardy

“If we don’t have it, you don’t need it” is the motto and philosophy of John Y. Faulconer, owner of Faulconer Hardware, located in the heart of downtown Orange. It’s a fitting metaphor for both the town and county of Orange. Four generations ago, John Faulconer’s great-grandfather walked home from Richmond after the Civil War. In 1870 he opened a sawmill and mercantile store beside what was then the Potomac, Fredericksburg & Piedmont railroad tracks. Faulconer keeps a foot-long section of that track on his desk today. From the very beginning there has

been a tradition of customer and community service.

## A Bit of History

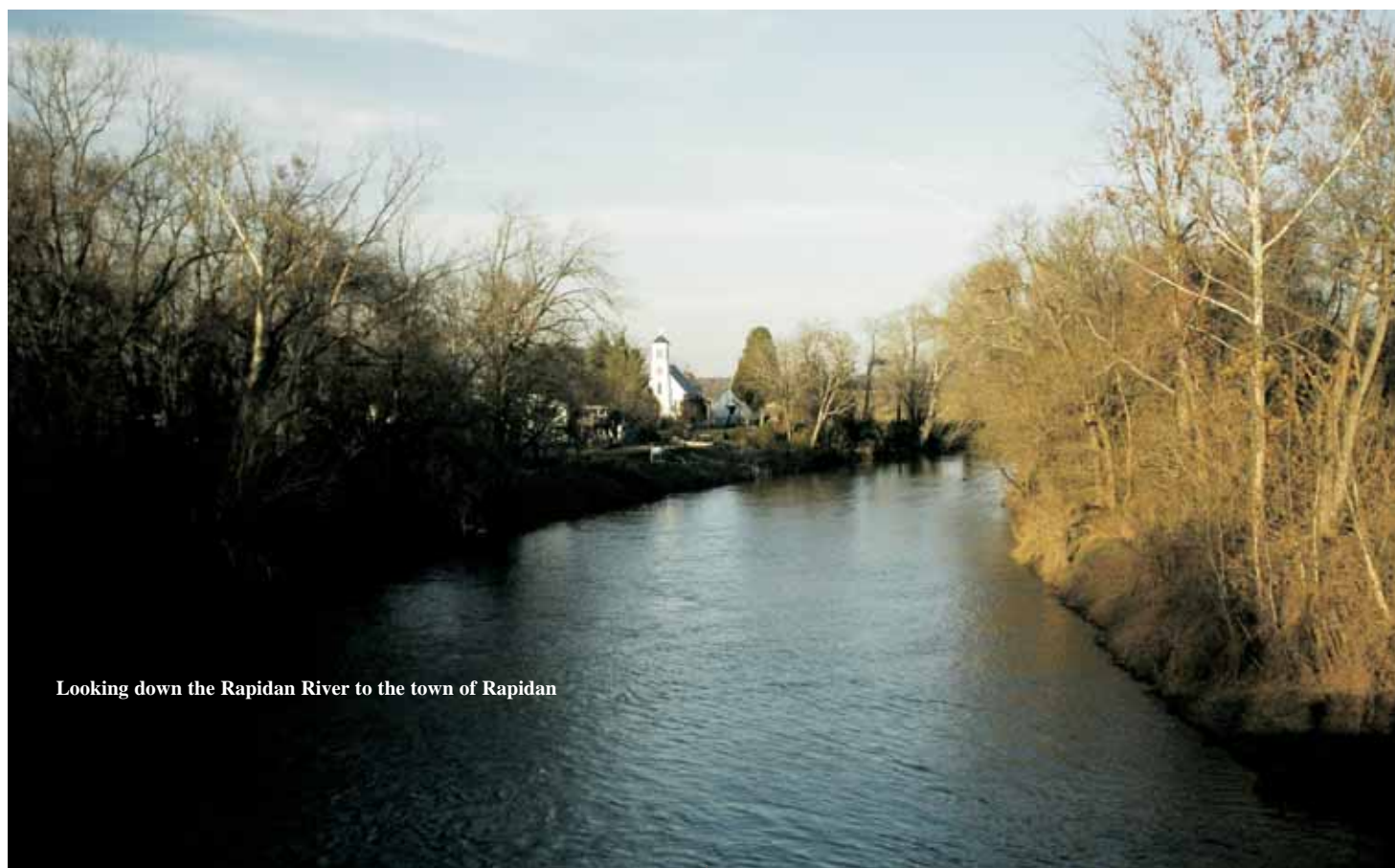
Orange County, created in 1734, was named in honor of William IV, Prince of Orange, and husband of Anne, Princess Royal of England. At that time it was the largest land mass county in Virginia, extending from the present eastern boundary to the Mississippi River on the west and to the Great Lakes on the north. Now, the boundaries are roughly 37 miles long and 16 miles wide. Some of the most scenic

and unspoiled views in all of central Virginia exist here. Located 83 miles southeast of Washington and 72 miles west of Richmond, the town of Orange may be reached easily from Interstates 95, 64, and 81. State routes 15 or 20 also ease into this soft, rolling landscape at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

The town itself grew up around the courthouse, as the county seat, and later became a railroad center when the railroad cars of the Orange & Alexandria laid their tracks through the middle of the public square. Today, the 1909 train station



Downtown Orange at the recently renovated Courthouse



Looking down the Rapidan River to the town of Rapidan

has been renovated and now functions as the Orange County Visitors Bureau, a great place to begin any tour.

One of the first settlers of the town, James Taylor II, arrived from England in 1722 and secured title to 8,000 acres. He established a successful plantation and historic residence, Bloomsbury, and began a tradition of large farms and antebellum homes in the county with over 150 existing today. Taylor's legacy to the country would be even more significant, however, as two of his great-grandsons would later serve as presidents: James Madison, called the "Father of the Constitution," as the fourth, and Zachary Taylor, who was born in Orange County at Montebello, as the twelfth.



A restoration project began in 2006 on Montpelier to restore the home to the Madison era.

### Montpelier

Located four miles south of town, Montpelier was the lifetime home of James Madison, principal author of the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights. His extraordinary wife Dolley was the first president's wife addressed as "First Lady," a moniker chosen by the eulogist at her funeral. The property was first settled by his grandfather Ambrose in 1726. The original mansion was built by his father in

1760. After Madison retired from public office in 1817, he and Dolley would make Montpelier their permanent residence, initiating an era of grandiose hospitality. They also made extensive improvements to the colonial-style, brick-and-wood mansion and to the 2,650 acres of grounds, creating two acres of a terraced formal garden and a 220-acre national landmark forest. Massive tulip poplars, oaks and specimen trees from his time can still be found there. Madison spoke of these woods as "just a squirrel's jump from heaven." Dolley Madison was forced to sell the property in 1844 after her husband's death for financial reasons, and the mansion changed hands six times before being purchased by William duPont in 1901.

During the duPont years, the mansion was greatly enlarged to 55 rooms, adding barns, greenhouses, a sawmill, a blacksmith shop and a railway station. His daughter, Marion duPont Scott, often called "America's First Lady of Racing," inherited the property, added a steeplechase course, and initiated the Montpelier Hunt Races. The races are held the first weekend in November and are nationally recognized as a premier event on the

National Steeplechase circuit.

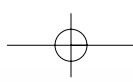
At her death in 1984, Mrs. Scott bequeathed the property to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. They managed the property until 2000, when the Montpelier Foundation, an independent nonprofit organization, took charge. After a comprehensive architectural and archeological study, a massive four-year restoration project began in 2006. Michael C. Quinn, president of the Foundation, says, "Our goal wasn't just to restore the home, but to restore Madison."

### Barboursville

If you continue south from Orange on Route 20 for 8 miles, you will find the resplendent home of Virginia Governor James Barbour (1812-1814), one of only three designed by Thomas Jefferson in his signature style of Palladian porticoes and a central octagonal parlor. This 1,000-acre estate was a thriving agricultural success until the house was destroyed by fire in 1884. Today, the ruins serve as a dramatic setting for outdoor summer Shakespeare productions by the Four County players.

### Vineyards

Gianni and Silva Zonin, a sixth-generation wine producing family from the Veneto region of Italy, acquired the 830-acre Barbour estate. Barboursville Vineyards, established in 1976, has created what Thomas Jefferson so assiduously worked for at Monticello, a thriving and award-winning vineyard of 125 acres of solely European grapes. Luca Paschina, general manager and winemaker, was recognized as "setting the standard for Virginia wines" at the Governor's Cup ceremonies in 2003. Adjacent to the Tuscan-style tasting room, Palladio Restaurant reflects the care given to the winemaking by offering gourmet cuisine with a Northern Italian flair using seasonal locally grown produce and grass-fed meats paired with the most complementary wine. Also on the property is the luxuriously



Barbourville Winery (Photo courtesy of Barbourville Winery)





restored and authentic 1804 Inn for the traveler who would like to spend a night or two soaking up the serenity of the countryside.

A stone's throw from Barboursville Vineyard is Burnley Vineyard. The Reeder family started planting vines in 1977 on 30 acres of land, and seven years later opened their winery to the public for tasting and sales of more than a dozen varieties of fine wines.

A little further south in Gordonsville, Dennis Horton began a small home vineyard in 1983 and is now one of the largest growers and winemakers in the Commonwealth, with 112 acres under vine and 40 wines to choose from. Horton Vineyards is credited with introducing the Voignier grape to the region.

Orange County is now the third-largest grower of wine grapes in Virginia and attracts more than 7,000 people to the

**Will Coleman at  
Tivoli**



annual Wine Festival at Montpelier the first weekend in May. According to Barbara Banner at the Orange Chamber of Commerce, there is an outdoor festival or street fair every weekend somewhere in Orange County from May through November.

#### **Horse Country Indeed**

Orange County has produced some of the finest horsemen in the past and continues to do so in the present. William

Coleman was chosen as "Young Rider of the Year" in 2004. His family owns Tivoli Farm, dubbed "the quintessential Colonial Revival mansion of the classical mode" by the National Register of Historic Places. Will trains and rides his own horses and those from several other farms in hopes that he and his horse will qualify for the US Olympic team in 2008. He was short-listed for the 2004 team but was sidelined by an injury. It is hard to imagine looking

at his youthful face how rigorously he has pursued his career in both America and Europe to learn about the breeding and training of horses. Then he gives a wonderful smile and says, "There are two things that I can do: work hard and ride horses well."

Sally and David Lamb, owners of Gordonsville's Oakland Heights Farm, offer guided trail rides up their mountain to a Civil War battle site, with either Western- or Eastern-style saddles. They also offer classes for all ranges and ages of riders. Having owned their farm for almost 30 years, the Lambs are dedicated to teaching the care of horses, fox hunting, offering programs for handicapped persons, and acting as springboards for both adults and children.

### Fishing

Becky Gore, teacher of earth science, astronomy and oceanography at Orange High School, grew up fishing with her brother and began a "hooked on fishing" program at Orange Elementary for the local 4-H Club. Since 1999 the club has been a junior member of the B.A.S.S. Federation Nation. There are 54 students involved in the program. These young fishermen are on the water in johnboats or in bass boats, with the sponsorship of Triton Boats, every weekend from March through November. They not only compete for the limit of five fish but also spend time building aqua cribs and planting trees at Lake Anna to provide cover for spawning bass. They have joined other conservation efforts throughout Virginia to clean up small lakes and streams. In 2004, Orange High School was honored as the outstanding chapter in the Junior B.A.S.S. Federation Nation for the whole country. Their enthusiasm and hard work has now garnered enough support that fishing is considered an alternative sport. Outstanding participants can achieve an athletic letter or win college scholarship money.

### Woodberry Forest School

Education and sports have been an integral part of the Woodberry Forest School, a private boys' boarding school, since its founding in 1889. It is located at the northern tip of the town of Orange, just barely over the Madison County line and bordering on the Rapidan River (a Virginia scenic river). The 175-acre main campus (the school's total property is over 1,200 acres) was originally the estate of Gen. William Madison, brother of James Madison. There are 13 athletic fields, a golf course, a skeet range, an outdoor pool, and boundless opportunities for competitive sports. In summer there is a sports camp for boys ages 10-14 with training in 15 different sports. The school is guided by an honor system that promotes a mutual trust between the students and faculty.

### Real Estate

Orange County offers some of the most beautiful landscape in Virginia's Piedmont. Estates such as Retreat, Mount Sharon, and Tivoli, to name a few, are found in every corner. Jack Samuels, Jr., principle broker for Jack Samuels Realty, says that until the recent national trend in the real estate market, the value of real estate in Orange has been steadily rising. Jack's grandfather, Joseph M. Samuels, started the real estate office in 1913. Today, after 94 years, it has 15 agents and remains a family business.

### Downtown Orange

Returning to downtown Orange, stop at the corner of Routes 20 and 522 at Marshall Farms and sample some of their organic cheese made from their own large herd of dairy cows. The farm is a good example of how the people of Orange County have been able to keep their commitment to preserving the land while also making it pay. Once back in town, leave a little energy for the self-guided walking tour of the 39 buildings in the Historic District. You can also call ahead to Frank



Chuck Mason of Mason Insurance

John Faulconer and his Jack Russell terrier Miller, the mascot of Faulconer Hardware



Jack Samuels Realty

Deanne Marshall at Marshall Farms Corner



Walker of Tourguide, Ltd. who can arrange custom guided tours for small and large groups.

And try to include The Arts Center of Orange, located at 129 East Main Street. As Chuck Mason says, "it has the finger on the pulse of town." Chuck is the president of Orange's Downtown Alliance and owner of Mason Insurance Agency, a fourth-generation, locally-owned business. Linda Marston-Reid conceived the idea for the center 10 years ago in her kitchen. The purpose of the Arts Center is to promote fine contemporary art in diverse styles. Gallery space is on the first floor and features four to six artists from all over the country, changing every two months.

Orange County Visitors Center  
877-222-8072  
[www.visitocva.com](http://www.visitocva.com)

Tourguide, Ltd.  
Frank S. Walker, Jr.  
540-672-9414

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540-672-2728  
[www.montpelier.org](http://www.montpelier.org)

Oakland Heights Farm  
David and Sally Lamb  
540-832-3350

Jr. B.A.S.S. Federation Nation  
<http://eteamz.com/ocsanglers>

Barboursville Vineyards  
540-832-3824  
[www.barboursvillewine.com](http://www.barboursvillewine.com)

Burnley Vineyards  
540-832-2828  
[www.burnleywines.com](http://www.burnleywines.com)

Horton Vineyards  
540-832-7440  
[www.hvwine.com](http://www.hvwine.com)

The gallery shares space with the gift shop selling pottery, sculpture, fiber art, and jewelry by Virginia artists. There are also artists' studios and many class offerings for both children and adults. On Friday nights, the upstairs space becomes Orange Jam, with middle and high school students playing their instruments and singing for audiences of parents, friends and the general public.

Printed on the utility buckets of Faulconer Hardware is another store motto: "A hoe and a whole lot more." The town and county of Orange have a whole lot more to offer. Come and see for yourself.

Louisa Barrett is a retired publicist living in Charlottesville. She enjoys reading, writing, and gardening.

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