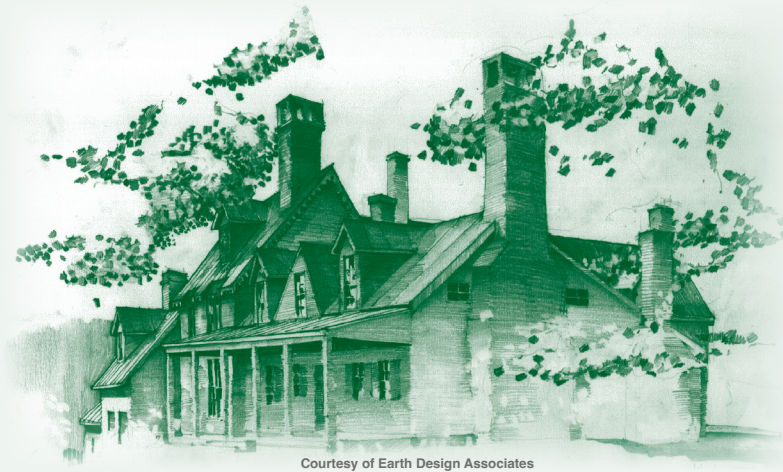




Courtesy of Earth Design Associates

NEWS FROM WESTON

SUMMER/FALL 2025

Letter from the President

On many occasions I heard about Weston from my cousins, Mildred Gulick Riddell and Mary Ashton. Cousin Mildred had wonderful memories of riding from her nearby farm, Redwood, to Weston where the Nourse sisters would share with her all things about foxhunting, animal husbandry, as well as flora and fauna native to Weston. Mary often talked of Weston, describing it as a lovely farmstead, filled with history and beauty. I was curious, so I visited Weston and was hooked.

Weston is indeed a special place, beautifully and authentically restored, that displays a place in time. The Main House and the outbuildings are treasures. This has happened because of hard work started by the Antiquarians when they acquired Weston in 1959. Throughout the years, bit by bit as the budget permitted, Weston's restorations moved forward. While much of the restoration is complete, work continues to transform the former Casanova Hunt Kennels into an art and educational center. Having a facility to host events and workshops will certainly help us fulfill our mission of preserving Weston, reaching out to the community, and celebrating the Nourse family's important contributions. As this is a major project, it is an expensive endeavor. All contributions will be greatly appreciated.

This newsletter highlights events and activities during the past year that reflect the WAS's determination to fulfill its mission. In the next pages there are wonderful photos and articles on recent research on Charles's and Annie's son, Walter, and Charles's sister, Henrietta. In addition, an abbreviated version of "Summer Wildflowers of Weston," is included here as an insert. The full version will be available to those attending the Tea.

Without the support of the Friends of Weston, none of these achievements would have been possible. We are so very grateful. We hope you will attend our annual Tea on September 28th celebrating a very busy and productive year.

Butter Strother
President

Round Up of '24 - '25

School Tours: From Virtual to Hands-On

Weston's school education committee is always seeking new schools and students to visit Weston for a hands-on history experience. On a very chilly, rainy day this past April, for the first time we welcomed Middle School students and their families from the Virginia Virtual Academy. This is an online public school serving K through 12 students with a diversity of needs. Families traveled from Norfolk, Newport News, Nelson County, Lynchburg, Fredericksburg, Culpeper and Nokesville. What an investment in traveling to Weston!

The misty, cold rain helped impress upon the students what sort of hearty souls were the Nourse sisters: Constance and Charlotte had to work, plant/sow, harvest, cook and feed, regardless of the weather. These students brought their unique perspective to the tour as they visited different buildings. In the timber barn they learned about early-American iron works and the early 18th-century German community of Germantown just down the road from Casanova. At the Blacksmith Shop, they asked about the source of iron and wondered whether the blacksmith made guns in addition to making nails, horseshoes and mending equipment. The hands-on demonstration of lifting the cornseeder with a reproduction wooden jack to repair a wheel especially impressed them. History, engineering, science and use of resources came together as students listened, observed and learned from the knowledgeable docents at Weston. ■

Bradley Elementary School's First Grade class visited Weston last fall.



Memories From the Past



Charlotte Nourse's horse, Pandora and Guests Circa 1956

Kimmie Meyer (Ford) is seated on Pandora behind Ellie Dodge (Neilson, daughter of WAS member Eleanore Neilson), while Teddy Dodge is holding the reins. Betsy Meyer (Anderson) is on the right. Taken in the summer of 1956. "Charlotte very kindly let us ride Pandora whenever we would come for summer visits at Rockhill" (childhood home of Betty Meyer Gookin, just up the road from Weston). "Pandora was up in age and very gentle. Mom was riding Pandora on her way to visit Charlotte and Constance when the old horse tipped over into a ditch! They were both fine, just delayed for tea at Weston."



Sue and Charlie Bopp's wedding at Weston:

E. Sue Smith married Charles Bopp on May 8, 1993 at Weston. Evening Scarlett was worn, with groomsmen holding their hunt whips up as bride and groom passed through. Sue is currently the Warrenton Hunt's Joint Master of Fox Hounds, with Chrissy Gray. We are grateful that members of the Warrenton Hunt continue to ride at and near Weston.

Spring Open House



On Saturday, May 10, Weston opened to the community for a wildflower walk, house and buildings tours, exhibits and demonstrations by local artists, an herbalist and a blacksmith. (Please see Page 8 about the upcoming September 27 Open House.)

Kennels Update



During the spring, underground plumbing work was completed. In August, installation of the metal wall studs and framing was completed.

Warrenton Hunt Trailride



Hillary Gerhardt (L) and Sue Bopp, MFH, are shown at Longwood preparing to test the trail that leads to Weston.

On Sunday, August 24, the Warrenton Hunt convened a community trail ride, starting at Weston and continuing to historic Longwood. This property has been recently acquired for the purpose of preserving history and greatly expanding the hunt's jurisdiction between Casanova and Catlett.

How One Of Weston's Own Helped Fauquier Farmers Succeed – And Evolve

By Sean Broderick

Weston's place in Virginia history is both well earned and well documented. Yet no compilation of Weston's area community contributions is complete without recognizing Walter Burton Nourse's legacy. A life-long Fauquier County resident, Walter played a central role in helping area farmers transition from the less-complicated, pre-World War I era through the Great Depression and into more sustainable, prosperous times.

Born in 1893 at Weston, Walter was one of four children of Charles and Annie Simpson Nourse. Charles, a New York businessman purchased the property in 1858 and renamed it Weston, in honor of his prominent family's ancestral home in Herefordshire, England. Charles and Annie were married in 1885.

Like many boys raised in Fauquier in the 1800s and 1900s, farm life was Walter's life. He carried that interest with him to The College of William and Mary and then Cornell, earning an agriculture degree from the Ithaca, New York Ivy League school in 1916.

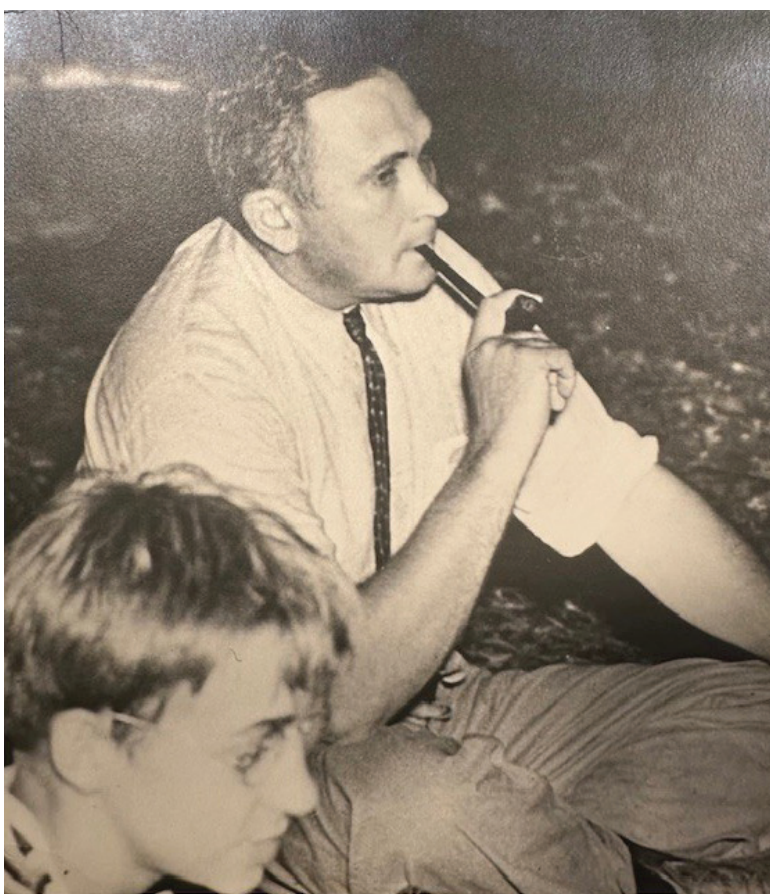
World War I took him to France as an Army Sergeant before he returned to Fauquier for good. Along with wife Jessie Dennett – the two met in France while he was at war and she was with the YMCA World Service Campaign – Walter settled in Casanova. They resided at Timberlane, a 140-acre parcel inherited from the original 440-acre Weston property.

Walter spent the 1920s and early 1930s in both public and private sector roles. He served as Fauquier's game warden and represented Fargo Engineering Company, a Michigan-based architecture and civil engineering firm. Meanwhile, evolutions in local farming practices and major country-wide economic developments were underway – and they would change Walter's life.

Fauquier was by and large a thriving farming community during Walter's youth. The U.S.A. 1917 entry into World War I improved fortunes, increasing demand for American crops as

U.S. farmers stepped up to support Europe's food needs. This combined with Fauquier's relative isolation due to a lack of efficient area transportation infrastructure meant that county supervisors, most of them prominent farmers, had little use for the U.S.A. agricultural cooperative extension system (ACES).

Established in 1914 to provide farmers research-backed education on all aspects of their livelihood, ACES relied on local agents as liaisons. Fauquier's supervisors allocated budget for the county's first agent in 1917.



Locals opted to rely on 4H clubs, peer-to-peer interaction and other locally established education programs to prepare its future farmers. While a post-war drop in crop demand raised concerns among many farmers, they didn't see funding a county agent as part of the solution. Influenced by residents' input, the board of supervisors opted to eliminate the agent's office in 1921.

Farming conditions worsened as the decade progressed – and not just in Fauquier. By 1929, President Herbert Hoover's administration was concerned enough to establish the Federal Farm Board. Its primary tasks were providing loans to farmers and purchasing surplus crops to help reduce supply and, ideally, boost prices. But the

program had one fatal flaw: It did not set production limits.

Bolstered by millions of dollars in government support and a guaranteed buyer, farmers increased output. They applied lessons learned in the ACES program, such as using fertilizer to boost crop yields, that were abandoned in the 1920s as money became tighter. Exacerbated by nationwide household spending cuts in response to the Great Depression that started in October 1929, crop prices fell even more.

Like most farmers, Fauquier's producers faced immense pressure to generate revenue and pay bills. Executives from The Fauquier National Bank of Warrenton, the county's top bank and farm loan provider, expressed concern to local officials. In

response, the board of supervisors re-established the County Agent's office, effective January 1, 1930.

Back in Washington, officials watched as the recession enveloped the nation. With the country's agricultural nervous system still in shock from the previous decade's struggles, the government had little choice but to step in again.

The answer this time was 1933's Agricultural Adjustment Act. The ambitious, complex program paid farmers not to produce and snapped up surplus agricultural products for the sole purpose of destroying them. It also created the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), part of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, to oversee distribution of subsidies. AAA's creation meant more work at the local level. Fauquier's leadership determined the county needed a larger staff focused on farmers and their issues. The most pressing need was an official to handle AAA-related work. The person needed to know both farming and, ideally, the county's farmers, and would benefit from some real-world business experience.

Fortunately, one of the county's own was the perfect candidate: Walter Nourse.

The AAA programs gave farmers much more to learn. While ACES was focused on farming practices, AAA informed farmers about new – and critical – government programs. Some, such as loan programs, were related to the Great Depression, but others taught soil conservation and other sustainability practices rendered crucial by the Dust Bowl crisis of the mid-1930s.

Walter's background prepared him well for his role as Emergency Agricultural Assistant to the County Agent. Beyond his farming experience, he benefited from his college years, where teaching and learning were daily rituals that fostered his appreciation for embracing modern farming practices. Overcoming typhoid fever in college and a chemical gas attack on a French battlefield meant he also could offer real-world perspective on perseverance.

The importance of AAA's programs elevated the County Agent office's visibility. Before AAA, communicating with farmers often meant going to them. Under AAA, farmers came together to learn about new programs and share information. After a few years, the AAA programs became familiar, lessening the need for a dedicated county staffer. But county supervisors recognized the ancillary benefits Nourse and his County Agent office colleagues generated. They unified farmers and shepherded new, county-level programs such as a dedicated agricultural board.

Those successes helped convince officials to approve and hire Fauquier's first Assistant County Agent – Walter Nourse. His title changed, but his role was largely the same. He supported the County Agent's mission as the key link between government programs and local farmers and helped them benefit from the ACES educational offerings.

In 1937, Walter was named County Agent – a position he would hold for the rest of his abbreviated but accomplished career. Walter suffered a fatal heart attack on March 3, 1949 at his Casanova home. He was 55.

(Continued on Page 6)



Watercolors from Henrietta Nourse's journal newly acquired by WAS.

New Records of Nourse Family History Made Available to WAS

This August, the Antiquarian's were visited by historians Ron Huffman and James Marianetti of Atlanta, GA. As a result of a generous gift by Nancy Topping, great niece of Jessie Nourse, the wife of Walter, these gentlemen are in the process of bringing to light a large collection of WWI / WWII records and associated items pertaining to Walter, Jessie and their daughter Joan. The visit was the initial step in uncovering Walter's family's place in the Casanova community, Fauquier County and the State of Virginia. During their tour of Weston, James and Ron presented the Antiquarians with a book of watercolors, "Wild Flowers of the District of Columbia", that seems to have been painted by Henrietta Nourse, Charles Nourse's (of Weston) younger sister, starting when Henrietta was eight years old. According to the dedication still visible on the inside of the cover, the journal in which these flowers were painted was given to Henrietta in 1841 by Rebecca Nourse, her mother, while the family was living at the Highlands, just north of today's Georgetown. An article about Rebecca and her talents as an artist, botanist and mother can be found on our website, www.historicwestonva/projects. A section of this article was published in our 2024 newsletter. The Warrenton Antiquarian Society is extremely grateful to Nancy's, Ron's and James's gift and their commitment to further exploring and uncovering aspects of the Nourse family history of which we previously had few records. Our thanks and appreciation also go to Sean Broderick for researching and writing about Walter in the article above.

How One Of Weston's Own Helped Fauquier Farmers Succeed – And Evolve

(Continued from Page 5)

Nourse spent more time as County Agent than in any other role and made numerous notable contributions, such as guiding farmers through World War II's unprecedented farm labor pressures. But his influence is arguably best illustrated by the years just after AAA's formation.

"In 1933 only 235 farmers cooperated with the Triple A program, whereas in 1939, 1,177 farmers who represent approximately 85 percent of the cropland in the county are cooperating with the Agricultural Conservation Program, for which the County Agent is secretary," reads the 1939 Agricultural Agent Annual Report that Walter prepared.

When Walter Nourse became a farmer, Fauquier's land stewards relied on each other and their tried-and-true ways. If you were in need and not well-connected to the farmer-dominated county Board of Supervisors, your chances of getting a hand were greatly diminished.

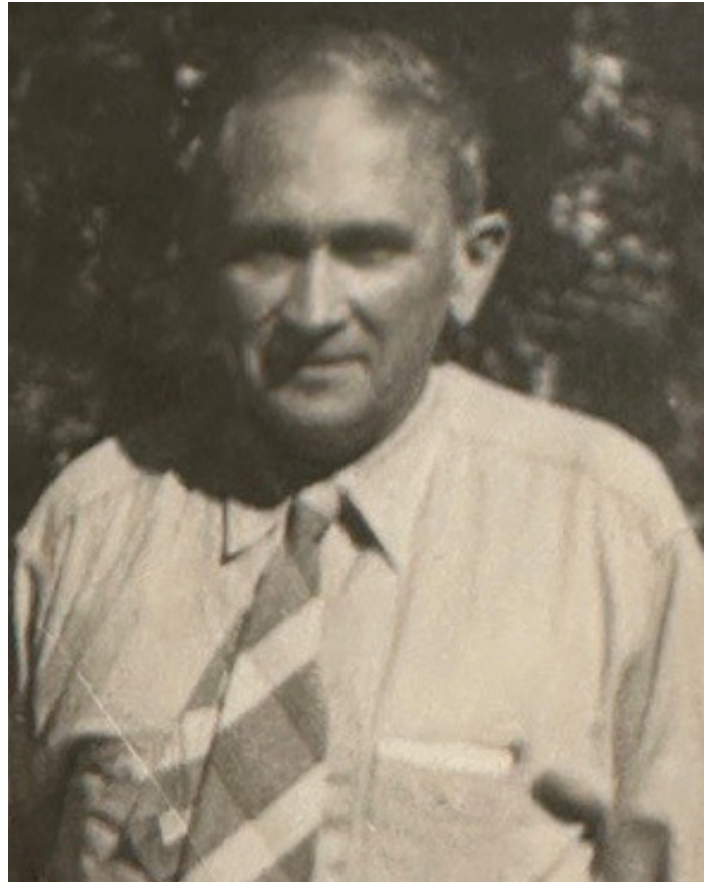
Walter's efforts drove much-needed change. His efforts in the County Agent's office helped foster an era of collaboration and openness to new, more sustainable farming practices – a legacy that endures in Fauquier County's farming community.

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Walter and Jessie; Timberlane--News From Weston, Summer 2016 edition

Nourse typhoid fever--The Washington Herald, October 20, 1916--<https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn83045433/1916-10-20/ed-1/> ■



Sean Broderick, the author of this article, has been researching and sharing stories for more than 30 years. A native of Boston, Mass., he has spent most of his life in or near Fauquier County. He and wife Christina now live in Casanova, a short walk from Weston.

Philanthropist Paul Mellon Celebrates Walter Nourse's Legacy

"There is one other name which I have not mentioned, but it is a very important one. It is a name that most of you know, the name of a kind man, an able administrator, a man wholly devoted to his soil, his fellow-farmers, and his State: the late Mr. Walter B. Nourse, County Agent of Fauquier County. I did not know Mr. Nourse for very long, but everything that I knew about him in the years I did know him, I liked. I speak with great reverence of his ability, his great interest in this project, and his wholehearted support of it. I know that we all miss him, and felt his absence from this inauguration ceremony with great regret. Although I understand that it is not within the policy of V.P.I. to attach individual names to research stations as memorials, I am sure that you will all agree with me that we can,

most appropriately, dedicate the results, both tangible and intangible, that emerge from this project, to the spirit and to the memory of Walter Nourse."

The quote above was made by philanthropist Paul Mellon during the dedication of the Virginia Forage Research Center in 1949. Mr. Mellon donated this center, a 420-acre farm outside of Middleburg, to Virginia Tech for the purpose of fostering research for improving pasture and animal productivity while enhancing the land. For 40 years, the center was used primarily for beef cattle research. In 1992, it was rededicated to equine research and teaching and renamed the Middleburg Agricultural Research and Extension Center (MARE.) ■

Appreciation

During the past two years, the Warrenton Antiquarian Society lost four stellar members. These stalwart ladies served to usher in a new era of stewardship of the Society. Ellie Spencer (Mrs. Harold Spencer), president 1989-93, and Deanie Thomas (Mrs. Gerald Thomas), president 1991-93, began the process of getting Weston registered as a state and national landmark. Gerry Turner (Mrs. Charles Turner, Jr.), president 1985-87 and 1995-97, was president when Weston was named

to the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register in 1996. Gerry also held the distinction, with member Audrey Mars (Mrs. Forrest Mars), as the founder of the Friends of Weston some 50 years ago. Ginny Vawter (Mrs. Clarence Vawter), who wore many hats during her twenty years of service to WAS, is especially remembered for making sure Weston looked its best for all visitors.

Lydia Dean Dubbelde Thomas



Lydia Dean, Dubbelde Thomas, "Deanie" was an Army "brat" and married an active duty Marine. They traveled all over the world and finally settled in Fauquier County where they spent the last 40 years of their lives. Deanie learned something new in every place she lived and brought her knowledge and skills to Weston where she worked outside with

flowers and the gardens and inside trying her best to organize the Antiquarians into running proper meetings.

Martha Joy Hamm Spencer

Martha Joy Hamm Spencer, called "Ellie" after the storybook character Eloise by her sister Julie, was a long time member of the Antiquarians. After a very active early life, she settled in Rappahannock County. Ellie met and married a local Warrenton man, Harold Spencer, and they spent the rest of their lives in the Virginia Piedmont. She rode to hounds with the Casanova Hunt, was active in the Warrenton Garden Club and was on the Board of the Fauquier SPCA. All of these activities served her well in her involvement with the Antiquarians and Weston. Ellie was the support behind Laurie Starke in publishing "The Jericho Turnpike".



Geraldine Sabean Turner

Geraldine Sabean Turner, Gerry, became a member of the Antiquarians when her mother-in-law Mrs. Charles Green Turner, Sr. "invited" her to join. She was involved in every aspect of the early activities of the Antiquarians, from cleaning out the endless first copies of the magazines lining the floors of the old kitchen to introducing the lovely fall teas. She and Audrey Mars started the Friends of Weston to raise money to maintain and restore the house and outbuildings. She sat at the card table at the entrance, and you couldn't pass her cheery smile without putting something in the basket.



Virginia Henderson Vawter

Ginny was a Virginian by birth and spent most of her life here. When she and her husband Clarence moved to Warrenton, Ginny never slowed down. Among her many volunteer activities the Antiquarians occupied a special place in her heart. She loved taking care of the gardens and was a star in cleaning out the cupboards that overflowed with 1940s history. Ginny was a positive spirit in all things to do with Weston.



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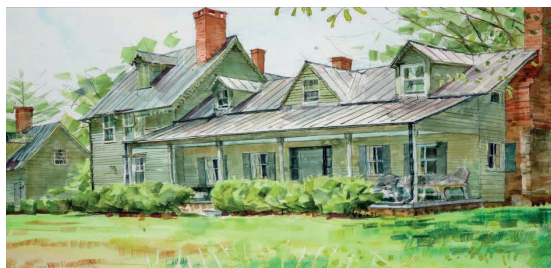
Lauren Starke

Butter Strother

www.historicwestonva.org

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Warrenton Antiquarian Society is to preserve, interpret and share educational resources related to local artistic, agricultural and family histories.



Painting by Douglas Stenhouse

OPEN HOUSE

Come Celebrate Fall at Historic Weston

Saturday, September 27, 1-4 PM

Casanova

**Join us for guided tours of the house,
gardens and historic outbuildings!**

Admission is free – All are welcome!