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NEWS FROM WESTON

FALL 2023

Letter from the President

Weston was bequeathed to the Antiquarian Society by Charlotte Nourse in 1959 with the hope of it becoming a special place. Forty or so years ago, when I first became president, the Warrenton Antiquarian Society and life at Weston were remarkably different from where we are today. It is interesting to look back.

Back then, in the summer and fall of 1981, Weston was mostly a quiet and sleepy place. Once a day, the huntsman for the Casanova hounds would visit, hounds at the kennels would bark, and every now and then trailers and cars would arrive for either a meet or a periodic horse show or terrier race held on the far side of Weston's 10 acres.

Sometimes we would receive visitors curious about the old house, or one of the Veterans who had been stationed at Vint Hill during WWII and who had been befriended by the Nourses might arrange for a tour. Once a year, on a late September Sunday, members would bring their best flowers and recipes and host a Tea to honor their Friends who had provided support for the restoration of Weston's historic buildings.

Other than fund raising, restoration and a couple of successful garden projects, few people, including most of the members, really knew much about Weston: its history, its connection to the larger world, the scope of the Nourse family's 100-year tenure and their tradition of service. Back then, Weston was viewed as a unique and special place with a lot of promise, but no clear plan.

Today, Weston is a designated museum, an education center and a place for bringing people together. Today, the Warrenton Antiquarian Society is an organization with a clear but challenging community-focused mission.

Now, during the week, adult visitors come to see the house, the nine fully restored 19th-century buildings, and the various interpretive displays. Children come as part of large school groups to learn about local history and traditional farm life through interactive experiences. On weekends, tables and chairs are often set up outside to accommodate workshops on the creative arts, horticultural practices, and for gatherings of friends and families—sometimes with music, sometimes just to talk and learn. And even though, sadly, the Casanova Hunt is no longer a part of Weston, it has become a place at which The Warrenton Hunt can meet with their hounds, convene for breakfasts and picnics, and host community trail rides.

Forty years later, Weston is not only busier than ever, it has the ability and calling to do more. And with the plans for an arts and education center complete—a full remodeling of the former Casanova Hunt Kennels—and this simple but exciting renovation almost underway, your generous support—whether small or large—is absolutely essential. Your support will fund the facilities necessary for Weston to serve as the small but significant hub for local art, history and environmental education that it was meant to be. It will provide space for Weston and the Antiquarians to continue to grow and better serve our community. Thank you for supporting Weston and its special legacy.

Laurie Starke

The Working Women of Weston

by Anne Van Ryzin

So often, through custom and circumstances, the labor of women has been ignored or obliterated from historical records. The Weston farm that we visit and enjoy today exists in large part because of the care and hard work on the land by women long gone.

When Thomas Fitzhugh, of Casanova, Virginia, died in 1843, he owned four farms and around 160 enslaved people. In his will he freed eight people and left the rest of his estate to the court to divide among his eleven sets of heirs. The executors kept primary enslaved families together, valued all of the property and divided the estate equally into eleven lots of land and eleven lots of enslaved people. In the courtroom inheritors drew a lot of each from hats. The north half of Owl Run Farm would become Weston in 1859 when purchased by Charles Nourse. In 1844 it was drawn by Giles Fitzhugh, brother of Thomas, along with 15 enslaved people, including the women and girls (age) listed below.

Kitty Napper (25), Susan Towles (24) Pressy Jane Riley (17), Sinah Smith (12), Lavinia Napper (11), Matilda (10), Sally Towles (1).

Pressy Jane, farm manager William Riley and their seven children lived in the Old Kitchen building. Other enslaved people lived in the Cabin or likely bunked in the Timber Barn loft. Agricultural census records tell exactly which crops and livestock were raised by Giles and his field workers. When Giles died in 1853, he freed in his will all 19 enslaved people then living on his property

In 1860, Charles Nourse moved his younger brother, Pemberton, to Weston to complete the first expansion of the main house. To oversee the farm Charles hired Edward Donnelly, newly arrived from Belfast with his wife Margaret. Enslaved cook Ellen was rented to manage the kitchen. The Donnellys lived in the Cabin and Ellen, with her four children, occupied the Old Kitchen. When Pemberton joined the Confederate Army and was killed in 1861, the Donnellys moved to the main house to guard it from marauding Union troops. By the spring of 1862, the Warrenton area was substantially under Union control so Charles, Margaret and Charley Nourse could travel from New York City to Weston. Margaret and Charles knew many senior Union officers from their years of living and working with Margaret's family at the West Point Foundry across the river from West Point Military Academy. These social connections allowed them to secure occasional guards for Weston.

Three women then resided on the farm. Ellen proved skilled and stable at her work, overcoming food shortages as she fed many visiting Union Army officers. She refused to join her runaway sister who made an unsuccessful attempt to escape with Union soldiers. In her diary, Margaret Nourse provided intimate details of Confederate neighborhood life and military activities gleaned from Union guests. She shared food supplies and medications with local women and their children while also managing to send and receive mail from her New York relatives. Margaret repaired the family clothing and was grateful when a neighbor's sewing machine became available. Visiting and caring for the sick was an important part of community involvement. While she flew the US flag in her bedroom on July 4th, Margaret was appalled at how the north was treating southern civilians. She understood that Charles was strongly opposed to war and that they could not go home to New York where he might be conscripted.

There was tension between the two Margarets. The struggle focused on churning the butter, a tiresome task assigned to Margaret Donnelly who was overwhelmed by the death of her young child, frightened by the nearby battles and wished to be back in Ireland. Charles finally settled the dispute by constructing the Dairy that still stands at Weston. It was built for food storage and it was locked from thieving soldiers. Charles gave the key to Margaret Donnelly, defining her role in the family organization. After nine months of farm labor Charles paid the Weston mortgage in Confederate dollars. The Nourses traveled north for him to look for employment and the Donnellys moved back into the main house for the rest of the War.

In 1868 Charles Nourse invited his sister Betty and her husband, Confederate Navy Captain Charles Simms, to live and work at Weston. During the entire war, the Simmses had left their eldest son, Charles, in Georgetown to be educated by Betty's sisters while she traveled during the conflict with her husband. Margaret Nourse later took young Charles Simms into her home in Pennsylvania to complete his education. The next decade at Weston was the first opportunity for Betty to be a traditional wife and mother to her second child, Richard Douglas. As did many farm women, she raised chickens and tended the milk cows. After Charles and Margaret Nourse returned to Weston in 1878, Charles sent to Betty the "butter and egg money" from her remaining livestock. The Simms family moved to Georgetown and after she was widowed, Betty would gather bones from local butchers, make beef tea and deliver it to invalids.

Margaret Nourse, long ill, died at Weston in 1883. Charles hired young Eliza Virginia Redd to cook and assist with household chores. For almost 70 years Eliza would continue as a mainstay of life at Weston. She helped raise Charles' second family, oversaw generations of household caretakers, provided meals for the many soldiers who visited Weston during World War II and was a very active member of Heart's Delight



*Eliza Redd in the Weston Kitchen.
WAS Archives*

Church. Eliza saw that everyone kept proper standards, allegedly even chiding Charlotte Nourse for wearing work pants. In the background she was the glue that held Weston together.

Changes had been accelerating in the lives of women as an outcome of the Civil War. Women were left solely responsible for farms, families and businesses as their husbands and older sons fought, or if they became widows, exercised their capacities beyond prescribed Victorian limitations. There were similar social outcomes for families who had been migrating West leaving women living in isolated circumstances. With fewer marriageable men available after the Civil War, young women faced the possibility of needing to support themselves.

In the South households were managed without the availability of enslaved help. Women were pressing for educational opportunities denied them in the past with nursing, teaching and some business careers becoming available and acceptable. Given social changes from these experiences, women wanted more legal rights over property and their own children. Thus voting for political leaders became a meaningful issue. The first US state to enfranchise women was Wyoming in 1890.

In 1885 Charles Nourse married Annie Carroll Simpson, tutor to the neighboring Randolph children. Both Annie and her sister Sallie had been orphaned after the Civil War, lived with relatives, were well educated and worked as residential teachers. Before he died in 1906, Charles and Annie had four children, Constance (1887), Mary (1891), Walter (1893) and Charlotte (1894). Sallie



Annie C. S. Nourse, WAS Archives

came to live at Weston to help with the Nourse children and both she and Annie provided their primary education at home.

It had become difficult for Charles to financially support a growing family on the income from a farm. When he was faced with foreclosure on a mortgage in 1901, his siblings, Mary and James Nourse, paid off the debt but required that Weston be deeded to Annie. When Charles died, Annie went to court and confirmed her ownership. She now needed

to support Weston and the family herself. Over the next three decades, in addition to farming, Weston served as a day and boarding school, summer camp for girls, hostel for invalids needing recovery care, training and birthing facility for horses, and seasonal gift shop. These entrepreneurial ventures required skills with advertizing, group management and debt collection. During her frequent stays at Weston, Theresa "Jimmy" Ambler, a close friend and professional nurse, assisted with many of the business projects as well as caring for ill family members.

Annie and Charles had provided good educations and experiences for earning and managing money for their daughters as well as for Walter. Constance had found it overly stressful to attend school away from home but became skilled in managing the family finances. Twice Constance successfully petitioned the estates of deceased relatives for financial support for Annie. As a youngster Mary managed chickens, kept a notebook on each hen and her eggs, and then sold the eggs to the family. Mary excelled in school, graduated from Vassar with honors, completed two years of medical school and, just before her accidental death, planned to complete her medical doctorate in public health at the University of Chicago. After working at Camp Lee Hostess House in 1918, Charlotte applied to work overseas to assist US servicemen. She was denied that position because of not speaking French.

With Annie ill, both Constance and Charlotte divided the work at Weston to care for their mother and the farm. Charlotte was skilled with horses, the livestock and farming. Constance managed the household. This became their lifelong arrangement. However, there was always time to carefully listen to the political speeches on their radio and to vote. Charlotte and Constance were active members of St. Stephen's and Grace Episcopal Churches. Constance helped keep the financial records



Constance and Charlotte Nourse, WAS Archives

for St. Stephen's and both decorated and volunteered for events at the nearby Grace Church Parish House. They both expanded their artistic talents to create articles for sale, opening the Black Horse Shop in the fall and winter. Off-season, Constance would take the family's artistic work to Pennsylvania for sale in a women's craft shop. She was delighted when she started to receive Social Security benefits after having paid taxes as an independent artist.

Providing assistance to military service men and women was always a serious commitment for the Nourse sisters. During World War II, Charlotte volunteered to manage the Warrenton Service Men's Club. As an extension of that organization, Weston was opened on weekends for military guests, primarily from Vint Hill Station, to rest in the countryside, ride horses, and enjoy home-cooked meals. Skits were written and acted, families were welcomed and yard chores completed. Many people would spend the night bunked around the house. At least one wedding took place at Weston.

Late in her life, when small community post offices were being eliminated, Constance recognized that in Casanova the post office was also a social hub. She wrote to and pressured every political leader befriended over the years. The small, former car garage was saved and still serves Casanova as a site for both mail delivery and community connectness.

During this time, when the sisters were no longer able to manage by themselves, Melvin and Ruth Cephas moved to the Weston Cabin to farm. There they raised their three children and cared for eight foster children needing homes. Ruth assisted Eliza Redd and cared for Constance and Charlotte when they were ill. The Cephas family was the last to farm Weston.

Visitors frequently comment on the peacefulness and endurance felt at Weston. In a sense that demonstrates the values of the women who lived there, blending changes in their social opportunities with the stability of deep involvement and caring for community. Independence was seen as a resource to be shared.

In 1960, Weston legally passed to the Warrenton Antiquarian Society to be maintained as a museum. Sixty-three years later, the tradition of working women at Weston continues. ■

For more information about Weston, please consider purchasing a copy of *Weston, A Place Apart, Second Edition*, edited by Betsy Anderson. Available to order from the website www.historicwestonva.org.

The Making of Weston, A Place Apart - The Motion Picture

by Roger Piantadosi

Back, several years ago, the notion of creating a video to capture the many voices and images necessary to convey Weston's specialness seemed like an obvious project - and a missing piece to the Antiquarians' preservation work. But who to help with this and how to fund it? Then the Northern Piedmont Community Foundation (NPCF) stepped forward with a grant, and Roger Piantadosi, founder of Synergist Media, offered to lend his and his son Luke's talents and the rest is more Weston history: the creation of a twenty-three minute production that captures the heart and soul of Weston while also confirming, in a big way, how working collaboratively and with strong purpose can achieve remarkable and, in fact, unimaginable, results. Below is an article Roger has written about his experience making this immensely special and superbly created production. – Mary Ashton

It was supposed to be just three to five minutes long.

At least that's what I proposed to the Warrenton Antiquarian Society back in the spring of 2022, after the nonprofit's then-president, Mary Ashton, got in touch with us — us being Synergist Media, a small Rappahannock County-based media production company of which I am proprietor and my son, Luke Christopher, chief photographer and cinematographer. She described the project she had in mind, and was happy to let us know that the Northern Piedmont Community Foundation had awarded the Antiquarians a \$4,500 grant to help fund it.

Moreover, someone at NPCF (for whom we'd just finished a short animated promotional video) had even recommended us, Mary said.

So there was no way we were not going to do this video.

And, as it turned out, there was no way it was going to be only three to five minutes long.

Fast-forward to July 2023, more than a year later — when, after many hours of fast-forwarding (and rewinding), I made the final edits on . . . yes, a 23-minute mini-documentary on Weston titled *Weston, A Place Apart* — named for the Antiquarian-published book by Betsy Anderson.

It's a highly educational video. And I'm not talking about just for you, or for school children and those interested in history. I mean for me.

At this point, my knowledge of Weston might even rival that of several card-carrying Antiquarians (well, okay, maybe a couple of the newer ones). Mary Ashton even threatened to nominate me as a member when I came to the June meeting this year to show everyone a still-unfinished rough cut.

But it wasn't just knowledge I came away with, as far as Weston is concerned. It was something else, and it was evident in almost every one of the 16 interviews Luke and I did over some 10 months at Weston.

It was more like: appreciation. Love, actually.

Before I was able to pursue a second (or third, or possibly fourth) career in video and music production later in my life, I spent a lifetime in journalism, mostly at The Washington Post, and after that as the editor-in-chief of the newspaper in that other, littler Washington, the one here in Rappahannock County. The point is that when I tackle a new subject, I fully expect, of necessity as well as by natural inclination, to learn something. Less often do I expect to catch something.

But the enthusiasm, and love, that our interview subjects

expressed on camera for this small, historic family farmstead in Fauquier County, left by two sisters to an afterlife of preservation and care, and operated this last half-century by a small band of sisters-in-spirit — was indeed highly contagious.

Mary had written a script for the video project, last summer. It was taped on my video workstation for a year. I think she tried to understand exactly how a video comes together, something we talked about during the many conversations we had as Luke and I repeatedly showed up last summer and fall to interview the subjects she had chosen to cover Weston's history, its educational programs, its value to the community and more. During one of those conversations, I think I might have even used the word "magic" in my lame and surely vain attempt to explain.

It turns out I might have been telling the truth about the magic part. Except that it had little to do with me — it was conjured, in the end, by the lovingly detailed knowledge and enthusiasm of those we interviewed.

And who was that?

- Betsy Anderson, an Antiquarian and former longtime resident of Weston who wrote the aforementioned history, and who introduced us to the Nourse family, including Charles Jr., his first wife Margaret and second wife, Annie, and their children, including the longest-surviving Charlotte and Constance Nourse, who willed most of the property to the Virginia wildlife refuge folks, and the farm and outbuildings to the Antiquarians;
- Laurie and Barry Starke, also former residents, he a landscape architect whose comments helped put Weston in perspective among Virginia's many, many historical properties; she, soon to be the Antiquarians newest president, explaining what the organization had to do to get Weston official historic recognition and to develop lasting support;
- Doug Larson, former development vice president at Piedmont Environmental Council and a Weston friend and advisor; local historian and writer John Toler; neighbor, community activist and advisor Sue Scheer; neighbor and former master of the Casanova Hunt Joyce Fendley, and former huntsman Tommy Lee Jones;
- Antiquarian Blair Lawrence, who brought the group's 40 years of repairs and renovations to life; Karen Hughes White, director of the Afro-American Historical Society of Fauquier County, and Rodney Cash Jr., a descendent of Weston farm workers and slaves, who put the history of slavery, in the area and in the neighborhood, into perspective;

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The Art of Weston's Workshops

by Diane Gulick

For three years, Weston has hosted a variety of monthly creative arts workshops on its shaded lawn during late spring and summer months.

There is a very special reason why.

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

In 2021, the Casanova Hunt gave notice that it would no longer be renting the kennels at Weston because it was disbanding. Soon after, the Warrenton Antiquarians made the decision to renovate the kennels providing a space for art classes, lectures, exhibits and methods for community outreach.

WAS also agreed to the creation of a series of workshops that would be experimental in that public interest, potential for renovation fundraising, and the quality of workshops would be assessed once the series concluded. The workshops would serve as practice and preparation for the kind of events the Antiquarians would schedule once the renovation of the kennels is completed.

The workshops are similar in that accomplished local artists



Photo courtesy of Diane Gulick

guide a gathering of about a dozen participants through the fundamental techniques and tools of a particular type of art so that all will leave Weston with a completed composition of their own. Each workshop is three hours in length. Each is held at Weston.

The first half is preparatory. It involves the instructor's introduction to a medium, a demonstration of techniques, and practice. Midway through the event, refreshments are served on Weston House's front porch. Participants relax in wicker chairs, enjoy getting to know one another, and have conversations about their interests in art.

An abbreviated tour of Weston follows which includes a walkabout that highlights the kennels where participants see and learn about its renovation. All return to the lawn for the second half of the workshop during which everyone applies their newfound knowledge, and with individual guidance from the instructor, create works of their own.

Workshops vary in artistic subject matter. "The Art of Flower Arranging" is usually the first workshop of the series, scheduled when springtime blossoms and greenery are available in abundance. As participants arrive, they are led to their seats and tables in front of Weston House where vases and baskets, ribbons and bows, and dozens of large buckets filled with a wide variety of flowers and foliage are preset.



Photo courtesy of Diane Gulick

Two workshops in the series involve painting. It truly doesn't matter whether a participant has never painted a single brushstroke or is a master who has come for inspiration. All

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The Making of Weston, A Place Apart - The Motion Picture

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• Former Fauquier County first-grade teacher and Antiquarian Ellen Steiner, who talked about what children get out of a visit to Weston and why it's important; Sonja Forster, an artist and teacher who leads painting workshops at Weston; and Annaliese Goolsby and Jack Woodward, young visitors to Weston; and, finally, Mary Ashton herself, our final interview, who helped pull everything perfectly together with her comments, especially on the Civil War and World War II years at Weston.

When Luke and I had finished all the shooting, including "b-roll" – footage of the house and farm and outbuildings, including some wonderful work by drone pilot Robert Stephens of Warrenton – we had 19 hours of raw footage. The interviews alone totaled 16 hours.

If there is magic involved in making a documentary, it is directly related to that saying I heard long ago, and often repeat: "God is in the detail."

While some unexpected health issues prevented me from working on the video from late fall through most of the winter, it was when I was able to delve into that footage – one word, one

thought, one feeling at a time – that the picture of Weston you will see in *Weston, A Place Apart* began to emerge.

And it was the aforementioned presence of love, dedication and enthusiasm that was on my mind when I started looking for music, which plays a big role in the videos I make. (And, by the way, the music that opens the video is not an original by me but by a stock music artist named Sarah Watson, and it is there because I knew it would be perfect as soon as I heard it. I did compose the closing music of the video.)

I'm so happy that the video is done, and I assume there will be details elsewhere in this newsletter (or coming soon) about where and when you can see it. But I am more happy to be asked to write this article, because it's where I can properly thank Betsy, and Mary, and Laurie, and Barry, and Blair, and Ellen – and everyone who sat patiently and cheerfully in front of our cameras and allowed us to record the stories, memories and feelings that make Weston such a special place. Thank you all so much. ■

The Story of Renovating the Former Casanova Hunt Kennels

as of August, 2023

By Mary Ashton

Approximately three years ago, the Antiquarians made the decision to move forward with turning the former Casanova Hunt kennels into The Constance and Charlotte Nourse Arts and Education Center.

Because this project felt daring and uncertain, we began slowly. While we had preserved and restored all of Weston's 19th-century buildings – with the significant help of members and friends – we'd had zero experience turning a well-used structure for housing hounds into a modern and badly needed facility for educational programs and related accommodations.

And so we began.

In 2021, we demolished the kennels interior walls and hired the architectural firm of Hinckley, Shepherd and Norden to develop a preliminary plan. With their help, we learned that the 1200 sq. ft. space could become the kind of place for gatherings and displays we had hoped. After more discussion, we took the step to hire the engineering firm, MEI Engineering, to design a renovated building with modern plumbing, electrical and HVAC systems.

In 2022, with the construction planning process underway, a



meeting with County planning staff uncovered that Weston needed a Special Permit to be officially recognized as a "museum" and educational center. Gratefully, in November, the County Board unanimously approved the permit and, for the first time, the Weston property was "zoned" to host visitors to learn about an important part of Fauquier's 19th- and 20th-century history. Thank you, Board Chair Rick Gerhardt, Planning

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The Art of Weston's Workshops

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gather together to learn about the particular genre presented.

Weston's "The Art of Watercoloring" features a popular local artist who came to live in Fauquier County from South Africa. Sonja Forster is a successful professional artist who teaches private watercolor classes in her home and enjoys teaching amid Weston's mature trees and fresh air. Sonja's individualized instruction enables each participant to paint originals on site.



Photo courtesy of Diane Gulick

Nancy Brittle conducts the oil/acrylic painting workshops entitled "Boldly Approaching the Canvas." A Fauquier County native, Ms. Brittle first studied art at Mary Washington College. She continued her studies at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts the Ecole de Beaux in Paris, and the Marchutz School in Aix. Her work has been exhibited extensively; she has been juried in a number of exhibits; Plein Air magazine has featured her artwork. Nancy told her group that she has the greatest admiration for the Antiquarians' creation of Fauquier County's arts and education center.

"Improving Cell Phone Photographs" was added to the Weston



Photo courtesy of Livia Mitchell

art workshop curriculum in July, 2022. After touring the buildings and grounds of Weston to introduce participants to available subject matter, Cindy McClanahan Ellis of McClanahan Camera and Sound used a PowerPoint presentation to discuss basic features and terminology relative to both iPhone and android camera and to become familiar with smartphone settings, especially creative controls, which enable users to take higher-quality images. ■



Photo courtesy of Diane Gulick

Betty Gookin's Shumard Oak

By Laurie Starke

The Shumard Oak (*Quercus shumardii*) is a large deciduous native tree found throughout the eastern and southern U.S. in bottomland forests. A member of the Beech family (Fagaceae), it is a relatively fast-growing, wide-spreading species of oak, valued for its resistance to drought, tolerance of moisture and, at its peak of maturity—it can reach a height of 60 to 100 feet—a beautiful, open canopy. That Shumard oaks grow at Weston is significant because this is the northern-most limit of the species' range.

According to the Garden Club of America's book, *Plants That Merit Attention—Trees*, the Shumard Oak is a "handsome tree that tolerates adverse sites. A good street or park tree with attractive, deep green glossy foliage and rounded, moderately dense crown. Fall color is a distinct asset; tolerance of alkaline clay soil is valuable."*

Recently, the Antiquarian Society retained an arborist to assess the plight of Weston's older trees, especially white oaks (*Quercus alba*), which have been in decline. The problem is apparently drought, interrupted by periods of deluge.



For all the above reasons, the Society decided this year to plant a Shumard Oak in honor of our late, beloved member, Elizabeth Williams Gookin (1922-2022). Betty was born in Casanova at Rockhill, just up the road from Weston. She became a member of

the Society in 1979, shortly after returning to Fauquier County from Richmond, Virginia, where she had founded and taught at the Sabot School at Stoney Point.

For many years, Betty guided the Society with her vibrant insights and good humor. She twice served as its president (1983, 1993) and was, with husband Richard, a steadying hand behind many of our most ambitious projects. On several occasions, she and Richard opened their home, "The Oaks," to Friends of Weston for unique programs featuring noted journalists, musicians and artists.



Visitors to Weston who walk or ride the grounds surrounding the property will see Shumard oaks among other oaks and native species. Now, in a grove just below the main compound of Weston's buildings, they will find "Betty's Shumard Oak." As Marionette Jones, our member who spearheaded the committee which sought and planted the specimen, put it: "Betty was an extraordinary woman. I hope her commemorative tree will thrive far into the future." ■

**Plants That Merit Attention, Volume I—Trees; The Garden Club of America, Janet Meakin Poor, Editor; Timber Press; Portland, Oregon; 1984.*

Renovating the Former Casanova Hunt Kennels

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Commissioner Mathew Smith and others for making this happen.

During 2023, a plan for a septic system was prepared by Dominion Soils, approved by the Virginia Department of Health, and, in July, Cedar Run Construction began installing a tank, pump and 50 yards of pipe to connect the kennels to Weston's septic field, upgraded in 2020.

One month later, in August, the completed construction plans were submitted to the County and the review process was underway.

During the remaining summer and fall, WAS will consider estimates for the kennels' building, plumbing, electrical and HVAC systems. Our original estimate, based on earlier research, is approximately \$140,000. The following benefits to the community will include:

An inside space for rotating displays and special exhibits such as Nourse family artwork, 19th-century farm ledgers and photos

A location for hosting speakers and showing educational videos including *Weston, A Place Apart*, a twenty-three minute production (completed the summer of 2023) that documents the history of Weston and the surrounding area. Currently, there is no inside location at Weston that comfortably seats and provides learning space for more than a half-dozen visitors and an instructor

An inside meeting and workshop space that will enable WAS not to have to depend on scheduling and convening community events on the lawn at Weston and only during pleasant weather

Two restrooms with ADA accessibility which will enable WAS to host school tours without having to rent porta-potties To make these improvements possible, targeted donations will be necessary. These donations will enable Weston to make its current programs and events more accessible, more frequent, more reliable, and more effective and enjoyable. They will provide a designated space for learning about local history, art, architecture, agriculture and the environment that no current space at Weston can accommodate.

The Warrenton Antiquarian Society is grateful to Joyce Fendley and the Casanova Hunt who left the kennels in a way that allowed us to imagine its future as an arts and education center dedicated to the memory and values of the Nourse sisters and family. They transformed a 1960s cinderblock farm building used by hounds for over half a century by adding a new roof, performing many repairs, and removing a half-acre of fencing and outdoor shelters.

Going forward, we will be immensely grateful to those Friends and donors who share our vision and can help ensure this story has a happy and inspiring ending for all. ■

Warrenton Antiquarian Society

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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.

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Weston's My Little Pony

Join us at Weston on October 14, 2023, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. for a presentation by Bonnie Zacherle, the creator of the original My Little Pony, and meet special guest Lola, Valerie Amster's therapy miniature pony. There will be games and crafts at various sites, opportunity for photographs, and refreshments. More information will be made available on the WAS website and in local news media.



*Photo courtesy of
Diane Gulick*