

The Orrison Family Cemetery¹
by
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On the island in the center of Permit Court, while the birds sing, the crickets chirp and the cicadas whirr; while the winds blow, the leaves rustle, and then the snows fall; the stone memorials stand sentinel, offering their silent testimony to days long gone by. These memorials open a fascinating door to our past. Beneath the memorials rest members of the Orrison family, the antebellum and Civil War-era owners and residents of the land that is now Kingston Chase. From all appearances and accounts theirs was a typical antebellum-Southern rural agricultural way of life, disrupted along with the rest of the nation by tensions over slavery splitting the nation apart, leading to the hostilities of the Civil War, the difficult Reconstruction in its aftermath, and cultural changes brought about by technological advances at the advent of the 20th century.

In 1842, Joseph Orrison purchased from Hardage Bridges 549 acres of land in the Herndon area, before Herndon had been so named. The local post office, located in a newly built train depot, was named the “Herndon P.O.” in 1858. In 1879 the Town of Herndon was incorporated, adopting the name of its post office. On November 8, 1845, Joseph purchased additional land from J. Bridges, bringing his tract to over 800 acres, stretching “from the old railroad on Sterling Road to the Chestnut Grove Cemetery on Dranesville Road” (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). From Fairfax County tax maps and current landmarks, the tract extends south past the W&OD bike path to Sterling Road, is bounded by Folly Lick Branch to the east, runs north to near the intersection of Hiddenbrook Drive with Dranesville Road, then extends past Dranesville Elementary School to Crestview Drive/Lincoln Avenue, which bounds the tract to the west (6). Joseph operated a dairy farm on this site, the center of the farm located just southeast of current Permit Court (5).

The farm included the farmhouse, working farm buildings, and slave quarters (5). The site of the Orrison farm house has been identified as between the current 1600 and 1602 Permit Court. An old road ran from Crestview Drive to between the plantation house and the cemetery, where now is the northern loop of Permit Court. The original cemetery was considerably larger than it is today; in the 1930s the cemetery was about ½ acre, enclosed by a wire fence with arched top, with a gate midway on the north side, facing the plantation house. There were 18-22 graves marked with stones, mostly on the west side of the cemetery. Some of the markers were 5-6 feet tall (3, 4, 7). Records also indicate an unmarked slave cemetery in the current backyard of 1606 Permit Court, beneath an old black walnut tree. At least three are known to have been laid to rest there; others may have been as well (4, 8).

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In 1855 Joseph sold 7.59 acres to the Alexandria, Loudoun, and Hampshire Railroad (9). Such was an early sign of the nationwide railroad boom to come in the years following the Civil War. In 1865 Joseph began selling off more substantive parcels of his land. He sold off 177½ acres to Alfred Ransom, then 100½ acres to Charles Burgess. Later, with his wife, he sold 87¼ acres to George Bond and further small parcels of land to the railroad (1). His will transferred ownership of the remainder of the land to his descendants after his death (10, 11).

Joseph Orrison was born in 1809 (11). On December 13, 1836 he married Jane E. Whaley, who was 8 years younger than Joseph. As of 1860 the couple had nine children: Ellen E. Orrison (23 yr), Jane A. Orrison (21 yr), John W. Orrison (19 yr), Lucy R. Orrison (17 yr), Oscar J. Orrison (15 yr), Mary J. Orrison (11 yr), Martha Cecelia Orrison (9 yr), William W. Orrison (9 yr), and Florence W. Orrison (3 yr). The 1860 census listed the occupations of Ellen and Jane A. Orrison as seamstresses (12). Perhaps they made and sold clothes to supplement the family income.

In 1860 Joseph's agricultural property amounted to 8 horses, 10 milk cows, 2 working oxen, 16 cattle, 10 sheep, and 55 hogs, along with stores of Indian corn, oats, wheat, rye, wool, potatoes, and butter. Joseph also owned one female adult slave, 32 years old, one female child slave, 7 years old, and two male child slaves, 15 years and 9 years old, housed in a single slave quarters (12). James Whaley, the father of Jane E. Whaley Orrison, specified in his will that his slaves were to be distributed one-third to his wife and two-thirds to his ten children. James Whaley passed away in 1847, leaving to Jane "a servant girl who has since given birth to a child." A dispute arose over ownership of this child. In 1857 the court decided "that one-third of the said negros according to their value be laid off for the widow to be held by her for the time of her life and that the remaining two-thirds be sold at public auction after thirty days' notice of the time and place of sale in one of the newspapers published in Leesburg" (1, 13). In other words, the court washed its hands of the entire matter of the Whaley children's slave inheritance and ordered them all to be sold. It is not known whether the adult female slave on the Orrison farm in 1860 was Jane's inherited slave allowed to stay in defiance of the court's decision; she would have been 19 years old in 1847 when James Whaley passed away. If she was the inherited slave, the 15-year old male slave on the Orrison farm in 1860 may have been the child at the center of the dispute.

It is reasonable to assume Joseph was a Christian churchgoer. In 1847, Joseph, acting as a trustee of the Sugarland Church, an Anglican Church dating back to the 1700s, petitioned the Fairfax County Court for the addition of a 3-acre lot to rebuild the abandoned church. In 1855 Joseph motioned for a road connecting Dranesville Road with Frying Pan Road, to provide churchgoers access. The road was built in 1856 (1, 14).

Joseph Orrison passed away on August 14, 1874, at the age of 65. Jane survived him by 15½ years, passing away on February 15, 1890, at the age of 73 (4, 7, 10, 11). The 1880 census places Jane at Oak Hill, the Dranesville District home of her daughter Lucy Orrison Higgs and her husband, Benjamin Ford Higgs, Jr. (15, 16); she likely spent her last years under her

daughter's care. Joseph and Jane were laid to rest in the Orrison Family Cemetery. Joseph's footstone and Jane's headstone and footstone remain.

Joseph voted twice in favor of Virginia secession, once in 1859 and again in 1861 (12). The latter vote was undoubtedly in favor of ratification of an ordinance of secession, passed on April 17 by the Virginia secession convention in Richmond, coming on the heels of the attack on Fort Sumter. The convention voted in favor of Virginia secession, provided the ordinance of secession was ratified by statewide popular vote, held on May 23. Joseph's son John Webster Orrison enlisted on March 11, 1862, joining Company A of the 35th Virginia Cavalry Battalion, known alternately as White's Rebels, Guerillas, or Comanches, after the battalion's organizer, Elijah V. White. Joseph was evidently a friend of the battalion, hosting a dinner for a portion of the battalion one day in late February or early March 1862, near the time John Orrison enlisted (17).

John Orrison would serve as a private from that date until the end of the war, when he was paroled on April 25, 1865 (18, 19, 20). Remarkably there is no record of him suffering injury or capture at any point during the war, notwithstanding the 35th Virginia Cavalry Battalion's service in the thick of fighting throughout the Virginia theatre. Among the battalion's impressive service record were Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign (1862), the Battle of Brandy Station (June 9, 1863), the Battle of Gettysburg (July 1-3, 1863), the Battle of Cedar Creek (October 19, 1864), the Battle of the Wilderness (May 5-7, 1864), the Overland Campaign (May-June 1864), and at Appomattox (April 9, 1865). The 35th played a highly significant role in the cavalry Battle of Brandy Station, saving General JEB Stuart from almost certain defeat. The battalion was the first Confederate unit to enter Gettysburg. At Appomattox, the 35th served as couriers delivering Union General U. S. Grant's surrender terms (21, 22).

After the war, John W. Orrison married Prudence Virginia Presgraves on January 17, 1867 (18, 23). He was a merchant (12). In 1902, at the age of 61, he applied for a veterans' pension, claiming rheumatism and loss of eyesight due to cataracts had rendered him unable to perform manual labor (24). John W. Orrison died of "paralysis" on January 24, 1917, at age 76. He was buried on the Orrison farm, but the exact location of his grave is not known (12, 18). No marker has been found.

During the Civil War, Prudence Presgraves's brother, Samuel T. Presgraves, fought in Company A of the 35th Virginia Cavalry Battalion, alongside John W. Orrison. He would not survive the war. On September 14, 1864, the 35th took part in what came to be known as the Beefsteak Raid. Confederate General Wade Hampton marched a cavalry division, including the 35th, around the rear of the Union lines enveloping Petersburg, VA. On the 16th, at Coggin's Point on the James River, General Hampton ordered the 35th to charge a Union brigade guarding an immense drove of 2,535 broad-horned Western beef cattle. The Yankees retreated, gaining Hampton the entire herd of cattle as well as a stock of repeating rifles. On the return march, Union forces compelled

the 35th to set up makeshift fortifications at Monk's Neck Bridge, south of Petersburg. An artillery barrage on the fortifications took the life of Samuel T. Presgraves (17, 25).

Also serving was John W. Orrison's future brother-in-law, Braden Ezra Hummer. He enlisted on July 16, 1861 as a private with Company K of the 6th Virginia Cavalry, with which he served until stricken with typhoid fever. He convalesced at home from late December 1861 until February 1862. On May 1, 1862 he was transferred to Company A of the 35th Virginia Cavalry, joining his future brother-in-law. On November 29, 1862 Private Hummer was captured by Union forces at Castlemans Ferry, VA on the Shenandoah River, about 20 miles east of Winchester, VA. Company A, officially on reconnaissance duty but at time dismounted, unsaddled, and engaged in fishing and boating, was surprised by a force of about 100 Union cavalry. After an exchange of taunts across the river, the Union cavalry crossed the river and routed the company, capturing about twenty, including Braden Hummer and Company A's commanding officer, Lieutenant Barrett (17). Braden Hummer was confined at Old Capitol Prison in Washington, D. C., then City Point, VA, before he was paroled. On August 16, 1863 he was captured again in Loudoun County and returned to Old Capitol Prison, then to Point Lookout, MD, then Elmira, NY, before being exchanged on March 10, 1865. He was paroled from Confederate service on May 2, 1865 (18, 19, 20).

Braden Hummer married Laura T. Whaley on September 2, 1860, 10 months before enlisting (18, 23, 26, 27). Laura T. Whaley was the sister of James W. Whaley, who would marry Mary J. Orrison in 1867 and would serve as a Corporal in Company A of the 35th Virginia Cavalry with his brothers-in-law (12, 19, 20, 27). Laura Whaley died on October 21, 1874 (27). On March 21, 1876, Braden Hummer married Ellen E. Orrison (12, 18). Braden's family had owned land adjacent to the Orrison property, and as a toddler, Braden had witnessed Ellen's birth (1, 26). Sometime between 1880 and 1900, Braden purchased the Langley Toll House on Georgetown Pike in Langley, VA. He resided there and added and operated a grocery store (26). Ellen Orrison Hummer died on September 24, 1891 (28). Ellen was laid to rest in the Orrison Family Cemetery. Her headstone was present in a photograph of the cemetery printed in the *Herndon Observer* in 1978 but is no longer there (29). Her footstone remains.

Sometime between Ellen's death and 1893, Braden married Willela Boucher (26). Around 1910, Braden became Langley's Postmaster. Braden Hummer died on March 18, 1924, at the age of 88 (18). He is laid to rest in the Lewinsville Presbyterian Church Cemetery near McLean (30).

On March 5, 1867, Mary J. Orrison married James W. Whaley. She was 18 years old; he was 23 (12). The relationship, other than through marriage, between James W. Whaley and his mother-in-law Jane Whaley Orrison, or Jane Orrison's father James Whaley, is not known. Among Mary and James's children, two died tragically young: Little Lillie, who died September 6, 1869 at age 1 year and 6 days; and Little Ray, who died January 27, 1884 at age 3 years, 8 months and 18 days. Both Little Lillie and Little Ray were laid to rest in the Orrison Family Cemetery. The headstone and footstone for both remain. The inscription on Little Ray's headstone reads,

“youngest child of M. J. & J. W. Whaley,” whereas the inscription on Little Lillie’s headstone reads, “first child of M. J. & J. W. Whaley” (4, 7, 31, 32). Little Ray’s headstone was present in a photograph of the cemetery printed in the Herndon Observer in 1978 but was missing for many years (29). In January 2010, the Orrison Family Cemetery was surveyed at the request of a realtor who found Little Ray’s headstone on a Great Falls property she was trying to sell. The marker was returned in August 2010 (33). It is not known when or where Mary Orrison Whaley and James W. Whaley were laid to rest.

Jane A. Orrison was born on January 29, 1839 and at the age of 29, on February 5, 1868, married Orlando M. Bussard, who was 27 (4, 12). During the Civil War, Orlando also fought in Company A of the 35th Virginia Cavalry Battalion (17, 19, 20, 24). The date of Orlando’s enlistment is not known. On February 18, 1865 he was wounded in action during a botched attack on an encampment of the 6th New York Cavalry in the vicinity of Neersville, VA. Orlando was part of an 80-man detachment from the 35th Battalion that initially raided tents at the encampment’s perimeter. From this initial success, believing the encampment to be small, the detachment pressed its attack to the interior not realizing the Union force was 600 strong. The attack was promptly repulsed and the detachment retreated without casualty save Orlando’s wound, a pistol shot through the left wrist. The shot shattered the wrist and after the war necessitated the removal of 23 bone fragments (17, 24). A *Boston Traveller* article of June 16, 1865 lists the release of Confederate prisoners including “Orlando M. Bussard, Vienna, VA.” If this is the same Orlando M. Bussard then sometime after receiving his wound, most likely at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865 shortly before General Lee surrendered to General Grant, Orlando was captured and sent to Fort Warren, an island fort serving as a Confederate prison off the shore of Boston. He was released along with 32 other prisoners and sent home after the war, on June 15, 1865 (17, 34). After the war Orlando was a farmer. Jane died on November 17, 1879 (4, 7, 35, 36). On August 24, 1880, Orlando married Annie R. Beales (23). Both Jane A. Bussard and Orlando M. Bussard were laid to rest in the Orrison Family Cemetery. Jane’s headstone and Orlando’s headstone and footstone remain.

Lucy R. Orrison was born on December 16, 1842, and on October 12, 1876 she married Benjamin Ford Higgs, Jr. Benjamin Higgs, Jr. was a farmer in Thompson’s precinct of the Dranesville District; in 1861 the personal property tax book reported he held 5 slaves, 8 horses, 1 vehicle, 15 cattle, and 25 hogs. As did Joseph Orrison, Benjamin Higgs, Jr. voted for secession in 1859 and 1861. Benjamin Higgs Jr.’s father, Benjamin Higgs, Sr., married Sarah Lane Rowles in 1816 and upon their marriage, Benjamin Sr. was bequeathed a farm and farmhouse known as Oak Hill. In 1917, the Oak Hill farm consisted of 233 acres. Oak Hill dates back to the 1700s, and the farmhouse still stands today as a private residence on West Ox Road. Benjamin Sr. died in 1835, when Benjamin Jr. was just five years old, and Sarah died in 1866. Benjamin Jr. inherited Oak Hill from Sarah, and after marriage Benjamin Jr. and Lucy lived there, with Benjamin Jr. working the farmland. As noted above, Lucy’s mother, Jane E. Orrison, lived with them at Oak Hill until Jane’s passing in 1890. Both Lucy and Benjamin died in 1917,

just six months apart from each other. Benjamin died of pneumonia on May 11 at the age of 86, and Lucy died on November 24 at the age of 74. Lucy Orrison Higgs was laid to rest in the Orrison Family Cemetery, apart from her husband, who was laid to rest in the Lane family cemetery in Centreville, VA. Lucy's headstone and footstone remain in the Orrison family cemetery. (4, 7, 12, 16, 37, 38, 39, 40).

Martha Cecelia Orrison died on December 11, 1876, at the age of 24. She was laid to rest in the Orrison Family Cemetery. Her headstone remains (4, 7, 41).

William Wallace Orrison was born on October 15, 1851. On November 27, 1879 he married Lilla Swart. William passed away on March 7, 1926. William was laid to rest in Union Cemetery in Leesburg (23, 42).

Oscar J. Orrison was born in December 1844. He married Rebecca Sebastian on March 14, 1878. On February 26, 1889, Oscar was appointed the Postmaster at the Leighs, VA Post Office (12, 43, 44). His will was probated in July, 1911. It is not known where Oscar J. Orrison was laid to rest.

Florence J. Orrison was born in November 1856. In 1900, at age 44, she lived in the Broad Run District of Loudoun County, in the home of her brother-in-law, James W. Whaley, presumably unmarried. She died in 1934 (12, 45).

Joseph and Jane Orrison and their family lived during the most tumultuous period in the history of our nation. Their way of life in 1842, when Joseph first purchased land on which now sits Kingston Chase, is now long gone. Much of how they lived is incomprehensible to us today. Fortunately, we no longer live in a time when human beings are considered property, subject to the shackles and the lash of enslavement, and forced dislocation and permanent family separation through sale and purchase at a moment's notice. That day and age has given way to a more equal, just and humane society, although we still have much to learn and more positive change to make. What has remained unaltered from the Orrisons' time are love of and devotion to family, a dedication to hard work and self-reliance, and an unshakeable belief that we can pass on to our children a better way of life.

Following Civil War and Reconstruction, the nation underwent a significant cultural transformation as a result of burgeoning industrialization and technological advances. The advent of this transformation was the expansion of the railroads, which Joseph Orrison began to witness. The benefits of the railroad were felt in the area almost immediately, as local dairy farmers, including Joseph, could now ship their milk from the Herndon Depot to Alexandria, Georgetown, and D. C. (9). This was of course only the start of the area's transformation. One wonders what Joseph and Jane would think of what has become of their farm, Herndon, Northern Virginia, and the nation. We hope they would realize, and appreciate, that today and tomorrow are built on the foundation of their past.

In 1975, a surveyor found the Orrison Family Cemetery “a depository for trash, bulldozed, overgrown, and vandalized, it can only be seen as a disaster.” The cemetery was saved through the efforts of Chris Antigone, builder and developer of Kingston Chase, who preserved the cemetery on the island in the middle of Permit Court while building houses and paving the road around it. Chris said he felt the cemetery added a “nice historic touch.” When the surveyor returned in 1988, he found the area “neat and trimmed and the circle perimeter now occupied by homes” (3, 29). In August 2010, members of Girl Scout Troop 1255 undertook to clean up the cemetery, coinciding with the return of Little Ray Whaley’s marker. The scouts raked, trimmed bushes, removed debris, and cleaned the markers (46). Five years later, in August 2015, Boy Scout Troop 1570 undertook an extensive restoration, likewise raking, trimming, clearing debris, and scrubbing markers; setting broken markers on gravel beds; up-righting Jane Orrison’s marker on a gravel bed; taking photographs of markers; preparing a grid map of the cemetery; and preparing this research paper. Our hope is the cemetery remains as it is right now, fully restored for all to enjoy, and for all to reflect on the Orrisons and our past, and what they have to teach us today.

On July 16, 2020, a package wrapped in plastic, with an enclosed anonymous note, was discovered on the perimeter of the island in the center of Permit Court. Wrapped within the plastic was a stone marker. The note explained the marker had been removed from the cemetery for safekeeping at the time the homes on Permit Court were built, and now the marker was back in its rightful place. The inscriptions on the marker are thin, barely visible, not legible, and appear to be crudely made. The marker has been placed among the other markers on a gravel bed at the center of the cemetery.

We recognize this paper is but a start to the genealogical record that could be built concerning the Orrison Family and their descendents. For one, this paper does not touch on Joseph Orrison’s grandchildren, beyond Little Lillie and Little Ray. We would appreciate any corrections and additions. Please send them to Roger, as noted in the footnote.

Orrison Family Cemetery – Marker Inscriptions

Lucy R. Orrison Higgs

Inscription: Lucy R Consort of Benja F Higgs Dec 16 1842 Nov 24 1917
*Dearest sister thou hast left us, We thy loss most deeply feel, But tis God who has bereft us, He
can all our sorrows heal*
Footstone: L. R. H.

Little Ray Whaley

Inscription: Little Ray youngest child of M. J. & J. W. Whaley Died Jan. 27 1884 Aged 3 yrs. 8
mos. & 18 dys.
If God folded his lamb early it was to save it having its fleece soiled with earthly corruption
Footstone: R. W.

Ellen E. Orrison Hummer

Base without Headstone
Footstone: E. E. H.

Martha Cecelia Orrison

Inscription: Died Dec. 11 1876 In the 24 year of her age
*Daughter thou were mild and lovely, Gentle as the summer breeze, Pleasant as the air of
evening, When it floats among the trees*

Jane A. Orrison Bussard

Inscription: Erected to the memory of J. A. Bussard By her Husband BORN Jan. 29 1839 DIED
Nov. 17 1879

Orlando M. Bussard

Inscription: (upper half of headstone missing)
*Dearest husband thou has left us, We thy loss most deeply feel, But tis God who hath bereft us,
He can all our sorrows heal*
Footstone: O. M. B.

Jane E. Orrison

Inscription: Sacred to the Memory of Jane E. Orrison consort of Joseph Orrison DIED Feb. 15
1890 in the 73rd year of her age
Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God
Footstone: J. E. O.

Joseph Orrison

Footstone: J. O.

Little Lillie Whaley

Inscription: First child of M. J. & J. W. Whaley Died Sept. 6 1869 Aged 1 yr. & 6 dys.
My God knows what is best, if he plucked his Lilley soon, it was to save it some rough blast

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