

Exhibits and Events

The Orange County African American Historical Society produces exhibits and co-hosts events commemorating the achievements of African Americans in Orange County. Annual events and co-sponsored exhibits include:

- The Eclipse Awards to recognize individuals for outstanding community work;
- Special programs at the Annual Membership meeting to acknowledge African American history and community achievements;
- Annual Juneteenth Celebration events;
- Interpretative panels installed at specific town and county locations;
- Digital communications: the Society's website and an annual newsletter;
- Assistance with genealogy research;
- Other narrative exhibits of Orange County African American history or current events.

If you would like to share your history, have ideas for events or exhibits, provide assistance in sharing the History or desire to broaden your knowledge on Orange County history, contact us.



Opening of The Montpelier Train Depot (2010) Exhibit "In the Time of Segregation." Juan Williams, Guest Speaker

Glimpses of Orange County's African American Heritage



Blue Run Baptist Church (Est. 1766) included African Americans among its founding members.



Portrait of Tuskegee Airman, Captain Andrew Maples (WWII) unveiled at Orange County Courthouse (May 2021)



Montpelier Slave Descendants Reunion (2007). Orange County High School students with renowned historians John Hope Franklin (far left) and Roger Wilkins (center).

The tree roots form an outline of the continent of Africa. The leaf canopy takes the shape of the state of Virginia with a spot of orange signifying Orange County.



Orange County African American Historical Society

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The Orange County African American Historical Society was founded in February 2000 with the mission to explore African American contributions to the cultural and historical heritage of Orange County, Virginia.

The Society seeks to enhance and promote awareness of the accomplishments and contributions of people of African descent as organic and essential components of our community, and our nation, at large.

Toward those ends, we endeavor to identify, research and preserve African American legacies, lore, and historical sites.



Chester Lewis, a founder of the Freetown community and Bethel Baptist Church (Unionville). Also, ancestor of trailblazer Chef Edna Lewis, “Grand Dame of Southern Cooking,” who was honored on a United States Postage Stamp (2014); and forbearer of Pulitzer Prize winning photographer Matthew Lewis, Jr.

Membership As a private, not-for-profit organization, the Orange County African American Historical Society relies on membership dues and charitable donations received from our members and friends. We invite you to join the Orange County African American Historical Society to volunteer your time and energy in preserving, protecting and promoting our African American Orange County heritage.

To join online or to download a printable membership form, visit www.ocaahs.org.

Orange County Public Schools and OCAAHS co-produced a short documentary in February 2023 that explores the individual journeys of many Orange County African American students, teachers and staff.



Edward S. Washington served in the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt as Blair House Butler.



Church Street Park (Juneteenth 2022) at the corner of Church and Chapman streets, downtown Orange. Interpretive panels highlight the once-thriving African American residential and commercial districts.

