

THE VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION FOR PARKS  
2007 SPRING CONFERENCE  
MARCH 29 – 31, 2007

-SYNOPSIS-

Our host State Park was Occoneechee – Scott Shanklin, Park Manager. As has become the custom, most of the attendees arrived during the afternoon and early evening on Thursday, March 29. Cabin 9, one of the new lodges, was designated the “conviviality site” and during the course of the evening frozen pizzas were thawed, heated, and consumed along with various libations, including some outstanding home-made wine. Several attendees brought along munchies and deserts that were similarly destined to not survive the evening.

Friday morning began with a continental breakfast in Cabin 9 followed by a tour of Occoneechee State Park. Of particular interest was the equestrian camp that is well under construction.

From Occoneechee, we traveled to Prestwold Plantation where we were treated to a tour hosted by Julian Hudson, Director. This is truly a special place. The house, built of stone quarried on the plantation, was laid out in 1793 and completed in 1795. The house still retains an exceptional degree of its original interior and exterior detail. Prestwold is also noted for the survival of its eighteenth century English botanical wallpapers and a series of French scenic wallpapers from the early nineteenth century. Much of the English furniture ordered during the house construction is on display as are original examples of early American craftsmanship.

Many of the original outbuildings remain and Prestwold is one of the most extensively documented remnants of late eighteenth century rural life to have survived in Virginia. Prestwold is a Virginia Historic Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Many of us agreed that we would return because it is such a special place. We “passed the hat” and made a \$150.00 group donation to Prestwold.

Enroute from Prestwold to Staunton River Battlefield State Park, we stopped for lunch at Ernie’s Restaurant in South Boston. The food was great as was the service, and before we left we had garnered a new dues paying member in the form of Ronnie Green, the manager.

At the Battlefield State Park, we were welcomed by Tim Vest, District Manager, and Jim Zanarini, Park Manager. Our tour of the battlefield was led by Doug Powell, a noted local historian whose relatives fought in the battle. Doug was decked out in period costume that lent even more credence to his narrative.

Next, we boarded wagons and were driven to the site of an archaeological dig conducted by Longwood College. Dr. Brian Bates, Head of Longwood's Archaeology Department, gave a fascinating and informative presentation on some of the findings.

From the dig, the wagons took us to the historic railroad depot for a quick tour and then on to Mulberry Hill Plantation for a guided tour of the house and grounds. Our tour guide, Grace Elliott, was wearing period dress and did a great job of recounting the plantation's history.

Returning to Occoneechee, we had time for a few minutes to freshen up after our full day of activities before getting back on the vans for a quick trip to the Lamplighter Restaurant for dinner. Senator Creigh Deeds was our dinner speaker and we surprised him by presenting him with VAFP's 2007 Legislator of the Year Award, only the second such award to be presented during VAFP's ten-year history.

Saturday morning began with a continental breakfast in Cabin 9 and a welcome to new arrivals by Scott Shanklin, Park Manager. We then began our semiannual business meeting with the first speaker being Joe Elton, State Park System Director. Next came the officer reports and a quick update by Roy Dudley about the status of Jamestown 2007 and the upcoming National Association of State Park Directors.

This was followed by a panel discussion on "Legislator Contact: Why and How" featuring Delegate Jim Dillard (Ret.), Joe Elton, and Jeanne Fischer, Friends of Smith Mountain Lake State Park President. Jim passed along some valuable tips and rationale, Joe spoke to the need for such contact from the Park System's perspective, and Jeanne discussed her Group's effort to thwart the proposed name change for that Park.

Gaston Rouse then brought the attendees up to date on various volunteer issues. Following a short open floor discussion, the meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon. Lunch was served and the Executive Committee met during lunch.