the station; some girders shot through the building, emerging through the back wall onto Short Street. Despite great damage to the tracks, shutting down rail service for more than 24 hours, there were no casualties. A trainman however, who had been in the derailed caboose with out any apparent injury, died of a heart attack two weeks later.

1979   Attempts to maintain a "flag stop" in Orange failed, and the Station sat abandoned and idle for 17 years.

The Town of Orange acquired the property, won a grant to refurbish the structure, and awarded contract to Charlottesville architectural firm of Farmer, Puckett and Warner for restoration of the railway station. Cost approximate $700,000

1997   October 12, the Orange Railway Station was rededicated as the Orange Transportation Center.

1998   January 5, The Orange County Visitors Bureau moved to the Orange Transportation Center sharing the space with a Community Room.

The Orange County Department of Tourism & Visitors Bureau is committed to raising the awareness of Orange County; enhancing its image; and promoting its interests and name recognition - locally, nationally and internationally.

The top ten states of visitor origin are Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, New York, Florida, California, Ohio, New Jersey, and Texas. Florida, California, and Texas have been in the top ten for the past six years!

International visitors have come from all continents, with the exception of Antarctica. The United Kingdom, Canada, Thailand, and Germany have the largest visitor percentages of all the countries.
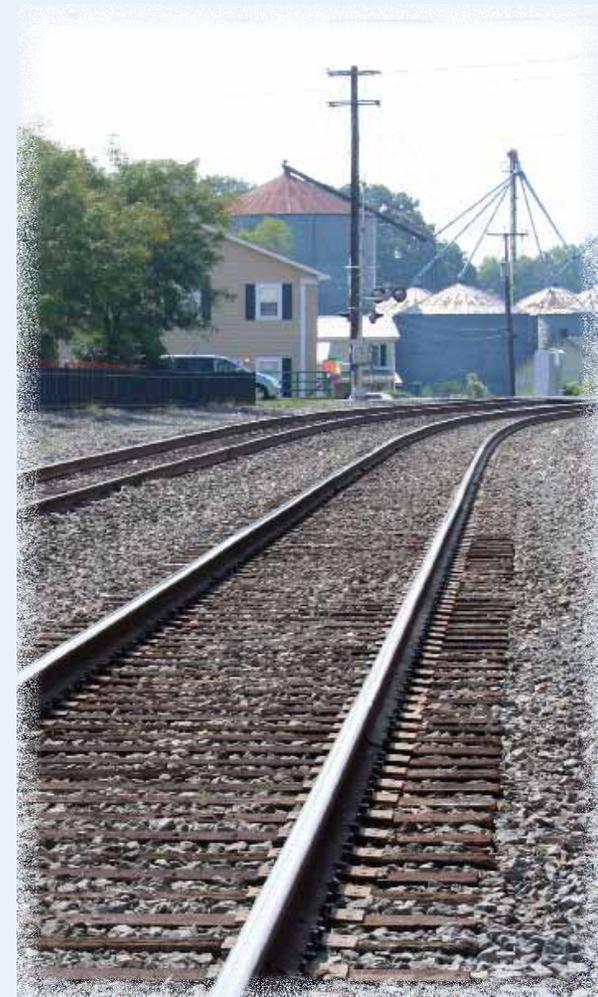
Look for our other publications:

Orange County Calendar of Events
A Brief History of Orange County
Orange's Courthouse
It Happened in Orange
Orange County Visitors Guide

ORANGE COUNTY
VIRGINIA
www.VisitOrangeVirginia.com

Orange as a Railway Town

By Paul Slayton

Picture by Toyita Rivera

1854 – 1979

Orange was founded in the middle of the 18th century as a Courthouse town. A century later in 1854 Orange added a second dimension - it became a Railroad Town. In that year the southward crawl of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad reached Orange. Indeed, its rails bisected the public lot, interposing itself between the Courthouse, on the west side of the track, and the county jail, situated just east of this railroad station.

Living away from navigable waters in 19th century Virginia meant being "stuck in the mud" much of the year. A railroad promised some surcease from the sticky problem of Orange County's red clay, of which General Robert E. Lee had commented, "Orange County mud and Orange County girls; each makes an impression quite indelible." Thus, to aid in subduing the impressions of Orange's mud, county officials and citizens, such as Dr. James Minor, donated property for the right-of-way to insure that the rail line laid its tracks through the village.

For the next 125 years the railway was the principal artery of Orange's commerce. All passenger trains, excepting expresses, stopped in Orange to drop and receive passengers and to deliver U.S. mail. Passengers were transported locally to Gordonsville, Charlottesville and Culpeper, and to connections to any place in the nation and the world.

Railroad Avenue, running southward from Main and Church Street, became the "high rent" district of Orange. Along the tracks were Levy's Busy Corner, the turn-of-the-century equivalent of a Wal-Mart store.

A fire, which began on Railroad Avenue in November 1908, destroyed about two thirds of Orange's businesses. Looking to the south and east from the vantage point of the railroad station, one can see only commercial buildings that were rebuilt in the decade following the fire.

Orange reached its peak as a rail center during World War II when more than 100 freight and passenger trains passed through every 24 hours. Orange youth went off to war as passengers on the railroad. Freight trains leaving Orange contributed to the war effort transporting wood products from Kentucky Flooring Company and local sawmills; parachutes manufactured at the American Silk Mill; and metalwork fabricated at Virginia Metal Products to be used in constructing gliders and landing ships.

The end of World War II saw the end of Orange as a railroad center. The automobile brought about the demise of rail passenger service and good highways led to the development of the trucking industry, which soon made serious inroads in the railway freight business.

By 1979, the town was unable to get Amtrak to maintain even a flag stop here. The railroad station closed its doors and sat idle, unused, for 17 years.

The Town of Orange received title to the property and began efforts to restore the station and on October 12, 1997, it was rededicated as the Orange Transportation Center.

Today, Norfolk and Southern freight trains pass through Orange frequently and Amtrak trains; however, there are no passenger stops at any time.

CHRONOLOGICAL FACTS

1854 The Orange and Alexandria Railroad arrived in Orange.

1908 November 8 - The Great Fire of Orange destroyed the rail road terminal at Railroad Avenue and Church Street.

1910 January 29 - Messrs. Robert and George Leigh of Louisa secured a contract to erect a passenger depot in Orange for the Southern Railway Company. The contract cost was $10,000, but it was completed July 19 with an over run cost of $13,000

1941-45 Orange reached its peak as a railroad center during World War II. More than 100 freight and passenger trains passed through the town every 24 hours.

1965 February 1– The railway station was seriously damaged when steel girders loaded and swung to the right as the train came around the curve.

The swaying girders struck the freight platform derailing three flat cars and a trailing caboose. Hurtling girders tore away much of

Experience   *Remember*   *Celebrate!*