

The CHRONICLE

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Friends Open Year with Debut of Lou Etta Watkins Oral History Video, Elect 2017 Board & Pay Tribute to Elaine Thompson



Burnt Out Capitol Was Scene of 1817 Monroe Inauguration

By James P. Lucier

The inauguration of the fifth president of the United States took place 200 years ago on March 5, 1817. The ceremony was held in front of the Old Brick Capitol on the site now occupied by the U.S. Supreme Court. It was the first such ceremony to take place outside because of the huge crowds expected. After all, the president-elect, James Monroe, was a national hero—and as the owner of the Oak Hill estate, the most prominent citizen of nearby Loudoun County.

(Continued on page 3)



The 22nd annual meeting of the Friends of the Thomas Balch Library kicked off on January 8 with a tribute to the late historian Elaine Thompson and the debut of the Friends' oral history video of Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission member Lou Etta Watkins.



Elaine Thompson, above, talked with CBS News about the tin box made by her great-great-great grandfather Joseph Trammel to hold his 1852 manumission papers. Learn more at balchfriends.org.

Thompson was remembered as a founder of the Black History Committee (BHC) and author of *In the Watchfires* about the Loudoun County Emancipation Association—a group cofounded in 1890 by her grandfather, Howard Clark. She also contributed to *Essence of a People I and II* and to the Balch Library online resource "A Glimpse into the African American History of Loudoun County."

The Watkins video, in which Lou Etta displayed her trademark wit and wisdom, was the hit of the meeting. *For more on the video and event, see pages 4 and 5.*

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www.balchfriends.org

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**2016 Loudoun History Awards Honor John K. Barrett
and the Black History Committee's Bus Tour Team**



The BHC's Bus Tour Team, above, left to right : Mary Randolph, Mattie Turner, Phyllis Cook-Taylor, tour director Alicia Cohen, Louis Jett, Shannon Fuller, Oatlands' Lori Kimball, and Waterford historian Bronwen Souders. At far right is Jack Barrett, who received the Loudoun History Award for an individual.

Two years ago, Alicia Cohen, cultural tourism ambassador (CTA) for the Journey Through Hallowed Ground, gathered fellow Black History Committee members and local historians to develop a tour of sites that tell the story of African Americans in Loudoun County. Sold out in 2015 and 2016, the annual spring tour has quickly become one of BHC's most successful programs. (The group will repeat the tour in June 2017; be sure to watch for announcements with details.) For their idea and efforts, the Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission presented the group with its 2016 Loudoun History Award.

Loudoun County historian and author Jack Barrett received the Advisory Commission's award for an individual. A Purcellville native, Barrett has researched, written, and published numerous works, including *A History of Loudoun County Baseball: 1869-1987*. He mounted the recent Thomas Balch Library exhibit on Loudoun baseball.

Donna Bohanon Receives NAACP Award

Chair of the Black History Committee (BHC), Donna Bohanon is the recipient of the 2016 Loudoun County NAACP Marie Medley Award presented on October 8 during the NAACP Annual Freedom Fund Banquet and Gala. Established by the Loudoun County Branch, the award honors its first president for her resounding commitment to the struggle for human rights, justice, and education.

By presenting this award, the Loudoun County Branch recognizes those who exemplify the same courage, strength and deeds. Honored to be recognized for her community work, Donna acknowledged the support of mentors Mary Randolph, Phyllis Cook-Taylor, and the late Elaine Thompson.



From left, Phyllis Cook-Taylor, Donna Bohanon, and Mary Randolph

Continued from page 1

Loudoun's James Monroe Ushered in "The Era of Good Feelings"

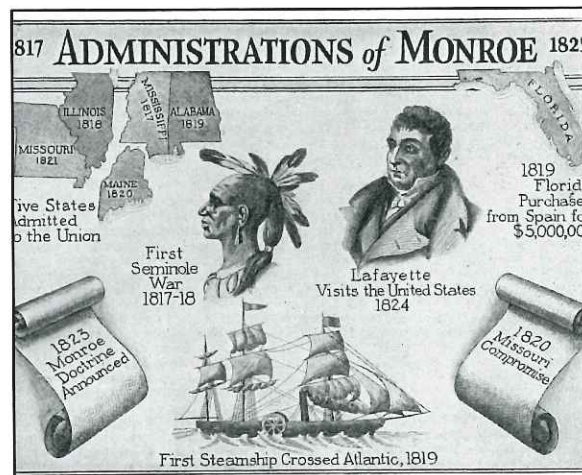
Across the street, the wreck of the U.S. Capitol Building still loomed, lying in ruins after the British burned it on August 24, 1814. The U.S. Treasury was staggering under debt after the War of 1812 and funds were scarce. Political bickering over whether the capital as a whole should be moved to Philadelphia, or even Cincinnati, had delayed reconstruction, just getting underway. Even the President's House, later to be called the White House when it was painted to cover up the burn marks, was far from being completed. The Monroe family

had to move into a rented town house at the angle intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and Eye Street, N.W. That house still exists today as the headquarters of a private club.

Nevertheless, the time was auspicious. Monroe was a war hero who had been wounded at Trenton during the War for Independence. He had been governor of Virginia and one of the first U.S. senators from Virginia. He was the most experienced diplomat of his time, with amazing skills in international relations, which included negotiating the Louisiana Purchase directly with Napoleon. He served as ambassador twice in France, twice in Great Britain, as well as in Spain.

When the War of 1812 began going badly, President James Madison recalled Monroe to national office to serve as secretary of state—and then, even while Washington burned, as

secretary of war at the same time. The new ships built in the Great Lakes shipyards led to famous victories in Lake Erie and Lake Champlain, turning around the war



in the North. Monroe reorganized the War Department and drew up new orders of battle, convincing a reluctant Congress to go along. Then, as British forces began congregating on New Orleans, Andrew Jackson's army was stalled on the march because the U.S. Treasury could no longer provide their pay. Monroe took out a personal loan and sent the funds to get Jackson going again. The defeat inflicted by the United States on the world's most powerful military machine turned out to be unnecessary since, unknown yet to all sides, the commissioners at Ghent had concluded a peace treaty two weeks before. Nevertheless, the stunning victory established the independence of the United States on the world scene once and for all.

In the election of 1816, Monroe, a member of the Democratic-Republican Party, was the overwhelming favorite, capturing 68

percent of the popular vote nationwide. When the votes of the Electoral College were counted, he won 183 votes to 34 for New York Federalist Rufus King. From that point on, the Federalist Party, the party of John Adams, disappeared from the scene.

By the election of 1820, Monroe would become so popular that he received all the votes of the Electoral College except for one elector who declared that he favored Monroe, but thought that only George Washington should go down in history as receiving a unanimous vote.

The leading Washington newspaper, the *National Intelligencer*, devoted its March 7 front page to an account of the inauguration, and the text of Monroe's address.

"Under the auspices of a delightful day, yesterday took place the interesting ceremony attendant upon the entrance of the President-elect of the United States on the duties of his arduous station," intoned the *Intelligencer*. The writer found that the "ceremony and the spectacle were simple, but grand, animating and impressive."

About 11:30, the president left his private residence on Eye Street, "attended by a large cavalcade of citizens on horseback," and arrived at the Old Capitol at 12 noon, thus starting the tradition of the Inaugural Parade down Pennsylvania Avenue. Entering the Senate chamber, he met ex-President Madison, and the Supreme Court (continued on page 6)

Spotlight on Friends Annual Event

Screening of Lou Etta Watkins Oral History Video Is Highlight of Friends' First Gathering of the New Year



Lou Etta Watkins, above, in a portrait by Sarah Huntington for the book In Their Own Words: Recollections of an Earlier Loudoun, which Huntington coauthored with writer Gale Waldron.

By Donna Bohanon, Chair, Black History Committee

Continuing its tradition of honoring an esteemed Loudoun County citizen in a video oral history, the Friends of Thomas Balch Library this year chose to highlight Lou Etta Watkins for her many significant contributions to the community.

A dynamic president of the Loudoun County Branch of the NAACP, she has been recognized for her exceptional service with its Marie Medley Award, which salutes an activist who demonstrates the courage, strength, and deeds of the founder of the County's NAACP.

Lou Etta Watkins also has served as PTA president of the George Washington Carver Elementary School in Purcellville. Other important contributions to the community include her work as a member of the League of Women Voters, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, the Thomas Balch Library Advisory Commission, Friends of the Thomas Balch Library and Black History Committee.

She has been a champion of civil rights for everyone—striving for quality education and full equality for all citizens. Most notably, she had fought for the inclusion of black history in the schools

as well as the preservation of Loudoun's African American history and all local history to be housed in a world-class facility accessible to all —Thomas Balch Library.

At the 22nd Annual Meeting of the Friends . . .



Susan Webber, left, and Jean Brown



Louis Jett, left, and Rich Gillespie

Friends Applaud Watkins Video and Elect New Board

Video Captures Lou Etta Watkins' Wit, Charm, and Elegance



Photo above left, from left, Lou Etta Watkins and her daughter, Julie Lane; center, front row from left, Friends board member Paul Lawrence, Lou Etta Watkins and, behind her, Margaret Ramey; photo right, video producers Donna Bohanon and Sarah Huntington. Patty Rogers-Renner, not shown, also served as a producer.

2017 Friends of Thomas Balch Library Board



2017 board members, front row from left: Vice President Lee Lawrence, James P. Lucier, Donna Bohanon; rear, from left: Sharon Parker, Paul Lawrence, Gail Adams, President Donald G. Cooper, Ronald A. Rust, and Secretary W. Perry Epes. Not present: Jeffrey Bolyard, Lewis Leigh, Jr., William C. Ray, Patty Rogers-Renner, Dorothy Shetterly, and Suzi Worsham.

Monroe's Inaugural

(Continued from page 3) justices.

The vice president administered the oath of office. Afterwards the whole party, accompanied by senators and marshals, went outside "to the elevated Portico temporarily erected for the occasion." There, "in the presence of an immense concourse of officers of the government, foreign officers, strangers (ladies as well as gentlemen) and citizens," the president delivered his address.

At the conclusion, he was saluted by guns from the Navy Yard, the battery, Fort Warburton, and other places. Then the *Intelligencer* goes on to say: "It is impossible to compute with any accuracy the number of carriages, horses and persons present."

Such a concourse was never before seen in Washington; the number of persons present being estimated at from five to eight thousand. The mildness and radiance of the day cast a brilliant hue on the complexion of the whole ceremony, and it is satisfactory to say, that we heard of no accident during the day, notwithstanding the magnitude of the assemblage."

Afterwards, the president and his wife, Elizabeth, returned to their home, where they received visits from their friends, senators, and members of the diplomatic corps. The day concluded with a "splendid ball" at Davis's Hotel.

At the end of the article, the anonymous author, probably the publisher, Joseph Gales, added some editorial comments: "The principles developed in his Inaugural Speech are such as, adhered to, will triumphantly bear him through. They are those of the honest Republican,

Mosby Heritage Area Association

invites you to attend

PRESIDENT JAMES MONROE'S INAUGURATION BICENTENNIAL SYMPOSIUM

Saturday, March 11, 2017

9:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Church of Our Savior Oatlands

Commemorate the 200th anniversary of James Monroe's inauguration as president of the United States. Monroe served as president from 1817 to 1825.

The program will be held at Church of Our Savior Oatlands followed by a reception at James Monroe's Loudoun County home, Oak Hill.

Speakers at the symposium include Scott Harris, executive director of the James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library; Dan Preston, editor of the James Monroe Papers; Sara Bon-Harper, executive director of James Monroe's Highland; and, Gordon Kray, sculptor of the James Monroe Statue in Williamsburg.

**For details, please visit
mosbyheritagearea.org or call
540-687-6681.**

and at the same time of the practical statesman. They afford us the highest presage of an upright and unsophisticated administration of public affairs, on the principles of the constitution, regulated by reason and tempered by the wisdom of experience."

The editor's prophecy was borne out. All historians have concurred that the Monroe administration was "The Era of Good Feelings." Shortly after taking office, the president set out on a victory tour through the major northern cities, traveling by horseback, mail coach, and that new-fangled invention, the steamboat. At each stop he was met by rallies, banquets, speeches, and concerts. A few months later he made a similar

journey through the South. His point was to bind the nation together again after the divisions of the war.

While in office, Monroe completed his lifetime vision of the United States as a continental power stretching from sea to sea. The Louisiana Purchase, which he had accomplished under Jefferson, doubled the size of the United States, but left the unexplored western border with Spanish Mexico undefined. As ambassador to Spain, Monroe had laid out the legal rationale why East and West Florida were properly part of the purchase.

As president, he instructed Secretary of State Adams to complete the negotiations with Spain to secure the cession of Florida and then define the western border with Mexico up the Sabine River to the Red River to the Arkansas River and then, in a breathtaking sweep, across the 42nd Parallel to the Pacific. More than any other president, Monroe created the continental integrity of the United States.

Texas and California were mere details to be filled in later.

For Monroe, sovereignty rested with the people, not the state. Thus he rejected the monarchical systems of the Old World, and encouraged the peoples of the Western Hemisphere to seek their independence from Europe, just as the United States had done. The principles he set forth in his Message to Congress of 1823 became known as the Monroe Doctrine and made him a beloved figure in Latin America for his time. The promise of the inaugural was well carried out.

—James P. Lucier is a member of the board of the Friends of the Thomas Balch Library, as well as the board of the James Monroe Memorial Foundation.

The Friends' Black History Committee, Looking Back and Forward

By Robert Sanabria, Communications Chair
Black History Committee

For 17 years, the Black History Committee (BHC) of the Friends of Thomas Balch Library, has set its sights on preserving, collecting, and sharing the local history of African Americans who have contributed to the emergence and development of Loudoun County.

Established in 2000, this small dedicated group of black and white members achieve this goal by telling the stories of the African American experience in Loudoun County through recorded oral histories and publications. In 2015 and 2016 we expanded our work to include tours of historic communities. (See *the Loudoun History Awards, page 2.*)

On Saturday, October 29, 2016, we held our first open house, which featured Gertrude Ashton Evans' story of segregation and her civil rights experiences in Leesburg during the 1950s and '60s. She also shared how a Letter to the Editor inspired her to tell her story using art as a backdrop. A native of Leesburg, self-taught artist Evans began drawing and painting in the early 1980s. Several of her latest works depict Leesburg's 1960s civil rights protests. The open house also featured a screening of "Looking Back at Leesburg with Wilson Townsend, Jr."

The family of the late artist and former BHC member Sherry Z. Sanabria, made a gift to the Balch Library of her painting "Settle-Dean Cabin." She was inspired to paint the former slave quarters when she learned the developer of Loudoun's South Riding community was about to raze it. The developer eventually agreed to move and restore the building, but for Sherry Sanabria the restoration would destroy its essence.

To preserve it, she painted the image of the building before anything was done to it, and thereby retained its inherent symbolism.

To better appreciate the range of Sherry's work, visit the Alexandria Black History Museum, which on January 11, 2017, opened "Before the Spirits Are Swept Away: African American Historic Site Paintings." This permanent exhibition of 23 of her paintings is made possible by a generous gift of the Sanabria family. The museum is located at 902 Wythe Street in Alexandria.

For Donna Bohanon, chair of the Black History Committee, the opening of the new National Museum of African American History & Culture (NMAAHC) provides an opportunity to increase our community's awareness of African American history right here in Loudoun County. Good examples are the late Elaine Thompson's donations to the NMAAHC of her great-great grandfather's "Certificate of Freedom" and the tin box he made to protect his manumission papers. (See *page 1.*) The papers and the tin are currently on display at the new museum. Copies of the papers can be found on the Friends of the Thomas Balch website under "A Glimpse into Loudoun's Black History" at <http://balchfriends.org/glimpse/>.



Loudoun County WWI veterans

2017 and 2018. The BHC plans to reach out to the African American community for ideas on how to honor Loudoun's African American soldiers. We will also work with the WWI Centennial Committee to support and promote county-wide programs and activities. To accomplish our goals, we need you. Check back on the Friends website for details as they emerge.

Future BHC plans include partnering with other organizations. Among those efforts is a plan to create a Speakers Series led by new BHC member Lorraine Terry. The series will involve professionals in the fields of historic study, preservation, and genealogy. Citizens born and raised in Loudoun County will also be invited to share their stories.



**Friends of Thomas
Balch Library**

THE CHRONICLE

P.O. Box 2184

Leesburg, VA 20177

540-579-2825

www.balchfriends.org

Winter Programs & Exhibits

Programs and Events

Researching African American Genealogy -
Cara Griggs, Library of Virginia reference
archivist, will discuss methods for researching
African American genealogy prior to the end of the
Civil War. February 2, 2017 - 10 AM - 12 PM

**Information Seeking Strategies in the Digital
Age -** Laura E. Christiansen, curator of
manuscripts and archives, will share online search
techniques. March 2, 2017 - 10 AM - 12 PM

**Opening the Door to Leesburg's History:
Introducing the Johnston Collection -**
Ben Tayloe, project archivist, will introduce it to
the public. March 19, 2017 - 2 - 4 PM

Researching Court Records - Jeanette Irby,
Loudoun Circuit Court judge, will discuss mining
court records. April 6, 2017 - 10 AM - 12 PM

*Programs are held in the downstairs meeting
room and are free unless otherwise noted.*

Tours and Exhibits

Margaret Mercer Room Exhibits

Frederick Douglass School Art Show through
January 31, 2017

Exhibit: Artifacts & Photos, Union Civil War
by Jack Craig - February 1 - 28, 2017

WWII Artifacts by John Wyrick - March 1 - 31,
2017

Lower Level Meeting Room Exhibit

Loudoun Photo Club - through March 31, 2017

Waterford's Civil War by John Souders - April 1
- June 1, 2017

*For updated news on programs, tours, and
exhibits, please visit the Friends' website at
[balchfriends.org](http://www.balchfriends.org) or the Library's website at
<http://www.leesburgva.gov/government/>*