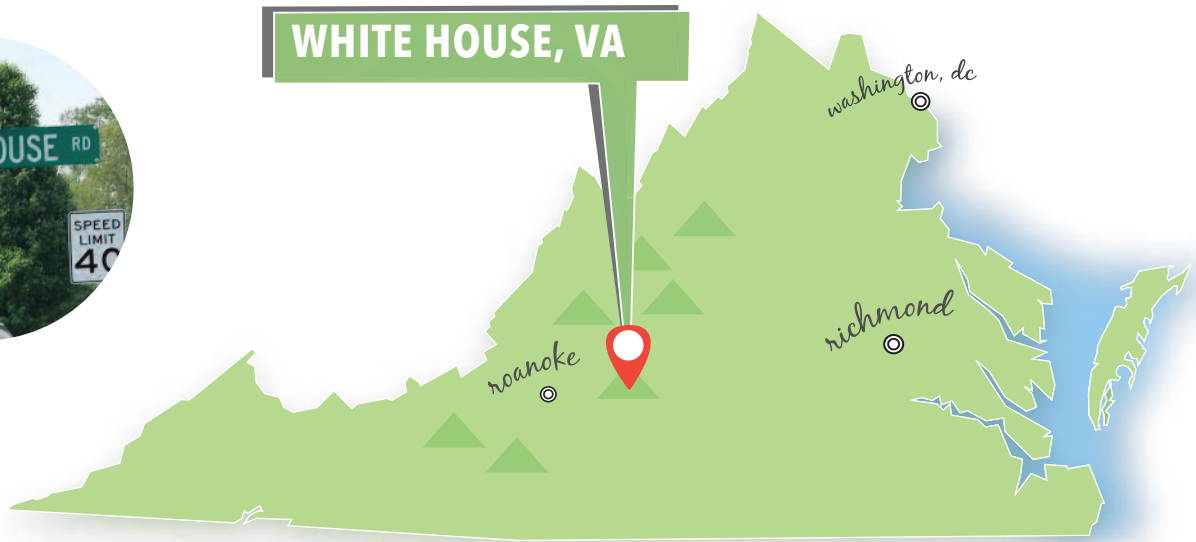


greetings from



WHITE HOUSE
Community Est. 1859

A sign at the corner of White House Road and Smith Mountain Lake Parkway welcomes travelers to the White House community.

The community was originally called Otterview but was later named White House after George Goob Saunders asked John Callaway Franklin to build him a white house on the knoll in 1859.

White House, Virginia

A crossroads community named after a white house that once stood on a knoll between what is now Smith Mountain Lake Parkway and White House Road.

White House corner has been long known as the intersection of Routes 626 and 608 to residents on the south side of Bedford County. So how did it get its name? Was it named after the famous building in Washington, D.C., or something else?

Jason Johnson, who serves on the Bedford County School Board, and is writing a book about White House, says it was simply named after a white house that once stood on a knoll between what is now Smith Mountain Lake Parkway and White House Road.

“The house was painted with real white paint instead of white wash, so it really stood out,” Johnson says. “It became a landmark for travelers.” Johnson and his parents now live on the property.

According to Johnson, the White House was built for \$1,500 in 1859 by John Callaway Franklin for George Goob Saunders. Franklin also built two other residences in the area that were very similar in style. One was for Elijah Cundiff at Fancy Grove, a few miles east of White House, and the other was built for Beebe Johnson on Route 122, just north of Davis Mill and Goose Creek.

Papers by Kenneth Crouch on file at the Bedford Museum and Genealogical Society show that George Goob Saunders was born in 1822, the son of Daniel Green and Frances Elizabeth Saunders. They lived at Ivy Cliff near the Isle of Pines, and the home is now under the waters of Smith Mountain Lake. He donated the land to Moody Meeting House. The site, now in Smith Mountain Lake State Park, was the beginning of Staunton Baptist Church.

White House operated as a plantation with slave labor up until the Civil War. Johnson says, in 1860 as many as eight slaves worked the 320-acre farm, planting corn, wheat and tobacco.

On June 15, 1864, an advance guard under Union Gen. William W. Averell’s command came to White House on the way to Liberty (now the town of Bedford) and may have emancipated the slaves.

After the war, the area became known as Otterview. The county of Bedford designated it as White House in 1988. Saunders and his wife, Martha Jane Cunning, and their children stayed at the house until the 20th century.

In 1925, the house was destroyed by fire, rumored but never proven to be arson,



After the original White House burned 1925, J. Roy Nichols purchased the estate in 1931 and built the house that stands there now in 1938. Terry Wayne and Peggy Harris Johnson bought the house in 1979.

according to Johnson. J. Roy Nichols purchased the estate in 1931 and the house that stands there now was built in 1938. Nichols and his family farmed the land until the 1960s. Nichols sold 90 acres of the property on the west side of Route 626 to Sam Goode. Terry Wayne and Peggy Harris Johnson bought the house in 1979.

Descendants of Sam Goode still live on the property purchased from Nichols in the 1930s. Sam's grandson Jeff and his family live in the old family home place, and son Norris rents a house about a mile down the road. Norris Goode fondly remembers his childhood in White House and talks about his father, who he called granddaddy.

"About 1936, granddaddy started construction on the house that today still stands, a clapboard Depression-style cottage of 1,200 square feet with three rooms upstairs and five down," Goode says. "It still has the two by beams that he milled and were so hard it was difficult to drive a nail in them." The 30-by-40-foot house was finished in 1938.

Goode also remembers what it was like before modern conveniences. He says the family used Aladdin lamps for light and that he had to haul water, two buckets at a time, from a springhouse about 75 yards down the hill from the house.

"Southside Electric Cooperative brought electricity to Huddleston in 1939, and we got running water and indoor plumbing. My mother continued to cook on a beautiful Bluebird wood stove that still sits in a shed out back of the house. It was several years before she finally broke down and agreed to an electric one," he says.

Sam and his brothers operated Goode Brothers, a lumber business that harvested the yellow pine trees that once dominated the landscape. According to Norris, Marion, the oldest brother, was the salesman. He would go on the road and sell the lumber wholesale to builders and suppliers. They hauled lumber to Roanoke to market and to Huddleston, where it went aboard the train bound for Norfolk.

Sam's brother, Arthur, ran the planing mill and another brother, Charlie, drove the truck. Norris even helped out by writing paychecks for the workers when he was 14, because he had good handwriting.

Marion and Arthur Goode established a cannery for Smith Mountain Brand Tomatoes at the south fork of Routes 608 and 626. Tomatoes were popular at that time, and the Goodes' was one of 52 tomato canneries in Bedford County.

The Goode Brothers also established an egg business, and each brother kept

hundreds upon hundreds of chickens, which together made for a rather large operation. Norris himself raised Guernsey and Black Angus cattle before going to school at Richmond Professional Institute (now Virginia Commonwealth University) to study art. He worked at Piedmont Label Company in Bedford for 42 years.

There are still some working farms in the White House/Huddleston area, but most of the businesses now are geared toward Smith Mountain Lake residents and tourists. Smith Mountain Lake State Park and Mariners Landing Resort are just a few miles west of the White House corner.

Jeanette Childress, who opened Lake Retreat Properties in 1980, says the opening of the State Park was a fantastic opportunity for the White House area and provided the spark that fueled the growth for the area. Lake Retreat Properties has been in business at the White House Corner since 1980. The company started with a broker and a couple of agents who listed and sold property and also offered waterfront homes for short-term vacation rental. The actual building that houses Lake Retreat was originally a boat sales and repair facility owned by Dan Callahan.

Reminders of White House's rich history are still visible today. The old Owen Store



White House People



Clockwise, from upper left: Charles Roy Nichols is pictured on a horse on the south side of the house. John Roy Nichols and his wife (who built the current White House in 1938) are pictured on the front lawn of the house in a picture his granddaughter says was taken in the early-1970s. Norris Goode lives on the White House property. Jason Johnson and his mother Peggy Harris Johnson in front of the White House.

and later Odd Fellows Lodge can still be seen today on Route 626, just east of the White House corner. The structure was built in 1900 by Alexander Tazewell (Taz) Owen. His business was known as A. T. Owen and Co. and closed in 1920. Records show that court was held at the Owen Store by Daniel Cassity (from nearby Leesville) and George Goob Saunders.

Owen later leased the two-story structure to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. The dates the lodge was chartered and discontinued are not known. Locals say the building was also used for revivals.

The Ayers Chapel/School is one of the more interesting stories in White House. It was named after the Rev. John Ayers, who was the first licensed Methodist minister in Bedford County in 1789. The original building was located on the south side of Route 608, just west of the intersection of Routes 626 and 608 and west of Route 853, the road to the Smith Mountain Lake airport. The chapel is believed to be one of the earliest places of Methodist worship in Bedford County. Dr. Elmer T. Clark in 1958 edited the three-volume series, *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, in which Methodist Bishop Asbury refers to the

chapel in 1788. It became part of the Bedford County school system in 1913 and was closed in 1937. The school is unique in that one of its students who became ill in the influenza epidemic expressed his wish to be buried on the school property. The youth, named Jack Harris, loved baseball and was buried at home plate.

He was the son of Albert Lee Harris and Annie Belle Ashwell, who were married Nov. 7, 1897, in Bedford County. Harris is the uncle of Johnson's mother, Peggy Harris Johnson. After the school was closed, the building was purchased by J. Roy Nichols of the White House. The wood from the school was used in building a house on the west side of Route 626 near the intersection of White House and Tolers Ferry roads. The building erected for Grover and Otha Tuck still can be seen on the property owned by Hertha Nichols.

White House is divided by Moneta on the White House Road side and Huddleston on the Smith Mountain Lake Parkway side. The name Huddleston is interesting. The community is named after industrialist Henry Huttleston Rogers, who started the Virginian Railway in 1907 by combining the Deepwater Railway in West Virginia and the Tidewater Railway in Virginia.

The Virginian Railway extended from Sewell's Point, on Hampton Roads, Norfolk, Virginia, to Deepwater, West Virginia, a distance of 443 miles. It operated from 1909 until 1959, when it was purchased by Norfolk and Western.

Rogers was a close friend of author Mark Twain, who frequently visited the Rogers family, often arriving on Rogers' 225-foot steam yacht *Kanawha*. At Twain's suggestion, Rogers gave financial assistance to Helen Keller, who dedicated one of her books to him. Rogers also provided Booker T. Washington with funds for the establishment of schools for southern blacks. The Booker T. Washington connection is interesting because James Burroughs' sister Katherine lived alone on a small farm next to the White House and his father was one of the early pastors at Moody Meeting House.

James Burroughs owned a small tobacco plantation, where celebrated author Booker T. Washington was born and that is now home to the Booker T. Washington National Monument. ■

Jeff Reid is a freelance writer and photographer who lives in Bedford County.