

*This year **Cooperative Living** is taking a road trip along the length of U.S. Route 1 as it crosses Virginia from the North Carolina border to Washington, D.C. In each issue, correspondent Deborah Huso will relate her experiences along the way.*

Art and Ale

Fredericksburg's draw isn't all Civil War. Take Route 1 into this historic city to enjoy local art and local brews.



by Deborah Huso,
Contributing Writer

I remember what Route 1 through Fredericksburg looked like 30 years ago. When I was a child, I spent long summer weekends camping outside Fredericksburg near the Chancellorsville Battlefield and can remember riding my bicycle into town, past Old Salem Church, into the historic district. I can't imagine riding my bike into Fredericksburg anymore. Today it's a bustling city that has sprawled up and down Route 1 and all along Route 3. But I credit those long summer weekends when I biked the battlefields at Chancellorsville and Wilderness with spurring my love for Civil War history.

Like so many of the cities and towns along old Route 1, Fredericksburg is a major destination for Civil War buffs (four major battles were fought here), but history isn't all this quickly growing city is about these days. It is has also become a destination for art and ale lovers (neither of which is mutually exclusive, by the



Per A. Bowman Smith Distillery's Mary Ahrens: "Bourbon, by law, has to be made in the U.S., and it has to be made of at least 51 percent corn."

way!). The region is home to four wineries, one brewing company, and one distillery.

Are you impressed? You should be. There are but a handful of bourbon distilleries in the U.S., most in Kentucky. And one of them is right here in Fredericksburg. The A. Smith Bowman Distillery moved here in 1988 from Reston, Va., and is now open for tours.

If you want to know how it's done, you can take a tour with the Bowman tour guides, Mary Ahrens and Bill Jones, who love to talk about whiskey, bourbon, vodka, gin and rum. "Bourbon, by law, has to be made in the U.S.," explains Ahrens, "and it has to be made of at least 51 percent corn. All barrels must be new, oak-charred. It's a completely American product."

The A. Smith Bowman Distillery has been in existence since prohibition ended in the early 1930s. Its flagship bourbon is John J. Bowman, which

takes 10 years to complete. Jones calls bourbon “the Mercedes of whiskey.” And if you go on a distillery tour here, you’ll see how it’s all done and get a glimpse of a warehouse holding some 5,600 barrels of liquor.

Currently, the distillery is in operation with five employees who collectively have more than 75 years of experience in the business. “The A. Smith Bowman Distillery uses time-honored traditions to produce hand-crafted bourbon that honors the legacy and ground-breaking spirit of Virginia’s pioneers,” says Ahrens.

She adds that the John J. Bowman single-barrel batch and the Bowman Brothers small batch each won a gold medal at the 2013 San Francisco World Spirits Competition.

Complimentary tours are offered 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and a special Father’s Day event is scheduled for June 15 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., open and free to the public.

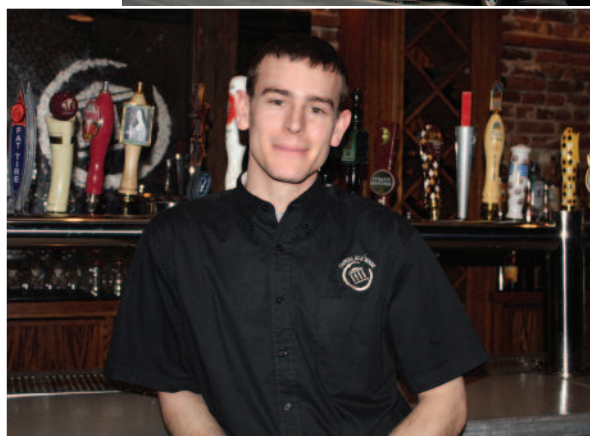
ON TO A DIFFERENT SPIRIT

If hard liquor isn’t your thing, however, you can head into downtown Fredericksburg (Route 1 turns into Princess Anne Street in the historic area), and enjoy beer tastings at the Capital Ale House on Caroline Street. This popular restaurant and bar has the largest beer selection in Central Virginia, including beers from the local Blue and Gray Brewery.

I’ve never been a big fan of beer, but when in an ale house, one must do as the other ale house patrons do. So I sign up for a five-beer tasting, sampling everything from a Legend Brown ale to a Bold Rock cider. Waiter Bryce Kinsey takes me on my tasting tour. Formerly in the U.S. Army, Kinsey now operates a recording studio on the side called Human Movement Records. And while he commonly offers tastings here at Capital Ale, he isn’t strict about how and when to drink your beer. “I think it’s more fun to pair different beers with different foods and see how it tastes rather than formally matching a beer to a dish,” he says.

But beer actually isn’t Kinsey’s passion. Music is. He runs what he calls his “mobile studio” on the weekends, is currently working on a degree in electrical engineering, and says he’s been playing clarinet for 16 years. Kinsey calls himself a “band geek,” but it’s Kinsey who

Distillery tour guide Mary Ahrens (inset) takes visitors through the warehouse (below), where some 5,600 barrels of liquor are housed while their contents age to perfection. Complimentary tours are offered from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Saturday.



(Above) The popular Capital Ale House on Caroline Street has the largest beer selection in Central Virginia, including local brews. Waiter Bryce Kinsey (left) commonly offers tastings, but suggests that patrons be creative and explore their own preferences when pairing beer and food.

alerts me to Fredericksburg's growing arts scene.

The historic downtown area is loaded with galleries, including the Art First Gallery, a 34-member artists' cooperative that has been operational for two decades. Local gourd artist Leah Comeford says many of the local artists are older. "You're starting to see artists beginning in their 40s to 70s, taking on new careers in retirement," she says. Comeford herself is a retired graphic artist from the West Coast who came to Fredericksburg as a bride 15 years ago. Today she paints on gourds and also teaches art classes.

Next door to Art First is another cooperative gallery called Brush Strokes. With 16 artist members, the gallery features painting, photography, and jewelry. Cooperative member Norma Woodward, age 73, is a former database manager who now spends her summers road tripping across the U.S. and taking pictures. "I now have time to do what I want to do," she says. "Last year I left home in July and came back in October."

STAYING OVERNIGHT?

If you're looking for a place to spend the night while exploring the galleries on Caroline Street, you can check into the luxurious Caroline House Bed and Breakfast, managed by innkeeper Lindi Calegari. The 1890 house was built by a Fredericksburg County treasurer who was tragically killed in a carriage accident right before construction was complete. The home opened as a B & B just over two years ago and is part of the Richard Johnston Inn complex.

A native New Yorker, Calegari ended up in Fredericksburg when her dad moved the family to Lake Anna to work at the power plant as a nuclear electrician. This single mom trained in court reporting has been here ever since, and while she had no experience in inn keeping before coming to work with the Caroline House, she comes from a large Italian family that loves to cook. Tall, slender, and graceful, Calegari says working at the Caroline House is "like working in a dollhouse every day." ■



IF YOU GO...

The Fredericksburg Visitor Center (706 Caroline St., 540-373-1776, www.visitfred.com, open daily 9-5 Mon.-Sat., 11-5 Sun.) is located in the heart of Old Town and directly adjacent to Trolley Tours of Fredericksburg (706 Caroline St., 540-898-0737, www.frederickstrolley.com), which offers tours of the historic city several times a day during the summer.

If you want to have a full exploration of the Fredericksburg area's winery and distilling culture, join the Grapes & Grains Trail (www.GandGTrail.com, 877-404-5810), and take a ride on the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad, enjoying six whistle stops that include four area wineries as well as the A. Smith Bowman Distillery (One Bowman Drive, 540-373-4555, www.asmithbowman.com) and the Blue & Gray Brewing Company (3300 Dill Smith Dr., 540-538-2379, www.blueandgraybrewingco.com).

Then explore the downtown district's more than two dozen art galleries, including Art First Gallery (824 Caroline St., www.artfirstgallery.com, 540-371-7107), Brush Strokes Gallery (824 Caroline St., www.brushstrokesfredericksburg.com, 540-368-0560), and the Fredericksburg Center for the Creative Arts (813 Sophia St., www.fccava.org, 540-373-5646).



(From top) Trolley Tours of Fredericksburg offers tours year-round; check their website for seasonal schedules. Art First Gallery is one of more than two dozen in the downtown district. The 1890 Caroline House offers convenient accommodations from which to launch your tour of the historic city.

For the best eats in town, check out the Capital Ale House (917 Caroline St., 540-371-2337, www.capitalalehouse.com), La Petite Auberge (311 William St., 540-371-2727, www.lapetiteaubergefred.com) for traditional French cuisine, or Ristorante Renato (422 William St., 540-371-8228, www.rrenato.com) for Italian cuisine.

Then enjoy luxurious overnight accommodations at the 1890 Caroline House (528 Caroline St., 540-899-7606, www.therichardjohnstoninn.com). ■

Fredericksburg in the Civil War

Four major battles of the Civil War occurred in and around Fredericksburg over an 18-month period from December 1862 through May 1864, making the region a vortex of fighting and resulting in a total casualty count of 100,000. Those battles included Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness, and Spotsylvania Courthouse. While you can visit all four battlefields, all of which offer driving and/or walking tours, you can also take a tour of Civil War sites in downtown Fredericksburg, including a street fighting exhibit on Caroline Street and the National Cemetery. Pick up a walking tour map at the Fredericksburg Visitor Center (706

Caroline St.), and visit the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park online at www.nps.gov/frsp.

TOUR BATTLEFIELD HOMES

Walking around the restored gardens of Chatham Manor in Falmouth (just across the Rappahannock River off Route 1), feeling the velvety petals of summer roses, watching the river drift lazily by just below the grounds, it is difficult to imagine this scene was ever anything but peaceful. The brick Georgian manor house, which now serves as headquarters for the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National

Military Park, was once the centerpiece of a rambling 1,200-acre plantation belonging to William Fitzhugh and worked by over 100 slaves, some of whom led a rebellion on the plantation in 1805.

But that was not to be the bloodiest period for Chatham. In 1862, the home served as a Federal headquarters (once visited by President Abraham Lincoln), and later as a hospital during and after the Battle of Fredericksburg, a disastrous defeat for the Union Army with more than 12,000 casualties. Volunteer nurses at the hospital included poet Walt Whitman and later founder of the Red Cross Clara Barton. Whitman remarked on the horrid scenes in and around the hospital, noting that at the foot of a tree on the grounds he saw "a heap of amputated feet, legs, arms, and hands."

Today Chatham is a very different place. Visitors, however, may learn about the manor house's history and that of the Civil War years in Fredericksburg through exhibits inside the historic home.

The Civil War-era owners of Chatham, the Lacy family, permanently moved away from the property after the war. The home and grounds were in complete disrepair, blood stains on the floors, graveyards on the grounds. Ironically, they made their new residence Ellwood, another Fredericksburg area home of significance to the local Civil War history. Part of the Wilderness Battlefield, Ellwood Manor was a middling farm in its day.

During the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864, it served as headquarters for generals under Ulysses S. Grant. It was also the burial place of Confederate General "Stonewall" Jackson's amputated arm following the Battle of Chancellorsville the previous year. Today visitors can visit the Lacy family cemetery at Ellwood where a monument marks the burial spot of the celebrated general's arm. Ellwood grounds are open to visitors daily during the summer, though you must obtain a visitor's pass at the Chancellorsville Battlefield Visitor Center first. The home itself is open as well on select summer dates when volunteers from the Friends of Wilderness Battlefield give tours.

INTERESTED?

Chatham is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Call 540-373-6122 for further info on Chatham. For information on when Ellwood is open for tours, call 540-786-2880. Learn more about these historic homes and the battlefields surrounding them at www.nps.gov/frsp. Admission to all Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park facilities is free. ■



(Top) Chatham Manor now serves as headquarters for the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park. (Above) The grave of General "Stonewall" Jackson's arm is located on the grounds of (left) Ellwood House.