

Visit Occoquan *Virginia*

TOWN OF OCCOQUAN
VISITOR'S GUIDE
Fall/Holiday 2023



LEARN ABOUT UPCOMING EVENTS & ACTIVITIES AT [VISITOCOQUANVA.COM](https://www.visitoccoquanva.com)

Old Hollywood Murder Mystery Whodunit: Best Laid Plans



Friday, October 27 at 7:30pm

Best Laid Plans is an audience participation, 1930s two-hour, interactive mystery event. Someone will die in a comedic way, and guests will have the opportunity to solve the crime as a team.

Tickets \$42 | 305 Mill St, Occoquan, VA | visitoccoquanva.com/spirits

OCOQUAN, VIRGINIA HISTORICAL MARKER TRAIL

413 Mill St

Ellicott's Mill
Civil War Trail
Milling History
Establishment
of the Town
of Occoquan
Water Basin
Gear Wheel
The Dogue Indians
Occoquan River
Bridges

416 Mill St

Carbide Bunker
Rockledge

402 Mill St

Carriage Stone

314 Mill St

Virginia Historic
District
Methodist Church

302 Mill St

Mill Street

200 Mill St

1804 Occoquan
Town Plat

203 Washington St

The Town Of
Occoquan Prospers
Mamie Davis Park
Occoquan Wharves
Occoquan Riverwalk
1804 Boundary Stone

204 Washington St

Ogle Harris Store

209 Washington St

Ebenezer Baptist
Church

206 Union St

Old Hammill Hotel

308 Commerce St

Odd Fellows Hall

307 Commerce St

Commerce Street

Table of Contents

Historical Marker Trail	3
Upcoming Events	4-5
Shhh... 4 Hidden Spots to Visit in Occoquan	6-8
Why We're Drawn to Occoquan	12-13
Town Map and Business Directory	12-13
Hold My Beer	14-15
Architecture of Occoquan	18-21
Occoquan Express	back cover

Learn more at
visitoccoquanva.com/history



To learn about upcoming
town events and activities
visit visitoccoquanva.com,
or for information on the
town visit occoquanva.gov

**This publication is produced by
Visit Occoquan and the Town of Occoquan**

All information such as events, dates, times, locations,
addresses, and contact information are subject to change.
Please contact the business or event host to confirm details.

COVER PHOTO BY SARAH HITCHCOCK BURZIO
DESIGN & LAYOUT BY HITCHCOCK CREATIVE

FALL/HOLIDAY
(SEP-DEC 2023)



Upcoming Events!



FALL ARTS & CRAFT SHOW

September 23 & 24

Hosted in the streets of Historic Occoquan, the Fall Arts & Crafts Show will feature two packed days of a wide range of 200+ artisans, makers and creators in over 20 categories. Meet emerging and experienced artisans, indulge in festival fare and enjoy live music in the beer & wine garden in River Mill Park. Kids will want to stop by Imagination Alley to watch performances by community groups or create their own art at the Art Bar! Learn more at occoquanfestivals.com.



TRIVIA NIGHT IN THE PARK

Friday, September 15 & Friday, October 20

Test your knowledge during our outdoor trivia nights in the park! Play six rounds of seasonally themed brain busters for your chance to win Occoquan gift cards.

\$30 for a team of up to 8 players or come on down and watch the fun for free!

Learn more at visitoccoquanva.com/trivia.



SPIRITS & SPIRITS

October 27-28

This popular fall event is back this year with hauntingly fun activities for adults, kids, and families:

Best Laid Plans: An Old Hollywood Murder Mystery

Friday, October 27 at 7:30pm

Costume Parade & Contest

Saturday, October 28 at 10:00am

Haunted Maze and Spirits Garden

Saturday, October 28 from 5-10pm

FREE Occoquan Express shuttle service: 10/28 from 12pm-11pm.

Learn more at visitoccoquanva.com/spirits.



HOLIDAYFEST

November 18 - December 3

Join us for 2 weeks of holiday festivities in Occoquan!

Annual Town Tree Lighting

Saturday, November 18

4:00-8:00PM

SIP & STROLL

Visitors may enjoy an adult beverage as they walk through town.

5:00-8:00PM

S'MORES AT THE PARK

Before and after the Tree Lighting, enjoy s'mores and roasting marshmallows at River Mill Park.

6:00PM

TREE LIGHTING

Join us in front of Town Hall where the Mayor will officiate this popular tradition!

UNTIL 8PM

SHOP LATE

Shop Occoquan and enjoy the first day of HolidayFest! When you #shopsmall and #shoplocal, you're supporting your neighborhood artists, shopkeepers, restaurant owners and the community.



Shop, Dine & Win! Contest

November 18 to December 3

Shop and dine at your favorite Occoquan businesses for a chance to win \$100 in Occoquan business gift cards! Over \$1,500 in gift cards to Occoquan businesses will be awarded.

Holiday Artisan Market

Saturday, December 2 from 11am-5pm

Sunday, December 3 from 11am-4pm

Our Holiday Artisan Market transforms River Mill Park into a magical holiday shopping experience! Artisans and craft persons will offer original, handmade work in a full range of media. From handmade bath and body products, candles, gourmet food products and home décor to fine art and jewelry, you are sure to find the perfect gift for everyone on your holiday list—and maybe something for yourself too.

FREE Occoquan Express shuttle service: Nov. 18 and Nov. 25 from 12-8pm, Dec. 2 from 11am-8pm, and Dec. 3 from 11am-5pm.

Learn more at visitoccoquanva.com/holiday.





shhh...

4 Hidden Spots to Visit in Occoquan

BY ROBERT CURRER

Occoquan itself is an open secret in Northern Virginia. From Rt. 123, it might look like a sleepy strip of historic houses nestled along the river, but Occoquan is a town full of hidden gems. You'll have to explore off the beaten path to find them all, but we've assembled a list of our four favorite secret spots to get you started. Read on to find out what's hidden in Occoquan.

The Riverwalk Gazebo

To find the first secret spot, park in the lot under Rt. 123 and follow Mill Street into town. On your right, you'll find the Riverwalk building across the street from the old visitor's center. Just past **Bar J Chili Parlor**, there is a staircase. Take those stairs to the second floor and follow the corridor past **Paint Your Heart Out** toward the river. You'll dead end in the gazebo.

This covered area delivers sweeping views of the river. The tiny isle of Heron Haven sits in the middle of the river straight out from the gazebo. This isle and the trees on the other side of the river are the best places to look for herons and bald eagles hunting along the river. Bring your binoculars because turtles are commonly seen sunning on the isle's rocky shoreline.

In the autumn and winter, the second-floor gazebo is ideal for sipping hot chocolate and enjoying the soothing rhythms of nature. There are no permanent chairs or benches here. So if you plan to hang out, bring a camp chair with you. While you're at it, stop at **Potomac Chocolate** on Mill St to ask about their hot sipping chocolate, another of Occoquan's best kept secrets.

Footbridge Waterfall

The footbridge waterfall is the perfect destination for a relaxing stroll through town. Follow Mill Street toward River Mill Park at the far end. Just on the other side of the **Mill Street Museum**, there's a ramp that winds down the slope to a footbridge. The footbridge alone is worth checking out as it offers the best views of the Occoquan River. Take your time and enjoy this picturesque panorama. Once you reach the other side, keep left, and you'll find another short stair leading down to the waterfall's headwaters.

This unique site is an excellent stop for a photo of the river life. Artists, writers, and outdoor enthusiasts are often found near the waterfall or the shaded river banks sketching or journaling. There's just something about this quiet part of Occoquan that sparks inspiration.



Occoquan Mill Ruins

Occoquan traces its history all the way back to the 1730s. With that kind of lineage, the careful observer can find echoes of the past throughout town. However, if you want to locate the oldest remnant of a bygone era this spooky season, you'll have to get off the beaten path.

Follow the main drag to the **Mill Street Museum** at the far end. There you'll find a set of stairs that lead down behind the building and toward the water. Look near the shoreline, and you'll spot what might first appear as just a jumble of old stone. If you're paying attention, you'll see that the rocks are far too regular for a natural spill. This is the ruin of the original Occoquan Mill.

The Occoquan Mill was one of the town's original structures. Built by Nathaniel Ellicott, it provided much of Occoquan's initial prosperity. The ruins are a historical site, so you can't enter them, but on an autumn evening, they are an excellent spot to start your own private ghost tour. Are the ruins haunted? That's for you to decide, but with almost 300 years of history, they've seen more than any other building in town.



Swing Bench

Autumn is the perfect time to cozy up to someone you love, and no place is better for adding a little romance to your scenic stroll than the swing bench in **River Mill Park**. Follow Mill Street into the park and keep left where the path splits. You'll know you're going the right way when you pass the giant LOVE sign—an adorable backdrop for a selfie with your squeeze. A short way farther down the path, you'll find the swing bench tucked among the manicured foliage. The bench was dedicated in 2022, in memory of Occoquan's Petra Casipit.

Any place in the park offers breathtaking views of the Occoquan River, but none provides the cozy seclusion of the swing bench. Grab a coffee from **The Spot on Mill Street** or **Grind N Crepe** and cuddle up on the bench. As you take in the view, keep an eye on the tree line across the water. It's a favorite perch for bald eagles who fish in the relatively shallow waters of the Occoquan.

An Open Secret

Occoquan is a town with a lot of character. Wander the shops long enough, and you'll find more than these four gems secreted away from the crowds. Just be sure to snap a photo when you do and **tag us on social media @visitoccoquan**. After all, one of the best parts of a secret is finding out who else is in the know. Happy hunting!



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BAHN MI W/ CHINESE SAUSAGE SANDWICH



SALMON POKÉ BOWL



AHI TUNA TACOS



CHICKEN TERIYAKI WRAP

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ADULT E-BIKE
(Flying Dutchman)

\$39.99



ADULT E-BIKE
(Interceptor)

\$39.99



ADULT E-BIKE
(Black Pearl)

\$39.99



ADULT E-BIKE
(Wicked Winch)

\$39.99



KIDS/TEENS E-BIKE
(Adventure Galley)

\$19.99



SCAN HERE

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scan the QR code or visit
occoquanebikes.com

203 Union Street, Occoquan, VA 22125
571-398-6115 | Occoquanebikes@gmail.com

Hours:

Wed-Thurs: 11:00 am - 5:00 pm | Fri-Sat: 11:00 am - 10:00 pm | Sun: 11:00 am - 9:00 pm | Mon: Closed

*Rates shown are for a two hour rental



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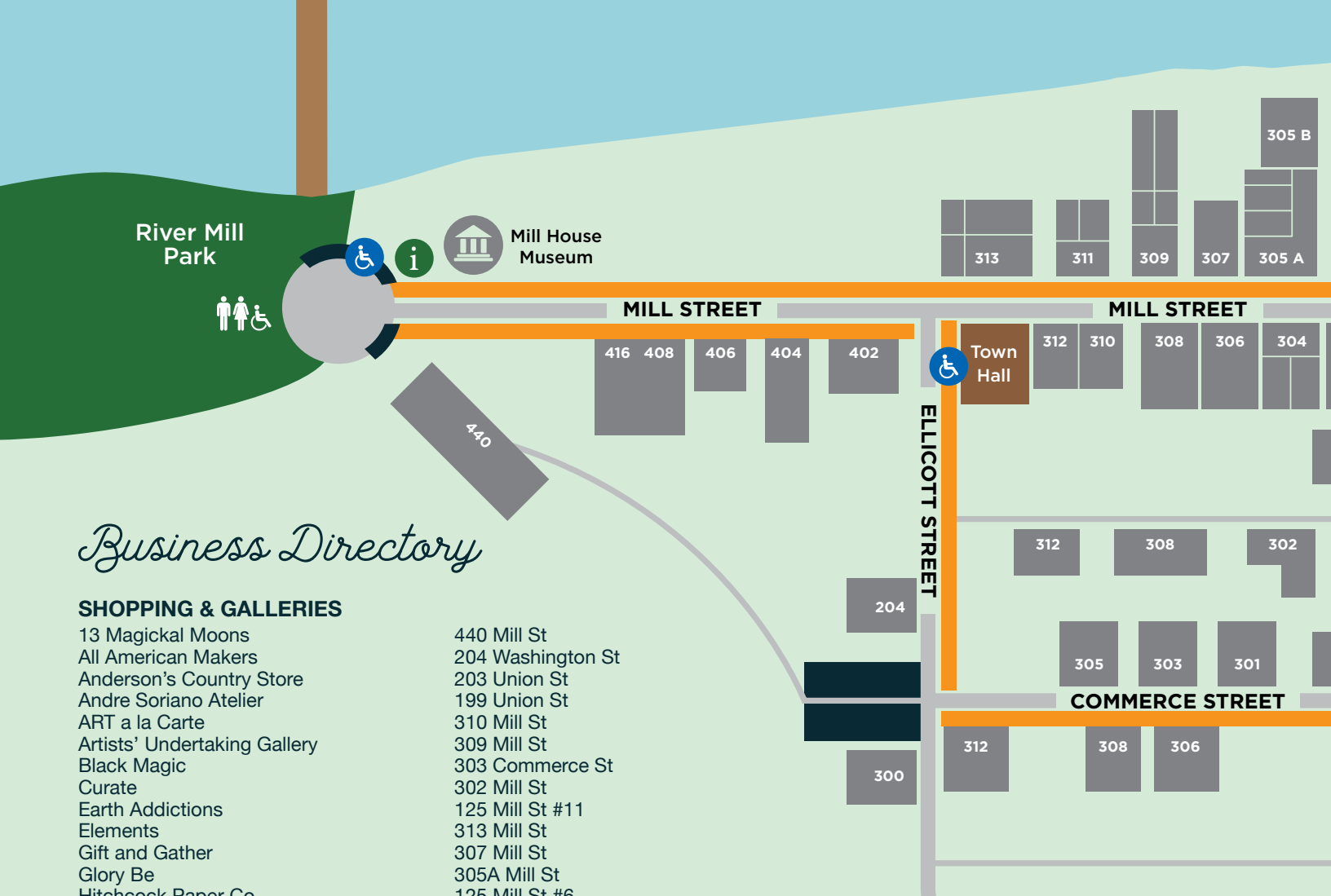
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For over a decade, Occoquan-based Patriots for Disabled Divers has been dedicated to bringing the joy and therapeutic benefits of scuba to veterans with disabilities.

patriotsfordisableddivers.org



Business Directory

SHOPPING & GALLERIES

13 Magickal Moons
All American Makers
Anderson's Country Store
Andre Soriano Atelier
ART a la Carte
Artists' Undertaking Gallery
Black Magic
Curate
Earth Addictions
Elements
Gift and Gather
Glory Be
Hitchcock Paper Co.
Jerry's Occoquan Jewelers
Labella Bridal & Wedding Services
Leaf and Moss
Leaf and Petal
Local Colour
Man Overboard Enterprises
Marin Woodturning
Occoquan Optical
Organic Allure
Paint Your Heart Out
Paradis Candles
Patriot Diving
Popp's
Puzzle Palooza Etc
Sincerely Yours Stained Glass Studio
So Bohemian
So Olive
The Loft Gallery
The Occoquan Outfitter
The Preservation Station
The Secret Jewelry Garden
Tulia Qi Integral
Union Street Guitar Works
Urban Posh Boutique
VanEch Studio
Verano

LODGING

Anne's Place
Harry's Place
The Bird's Nest
The Daisy
The Ellicott
The Farmhouse

440 Mill St
204 Washington St
203 Union St
199 Union St
310 Mill St
309 Mill St
303 Commerce St
302 Mill St
125 Mill St #11
313 Mill St
307 Mill St
305A Mill St
125 Mill St #6
306 Mill St
313 Mill St
312 Commerce St
201C Union St
408 Mill St
310 Mill St
313 Mill St
125 Mill St #12
202 Union St
125 Mill St #7
125 Mill St #4
305B Mill St
450 Mill St
305A Mill St
214 Commerce St
310 Mill St
125 Mill St #10
313 Mill St
406 Mill St
204 Union St
308E Poplar Alley
304 Mill St
205 Union St
203 Washington St
125 Mill St #5
125 Mill St #3

309 Mill St
309 Mill St
408 Mill St #4
408 Mill St #2
408 Mill St #3
416 Mill St #2

PERSONAL SERVICES

Angie's Nails
ASM Chiropractic & Wellness
Be Always Beautiful
Dansk Day Spa
Forever Young
Good Hair Day Salon
Healing Light Skincare and Reiki
Leggy Lashes LLC
Occoquan Family Chiropractic
Salon 8 Hair & Nails Spa
Shear Glo Beauty Bar

RESTAURANTS & FOOD

Ballywhack Shack
Bann Thai
Bar-J Chili Parlor
Bottle Stop Wine Bar
Cock & Bowl
D'Rocco's Grille/The Taproom
Grind N Crepe
Madigan's Waterfront
Mill St. Draft Garden
Mill Street Sweets
Nazbro Chocolates
Potomac Chocolate
Salad Saloon
The Golden Plum
The Secret Garden Cafe
The Spot on Mill
Third Base Pizza and Frozen Custard
Zorba's Grill

206 Union St
312 Poplar Alley
204 Ellicott St
212 Commerce St
206 Mill St
308 Mill St
300 Ellicott St
303 Commerce St
303 Union St
202A Washington St
125 Mill St #14

304 Mill St
416 Mill St
125 Mill St
311 Mill St
302 Poplar Alley
301 Mill St
301 Commerce St
201 Mill St
200 Mill St
305A Mill St
309 Mill St
304 Mill St
208 Poplar Alley
126 Commerce St
404 Mill St
406 Mill St
202 Commerce St
201B Union St



GENERAL

Ajani Truth Photography
 Amaya Studios LLC
 Anthony R. DiFrancesco PhD PC
 Blue List Partners, LLC
 Dominion Yachts
 Edward Jones
 Group Benefits Designers Inc
 Hitchcock Studios
 Law Office of Kathleen Grace Walsh
 Norma Fayak Photography
 Occoquan Masjid Al-Hussain Peace House
 Occoquan Spirits Ghost Tours
 Patriots For Disabled Divers
 Penguin Paddling
 PRM Integrated Systems
 Pure Palette
 Puritano Media Group Inc
 Ravensworth Custom Home Improvement
 Reilly Law, PLC
 Reinhardt, Harper, Davis
 Riverside Property Management
 Rodas Mc Multi Service LLC
 Safe Harbor Financial Advisors, LLC
 Starwishmusic
 Talent Acquisition Concepts
 Talutium Real Estate
 Terrestri LLC
 The Concrete Artisan
 The Good News Community Kitchen
 Title Write 1, Inc
 Waters Way Counseling, PLLC

306 Commerce St
 308 Poplar Alley
 214 Commerce St
 300 Ellicott St
 312 Poplar Alley
 308 Commerce St
 205 Union St
 305A Mill St
 206 Commerce St
 125 Mill St #9
 209 Washington St
 408 Mill St
 305B Mill St
 201 Mill St
 306 Commerce St
 312 Commerce St
 309 Mill St
 309 Mill St
 300 Ellicott St
 206 Commerce St
 300 Ellicott St
 311 Mill St
 300 Ellicott St
 306 Commerce St
 306 Commerce St
 304 Mill St
 306 Commerce St
 204 Commerce St
 308 Poplar Alley
 300 Ellicott St
 308 Poplar Alley

FREE TIMED PARKING DISTRICT

- 4 HOUR PARKING
- 8 HOUR PARKING

OTHER

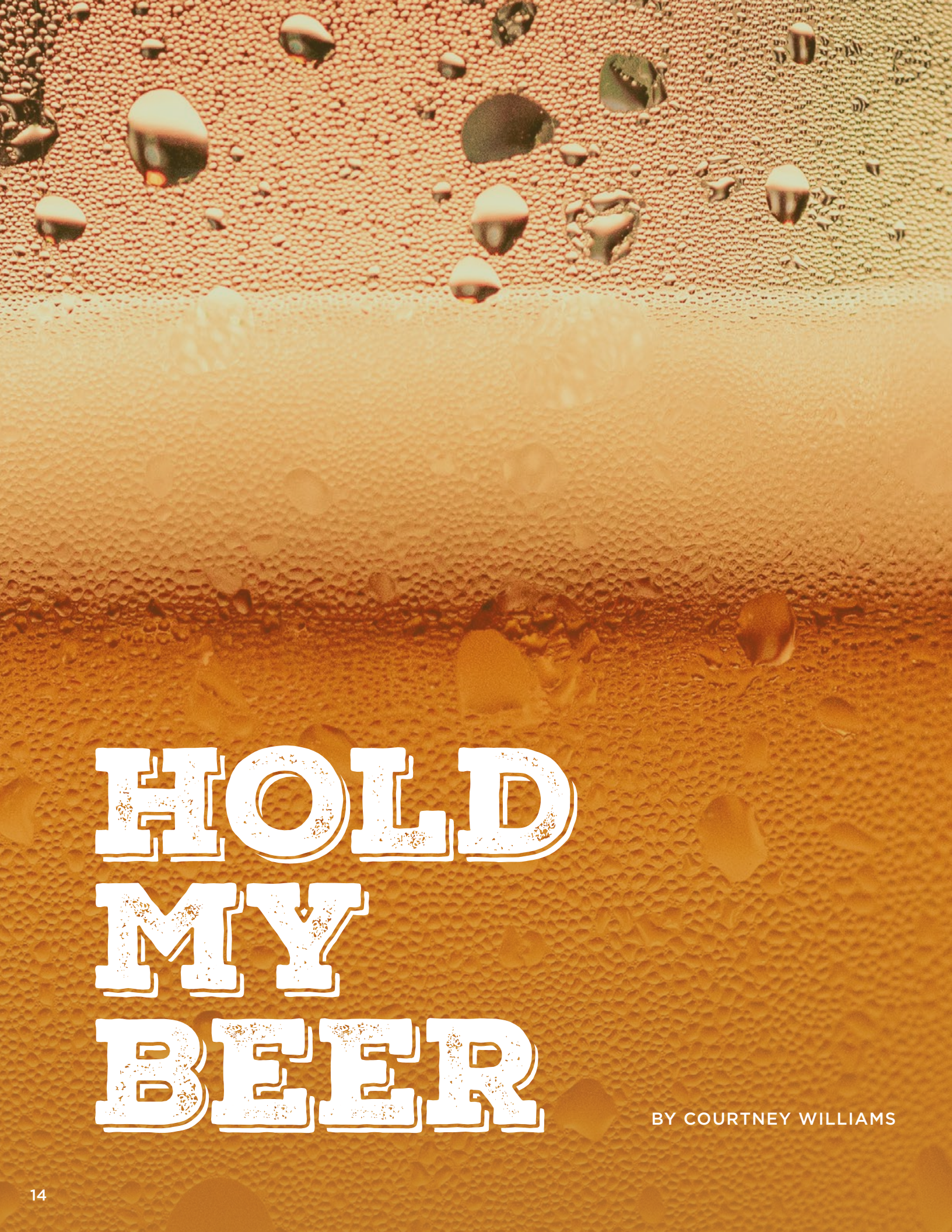
Kayak/SUP Ramp
 Mamie Davis Park
 Mill House Museum
 Public Dock
 Public Restrooms
 River Mill Park
 Rockledge Mansion
 Town Hall
 United States Post Office
 Veterans of Foreign Wars
 Visitors Information Kiosk

111 Mill St
 205 Mill St
 413 Mill St
 205 Mill St
 458 Mill St
 458 Mill St
 440 Mill St
 314 Mill St
 202 Mill St
 204 Mill St
 413 Mill St

HOME-BASED BUSINESSES

Apiary Market
 Innovative Design & Renovation
 LM Force Consulting, HR Consulting
 Riina Mettas Jewelry

apiarymarket.com
 816-531-2221
 703-490-5506
 riinamettas.com



HOLD MY BEER

BY COURTNEY WILLIAMS

Tis the season for blankets, bonfires, and (one of our favorites) brews! If your day or evening calls for a beer, “hop” on over to one of Occoquan’s eateries to find the perfect pint.

Cock and Bowl (302 Poplar Alley) is a Belgian bistro offering a constantly changing selection of craft Belgian beers on tap. Enjoy a glass alongside freshly-made Belgian cuisine for a truly European experience.

Looking to grab a beer and go? With over 100 options and microbrews, **The Spot on Mill Street** (406 Mill St) has something for everyone.

If your ideal hangout is a low-key evening amongst friends, **Bar J & Chili Parlor** (125 Mill St) is where you’ll want to be. When the weather is just right, enjoy a drink and Tex-Mex on their outdoor deck while listening to live music by local artists.

We know it’s fall but every season is tiki season at **Madigan’s Waterfront** (201 Mill St). Sip on a variety of beers and drinks at their tiki and (covered) outdoor bars to the tune of live music. Tiki torches not your thing? Madigan’s offers indoor dining with a full menu of seafare.

Enjoy a cold one at any of these other in-town restaurants to truly “top off” your time in Occoquan:

- Anderson’s Country Store (203 Union St)
- Bann Thai (416 Mill St)
- D’Roccas Italian Restaurant (301 Mill St)
- Mill St. Draft Garden (200 Mill St)
opening this fall!
- Salad Saloon (208 Poplar Alley)
- The Secret Garden Cafe (404 Mill St)
- Zorba’s Grill (201B Union St)

Beer not for you? Not to worry! **Bottle Stop Wine Bar** (311 Mill St) has an extensive selection of cocktails and wine by both the glass and bottle (and of course a number of great options for our craft beer aficionados.)

Explore the full list of the restaurants, stores, sites, and events that Occoquan has to offer at visitoccoquanva.com!





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ARCHITECTURE OF OCCOQUAN

BY ROBERT CURRER



MODERN OCCOQUAN

traces its roots all the way back to 1734 with the establishment of a tobacco warehouse on the Occoquan River's south bank. However, it was John Ballendine's purchase of the land in 1755 that set the future of Occoquan into motion. He envisioned the commercial opportunity the river mouth offered with its ready connection to the Potomac. Ballendine developed the land along the river. His initial buildings and the investments of others brought forges, stores, dwellings, and Nathaniel Ellicott's lucrative mill to the growing settlement.

As early as 1804, Occoquan achieved official town status. Today many remembrances of Occoquan's past grace the charming historic district. The evolution of this once port town is plainly visible in the diverse architectural elements of the buildings. Indeed, continual revitalization has turned Occoquan into something of an architectural time capsule. To preserve its significance, Historic Occoquan was officially added to the National Register of Historic Places on October 6, 1983. Visitors can experience these functional elements of our national heritage first-hand with a simple stroll through town. Read on to learn more about the historic buildings you'll see on your next visit.

OCCOQUAN ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

After housing two centuries of Americans, it is perhaps unsurprising that the town's architecture doesn't follow any single tradition. Without building codes or homeowners associations for much of its life, build design was subject only to the needs and preferences of the builder. Indeed, out of the 5 dozen registered structures within the historic district, one would be hard-pressed to find two identical buildings.

This blending of architectural styles is known as "builder's vernacular." Builder's vernacular is a broad category of structural types and construction methods. Often planned without professional guidance, structures built in the vernacular style borrow from various other academic traditions and rely on the common sense of the builder. This style accounts for most structures in pre-industrial societies around the world. As such, it makes Historic Occoquan's eclectic buildings particularly useful in learning about the development of architecture in mid-Atlantic America.

ICONIC CONTRIBUTORS

Of the 60 buildings within Occoquan's historic district, 53 provide important architectural examples from the period of their construction. However, of these buildings, three are of particular importance.

MILL HOUSE

The Mill House is perhaps the most well-known of Occoquan's historic buildings. It is all that remains of the town flour mill owned by Nathaniel Ellicot. The Mill House is a small, one-story structure made of stone and brick. It stands above a raised basement and is covered by a gabled roof. This dwelling was most likely built in the late 1700s. Today, the Occoquan Museum occupies the space and is a fitting tribute to the building that once contributed so significantly to the town's origins.

ROCKLEDGE

Rockledge is one of the few remaining examples from the town's settlement years. Constructed by Ballendine himself in 1760, it's a beautiful example of Georgian architecture. The house is two stories of stone construction, standing on a hill overlooking Mill Street and the Occoquan River. Additionally, it provides a fine sample of elaborate woodwork from the period. Gutted by fire in 1980, only the exterior walls remain of the original construction. However, even restored, it retains its architectural and historical importance.

HAMMILL HOTEL

Located at the intersection of Commerce and Union Street, the Hammill Hotel is an exemplary representation of antebellum construction. Built in 1830, this square, three-story structure is made of five-course American bond brick and features a hipped roof instead of the gabled roofs more commonly seen in town. During the Civil War, this hotel also served as the headquarters for Wade Hampton, a general of the Confederate Army and later a United States Senator for South Carolina.



THE TURNING OF THE WHEEL

Over the decades, Occoquan has seen its fair share of disasters. In 1916, a fire ravaged Mill Street. While it destroyed many commercial structures, a few residential buildings survived, notably 406 Mill Street. Its five-bay, wood frame construction and porch featuring turned posts and decorative sawncut balustrade make it a gorgeous specimen of period architecture.

After the fire, 406 Mill Street was converted to a commercial space, housing several generations of businesses beneath its gabled roof. Today, The Spot on Mill Street calls number 406 home. Similarly, many of the buildings within the historic district have reinvented themselves over the years to meet the needs of this still vibrant town.



THE TWO CHURCHES

Starting in the late 1920's Occoquan was home to two churches. The Ebenezer Church on Washington Street was the first, constructed in 1924. In 1926, a Methodist congregation followed suit and built their own church at 314 Mill Street. Today, both have found new callings. The Ebenezer Church has converted to the Masjid Al-Hussain Peace Mission. While the old Methodist church building serves as the Occoquan Town Hall, but remains an exquisite example of eclectic architecture in six-course American bond brick.

AN UNDERTAKING

309 Mill Street is a beautiful two-story building with a shed roof and mansard front. Built in 1932 from stretcher bond brick, it housed the town undertaker for many years. However, the funeral home was forced to close after Hurricane Agnes in 1972. Five years later, a collective of local artists opened a gallery space in the building. As an homage to 309's past, they named their endeavor the Artists' Undertaking Gallery.

THE SHOW GOES ON

Built in the early 1900s, 403 Mill Street is an example of commercial vernacular construction. This tradition is similar to builder's vernacular in its non-conformational style. However, commercial vernacular is more typical of post-industrial architecture. Yet, it still focuses on meeting the community's immediate needs with locally sourced building materials. This building, with its parapet roof, was once home to the Lyric Theatre, a one-screen cinema seating up to 300 patrons. These days, 403 has housed a series of several retail establishments, including a coffee shop and a puzzle store.



THE MARRIAGE OF PAST AND PRESENT

Indeed, almost every building in Historic Occoquan has adapted to the community's needs over the years while remaining true to its architectural roots. Few other towns can boast the longevity and consistency of Occoquan. With over 250 years of history echoing along its streets, Occoquan's eclectic architecture stands as a testament to the building of a nation.

LEAF & MOSS

plant & gift shop

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glorybehome

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Bar J Chili Parlor
125 Mill Street
Occoquan, VA 22125
(571) 398-6294



Grind N Crepe
301 Commerce Street
Occoquan, VA 22125
(571) 572-3258



Third Base Pizza & Frozen Custard
202 Commerce Street
Occoquan, VA 22125
(571) 398-2613



Anderson's Smoked BBQ
203 Union Street
Occoquan, VA 22125
(571) 398-6115



The Anderson family has been serving Occoquan and the surrounding area for over 40 years, stop by today at any of our family-owned restaurants.

We have something for everyone!

THE OCCOQUAN EXPRESS

FREE SHUTTLE SERVICE
SATURDAYS THIS FALL
FROM 12PM TO 8PM*

FREE shuttle service from the VDOT lot on 123 & Old Bridge Road, with a drop off at Mamie Davis Park in historic Occoquan!

**Sep. 2 through Dec. 16, 2023. Excludes Sat, 9/23. Extended hours: 10/28 from 12pm-11pm and 12/2 from 11am-8pm. This service is free to the public. Service animals welcome.*



ENJOY
OCCOQUAN
MORE.
**HUNT FOR
PARKING
LESS.**