



BELLE GROVE PLANTATION



Photo by John Adamson July 2017

Belle Grove Plantation's staff and Board of Directors are grateful to all its members and supporters who have helped it stay resilient these last few years—*thank you.*

We were able to hold almost every event and program this year and since that included events postponed by the pandemic, the schedule has been busier than ever. It is wonderful to welcome friends and visitors back to the property and to be a safe place for outdoor festivals and activities. In September, Belle Grove again hosted the U.S. Border Collie Handler Association's National Sheepdog Finals. We are proud that this North American championship finds our site so perfectly suited for their sport and enjoys visiting so much.

Thanks to generous sponsors, we are undertaking several restoration and preservation projects. As reported in the summer issue, we were delighted that Stephen and Annette Comer began an endowed fund, the Nancy Lee Comer Fund for Belle Grove

Plantation Collections, that is supporting a current project to conserve six rare books in the collection.

This September, Belle Grove received a generous contribution from the James L. and Mary Jane Bowman Charitable Trust for the research, preservation, and maintenance of Fort Bowman (read more on page 3).

With support from Fred and Christine Andrae, Belle Grove will conduct several projects, including: dendrochronology of the Manor House to better understand the construction date of the building; a pilot project to restore the Manor House windows; and, together with a grant from Crescent Cities Charities and an in-kind donation from Neff's Grading, Landscaping & Excavation, the restoration of the blacksmith forge to an early 19th-century appearance.

Forward momentum is strong at Belle Grove and even more progress

is possible with your generous financial contribution.

Your year-end gift will allow us to stay focused on these critical projects as well as ongoing research and interpretation. This includes a new exhibit, under construction, with the artifacts from excavations of the enslaved quarter site.

Your donations are key to our success. We match these contributions with earned income and manage on a lean budget thanks to the dedication of our staff and many volunteers.

Thank you for your generosity and stewardship, which sustains Belle Grove as a vibrant community hub and treasured historic site.

We send our best wishes for a happy holiday and bright new year ahead.

Sincerely,

JOHN

John Clancey
Board Chair

Kristen

Kristen Laise
Executive Director

How to Donate

- Use the enclosed envelope to donate by check or credit card.
- Click the "Donate Today" button at bellegrove.org to donate via PayPal (does not require an account, you may use your credit card).
- If you are over 70 and a half years old and have a tax deferred IRA, you may make a "Qualified Charitable Distribution" donation from your IRA directly to Belle Grove without paying taxes on the donated amount, even if you do not itemize tax deductions. Consult your IRA trustee for details. Belle Grove's EIN is 54-1047175.
- Give the gift of stock by contacting Bayliss Wealth Management Group of Wells Fargo Advisors at 540-545-7700. Reference Belle Grove Inc.'s account #5697-7377 and DTC #0141.

Belle Grove is a 501c3 non-profit organization and is registered as a charitable organization with the Commonwealth of Virginia and a financial statement is available upon request from the Office of Charitable and Regulatory Programs. Your donation is tax deductible and will be acknowledged in writing.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN H. ADAMSON III



Photo by Rick Foster April 2019

On November 19, John Adamson died unexpectedly of natural causes. He contributed daily to the life of Belle Grove—just the day before he participated in a tour of Fort Bowman, where he excitedly explored its roof joist construction with Board members and volunteers.

John was a member of Belle Grove’s Board of Directors for more than ten years, was Board Chair in 2013-2014, served in other Board officer positions, and on several governing committees. Belle Grove benefited from his business experience as well as his innate sense of fairness. Rob Nieweg, Vice President, Preservation Services & Outreach Department at the National Trust for Historic Preservation, said, “John was a good man, a leader, who acted with honesty, and fundamental integrity.”



Photo by John Adamson May 2019

John represented Belle Grove in its partnership with Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park. In addition to providing sound reasoning and good counsel on many Park initiatives and issues, John was the Chair for the Federal Advisory Commission of the Park.

Belle Grove’s Executive Director, Kristen Laise, said, “What made John so special was his love of learning and his continued legacy will be the way he taught and inspired others.” He felt that Board Members should thoroughly know the history of Belle Grove. He became a docent and gave tours almost weekly. John became an expert in the architectural history of Belle Grove’s 1797 Manor House and 1918 Bank Barn and loved sharing the details of these buildings with guests of all ages.



John was also avidly interested in the African American history of Belle Grove and the history of slavery and race in this country. He was skilled in pointedly, yet sensitively, discussing this difficult topic on the tours he led. When a visitor would ask, as they frequently do, “Why didn’t we learn about this in school?” John commiserated and knew he was making a difference.

A native of Arlington, John and Barbara, his wife of 52 years, moved to Strasburg in 1998. They loved the mountains, Shenandoah River, and the region’s history. They became steeped in the area’s material culture, from pottery to furniture, and John collected Kentucky long rifles. They lent their time and talents to many community organizations, including the Strasburg Museum and Shenandoah County Historical Society, where Barbara currently serves as President.

John became involved with Belle Grove and the National Trust for Historic Preservation through his

interest in history and architecture. Upon returning from the National Trust’s 2012 annual meeting, he wrote effusively to their then-President Stephanie Meeks saying, “I am personally energized beyond my expectations.” That this personal note was saved speaks to John’s qualities “as a great storyteller and person—his humility, his humor, his thoughtfulness, his enthusiasm, and his kindness,” said Katherine Malone-France, Chief Preservation Office at the National Trust.

John’s commitment to historic preservation led him to found the “Historic Barns of Shenandoah County,” and to document more than 200 barns. This effort was recognized on Preservation Virginia’s 2018 list of endangered historic places. John became an authority on barn construction and frequently lectured and gave tours. His work significantly advanced the preservation of this iconic fixture of the Valley’s landscape.

John was delighted by the restoration of the Belle Grove 1918 Bank Barn to become the Beverley B. Shoemaker Welcome Center. His joy is evident in the photo at the start of this story that was taken when he and Barbara attended the building’s dedication in April 2019.

John’s friendship and mentoring of Belle Grove Board Members, staff, and volunteers will be deeply missed. The warmth and passion for history that he radiated will never be forgotten.



Photo by John Adamson April 2021

EXCITING THINGS TO COME

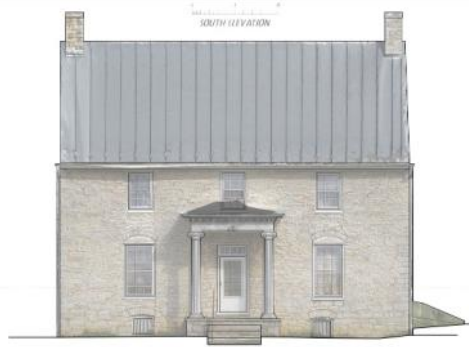
PRESERVATION AT FORT BOWMAN

Belle Grove was given a \$250,000 grant from the James L. and Mary Jane Bowman Charitable Trust for the research, preservation, and maintenance of Fort Bowman.

This property belonged to George and Mary Bowman, the uncle and aunt of Isaac Hite Jr. of Belle Grove, starting in the 1730s. The existing house was built c. 1771. Though it has had various owners throughout the years and an addition was added to the north side, much of the 18th century fabric of the building remains intact. It is a spectacular example of the merging of English- and German-vernacular building styles.

In recent years, Belle Grove has been renting the home and leasing the land to an agricultural tenant to cover maintenance costs.

With the grant from the Bowman family, an opportunity exists to give this property the attention it deserves. A comprehensive Historic Structures Report that was begun in 2007 will be completed. That will include doing measured drawings of the interior of the house and an engineering study of the structures.



Photogrammetric drawing of the south elevation of Fort Bowman by Peter Aaslestad. These high resolution images allow measured drawings to be made of the structure and its features.

The home needs repairs, such as stone repointing, removal of some non-historic features, and upgrades to the kitchen and bathrooms. These projects will be started in 2022.

During this time, Belle Grove will make the house more available for occasional touring. At least one Hite of Excellence Series of Sumptuous Feasts events will take place there and it will be open during the Hite Family Reunion in July 2022.

While Fort Bowman had attentive tenants to care for it, it is exciting to envision the full potential of this property taking place.

NEW ONLINE EXHIBITS

A “Sustaining the Humanities through the American Rescue Plan” grant has been awarded to Belle Grove. This program is made possible by funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Rescue Plan Act.

The grant will be used to create two new online exhibits. One will be about the granddaughter of Isaac Hite Jr. and Ann Hite, Mary Briscoe Baldwin (1811-1877). Ms. Baldwin was an Episcopal missionary, teacher, and founder of a mission school in Syria. The exhibit will explore how she navigated these careers as a single woman in the 19th century. It will also highlight the soon-to-be-digitized herbarium scrapbook she made for Ann Hite.

The second one will be an online exhibit about Emanuel Jackson, who purchased the freedom of his family from enslavement by the Hite family in the 1830s and 1840s. It will feature research that is underway currently.

Pritchard-Ritter of “For the Love of History Consulting.” is curating and designing these exhibits. Jess most recently created an exhibit about Ann Hite at virtual.bellegrove.org.

TIMELESS TALES & VERSE AT BELLE GROVE

December 3-30, Belle Grove is decorated for the holidays and open for touring. “Timeless Tales and Verse,” celebrating holiday-themed literature from the years of Belle Grove’s history, is the inspiration for this year’s decorations.



Guided tours will be held hourly Monday-Saturday 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and Sunday 1-5 p.m. On Friday and Saturday evenings, 4-8 p.m., the Manor House is open for self-guided tours and is lit by candlelight with live music in the Parlor.

The Museum Shop is open during all touring hours and has unique gifts and local products from area artists, artisans, and farms, such as Gustafson Glass, J. Q. Dickinson Salt-Works, and adorable gourd sheep from local artist Nina Burke shown here.





Photo by John Adamson November 2021

THANK YOU 2021 SPONSORS AND DONORS

Belle Grove is so grateful to every person who donated time and funds this year. We particularly thank and acknowledge the following exceptional individual, corporate, the Hite of Excellence Dinner Series and Wine Fest sponsors, as well as Belle Grove's Madison, Heritage, and President's Society level members.

Belle Grove Plantation

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Belle Grove Plantation is one of the 27 historic sites of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Since 1977, it has been operated and funded by Belle Grove, Inc., a 501c3 non-profit organization.



Belle Grove Plantation is a partner in the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park. The Park was founded in 2002 and is a partnership between the National Park Service, four non-profit organizations, and one municipality.