

Doswell, Virginia

Lew Brodsky #2585



It's April 2019, so there are only three months to go until Virginia plays host to the 62nd International Rally of the Wally Byam Airstream Club! This is the fourth in a series of six Blue Beret articles about Virginia places of interest to visit before, during or after attending the Doswell, VA, Rally.

In the previous Blue Beret articles, we've described points of interest for day trips within about 35 miles of Doswell and major attractions for extended sightseeing that lie to the west and southeast of the rally site. This month, we will examine some significant places to the north and east, with a focus on Virginia's "Northern Neck," the large peninsula between the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers. There is tag line associated with this area - visitors are encouraged to "Experience the Road Less Traveled." Here you will not find large population areas or busy major tourist attractions. The towns and waterways in a northeasterly direction from Doswell are decidedly calm, sleepy and rural, but you will find there a few unique gems worth your time. Each is listed on the chart which accompanies this article.

First, let's ignore most of what lies to the north in this article because we'll be covering how best to visit Metropolitan Washington, D.C., in Article #6 (to be printed in the June 2019 Blue Beret). But we've included in this month's article one northerly destination that we think is well worth



USMC Museum Interior

a day trip from Doswell: the National Museum of the Marine Corps. Just drive 55 miles north on I-95 and it's hard to miss, because the building is an architectural marvel spectacularly visible from the travel lanes of the highway. Its angled spire juts skyward in an abstract reminder of the famous

photo showing the flag raising on Iwo Jima in February 1945. Located just a stone's throw east of I-95, off Exit 150, it has a large, free parking area, big enough for tow vehicles with trailer attached. Admission is free. Once inside, visitors are treated to videos and interactive displays which explain the history of the U.S. Marine Corps. You can wander for hours through areas with life-size dioramas of famous battles, complete with sound effects, uniformed mannequins, and simulated climates. Vintage planes, helicopters, tanks, and armored vehicles are featured inside. Volunteer docents are retired Marine veterans. Also, don't miss the movie "We, the Marines," (there is an admission fee), shown in the new, Medal

of Honor Theater - a giant screen audio-surround sound experience (think "IMAX"). There is a cafeteria and restaurant on the premises and, for Airstreamers who have military I.D.s (Active, Guard, Reserve or Retired), a commissary and Base Exchange are located on the adjacent Quantico Marine Corps Base.

The glorious military history of the Marine Corps is exciting to absorb, and the film, "We the Marines," will get your heart pumping, but if you prefer to spend time in a more tranquil, rural setting, Virginia's Northern Neck may be just the place. Head northeast and east from Doswell and cross the Rappahannock River onto the Neck. You can camp at one of two Virginia State Parks: Westmoreland, along the south bank of the Potomac River, is a large recreational park with wooded sites. Further east, along the Rappahannock, is the smaller and more remote, Belle Isle State Park. Either park may be used as a base from which to tour points of interest in

the Northern Neck, such as:



Stratford Hall

Stratford Hall is near the town of Montross in Westmoreland County. A plantation of the 18th & 19th Centuries, Stratford is the ancestral home of the

Lee family of Virginia. It was the boyhood home of two signers of the Declaration of Independence: Francis Lightfoot Lee and Richard Henry Lee. In its brick mansion, called the "Great House," Confederate General Robert E. Lee was born in 1807 to Anne Hill Carter and Light Horse Harry Lee (Washington's heroic Revolutionary War cavalry commander). The house has period furnishings and costumed docents to guide you through it while explaining the history of the Lee family. You can walk the gardens, grounds, and visit the outbuildings. There is also a museum with artifacts in the site's modern Visitor Center and a good restaurant on the premises.

Nearby is the birthplace of Virginia's most famous historical figure. George Washington Birthplace National Monument lies along the Potomac, about 10 miles west of Stratford Hall. Operated by the National Park Service, this is the colonial tobacco plantation where America's foremost founding father and first president was born in 1732. The original house



George Washington Birthplace Memorial

Volunteers Needed! **These Committees need help in Doswell:**

Band/Choir - Greg Heuer gheuer@umich.edu

Carpentry - Fred Kiehl fred@kiehlbuilding.com

Club Store - Leslie Martin ljjamartin@yahoo.com

Member Services - Judy Shelley judyfshelley@gmail.com

Presentations/Roundtables - Victoria Magnacca doswellpresentations@wbcci.net

If you are willing to volunteer, please contact the chair by email.

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was lost to fire in 1779, but a replica "Memorial House" was built on the site in the 1930s, near the original home's foundation. Today, the Park Service maintains the property as a working colonial plantation. There is a good Visitor Center with introductory film and museum.

Elsewhere on the Northern Neck are two unique historical sites worth a look. Close to Belle Isle State Park, Historic Christ Church and Museum in Lancaster County was a gift to the community by Robert "King" Carter, the wealthiest Virginia planter of the 18th Century. The church is an architectural masterpiece and National Historic Landmark. It stands today in superb condition and is virtually unchanged since 1735. It features



Christ Church Pulpit

uniquely shaped soaring walls, beautiful brick work, and molded brick doorways. The interior has vaulted ceilings, large windows, a walnut altarpiece and colonial Virginia's only surviving high-back box pews. It also has one of only two triple-decker pulpits to survive from the period; community announcements were made from the bottom tier, gospels read from the middle tier, and sermons delivered from the top. In a separate building there is an introductory film and spacious museum.

About 33 miles away in Warsaw, VA, is a colonial era building that is most definitely NOT in superb condition.

Menokin, built in 1769, will remain in ruins. But this is purposeful. It was the home of Declaration signer Francis



Menokin

Lightfoot Lee (see Stratford Hall, above). But after more than two centuries, the brick house, which sits on 500 acres of property, was abandoned. It deteriorated, was vandalized and has partially collapsed. Recently, in what has been labeled "the most engaging preservation project in America," a foundation has undertaken a very unconventional approach to preserving the historic ruins, not by rebuilding the house, but by replacing missing portions of the crumbling walls with huge glass walls. This is a work in progress. As explained by one of the Menokin Foundation's consulting advisory architects: "If you were to reconstruct the house, you'd cover up some of the most interesting parts. With glass, we can actually see how an 18th-century building comes together." Contact the Foundation for a tour of this one-of-a-kind project.

In the May issue of the Blue Beret, we will take a look at more places to go, things to do, and wonders to behold in the great Commonwealth of Virginia.



Virginia Points of Interest Driving EAST & NORTHEAST from The Meadow Event Park	# miles from Doswell (Est. driving time)	Website	GPS Coordinates
National Museum of the Marine Corps 18900 Jefferson Davis Highway (U.S. 1) Triangle, VA 22172 877-653-1775 Admission is free, ample free parking Fee for "GIANT SCREEN" film: "We, the Marines"	55.8 (north) (52 min.) via I-95 north to Exit 150	Find their website on Google.	38.54331N -77.33891W
Stratford Hall (built in the late 1730s) Ancestral home of the Lee family of Virginia & birthplace of Robert E. Lee 483 Great House Road Stratford, VA 22558 804-493-8038	56.8 (northeast) (62 min.) via U.S. 301 & SR 3	www.stratfordhall.org	38.14616N -76.84721W Entry gate
Washington's Birthplace National Monument (U.S. Park Service) 1732 Popes Creek Road Colonial Beach, VA 22443 800-224-1732, ext. 227	50.9 (northeast) (55 min.) via U.S. 301 & SR 3	www.nps.gov/gewa/index.htm	38.18388N -76.92018W
Historic Christ Church & Museum 420 Christ Church Road Weems, VA 22576 804-438-6855	75.2 (east) (85 min.) via SR 30, 33, 14 & 3	www.christchurch1735.org	37.68027N -76.42343W Parking area
Menokin (1769) Preservation Project Ruins of Francis Lightfoot Lee's home 4037 Menokin Road Warsaw, VA 22572 804-333-1776 Call for tour appointment	48.7 (east) (57 min.) via SR 30 & U.S. 360	www.menokin.org	38.00674N -76.79823W
Westmoreland State Park (camping) 145 Cliff Road Montross, VA 22520 804-493-8821 W/E sites, Dump station	53.8 (northeast) (54 min.) via U.S. 301 & SR 3	www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/	37.23524N -76.63939W Entrance to parking areas
Belle Isle State Park (camping) 1632 Belle Isle Road Lancaster, VA 22503 804-462-5030 W/E sites, Dump station	67.4 (east) (77 min.) via SR 30, U.S. 360 & SR 3	www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/	37.78111N -76.59451W