

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

IN RECOGNITION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF BELLE GROVE PLANTATION

HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 29, 2017

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the 50th Anniversary of Belle Grove Plantation, a museum of an extraordinary historic house located near Middletown, in the part of the 10th Congressional District of Virginia that includes the northern Shenandoah Valley.

The remarkable history of this home begins in 1732, with the settlement of the family of Jost Hite, one of 16 German immigrant families, on land they obtained in two land grants. Jost Hite's grandson, Isaac Hite, Jr., served as Lieutenant with the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. In 1783, he married Nelly Conway Madison, sister of a future President of the United States, and received 483 acres from his father, on which they built the Belle Grove Manor House from limestone quarried on the property. Isaac Hite, Jr. was eventually commissioned as Major in the Frederick County Militia by Governor Patrick Henry in 1785. Major Hite was evidently a highly successful farmer and entrepreneur who expanded the grain and livestock plantation to 7,500 acres and also successfully operated a general store, a grist-mill, a saw-mill and a large distillery. However, it is also self-evident that, without the labors of the many slaves who lived on the plantation, Major Hite would not have had this success. Family records compiled by the staff of Belle Grove Plantation indicate that the Hite family owned 276 slaves who worked in a variety of capacities at Belle Grove between 1783 and 1851.

Shortly before the Civil War, Belle Grove was sold to a person outside of the family and during the war, it was seldom without a military tenant and its grounds were hardly ever without an army. Belle Grove was most notably used as a headquarters by Union General Phillip Sheridan during the Civil War Valley Campaign of 1864 and it was centrally located during the pivotal Battle of Cedar Creek. After a successful surprise attack by Confederate General Jubal Early during the early morning hours of October 19, 1864, General Sheridan regained the territory later in the day, thus securing the strategically critical Shenandoah Valley for the Union and significantly boosting President Abraham Lincoln's chances of being reelected.

I am honored to represent a Congressional District with historical places such as Belle Grove Plantation that are essential to the telling of the story of our nation. Fifty years ago, on August 13, 1967, Belle Grove was dedicated as a museum and today, it is a National Historic Landmark, a Virginia Historic Landmark, and a historic property of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It is also the most significant structure in the Cedar Creek

and Belle Grove National Historic Park, a partnership park comprised of private landowners, county governments and nonprofit organizations that was established by Congress under the leadership of my predecessor, Congressman Frank Wolf, and authorized by the National Park Service on December 19, 2002. Through the many interpretive programs it offers, Belle Grove Plantation serves the people of the Commonwealth and our nation as an educational center that helps Americans of all ages establish a stronger sense of our own identity through a better understanding of our past. The entire operation of the museum is funded by private contributions since it receives no government funding and is not a recipient of a regularly scheduled contribution from the National Trust. Mr. Speaker, I ask you and our colleagues to join me in thanking Belle Grove Plantation Executive Director Kristen Laise and her staff and volunteers, as well as the members of its Board of Directors, for their extraordinary purposefulness, ingenuity and resourcefulness in preserving Belle Grove Plantation as a special place to learn about the history, culture and economy of the northern Shenandoah Valley during the 18th and 19th Centuries.

NATIONAL GRANGE 150TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. GREG WALDEN

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 29, 2017

Mr. WALDEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to say congratulations to the National Grange on 150 years of service to rural America, and to thank Susan Noah, President of the Oregon State Grange, and her husband, Mark, for their continued leadership in my home state.

In Oregon, we understand how important it is to support our rural communities. The National Grange has been a steadfast partner in this effort. With over 167 Granges and 5,000 fraternal members in Oregon—and several thousand affiliate members—the National Grange is a strong advocate for rural communities in our great state of Oregon and across the country.

The Grange has been essential in the development of rural America during three centuries: during the 19th Century, they advocated for legislative protection for farmers through the Granger Laws; in the 20th Century, they promoted research and education to improve agriculture through the Cooperative Extension Service and Land Grant Colleges while working to expand mail delivery and electricity to rural areas; and in the 21st Century, they have encouraged the expansion of broadband internet service.

The Grange has provided a megaphone for the voice of rural communities throughout the country. The effort of this organization to bring people from across the country and across the political spectrum together in support of rural America is truly inspiring.

Being a champion for rural America is an endeavor that transcends party lines and benefits all Americans, not just those living in rural communities. The Grange has led the effort in this, with an emphasis on service to the local community and volunteerism to improve the quality of life and economic well-being of rural America.

On behalf of rural communities in Oregon and across the country, and the entire United States Congress, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the National Grange on 150 years of unwavering service to rural America.

IN HONOR OF FIRST NIGHT WINCHESTER

HON. BARBARA COMSTOCK

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 29, 2017

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize First Night Winchester which, for 31 years, has provided the residents of the Northern Shenandoah Valley a wonderful way to celebrate New Year's Eve. In 1986, Winchester community leader Kathy Nerangis asked other leaders to join her in creating a family-friendly, non-alcoholic event, where people could congregate to enjoy live performing arts and each other's company, as an alternative way of welcoming in the New Year.

First Night Winchester held its inaugural event on December 31, 1987 in Old Town Winchester, attracting 1,800 people. Since then, it has become a time-honored tradition for many individuals and families to make their way down to the center of town to enjoy the peaceful atmosphere and good tidings of those who congregate for the special occasion. After three decades, those who, as children, enjoyed First Night Winchester with their families, are now bringing their own children to celebrate and the number of participants has, on occasion, reached 10,000.

Throughout the day, rides are offered on the Shenandoah Valley Gas and Steam Engines, the Shenandoah Valley Civil War Museum is open for visits, face painting is offered at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley and a live performance of ice sculpting is taking place on the Old Town Walking Mall for everyone's enjoyment. Throughout the evening, the many downtown Winchester churches and the Handley Public Library house a diverse assortment of performers, including jugglers, gospel singers, comedians, classical pianists and neo-classical guitarists, magicians and blue grass and Delta blues musicians. The evening ends with the ushering in of the New Year as all gather to join in the countdown of the official "Apple Drop" and enjoy the spectacular fireworks that follow.

Despite the enrichment to the quality of life that the more than 200 First Night events provided in the past, First Night Winchester is one of only 36 cities that continue this tradition, making it the 5th oldest in the nation. Mr.

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