

# Occoquan prepares for yearlong bicentennial celebration

By ALLEN M. STRENG  
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An existence of 200 years is something worth celebrating and that is just what the town of Occoquan is going to do.

Beginning Saturday, the town will have special events planned through 2004 to celebrate its bicentennial.

"Whether you live in town, visit the town, shop in the town or simply appreciate Occoquan, this is an opportunity to show your support," said Leo Smith, a Occoquan Town Council member and the chairman of the town's Bicentennial Celebration Committee.

Occoquan was a thriving community in the mid-1750s, having grown into an industrial complex with ironworks and several mills. John Ballentine was responsible for much of the industry.

Historians note that the nation's first automated grist mill was built in Occoquan in 1759. It operated for more than 150 years until most of it was destroyed by fire. The only remaining structure was the miller's house, which today serves as the town's museum.

When Ballentine's business was forced closed, Nathaniel Ellicott took over. It was Ellicott who persuaded the Virginia General Assembly to charter the town of Occoquan in 1804.

Two hundred years later, its residents, friends and admirers want to honor Occoquan's long and rich history.

The grand kick-off event begins at 11 a.m. at the Occoquan Town Hall and the public is invited to attend.

"Come out to say you like what we have here," Smith said. "Occoquan is a jewel of the country. We have to preserve it and protect it."

Many local, county, state and federal officials will be on hand to offer words of appreciation for the town and what it means to its surrounding communities.

U.S. Rep. Tom Davis, R-11th District, will present the town with an American flag that has flown over the U.S. Capitol. Cub Scouts from Pack 1149 will then raise the flag in front of the town hall. The Old Bridge Chamber Orchestra Brass Quintet will perform throughout the event slated to run to 2 p.m.

Along with the ceremonial activities, U.S. Postal Service officials have pitched in to honor the event.

A special cancellation stamp has been designed and will be used on all mail postmarked at the Occoquan Post Office on Saturday. The town's postmistress also will be on hand at town hall during the event to stamp envelopes.

The black and white stamp will depict a silhouette of a paddle wheel on a mill



Courtesy image

**Occoquan begins celebration of its bicentennial this Saturday.**

with the Occoquan River in the background.

"It will look a lot like the bicentennial logo," Smith said.

Jan E. Moffatt and Jane Andrie Gillette of The Loft Gallery in Occoquan designed the logo that will be prominently displayed throughout the town during the bicentennial year.

If residents and visitors do not want to actually mail an envelope, they can bring one by and get it stamped as a souvenir, Smith said.

"It will be a collector's item," Smith said.

The cancellation stamp will be used only twice, once on Saturday and again next January at the end of the yearlong celebration in 2005.

To make that envelope and cancellation even more special, Town Hall will be selling envelopes with the bicentennial logo on them.

These envelopes can also be purchased at several businesses throughout the town, including The Coffee Shop, the Garden Kitchen and the Occoquan Basket Shop.

At the conclusion of the festivities, visitors are encouraged to stay in town and visit its many shops and restaurants.

They will also notice many of the improvements that have been made to the town's streets and walkways over this past summer, as well as see the progress that has been made to create a new boardwalk along the Occoquan River, Smith said.

Saturday's event is just the first of many commemorative efforts that will continue throughout the year.

An effort also is underway to collect enough applications for the state to designate a special bicentennial license plate

featuring the logo. The applications are not limited to town residents or merchants.

Organizers hope that everyone who appreciates the historic town will want to display such a license plate on their car as the ones now seen around the state marking the upcoming 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown. Applications are available at town hall and the Garden Kitchen.

The bicentennial committee has also launched a "Buy a Brick" program for the walkway leading to town hall.

"We've gotten a lot of excitement about this," Smith said.

The recently completed Mill Street Improvement Project included in part the bricking of the sidewalks along the street. The only path in the town that hasn't been bricked is the one leading to town hall.

Anyone can buy a brick for \$100 and it will be engraved with up to 30 characters. The center of the bricked walkway will have the bicentennial logo engraved into it.

"Our 200th birthday is something to be proud of and we invite you to come, bring the family, and enjoy the social, cultural, and unique atmosphere of the quaint little town and its mercantile," Smith said.

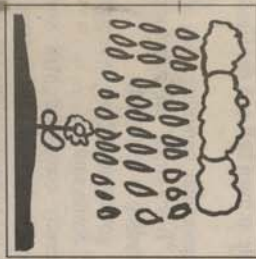
Staff writer Allen Strenge can be reached at (703) 878-8010.



# Weather

Friday, Jan. 2

Mostly cloudy. Highs in the mid-50s. Lows in the lower 40s.



**Balar Barzinjee**  
Grade 4, Pattie Elementary

## This week

### SATURDAY

Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 60s. Lows in the upper 40s.



### SUNDAY

Mostly cloudy. Highs around



# No evidence of terrorism aboard plane at Dulles

By **LARRY MARGASAK**  
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — U.S. authorities were acting on intelligence information — and not just suspicious passenger names — when they boarded a British Airways jet on New Year's Eve at Dulles International Airport, a national security official said Thursday.

No evidence of terrorism was found and the major consequence appeared to be inconvenience, with the 247 passengers waiting more than 3½ hours before getting off the plane while some of them were questioned.

"We had concerns with individuals on the flight, but threat reporting information led us to make the decision to have the flight escorted," a national security official said, speaking only on condition of anonymity.

"It was fact-related," the official said and not just connected to the passenger list the United States now receives from airlines flying to the United States.

## British Airways cancels flight

By The Associated Press

LONDON — British Airways canceled one of its three daily flights from London to Washington on Thursday following security advice from the government, a spokesman for the airline said.

A Department of Transport spokeswoman said she was unable to comment on matters of security or whether the

cancellation was a result of a specific threat.

The spokesman said alternative arrangements had been made for the 180 passengers on Thursday's flight, which had been scheduled to leave London's Heathrow airport at 10:05 a.m.

He added that neither of the two other daily flights to Washington had been canceled.

7:06 p.m. landing.

The plane was kept several hundred feet from the terminal during the questioning.

Passenger David Litwick told WJLA-TV in Washington that he and his wife were not questioned, but at least one other passenger was. Litwick said four FBI agents spoke to a woman who appeared to be from the Middle East, repeatedly asking her why she was not traveling with her husband.

Earlier this week, a scheduled

## OBITUARIES

### John Kecskemety

John Kecskemety, 82, died December 30, 2003, at Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

John is survived by his wife of 48 years, Jewel Kecskemety. He is also survived by five children, John (Hull, Mass.), Martrath Castle (Hull, Mass.), Stephen (Freemont, N.H.), Bruce (Palmer, Alaska), Dolores Dussol (Woodbridge), 15 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren. John is preceded in death by his daughter Patricia McGrath.



**Kecskemety**

John served in WWII, the Korean Conflict and was one of the commanders at Fort Duvall. He retired from the United States Army after 28 years of service. He later worked for the civil service for 22 years.

The family will be receiving friends from 2 to 5 p.m. Sunday, January 4, 2004, at Mountcastle Funeral Home, 4143 Dale Blvd. A graveside service will be held at 10 a.m. Monday at Mountcastle

## FUNERAL NOTICES

- **Lawrence Emerson Cooper**, 85, died Dec. 27, 2003. Visitation: 10 a.m. today at First Baptist Church, Manassas. Service: 11 a.m. today at the church. Interment at Mount Olive Baptist Church, Lincoln, Va.
- **Rosemary E. Heck**, 85, died Dec. 27, 2003. Visitation: 7 to 9 p.m. today at Shirley Funeral Home, Berryville and one hour prior to service time at the church. Service: 1 p.m. Saturday at Behr Assembly of God Church, Behr. Interment at Warrenton Cemetery.
- **Gail M. Lyons-Vance**, 48, died Dec. 26, 2003. Service: 11 a.m. today at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, Triangle. Interment private.
- **Edward W. Maron**, 91, died Dec. 28, 2003. Service: today at Mountcastle Funeral Home. Interment at Quantico National Cemetery.
- **Wafa S. Qura**, 40, died Dec. 30, 2003. Visitation: 7 to 9 p.m. today at Price Funeral Home, Manassas. Service: 11 a.m. Saturday at the funeral home. Interment at Stonewall Memory Gardens, Manassas.