



Kingdom of the Netherlands

Press Release
Royal Netherlands Embassy
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Contact: Public Diplomacy, Press and Culture
[Carla Bundy](mailto:Carla.Bundy@netherlands.nl), 202-274-2632 or 202-413-9786;
[Jacqueliën Nienhuis](mailto:Jacqueliën.Nienhuis@netherlands.nl), 202-274-2606 or 202-262-0995

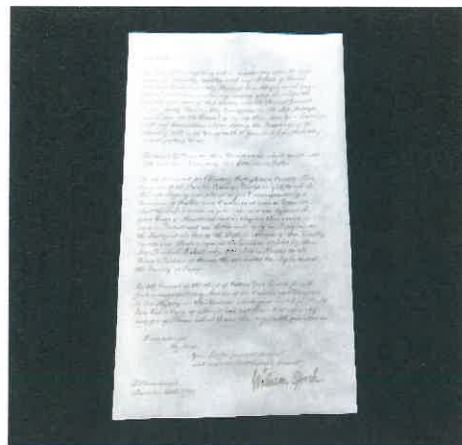
March 23, 2018

LOST HISTORICAL ORANGE-LETTER RECOVERED

(Washington, D.C.) — The story behind the naming of Orange County has long lived in the shadow cast by the question of "probably." When crossing the Orange County line, a welcome sign proudly states that the county "was probably named in honor of William IV, the Dutch prince of Orange."

But ask anyone in the streets, and most people would not know of that probability, meaning the origin of the county's name was somewhat lost, or at least questionable.

So staff members of the Netherlands embassy started investigating to see if they could find historical documents to remove the shadow of "probably" and shine the light of "actually" onto the naming of Orange County.



With the help of Orange County historian Frank Walker, they learned of a letter sent in 1734 by Lieutenant Governor William Gooch in which he confirmed that Orange County was actually named after William of Orange in honor of his marriage in 1734 to Princess Anne of England.

The letter should have been in the archives of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., but it was missing. An initial search turned up several documents, one of them printed on sheepskin, with hard-to-read texts, possibly indicating the heritage of the Virginia county. These turned out to be the wrong documents.

Not to be disheartened, embassy staff renewed their efforts to find the missing letter, and focused on a box containing almost 300 texts. One of them should have been a handwritten copy of the letter sent by Lieutenant Governor Gooch in 1734. But that document was misplaced, only to be found in a different box in the Library of Congress.

Replicas of the document, with the kind permission of the Library of Congress, will be donated today to Orange County and the Orange County Historical Society. "I'm very satisfied we can confirm with certainty that Orange County is named after our Dutch prince. I'm very happy to reconnect historical ties with this beautiful region in Virginia," said the Netherlands Ambassador Henne Schuwer.

For more information, please contact Carla Bundy, Press Officer at the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands or Jacquélien Nienhuis.

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