

Rockahock in New Kent now protected forever

SEAN JONES
Richmond Times-Dispatch

A historic swath of farmland along the Pamunkey River has been permanently protected against development. The land's native species, soils and history are part of a farm property once owned by the family of Martha Washington, the wife of first President George Washington.

The Capital Region Land Conservancy has been working since 2017 to have the property known as Rockahock, in New Kent County, placed into an Agricultural Land Easement. Such an easement ensures that farming will forever be part of the landscape at Rockahock, as it has been for the past 350 years.

The entire easement encompasses about 568 acres of what was once 6,200 acres of land owned by Daniel Parke Custis, who willed the land to Martha Dandridge Custis Washington. The Washingtons referred to the property as "White House," and it was later burned by Union soldiers as they retreated from the Seven Days Battles early in the Civil War.

Rockahock is an Algonquin word meaning "sand bar." It is also an important site across the Pamunkey River from the Pamunkey Indian Reservation, established in 1646.

The Capital Region Land Conservancy was able to purchase the property for the protective easement after the passing of former owner Roberta Runion in 2021. The conservancy purchased the land through a \$2.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Services.

That marks the largest amount awarded to a single project in Virginia by the program.

Edwin Martinez Martinez, the NRCS' state conservationist for Virginia, said the purchase shows demand for funding farmland preservation in rapidly developing areas where prime agricultural lands are at risk.

Rockahock has about 362 acres of USDA-designated prime soils, including 228 acres of Pamunkey soil. While the property is said to



CAPITAL REGION LAND CONSERVANCY PHOTOS

The Capital Region Land Conservancy has been working since 2017 to have the property known as Rockahock, in New Kent County, placed into an Agricultural Land Easement. Such an easement ensures that farming will forever be part of the landscape at Rockahock, as it has been for the past 350 years.



Rockahock has about 362 acres of USDA-designated prime soils, including 228 acres of Pamunkey soil. While the property is said to be remarkable for its farmland, it was at risk due to rapid growth happening in New Kent — the 10th fastest-growing locality in the nation during 2023.

Rockahock is an Algonquin word meaning "sand bar." It is also an important site across the Pamunkey River from the Pamunkey Indian Reservation, established in 1646.



grown 208% over the past 40 years from 8,900 to 26,134 residents. Farmland acres decreased 28% over that same period. According to a Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation vulnerability model, Rockahock rates between 11 and 50 for its likelihood of being developed (on a scale of 100) by 2029.

"Rockahock is an incredible, one-of-a-kind place that rarely

becomes available to purchase. When we had the opportunity to acquire it from Roberta then work to conserve it, we were compelled by how important a site it really is," said Henry Shield, managing member for Rockahock LLC. "We look forward to protecting even more acreage in the next phase and completing Roberta's vision. CRLC staff couldn't have been better to work through this process and to illuminate aspects of the property that will make us better stewards of the property into the future."

The rich, natural land has more than 2.5 miles of frontage along the tidal Pamunkey River. It includes endangered water for species of fish such as the American shad, alewife, Atlantic sturgeon, blueback herring and white perch. There are also 54 acres of wetlands and a 27-acre dammed pond that provides irrigation for the agricultural fields.

It also has imperiled plant species such as Spongy arrowhead. Fewer than five populations of the species are documented in Virginia.

The river itself is included in the National Park Service's Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, where John Smith was marched after his capture by Powhatan Confederacy chief Opechancanough, the uncle of Pocahontas.

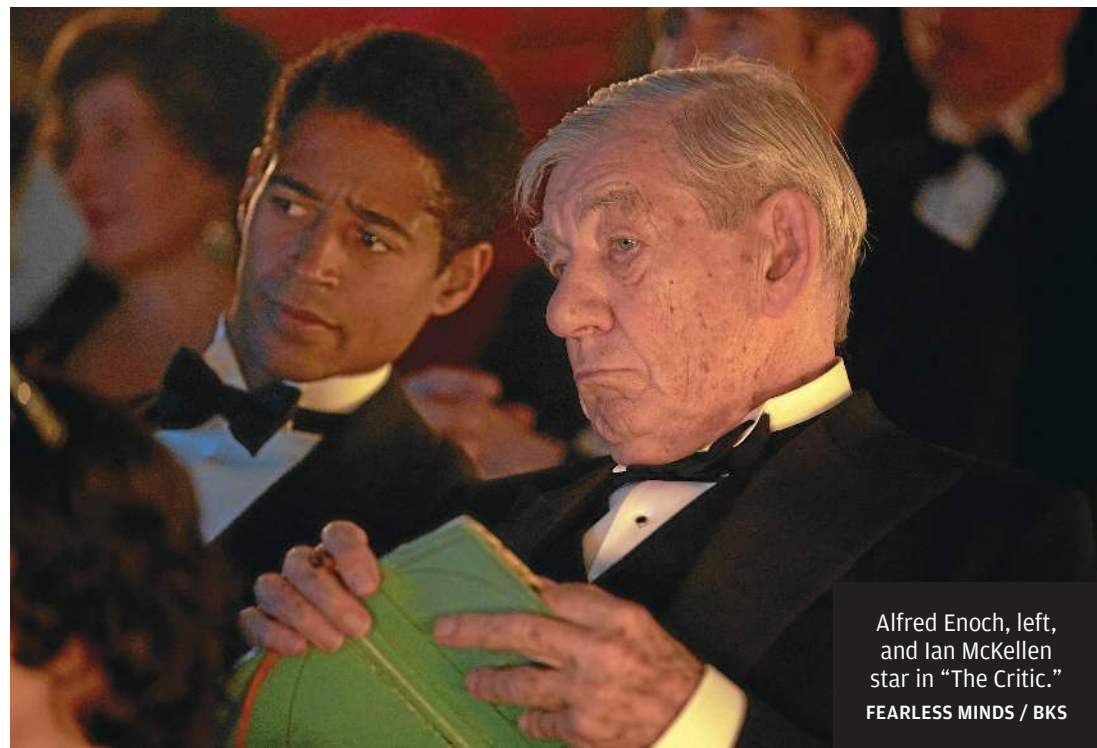
The route was also used by George Washington and Jean-Baptiste de Rochambeau during their 14-week journey over 680 miles from Rhode Island to Yorktown during the American Revolution.

In the city of Richmond, the Capital Region Land Conservancy recently announced the protection of approximately 10 acres of forested land and green space along Pocosham Creek, next to city-owned parkland near Walmsley Boulevard and Belmont Road.

That portion of land was protected with a conservation easement and an eye to a future public access trail.

Sean Jones (804) 649-6911
sjones@timesdispatch.com

DVD RELEASES



Alfred Enoch, left, and Ian McKellen star in "The Critic." FEARLESS MINDS / BKS

MURDER, BLACKMAIL AND THEATER

"The Critic" tops this week's video picks

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

A British historical drama boasting a strong cast tops the DVD releases for this week.

Lesley Manville, Gemma Arterton and Ian McKellen star in "The Critic," set in the London theatrical world, in which a critic becomes embroiled in a murderous web involving a blackmail scheme.

Also new on DVD today

"Attachment": Danish horror romance that finds two women romantically involved in London, where one of their disapproving mothers may be responsible for strange occurrences.

"Night of the Missing": Horror anthology that unfolds in the form of a peculiar woman recounting tales to a small-town sheriff.

"The Shape of Water": Guillermo del Toro's 2017 horror-fantasy that won Oscars for best picture and director enjoys a Criterion Collection release on 4K Ultra HD and Blu-ray.

David Howard Thornton stars as Art the Clown in "Terrifier 3," which arrives on digital HD today.

CINEVERSE



"Paper Moon": Also joining the Criterion ranks is filmmaker Peter Bogdanovich's 1973 drama starring Ryan and Tatum O'Neal as swindlers during the Great Depression.

Out on digital HD today

"Terrifier 3": The gore-pushing boundaries of the horror series featuring Art the Clown are tested in this Christmas-set threequel from writer-director Damien Leone.

"Letters at Christmas": A family — with parents facing divorce (but maybe not for long?) — stumbles across old love notes while renovating a hotel in this holiday romance film.

ENTERTAINMENT BRIEF

Lily-Rose Depp out to prove critics wrong

Lily-Rose Depp feels like people have always been "ready to see (her) fail."

The "Nosferatu" actress — who is the daughter of Johnny Depp and Vanessa Paradis — is determined to work as hard as she can to prove people wrong and show that she deserves to be successful in her own right.

She told Vanity Fair magazine: "I feel like people have been ready to see me fail, in a way, since I was a kid. That has made me only want to work harder and prove people wrong. Not in a vindictive way at all but just in a sense of, like, fuel to my fire. I do want to prove that I'm a hard worker and I'm not here for anything else but to work hard. But Rob (Eggers, 'Nosferatu' director) was one of my bucket-list directors. I didn't think I would get to work with him so soon, so early in my career."

The "Idol" star confessed to feeling imposter syndrome while shooting "Nosferatu" opposite Bill Skarsgård as the titular vampire.

She added: "Getting to a place where I felt confident enough within myself to be like, 'I can do this and I am here for a reason,' I definitely have struggled with that."

BIRTHDAYS FOR NOV. 26

Impressionist **Rich Little** is 86. Singer **Jean Terrell** of The Supremes is 80. Bassist **John McVie** of Fleetwood Mac is 79. Actor **Marianne Muellerleile** (Film's "Memento," TV's "Life With Bonnie") is 76. Actor **Scott Jacoby** ("That Certain Summer") is 68. Actor **Jamie Rose** ("Falcon Crest," "St. Elsewhere") is 65. Country singer **Linda Davis** is 62. Actor **Scott Adsit** ("30

Daisy Ridley can't recall helping after car crash

Daisy Ridley has no recollection of coming to the aid of a van driver whose vehicle "flipped" in front of her.

The "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" actress admitted she panics in times of crisis but can also be quite helpful, even if she's just operating on autopilot. Asked what she does in a crisis, she told The Guardian newspaper: "I panic. I'm someone who outwardly doesn't seem to be panicking and inwardly is panicking a lot. I tend to be pretty logistical. One time, I witnessed a really terrible thing on a motorway. A van tire blew out, and it flipped in front of me. When I came to, I had my hazard lights on, and I'd called the police, but I don't remember having done that. So I feel like I'm actually quite logistical in a crisis. Then, afterwards, I cry."

Ridley has teamed up with her husband, Tom Bateman, for her latest movie, "Magpie," for which he wrote the screenplay from her original idea and in which she also plays Annette.

She said: "It was great because we share a very similar creative sensibility in terms of films we love and the film we wanted to make."

— Bang Showbiz



DJ Khaled



Ora

Rock") is 59. Actor **Kristin Bauer** ("True Blood") is 58. Actor **Peter Facinelli** ("Nurse Jackie") is 51. Actor **Tammy Lynn Michaels** ("The L Word," "Popular") is 50. Hip-hop artist **DJ Khaled** is 49. Actor **Maia Campbell** ("In the House") is 48. Country singer **Joe Nichols** is 48. Musicians **Randy and Anthony Armstrong** of Red are 46. Singer-actor **Rita Ora** is 34.

— Associated Press