

Orange County, Virginia

Orange County	
County	
Orange County Courthouse <div>Orange County Courthouse</div>	
Map of Virginia highlighting Orange County <div>Location within the U.S. state of Virginia Map of the United States highlighting Virginia Virginia's location within the U.S. Coordinates: 38°14′N 78°01′W</div>	
Country	United States
State	Virginia
Founded	1734 ^[1]
Named for	William III of England
Seat	Orange
Largest town	Orange
Area	
• Total	343 sq mi (890 km ²)
• Land	341 sq mi (880 km ²)
• Water	2.5 sq mi (6 km ²) <div>0.7%</div>
Population (2020)	
• Total	36,254
• Density	110/sq mi (41/km ²)
Time zone	UTC−5 (Eastern)
• Summer (DST)	UTC−4 (EDT)
Congressional district	7th
Website	orangecountyva.gov

Orange County is a [county](#) in the [central piedmont region](#) of the [Commonwealth of Virginia](#). As of the [2020 census](#), the [population](#) was 36,254.^[2] Its [county seat](#) is [Orange](#).^[3]

Orange County is home to "Montpelier", the 2,700-acre (1,100 ha) estate of [James Madison](#), the 4th [President of the United States](#) and "Father of the [Constitution](#)." The county [celebrated](#) its 275th [anniversary](#) in 2009.^[4]

History

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The area was lived in for thousands of years by different [cultures](#) of [Native Americans](#). At the time the [Europeans](#) came, the Ontponea, a sub-group of the [Siouan](#)-speaking [Manahoac](#) tribe, lived in this [Piedmont](#) area.^[5]

The first European [settlement](#) in what was to become Orange County was [Germanna](#), formed when Governor [Alexander Spotswood](#) settled 12 [immigrant](#) families from [Westphalia, Germany](#) there in 1714. This was a total of 42 people. Orange County was created in August 1734 when the [Virginia House of Burgesses](#) adopted "An Act for Dividing Spotsylvania County." Unlike other counties whose boundaries had ended at the [Blue Ridge Mountains](#), Orange was bounded on the west "by the utmost limits of Virginia" which, at that time, stretched to the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes. The colony of Virginia claimed the land, but very little of it had yet been occupied by any [English people](#). Orange County may have been at one time the largest county that ever existed.^[6] In 1738 most of the [western](#) area was split off into [Augusta County](#). The large county was to encourage settlement further west to counter the [French](#) claim to the [Ohio River Valley region](#).^[7]

While no battles of the [American Revolutionary War](#) were fought in Orange County, 100 men from the county were recruited to the [Culpeper Minutemen](#).^[8] They fought in the [Battle of Great Bridge](#), among other engagements.^[8]

The development of [transportation](#), including several [railroad](#) routes, up through the mid-[nineteenth century](#) helped build a [agricultural economy](#) in Orange County. The final adjustment of the county's boundaries occurred in 1838, when [Greene County](#) was created from the western portion of Orange. The Town of Orange was legally established in 1834 (officially becoming a town in 1872) and had already served as the county seat for nearly a century. The Town of Gordonsville officially became a town in 1870.^[7]

The county saw limited conflict during the [Civil War](#). Most of the activity was centered around the towns of Orange and Gordonsville. The exceptions were the [Battle of Mine Run](#) and the [Battle of the Wilderness](#) in the eastern portion of the county. The Battle of the Wilderness was a significant turning point in the war. Following Virginia's readmission to the [Union](#) in 1870, and with the loss of slave labor, the agricultural economy resumed with more

emphasis on livestock and dairy farming. This was because these activities requiring less physical labor. The dominance of the railroad and the relative ease it offered in delivering goods to larger markets increased the [livestock](#) production in the county's agricultural economy. Agriculture and [manufacturing](#) continued to expand into the [twentieth century](#), with a peak of 1279 farms and 20 manufacturing companies located within the county as of 1929. A manufacturing survey produced during the [Great Depression](#) noted that Orange County's economy remained relatively healthy due to its accessibility.^[7]

The significance of agriculture to Orange County's history was great enough that the Commonwealth of Virginia set aside approximately 31,200 acres (126 km²) in the western portion of the county as the [Madison-Barbour Rural Historic District](#). The District was added to the [National Register of Historic Places](#) in 1991 and is the largest such district in Virginia. It includes James Madison's Montpelier and James Barbour's Barboursville mansion (designed by [Thomas Jefferson](#), now in ruins). It includes other sites listed on the National Register.^[9]

Orange County's population went up and down following the Civil War up through the 1930s. From that point forward, the population continued to grow steadily, representing an almost 300% increase through the 2010 Census.

Geography

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According to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#), the county has a total area of 343 square miles (890 km²). Of that, 341 square miles (880 km²) is land and 2.5 square miles (6.5 km²) (0.7%) is water.^[10] The [terrain](#) is made up of rolling hills, generally increasing in [altitude](#) and [slope](#) as they continue westward toward the Blue Ridge Mountains. The highest point is Cowherd Mountain at 1,196 ft (345 m), approximately 2.5 miles (4 km) northwest of Gordonsville.^[11]

Orange County lies within the [watersheds](#) of both the [Rappahannock River](#) and the [York River](#). Both of these drain into the [Chesapeake Bay](#).^[12]

Adjacent counties

[\[change\]](#) | [change source](#)

- [Madison County](#) - northwest
- [Culpeper County](#) - north
- [Spotsylvania County](#) - east
- [Louisa County](#) - south
- [Albemarle County](#) - southwest
- [Greene County](#) - west

Waterbodies

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- [The Rapidan River](#) defines the northern boundary of the county
- [Lake Orange Archived](#) 2016-03-04 at the [Wayback Machine](#) - a 124-acre public lake southeast of the Town of Orange
- The [500-acre Main Lake](#) in Lake of the Woods

Nationally protected areas

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- [The Wilderness Battlefield](#) in the eastern portion of the county lies within the [Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park](#)

Transportation

[[change](#) | [change source](#)]

A Map of Orange County, VA

Major highways

[[change](#) | [change source](#)]

- [US 15](#)
- [US 33](#)
- [US 522](#)
- [SR 3](#)
- [SR 20](#)
- [SR 231](#)

Airports

[[change](#) | [change source](#)]

- [Orange County Airport](#) (OMH)
- [Gordonsville Airport Archived](#) 2014-05-23 at the [Wayback Machine](#) (GVE)

Public transportation

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- The [Town of Orange Transit](#) (TOOT) provides bus service around and between the towns of Orange and Gordonsville

Demographics

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In the 2020 [census](#), there were 36,254 people, 14,190 [households](#), and 9,986 families living in the county. The [population density](#) was 106.5 people per square mile (41.1/km²). There were 15,671 housing units. The breakdown by [race](#) was 76.9% [White](#), 12.0% [Black](#), 0.9% [Asian](#), 0.5% [Native American](#), 0.1% [Pacific Islander](#), 2.3% from one other race, and 7.3% from two or more races. [Hispanics](#) and [Latinos](#) made up 6.0% of the people.

The [median](#) (middle) age was 44.6 years. The age breakdown was 21.1% under age 18, 56.9% from 18 to 65, and 22.0% over 65. The gender breakdown was 48.2% male and 51.8% female.

Of the households, 28.4% had children under age 18, 52.7% had a married couple, 6.9% had an unmarried couple, 25.3% had a woman with no partner, 15.1% had a man with no partner, and 24.7% had one person living alone. The average household size was 2.54 people.^{[17][18]}

As of 2022, the [median](#) (middle) yearly [income](#) for a household was about \$87,309, and the median income for a family was about \$100,907.^[19] The [per capita income](#) was about \$41,650.^[20] About 10.0% of families^[21] and 13.0% of the people lived below the [poverty line](#). This includes 21.1% of children under 18 years old and 7.7% of people over 65 years old.^[22] The median [home](#) value was about \$316,000.^[23]

Historical population

Census	Pop.	%±
1790	9,921	—
1800	11,449	15.4%
1810	12,323	7.6%
1820	12,913	4.8%
1830	14,637	13.4%
1840	9,125	−37.7%
1850	10,067	10.3%
1860	10,851	7.8%
1870	10,396	−4.2%
1880	13,052	25.5%
1890	12,814	−1.8%
1900	12,571	−1.9%
1910	13,486	7.3%
1920	13,320	−1.2%
1930	12,070	−9.4%
1940	12,649	4.8%
1950	12,755	0.8%
1960	12,900	1.1%
1970	13,792	6.9%
1980	18,063	31.0%
1990	21,421	18.6%
2000	25,881	20.8%
2010	33,481	29.4%
2020	36,254	8.3%

U.S. Decennial Census^[13]
1790-1960^[14] 1900-1990^[15]
1990-2000^[16] 2010-2020^[2]

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