



# Preserving Yesterday Enriches Tomorrow



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## THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MADISON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mast Head Pictures Courtesy of Tucker Hill

Editor: Jill Schreiner

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**P.O. Box 467, Madison, Virginia 22727**

**November 2002**

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### **SOCIETY TO MEET NOVEMBER 19, 2002**

The next membership meeting will be held at 2 p.m. on Sunday, November 17 in the auditorium of the Madison County Administration Building. Mrs. Pat Early, outreach instructor for the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, will present **LIVING WITH THE INDIANS**. You will be able to handle and analyze clothing, bone tools, pottery, and other reproduction artifacts of the Powhatan Indian Culture. She will talk about the ways the Powhatans effectively used their environment and about the day-to-day jobs in and around a Powhatan Village. Refreshments will be served in the Kemper residence following the presentation.

### **ARCADE VOLUNTEERS**

The Madison County Historical Society is delighted that volunteers are available to assist Curator Jan Harris almost every Tuesday and Thursday. Our thanks to Anne Ferguson, John Imlay, Linwood Imlay, Bob Lovegren, Virginia McGhee, Virginia Utz, Jane Volchansky, Millie Wieser, Paul Wieser and Emily Williams. Sandy Stowe helps with research and Edna McDaniel collects old photographs for the Society. To date, one-on-one training has been taking place with Jan Harris each Tuesday and Thursday. Our goal is to obtain more volunteers at the Arcade and open the museum more days each week. Anyone interested in joining this enthusiastic group can call Jan Harris (923-4438) or Emily Williams (825-7503).

### **ARCADE EXHIBITS**



Normal School Madison VA 1908

A new exhibit on the development of Madison schools is open at the Arcade. It includes photographs of several classes. Curator Jan Harris invites you to see if you are in one of these photographs or know someone who is. The exhibits on the Rapidan Railroad and Main Street continue. The Arcade is open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. You may call Jan Harris (923-4438) to make arrangements to visit the Arcade at other times.



Photo Courtesy Robert Haught

## MCHS VISITS SALUBRIA

With an authority on colonial settlements in Virginia as their guide, society members took a fascinating journey into history with a visit to Salubria, the 18<sup>th</sup> century home of the widow of Alexander Spotswood.

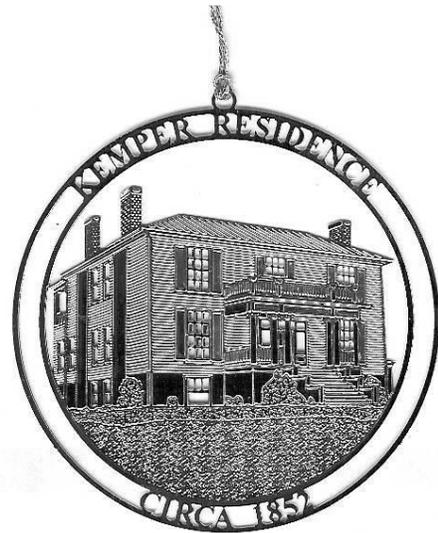
Thomas Faircloth, president of the Memorial Foundation of the Germanna Colonies, pointed out features of the beautiful rolling grounds before leading the group on a tour of the stately Georgian mansion southeast of Culpeper. He traced the history of the house, built in the mid-1700s by the Rev. John Thompson, whose first wife had been married to the royal governor.

Faircloth noted some distinctive architectural features of the well-built structure, which has most of its original flooring and windowpanes. A window had been knocked out in a vandalism incident and a chamber pot stolen. He also told some interesting stories about the role of Salubria in the Civil War, when a Union Army general made his headquarters there.

With no electricity or plumbing, Salubria remains much the same as in its original state. It was last occupied in 1938. Faircloth said some repairs were done in the 1950s under the direction of Washington Reed, who at the same time was reconstructing the White House under President Harry Truman.

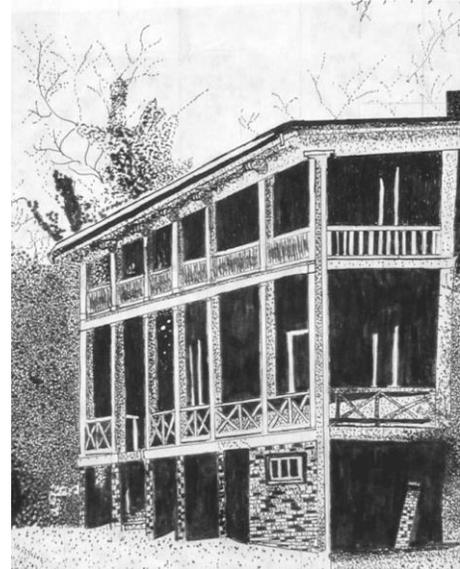
Following the tour, the group enjoyed refreshments outdoors in the shade – a welcome treat on this warm Sunday in August.

## 2003 ORNAMENT



The 2003 ornament featuring the Kemper Residence has arrived. They may be purchased at the Arcade for \$10.00 plus tax (\$10.45 total).

## 2003 CALENDAR



The Society's 2003 Calendar, which features pen and ink sketches of Main Street landmarks by Madison County High School art students will be available at the November 17 Membership Meeting. Other locations where the Calendar is sold are: the Arcade, the Chamber of Commerce, Greystone TV and Appliance (Radio Shack), Handcraft House, the Library, the Mountain Store (Criglersville), the Museum of Culpeper History, and the Plow and Hearth's Country Store. The cost is \$ 10 plus tax.

## KEMPER RESIDENCE

**Tours** - Students from the third grade at Waverly Yowell School toured the Kemper Residence on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. They also visited the Arcade. Genevieve McLearen, Jan Harris and Rita Cunningham conducted the tours.

### ACQUISITIONS

Book – Green County Cemeteries  
Emily Williams

Silver Tray – Bob & Mary Haught

China and Tea Pots –  
Maury Hansen            Virginia Serroka  
Clair Jaenke            Heidi Sage  
Rita Cunningham

Cash Donations –  
Emily Williams            Agnes Price  
Steve Hoffman  
Paul & Millie Wieser  
Mr. & Mrs. Norman Klocker  
Mr. & Mrs. Carl W. Fisher

**LEAFLET** - A new leaflet is now available which provides a brief narrative of the life of James Lawson Kemper. These are available at the Residence, Arcade and the Chamber of Commerce. This publication was made possible by Eddins Ford.

### WELCOME – NEW MEMBERS

The Society is pleased to welcome the following new members:

- Senator Edd Houck - Partner
- Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth E. Hardy – Partner
- Nancy L Sorrells – Single



**Bill & Bertha Scholten enjoy tea poured by Rita Cunningham**

Photo Courtesy Robert Haught

## TEA AT THE KEMPER

The first in a series of Benefit Teas was held on September 25<sup>th</sup>. A wonderful selection of sweets, savories and fruits were served to a full house of guests. Many compliments were received as well plans to attend the Winter Tea scheduled to be held on January 22, 2003. Reservations are limited – make your plans early. Proceeds from the Tea are earmarked for the renovation of Governor Kemper's law office and the servant quarters. We are still in need of cups and saucers, dinner and luncheon plates, teapots and teaspoons. They do not have to match. Volunteers who prepared the delicious food and served as hostesses are:

Mary Haught	Mary Jo Dilling
Vi Hilliard	Ann Hughes
Betty Lynn Yowell	Genevieve McLearen
Rita Cunningham	Heidi Sage

Appreciation also goes to those who loaned teapots, china, flat ware and linens:

Pay Fray	Jill Schreiner
Mary Haught	Bob & Judy Lovegren
Joan Cheston	Heidi Sage
Betty Lynn Yowell	Rita Cunningham

## TASTE OF THE MOUNTAINS

The Kemper Residence and the Arcade opened their doors for the annual Taste of the Mountains Street Festival. Many visitors toured both of these special places. The new 2003 Calendar and Kemper Residence Ornament were sold at the Residence, Arcade, and a booth on Main Street. The following volunteers acted as docents at both buildings and assisted at the booth.

Jack & Martha Cornwall	
Betty Lynn Yowell	Bill Scholten
Sandra Stowe	Joan Cheston
Gina Cheston	Lee Decker
Ann Miller	Rita Cunningham
Jan Harris	Paul & Millie Weisner
Louisa Grogen	Rebecca Rumpler
Emily Williams	Tucker Hill & Mollie
Ed Hughes	Dick Tanner



## CEMETERY SURVEY

Sandy Stowe is making great progress on graveyard and cemetery documentation. She is now focusing on family graveyards, especially over-grown and hard to reach graves. Those with old graveyards on their property are asked to contact Sandy (948-6689) to let her know of all graves. Also, if you wish to assist with this project let her know.

A major need right now is someone with time, patience and "know-how" to enter the hand-recorded information. It would be most appreciated if someone with computer skills would undertake this project. It would be great to have this information available for publication



## INTERESTING PROJECTS TO DO

The Society has several interesting projects that need helpers. They include:

1. **MERCHANDISING PROGRAM** - Review publications and other items which the Society sells or could sell. Develop agreement to be used with suppliers. Prepare marketing plan
2. **WRITING PAMPHLET** - Prepare a new Madison County Historical Society Pamphlet. Outline the history of the Society. Provide illustrations of past achievements. Present reasons why the Society needs to be supported today.
3. **GRAVE SITES** - Join other members in locating and recording gravesites through out the County.
4. **RAPIDAN RAILROAD** - Research the route the railroad followed from Wolfstown to Orange in 1920-24.
5. **HOST/HOSTESS** - Serve as a host/hostess at the Arcade and/or the Kemper Residence.

Please contact President Rita Cunningham at 948-6542 or Bob Lovegren at 923-4973 for additional information, to volunteer, or to provide your ideas on how you might contribute to the Society in other ways.



Carol Nash Searches for Clues to the Chimney

Photo Courtesy Robert Haught

## LAW OFFICE RESTORATION

A major component of the restoration of General Kemper's law office will be the chimney on the building's west side. The evidence for the existence of a chimney there is strong: siding, the width of a chimney, has been replaced in the center of the west side; the roof and fascia boards at the west peak have been repaired in an area that would correspond to a chimney stack; the window now in the west wall, though old, is different from the other windows in the building and probably was inserted during the University's renovation and taken from one of the two dependencies destroyed at that time; the opening in the west wall of the second floor room is suitable for a stovepipe exhausting into a chimney; and floor boards on the west side of the ground floor room have been replaced in an area the size and shape of a hearth. With all this evidence at hand the remaining piece was the foundation for the chimney, usually covered over after a chimney has collapsed or been dismantled.

To help with this final piece of evidence Carole Nash, an archaeology professor at James Madison University and a Madison County native, along with her student, Megan Veness, conducted a dig adjacent to the law office on September 29. Two trenches were dug in the area of the suspected chimney base. Pottery shards and other objects compatible with a mid-19th century construction date were found in the fill adjacent to the building foundation. However, there was no evidence of a chimney foundation.

While this is unusual in planned construction, it does not rule out the chimney's existence. Occasionally chimneys were built directly on the ground without below grade foundations. Such construction could account for the short life of the chimney and its later replacement by a small interior chimney to serve only as a stove exhaust.

Three scenarios need to be considered in assessing the law office. The building may have been built in its present location, with the chimney as part of the original construction. Or it may well have begun its existence as something other than a law office and may have acquired the chimney when General Kemper decided to use it as his office. A third possibility is that the building was moved from some other spot on the property and its chimney was not brought with it. Evidence against the third interpretation, though, is a photograph of 1940, supplied by Justice A. Christian Compton whose family owned the property at the time. This photograph, of the southeast exposure of the building, shows the edge of a large, vine-covered mass, broad at its base and tapering up to the roof peak on the west side of the building, an appearance compatible with the remains of a substantial chimney. It is likely, therefore, that the building was constructed in its present location and either had the chimney at that time or received it later on General Kemper's instructions.

The goal of the Historical Society is to restore the law office as closely as possible to its state when General Kemper used it. To achieve this the existing evidence requires that restoration include reconstruction of the chimney. However, the Historical Society is still trying to assemble all the evidence available to determine the building's history. This work would be greatly facilitated by photographs showing the west side of the building in its early years and by those of the interior before the University of Virginia remodeled it. **The Historical Society appeals to the community to share with it any photographs or personal recollections of the building in its early years. If you have any information that you think would be helpful please contact Maury Hanson at 948-3875 or contact the Historical Society directly at 948-5488.**

# THE LADY OF THE KEMPER HOUSE

By Ann Ferguson

Cremora (Belle) Conway Cave became the bride of James Lawson Kemper on July 4, 1853 at Madison Courthouse. The historical record is sparse regarding her background, but by stitching available facts to the time in which she lived, we can draw a pattern of her life.

James Lawson Kemper must have been a dashing figure to young Belle Cave when he first paid her court. Photographs show a broad-shouldered man with dark hair and penetrating dark eyes. When he asked for her hand in marriage, he was a respected lawyer with an office in Madison Courthouse and he owned 20 acres of land and a town lot with a house. He had an interest in politics and in November 1853 was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates.

Belle is described as slight of figure with dark hair and a friendly, vivacious personality. At the time of their marriage she was sixteen years old and her husband was 30. An only daughter with three brothers, Belle's family held a position of importance in Madison County. Her father, Belfield Cave, was Clerk of the Superior Court, a post he held for 37 years. The young couple moved to the house on the town lot that James owned, located on Main Street in front of the Beth Car Church

In those early years, Belle and James made several visits to Virginia's mineral springs to vacation and for health reasons. By 1860, Belle was the busy mother of a son, Meade and two daughters, Frances and Florence. Her husband supported his growing family through an expanding law practice and continued his duties in Richmond in the House of Delegates; he was re-elected in 1855, 1857 and 1859 Virginia seceded from the Union in May 1861 and joined the Confederate States of America. Soon after, James Lawson Kemper was commissioned a Captain in the Confederate Army. These dramatic events closed a chapter on the gentle phase of Belle's life with her husband.

Belle was 24 years old when faced with the challenge of raising three young children without

the daily support and comfort of her husband. She had no sisters to call on for help, but it is likely that her Mother became her mainstay. As the years passed, shortages became more acute for even basic items. All able bodied men were called to the Army, the best horses and mules were taken for use by the troops and the planting of crops fell to those least able to plow, plant and harvest for the best return. Much of the food produced went to feed Confederate troops or was taken or destroyed in Union raids. The civilian population made do with what was left. Eventually blockades stopped the flow of certain items so that coffee, tea, dress goods and even sewing needles and writing paper were unavailable or, if found, very expensive. Belle surely spent each day concerned for her children's welfare as her family lived with the threat of Union raids. Their lives were punctuated with the sound of marching troops, both Confederate and Union, who crossed Madison County first on the attack and then in retreat.

At night Belle's final thoughts before sleep would have been filled with concern for her husband. Was he well; was a battle imminent in which he would be wounded? (James Lawson Kemper was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General in 1862 and led his troops in many actions on the field of battle.) She also must have shared her Mother's concern for the safety of her brother, Benjamin, serving with the 2nd Virginia Cavalry.

It was in July 1863 on the Battlefield at Gettysburg that Belle's worst fears were realized. General Kemper suffered a wound described as mortal and reports were circulated that he had died. General Lee sent condolences to Belle and all southern newspapers lamented the loss of this Confederate hero.

Belle refused to accept the news of her husband's death as fact. She stayed firm in the belief that he had survived. In early September she was informed that he was a prisoner, first held at a makeshift hospital in Gettysburg and then moved to Fort McHenry in Maryland. Belle did not wait for action by the military and traveled to Richmond to plead her case before the Commissioner of Prisoner Exchange. Soon

she was informed that General Kemper would be exchanged for a Brig. General Graham.

The General was warmly welcomed on his return to Madison, but his arrival was saddened by news that his daughter, Frances Merriweather, had died in July, at the time he lay close to death in Gettysburg. This grateful wife and grieving mother spent many weeks nursing her wounded and pain-ridden husband. She was rewarded for her efforts by his return to health, although he would walk with a limp, aided by a cane, for the rest of his life

It was in late February 1864, that the Kemper's home was laid waste by Union raiders. A contingent, led by George Armstrong Custer, marched to Charlottesville from Culpeper. Their intent was to create a diversion while Union soldiers freed prisoners from Richmond's Libby Prison. The raiders were turned back and on the way north burned everything in their path, churches, businesses and the homes of Confederate officers. At the time, the General was with his brigade in winter camp near Richmond. Belle and her children, now including James, Jr., had taken refuge in Halifax, Virginia living with the General's sister, Sarah. While his disability prevented a return to active service, General Kemper was put in charge of Virginia's reserve forces where he served until the war's end.

In 1865, the General brought his family back to Madison where they lived with Belle's parents until he could restore his financial position and arrange for a permanent home. Eventually, the General purchased five acres with an existing house on Main Street from his mother-in-law.

A return to a home of her own must have filled Belle Kemper with delight. Her new home was handsome with assorted outbuildings to support domestic needs. The nation was at peace, her husband had resumed his law practice, with a promising political career ahead and he was there to give her loving support in raising their children. In her early 30s Belle had two more children, Lucy and Jessie. Perhaps the Kemper family now enjoyed a time of gentle contentment looking forward to a promising future.

It appears the experiences of the war, her husband's brush with death and the loss of her first-born daughter had taken their toll on this young woman and her health began to fail in the late 1860s. She developed a severe eye infection. Although specialists in Richmond were consulted, no cure was found. Within the next two years she was blind.

In January of 1870, Belle fell seriously ill. She appeared to improve for a time, but by late summer she was again stricken with the added complication of a pregnancy. Her seventh child, Reginald Heber Johns, was born on September 8. This last childbirth broke Belle Kemper's fragile hold on life and one month later, on October 8, 1870 she died in the second floor bedroom of the family home.

James Lawson Kemper was inconsolable over his wife's death. He took up residence in his law office on the grounds of his home, using the space as a sleeping room. Belle was the only woman he had ever loved. On December 28, 1870, in a letter to Belle's Mother, he wrote: "... She more than filled [my] ideal in everything-grew brighter from every trial-and proved to be gold in the crucible. . . ."

Following his term as Governor of Virginia, James Lawson Kemper purchased a property in Orange County; he named the home Walnut Hills. His greatest joy for his remaining years was in the children Belle Kemper gave to him. James Lawson Kemper died in 1895; he never remarried.

(This article is based on information from [The Confederacy's Forgotten Son](#), by Harold R. Woodward, Jr.)

The Madison County Historical Society is a non-profit organization founded and operated for the perpetuation and preservation of Madison County heritage and traditions. The mission of the Society is to record, preserve, and stimulate interest in the history of Madison County, its families, occupations and way of life.

Membership is for one year with renewals due on the anniversary date of membership. Membership and other contributions to the Society are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Types of Membership:

Patron	\$500 or more	Business	\$50
Benefactor	\$250 to \$499	Family	\$20
Partner	\$100 to \$249	Single	\$10
Friend	\$50 to \$99	Student	\$5

Membership applications are available at the Arcade and the Kemper Residence. For more information call the Society Office at 540-948-5488 and leave your name, telephone number, and address. We will send you a membership application or return your call to answer your questions. You may wish to call the Membership Chair at 540-923-4973 or e-mail him at [boblove@nexet.net](mailto:boblove@nexet.net).



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