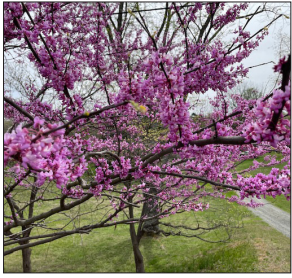


# Preserving Yesterday Enriches Tomorrow



Madison County  
Historical Society

[www.madisonvahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.madisonvahistoricalsociety.org)

May 2023

## Come to Kemper on May 21st

The May 21, 2023, Madison County Historical Society quarterly program will be an Open House at the Society's Museum in the Kemper Residence. The emphasis will be upon the display of artifacts and photos from the old Odd Fellows Lodge building sitting at 700 South Main Street in Madison. This old building was purchased in 2003 by Nancy Garnett Williams, a native of Madison with a keen interest in the preservation of African-American historical memorabilia. The articles on display are on loan from Nancy through the end of the year; Jennie Hill Robinson set up the exhibit. Both Nancy and Jennie plan to attend the Open House. The slave/servant cabin, the Kemper/McMullen Law Office, and the entire Kemper Residence will also be open on the 21st.



*Nancy Garnett Williams*

The Odd Fellows movement originated in England and spread to the United States as the Independent Order of Odd Fellows which originally excluded African Americans. A free African American sailor in New York, who could not join the IOOF, acquired a Grand United Order of Odd Fellows (GUOOF) charter directly from England. On March 8, 1880, eleven African-American men in Madison received their charter from England and were able to create Odd Fellows Friendship Lodge 2121. Originally meeting in Antioch Baptist church, they considered themselves people who wanted to do right for the town and county. Powerfully connected to the community, Odd Fellows stepped in as a brotherhood to help out widows, orphans and the sick, supporting children, paying for funerals when needed, and even providing insurance to black people. The lodge was a social fellowship, community organization center and support group all in one.



Why the name? An old and apparently authoritative history of Odd Fellowship gives the explanation, "That common laboring men should associate themselves together and form a fraternity for social unity and fellowship and for mutual help was such a marked violation of the trends of the times (England in the 1700's) that they became known as 'peculiar' or 'odd,' and hence they were derided as 'Odd Fellows.' Because of the appropriateness of the name, those engaged in forming these unions accepted it and when legally incorporated the title 'Odd Fellows' was adopted." There are other explanations for the name, but this one deserves our curiosity.

All are invited to the Open House from 2pm- 4pm on Sunday May 21st, 2023.

# A Note From The President

Here goes with another newsletter highlighting our various displays and programs. Both the Mountain Museum in Criglersville and the Madison Museum at Kemper opened for the season in early March. We have lots of new exhibits at both Museums for visitors to see, and both have books, cards, and other gifts available for purchase. Please consider us if you plan a visit to the area during 2023. We love to have local visitors as well. The Museum at Kemper is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 10 AM until 2 PM, and the Mountain Museum in Criglersville is open on Sundays from 1 PM until 4 PM. Both Museums can be opened for special tours on other days and times. Call 540-395-5119 and leave a message with your desired tour date and someone will return your call to set up a time for your visit.

Thanks to the "Tea Team" for another very successful fundraiser for our Society. They always do a wonderful job with the teas and certainly keep our Society in a good light. The drive by teas have worked really well during the pandemic and are easier for the volunteers, so we may see a drive by again in September. We are so fortunate to have volunteers for all of our activities as we do not have any paid people to do different tasks as we go about our daily routines. Most of our revenue is derived from membership dues. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a member, see the information about membership located on the back page of this newsletter. We welcome everyone to the Madison County Historical Society.

An "Open House" at the Kemper Mansion is being planned as our quarterly program on May 21, 2023, from 2 until 4 PM to let you see new things on display. The highlight is the exhibit about the Odd Fellows Lodge and House of Ruth set up by new Curator Jennie Robinson with objects on loan from Nancy Garnett Williams. We also have a selection of old ledgers, donated by Steve Hoffman, from different business locations in Madison County. These allow visitors to take a peek into Madison's business world of the past. The slave/servant cabin, the Law Office, and the entire residence will be open on the 21st.

The 3rd annual Mountain Skills Day is being planned for September 10, 2023, at the Mountain Museum in Criglersville. This event will replace the program usually held on the 3rd Sunday in August. This program will feature people demonstrating skills prominent among families living in what is now the Shenandoah National Park. There will also be blue grass music, food available for purchase, and plenty of parking. The chimney monument and kiosks are always there for our visitors, and the museum will be open on the 10th so visitors can view the exhibits.

We are also planning to open the Arcade on special occasions later in the year to display some of the Rescue Squad memorabilia given to the Society along with other items stored at the Arcade. Dates and times will be announced via our website, Facebook page, as well as in the Madison Eagle.

A walking tour in conjunction with Waverly Yowell School's 4th Grade is being planned for May 22. This tour will consist of visits to county buildings and the Kemper property. Lots of volunteers will be needed for this tour as it involves quite a few stops. Please give us a call or send an email if you want to assist with this project. It usually runs from around 9 AM until lunch time.

We are in the process of putting together an article about all of the valuable things that Ed Berry accomplished for us during his journey on this earth. He was responsible for so many of the things that have been done in the Madison Heritage Foundation which later became the Madison County Historical Society. And, of course, his reach extended far beyond our organization as he was so valuable to Madison County during his lifetime. He knew and helped so many people in our area; his passing was a great loss to the county. We welcome input from the general public about Ed's contributions.

Thanks for your support  
Max Lacy, President

## From the Editor....

My remarks this time are dedicated to my friend and colleague Ed Berry. Ed and I were the first Tuesday volunteers at the museum at Kemper for several years, and we never lacked for tidbits of Madison history to discuss. It didn't matter whether it was trivia, real history, or just friendly gossip. We covered it all in a kindly (I hope!) fashion. Sometimes, we actually did business and talked about topics and research for this newsletter. Ed and I also spent upwards of six hours squeezing our way among the file cabinets in the Madison County Schools archives room. He did groundbreaking research on educational opportunities for African Americans in the county. I regret that much anecdotal material has gone with him but am thankful for the two long articles published in this newsletter in August 2022 and May 2022. They came to 3,513 words. Overall, Ed wrote 6,826 words for us and compiled an updated timeline of Madison County history that we have quoted, and will continue to do so, from time to time. Thank you, Ed. Rest in peace.

The usual reminders:

- Past issues of this newsletter may be accessed at [www.madisonvahistoricalociety.org](http://www.madisonvahistoricalociety.org).
- Print subscribers can go to the same site to enlarge photographs.
- We welcome feedback and letters to the editor. Our addresses are [madhistory467newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:madhistory467newsletter@gmail.com) for electronic submissions and PO Box 467, Madison, VA 22727 for paper.

~~~Judy Mahanes



# Lights, Fishing, and Fun

By

Kathleen Hoffman

Talk about doing it yourself – about a century ago Madison had a fair-sized dam that generated then-scarce electricity for its citizens. Located on the Robinson River a few miles from where the river goes under Route 29 just north of the town of Madison, the structure completed in 1926 put the county well ahead of most rural communities during the 1920s and 30s.

The dam at the end of Larkins Mill Lane and the power plant house perched on the south end produced power beginning in August of 1926 and operating entirely under local ownership for several years. The impressive amount of money raised for it was all from local sources; it was about \$80,000, which in today's dollars is more than \$1.3 million.

It was later partly torn down to keep the water from backing up further onto farmland upstream, but quite a bit of it is still standing, and the dam in full operation lives on in memories. For Aubrey Shepherd of Rochelle, son of one of the first operators, the great thing about the power dam had nothing to do with being able to see at night what you were doing at home or feeling satisfaction that Clore Chair Factory could operate its electrical wood-working equipment. "Catfish" Shepherd, now 93, will tell you. "It was the best cat-fishing place around. We would probably have starved to death if my father hadn't been able to fish out of the power dam house windows."



*View toward Oak Park side from downriver*

Martha Breeden recalls it as a wonderful recreation spot; church congregations would gather there for picnics, and children vied for swimming rights above and below the dam. "I was just a little girl who liked to go fishing with my dad," she said. Both parents and her sister also found the riverside attraction just a few miles from the town of Madison enticing. "And then there was the fish fry the next day."

The water cascading over the dam might have been creating a valuable commodity in a rural area in those days as it generated electricity, but Breeden was happiest about the lovely background sound it made as her family enjoyed the day out.

Peaceful, scenic, and often delicious as county residents found the lake and its results, though, it was also making history. Madison was a leap ahead of much of the country. Many urban areas had electricity, if often spotty, but into the 1930s provision of such power in rural parts of the U.S. was considered impractical because of the high costs of running lines among wide-spread houses and farms.



*Martha Breeden with catch of the day*



*Tolliver Utz, Jimmy Berry,  
Maxine Shepherd Ford, Betty Shepherd Utz*

The Rural Electrification Act, one of many New Deal proposals by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was passed in 1936, putting government money and organizing efforts behind the provision of power. By then the local dam had been generating power for many Madison residents and farms, however isolated, for a decade. More and more, the federal money was loaned and distributed through co-ops; that sort of organizing power had been a strength of rural communities for a while, and the New Deal leaders used it.

*(Continued on Page 4)*

(Continued from Page 3)

In her book, *Madison County, Virginia: A Revised History*, published in 1977, former county educator Margaret G. Davis pointed out that the dam was one of the events that happened about the same time as formation of the Shenandoah National Park that “revolutionized the lifestyles of the citizens.” She wrote that Hubert Cave, then the clerk of the court for Madison, was the moving force behind the venture, the person who organized and presumably somehow gathered the funds. The money went for construction of the dam and the plant that drew its strength from the water passing through carefully engineered passages under and to the side of the small powerhouse. Also to be funded were miles-long utility lines and other equipment for the incorporated Madison Power Company.

Happily, Madison educators worked to preserve this history. Davis, who wrote her “revised history” with a dedication to Claude Lindsay Yowell, author of the 1926 *A History of Madison County, Virginia*, did so because Yowell had provided his manuscript to her. Yowell served in county school-related positions including being the principal of the county’s high school. He wrote in his book, coincidentally published in 1926, that power generated inside the county “could be sent by wires for a long distance or used at home to lighten the burden of the farmers.”

Davis recently recalled that in researching the subject she also spoke extensively with Joe Fray of Madison, who was old enough to remember many details and had an unusually good ability to recall the past of his county.

The first officials of the company were A.H. Cave, W.H. Goodall, J.B. Fray, F.P. Smith Jr. and M.F. Blankenbaker. Cave, an engineering graduate of Virginia Tech, had once worked in an office with Thomas Edison in New Jersey. The two became friends, and Cave was obviously inspired by his association with the inventor of the light bulb and countless other electrical leaps.

Cave the engineer presumably oversaw the construction on the Robinson River, located on a six-acre tract known then as the Madison Woolen Mills property. As is plain from the many county place and road names with “mill” in them, waterpower had long been in use for milling grain and producing fabrics. There were streams of various sizes, and as Yowell said in his own book, “The streams of Madison are all swift, and the power that could be developed is almost unlimited.”

Aubrey Shepherd recalls the small mills with nostalgic fondness. “People grew their own wheat, took it to those little mills, and they would have flour for six months.” Some of those mills continued to operate using electricity for a while.

Born a few years after the dam was built, Shepherd grew up in a house that was owned by the dam, nearby on the Brightwood side. His father, Robert Shepherd, with Guy Hoy worked in shifts to ensure that all was running properly at the plant. The two and another county native, Paul Utz, were soon putting in shifts around the clock, guarding the dam against debris washed against it, and the plant itself from entanglements with logs and other glitches. The salary was \$15 a week, Aubrey Shepherd remembers wryly.

Living on the water’s edge was pretty great, Aubrey Shepherd says now. He did his own share of catfishing and had friends who were overjoyed to be able to come home with him and play in the water at the base of the dam. Of course, he himself was an accomplished swimmer. Upstream there was water about 25 feet deep and people swam and rowed boats. “You could drink the water” because it was so clean back almost 100 years ago.

Not that there wasn’t danger involved. One night his father was trying to clear a logjam on the dam and toppled over it. He was knocked unconscious but managed to get himself up and walk home in the watery dark, following the house light powered by the dam.



*Observation deck used during maintenance*



*Aubrey Shepherd*



Paul Utz lived on the other side of the river, referred to as the Oak Park side (Power Dam Road now comes from the Oak Park Road to a point above an impressively rocky cliff with the dam below). The hill must have made for quite a trip to work and back home for Utz.

The dam foundation area and lake were dug by hand, pre-bulldozers, Shepherd learned when he was young. Cement was mixed onsite, and the available power used was men and horses, although there was some steam power in use. No name was ever given to the lake, he says, because it was always the Robinson River.



*View of dam from upriver*

Shepherd doesn't remember the lines going up, because they were largely in place before he was born. The plant first served the towns of Madison and Brightwood, since those were population centers and were nearby, Davis wrote in her revised history. The Madison Power Company then put up its transmission lines to the Clore Chair Factory, presumably the biggest industry, and then extended from the first towns toward the mountains to Criglersville, then to Oak Park, Locust Dale, and even to Somerset and Barboursville. Along the way, in late 1929, the assets of the Madison Power Company were sold to the Republic Service Corporation. But as more and more customers came online, the dam couldn't keep up with the demand.

Davis wrote that the company then built ten miles of high-transmission lines to Boston, Va., northwest of Culpeper. There it connected with the Page Power Company and Virginia Public Service Corporation and began purchasing extra power. With the coming of the very popular federal push for rural electrification, the Northern Piedmont Electric Cooperative began serving part of Madison. Further changes came as Potomac Edison bought Republic Service Corporation. The Madison Power Company location was sold in 1965, and soon the dam was broken.

Fortunately, the dam was memorialized by a Madison artist, Tony Ford, a nephew of Aubrey Shepherd and grandson of the plant operator, Robert. His father also worked there, and as a boy he spent happy hours in the water. "It was before the parks for Madison, and all sorts of gatherings were held there. The water sounded so good." Working from a photo taken during the years of operation, he painted the dam with water pouring over it. A fairly large work, it reflects some definite personal feelings, and Aubrey Shepherd has proudly hung a print of it that his nephew gave him. Paul Utz is the operator pictured.

Ford recalls that the spot had its own post office, called Port, and the Larkins Mill that the road is named for was a textile mill.

Ford was always drawing as a child, and is mostly self-taught, with his family roots firmly in Madison, so the dam was a natural subject. His father, Jimmy Ford, worked for Potomac Edison and might have stayed after the local dam stopped operating, but "they sent him up a light pole"; after a first try, he said no, and went to work for the highway department. It seemed a safer choice.

One of his lasting impressions is crossing the river below the dam across a narrow footbridge that felt "hundreds of feet up." There was also a low-water bridge - now one county road ends on the top of the hill on the Oak Park side, and another, Larkins Mill Lane, swings around and dead ends on the Brightwood side with driveways continuing.

Between those two roads history was made, and children made lifelong memories.



*Tony Ford with his painting*

## Your Board of Directors

According to the society's by-laws, board members are elected by the general membership at the first quarterly meeting of the year. Following this election, the board selects its officers at its next regular meeting. Here is a listing of the 2023 Directors for the Madison County Historical Society.

Arlene Aylor, Membership Chair

Penn Bowers, Vice-President & Program Chair

Martha Breeden, Corresponding Secretary

Phil Brockman, Recording Secretary

Jean Busboso, Director

Janice Carpenter, Director

Dennis Coppedge, Director

Max Lacy, President

Judy Mahanes, Treasurer

Pam Nelson, Director

Beppy White, Curator Emeritus

Martha Breeden manages the Society Facebook page and serves as Photography Editor of the newsletter. Judy Mahanes is Editor of the newsletter.

In non-board roles, Mary Haught manages rentals of the Kemper Residence and chairs the Kemper Tea Team. Katy Cashman oversees the Society webpage. Jennie Hill Robinson is Curator of Exhibits for the Madison Museum at Kemper

We sadly report that one board seat is vacant due to the unexpected death of Ed Berry shortly after his election to a second term on the board. According to the by-laws, the Board of Directors may fill vacancies that occur between elections. Please contact any current board member if you wish to serve on or nominate someone for the Board of Directors.

# Carver Celebration in Madison

As part of the year-long observance of the 75th anniversary of the opening of George Washington Carver Regional High School, Madison County alumni celebrated on Sunday, February 19, 2023, with "Telling our Story: Let the Music Play." The event took place at the Madison Fire Hall. Turner Gurlz Foods, LLC catered the delicious meal. It was a joyous occasion as people came from all of the counties (Culpeper, Madison, Orange, and Rappahannock) along with guests from other areas. The Fire Hall was full!

The program featured music, reminiscing, and remarks from keynote speaker Rev. Frank D. Lewis, Sr., Chair, George Washington Carver Regional High School Alumni Association, Inc. Rev. Lewis stressed the need to keep "The Story" alive for the next generation. They need to know the struggles and adversity that had to be overcome to get to where we are today. Everyone cheered when several graduates took to the microphone to sing the Carver alma mater for the first time in many years.

Displays at the fire hall celebrated Carver's rich musical history, recognized early advocates for Carver from Madison, and introduced a traveling exhibit "Being a Citizen."

This program will be followed by programs in the other counties. The Orange County program was held on April 16, 2023, at Sweet Vines Winery, Unionville with the theme "Telling our Story- Teach the Children."

The culminating event is a Gala scheduled at Germanna Community College's Daniel Technology Center in Culpeper on Saturday, October 21, 2023.

# Membership Report

The Society is pleased to welcome the following new members this quarter:

Audrey Sarate - Ruckersville, VA

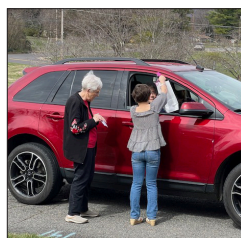
Sean Carter - Silver Spring, MD

Orange County African-American Historical Society

## Successful Spring Tea

Once again, participation was strong for the Spring Tea on March 22. We are grateful to all those who joined us. Thanks to you, we exceeded our goal for donations to support the Society.

Neighbors seem to like the idea of picking up a lovely bag filled with goodies—prepared and donated by our team of volunteers-- and enjoying the treats and tea with friends in the comfort of home.



We have heard that some serve the savories and the sweets at a table fully decked out with china and linens. Others seem to enjoy a more casual atmosphere, but they still have the advantage of a light luncheon with no work in the kitchen.

Thank you to all who participated and supported the Society while enjoying special delicacies.

The Fall Tea is tentatively set for Wednesday, September 27. More information will appear in the August newsletter.





# Culinary Tidbits from Betty Mallory

The speaker for the November 2022 MCHS quarterly meeting was Betty Mallory, a Madison native, who spoke to us about her cookbook *To Be Blessed*. Described as a lifetime collection of recipes and traditions and based on the Biblical premise that hospitality requires a spirit of giving and an open table, Betty's book shares her recipes and stories of family and friends. Her goal was to highlight wonderful food and love. The book contains Pat Lattin's beautiful illustrations of items found at the family farm.

Betty was raised on a farm and presently lives on a farm. Breakfast was the most important meal of the day. Think biscuits, eggs, sausage, bacon, homemade preserves, and butter!

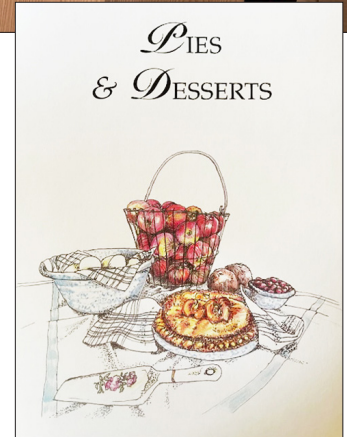
The planting schedule for the vegetable garden began in February with her father plowing the garden with a mule and then planting peas. The family made sauerkraut, canned all vegetables, and butchered hogs in December for themselves and others. Every bit of the hog was used. Betty says the best part is tenderloin--sliced, floured, and fried and then served with gravy. Betty also described gigging frogs in the Rose River at night with her father. The legs were fried and served with eggs.

Sunday family dinners featured chicken which her mother caught, killed, and fried along with vegetables from the garden and lemon meringue or chocolate pies for dessert. The children always played afterward. Chess pie, made from simple ingredients, originated during the depression when things like pecans and fruits became too expensive for many farm families.

Betty shared the secret to a good pound cake: slow oven, cold butter, and thorough mixing of ingredients. To make apple butter, put raw peeled apples in apple cider, begin cooking about 2:30am, and stir the mixture over the fire for at least 12 hours. Spices and sugar are added just before filling the jars. Then the plan is to clean up and welcome guests from all over.

When asked about the title Betty says she has had a great life with wonderful husband, children, and friends and that writing the book has been a great joy for her. "I am so blessed."

This was an entertaining program whether you were born on a farm, lived on a farm or have only been a city dweller.



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## FOR RENT

As you plan spring and summer activities, remember-- and remind your friends-- that the Kemper Residence is available to host your activities. The entire main floor, including the small kitchen may be used for a \$100 donation to the historical society.

Over the years, it has been the scene for numerous baby or wedding showers, rehearsal dinners and even a wedding or two.

Contact Mary Haught at 540-718-2175 or maryhaught@hughes.net to plan a tour for making arrangements to hold your event in this lovely historic building.



Madison County Historical Society  
P. O. Box 467  
Madison, VA 22727  
540-395-5119

Address Service Requested



[www.madisonvahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.madisonvahistoricalsociety.org)  
[madisonvahistory@gmail.com](mailto:madisonvahistory@gmail.com)

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.

Memberships and donations, major sources of income for the Society, are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. Membership application forms are available at the Museum and on-line at [www.madisonvahistoricalsociety.org](http://www.madisonvahistoricalsociety.org). (Click "About Us" and scroll down the page.) Memberships run for one calendar year and include the following categories:

|            |                |          |      |
|------------|----------------|----------|------|
| Sustainer  | \$500 or more  | Business | \$50 |
| Benefactor | \$250 to \$499 | Family   | \$30 |
| Partner    | \$100 to \$249 | Single   | \$20 |
| Friend     | \$50 to \$99   | Student  | \$5  |

For more information about any of our activities, call the Society Office at 540-395-5119. Leave a message if no one answers so we may return your call. Our email address is [madisonvahistory@gmail.com](mailto:madisonvahistory@gmail.com).

Our physical address is 412 N Main Street in the town of Madison.