

Preserving Yesterday Enriches Tomorrow



Madison County
Historical Society

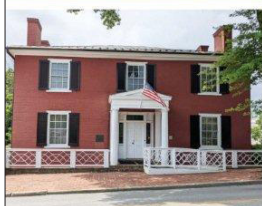
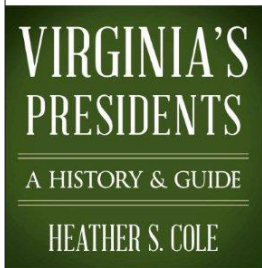
www.madisonvahistoricalociety.org

November 2023

Virginia's Presidents and Sites Shaping Their Lives

Our speaker for the November 19th, 2023, Madison County Historical Society meeting will be Heather Cole. "At Home with the Virginia Presidents" is her topic, an engaging armchair travel talk about the eight Virginia-born presidents and the sites that shaped their lives. We will travel the state from Staunton to Charles City and Wytheville to Winchester to visit (virtually) the homes and historic sites of the Virginia presidents. We will learn a bit about the presidents' lives, take a peek inside their homes and get some ideas for our next road trip.

Ms Cole has written a book, *Virginia's Presidents: A History and Guide* which tells the stories of the Virginia Presidents and the historic sites that interpret their lives. It includes profiles of each of the eight Presidents and descriptions of the Museums, historic sites and Presidential homes in Virginia and surrounding states that tell their stories and, by extension, the story of our nation. Among these eight Virginians were those who established a new nation, drafted our founding documents, fought in numerous battles, led the country through wars and created an international peace keeping organization. The book tells of the more than two dozen presidential homes, museums, and historical sites across the Commonwealth of Virginia and beyond which tell the stories of these Virginia-born Presidents. Many have expanded their interpretations to include a more complicated and nuanced story about our Presidents and include the stories of the other men, women and children who supported them in their political, military, and civilian careers.



Ms Cole is a public historian and writer living in Staunton, Virginia. She has worked in a variety of museums and archives, is currently working as a digital archivist for the Southern Foodways Alliance and does freelance writing and editing.

The talk is about 40 minutes followed by a Q & A and book signing. It will be held at 2pm November 19th in the Madison County Administration Offices auditorium and everyone is invited to attend.

A Note From The President

I would like to welcome new Board member Nancy Garnett Williams to fill out the term of the late Ed Berry. We are looking forward to tapping into her knowledge of Madison County. Regular Board elections will be coming up in February. As of now, it appears that there will be at least one open seat. Please let us know of someone you think would be willing to serve on our Board. The voting will take place at our February program.

Looking back, we have been busy since the last newsletter: We sponsored the annual Mountain Skills Day at the Mountain Museum in Criglersville on September 10 from Noon until 5 pm. The event was a big success with lots of demonstrators and lots of visitors. Some highlights of the day were: Ken Yowell bringing his Model A car for people to see, Sierra and Cheyene Hester dressed in period clothes, and Jimmy Graves autographing and selling his book titled "Shadows of The Blue Ridge Graves Mountain Farm and Lodges and the Graves Family". See page 7 of this newsletter for more coverage of the day.



Mary Haught and Esma Owens
on Delivery Duty

The "Tea Ladies" held another excellent drive by tea with all of the proceeds going to fund some of our different projects and programs. They always do such a fine job of fixing and packaging the goodies for people to pick up and take home for their own parties.

In October, we held an "Open House" at the Arcade to show some of the trophies, plaques, and scrapbooks that the Rescue Squad collected over the years. We also had the "Meander Painting" on display. Also on display was the desk from Gibbs and Estes Store that stood where the Peterson Building is now located. Nancy Garnett Williams had the "Lodge Hall" open the same day. That building housed the Madison Odd Fellows Chapter that was chartered in the late 1800's. The Lodge building on South Main Street will be open on several weekends in the coming months. A large collection of the artifacts from that lodge will be on display at the Madison Museum at Kemper through the end of the year.

Our Museums will be open for visitors until the middle of December during regular hours. Special tours may be arranged by calling 540-395-5119. Leave a message if no answer and someone will contact you to set up a date for your tour. We also have gifts for sale in both gift shops if you are looking to enlighten a young person or even an adult about Madison County History. Madison Museum hours are Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 10AM until 2 PM. The Mountain Museum in Criglersville is open from 1PM until 4PM on Sunday afternoons.

Finally, don't forget the program about the Virginia Presidents at the County Auditorium on November 19, 2023. Details can be found on the first page in this Newsletter.

Thanks for your support
Max Lacy, President
Madison County Historical Society



Tea Delivery
Pat Fray and Esma Owens

From the Editor....

I shall be brief this time so as to leave plenty of space for photographs! However, I must welcome Gaye Goodall and Erin Yowell Estes to our writing team and invite them to keep writing for us! To you careful readers wondering how the Yowells we mention are related.....yes, Kenny of Model A fame and Erin are father and daughter. The usual reminders:

- Past issues of this newsletter may be accessed at www.madisonvahistoricalsociety.org
- Print subscribers can go to the same site to enlarge photographs.
- For feedback and letters to the editor, our addresses are: madhistory467newsletter@gmail.com and PO Box 467, Madison, VA 22727.

~~~Judy Mahanes

## Membership Report

Below are listed those who became new members during the third quarter:

- Patrick Allen - Madison, VA
- Essie Berry - Madison, VA
- Esma Owens - Madison, VA

Be on the lookout for your 2024 renewal letters. Just fill out the form on the back of the letter and return it along with your tax-deductible dues. Please make any necessary changes in your personal information to help us keep our records up to date. Your support of the Society is greatly appreciated.

~~~Arlene Aylor

Robert "Bob" William Yowell

February 3, 1916 - February 10, 1945

By
Erin Yowell Estes

When I was growing up, I heard vague stories now and then alluding to a legendary relative I'd never met. Little comments like, "Uncle Bob would love to see how good the peaches look this year," or "Uncle Bob used to teach here at the Barboursville School, did you know that?" while attending a play put on by the Four-County Players. I didn't know too much about my Great Uncle Bob, just that he was the eldest of my Great Grandparents, Albon Waverly & Mary Elizabeth Hale Yowell's, eight children. I knew that my grandfather, Everett Yowell, and his siblings had a deep hole where Uncle Bob should have been. I remember being shown his Purple Heart every so often whenever Pop-pop (Everette) put it out with Uncle Bob's picture on display in the dining room for Veteran's Day or whenever he missed him. All I knew, all any of us knew, was that Uncle Bob was lost in The War. My family was forced to carry on living without Uncle Bob, building families and fumbling on through time in a way he was never able to. It is my hope that telling his story will remind others of the great sacrifices so many in our armed forces and their families have given to the great idea of freedom and to reiterate the importance of protecting that ideal, no matter the cost. Stories like my Great Uncle Bob's must be retold to future generations so that an understanding is ingrained that freedom is paid for at a heavy price: Freedom is not free, and it should not be taken for granted.

Uncle Bob started a career in teaching, after his father A.W., for whom the Waverly Yowell Elementary School was named. He began his career teaching 7th Grade at the school in Barboursville which is now used for performances by the Four-County Players. He then took a 7th Grade teaching position and principalship in The Plains, Virginia and later worked over the mountain at Toms Brook High School in Toms Brook, Virginia as an agriculture teacher. At the outbreak of WWII, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and his brother Everett drove him to the train station in Culpeper to catch the train for his tour of duty. Before Uncle Bob left, he told my Pop-pop to take care of his peach orchard and his Dodge. I don't know about the car, but I do know my Pop-pop took great care of that peach orchard until his dying day.

Recently, I had the opportunity to ride the train into Culpeper from BWI airport. I was trying to surprise my family with a visit and on the ride, I realized, and became overwhelmed with emotion, that I would be coming home on the train that took my Great Uncle off to war never to return again. A spirit of gratefulness took hold of me, and I became acutely thankful to have had the opportunity to grow up in the Piedmont and call this beautiful land home.

Uncle Bob rose to the rank of 1st Lieutenant and served in the 444th Bombardment Group at Dudhkundi Airfield in India. From Calcutta, the group flew bombing raids throughout the India-Burma Theater. Uncle Bob flew over 72 missions, and then, the family got word that he was missing in action. He never came home.

Decades went by, and while Uncle Bob was never forgotten, everyone often wondered what had happened. The family suffered decades of not knowing what had happened to their beloved brother, and I became aware that I might be able to find that information and help bring closure to the family. In 2007 shortly after graduating from Christopher Newport University in Newport News with a degree in History, I started looking into the matter. My access to the university's online databases, which were linked to a national database of information that was generally restricted to the public, had not yet been revoked. The Freedom of Information Act in conjunction with the now well-developed internet allowed the searching for particular information a lot easier than it had been in the past. I found the nephew of a member of Uncle Bob's crew who had done extensive research into the incident and was able to finally piece together the story of my Great Uncle's last weeks all those years ago.

On January 11, 1945, Bob was a 1st Lieutenant Radar Technician on a B-29 in a raiding mission over



*Robert Yowell
Photograph Courtesy
Erin Yowell Estes*

the Japanese ship repair facilities in occupied Singapore. At 22,000 feet, the plane was hit by antiaircraft fire in the bomb bay area causing an explosion. Some of the crew died on impact, but others were able to bail and parachute to the ground. Bob was one of these crew members. Three of the crew gathered together on the ground and were found by Chinese guerrillas (friendlies). Bob and another crew member, 1st Lieutenant Heiss, were together and with a different group of Chinese guerrillas. The two guerrilla groups were in contact with each other. At dawn the following day, they were trying to get Bob and Heiss together with the other three when Bob and Heiss were caught by a Japanese patrol while crossing a road. The Japanese took them to be confined in a wooden hut near the Naval Club at Selatar Air Field, Singapore. Meanwhile, the other three surviving crew members were extracted via British submarine.

At the beginning of February, the prisoners of war were joined by more prisoners of war: survivors of a different B-29 crash. All the prisoners were interrogated and tortured. On the 10th of February, just after Bob's 29th birthday, he, together with four or five of those other prisoners, was beheaded on the grounds of Nee Soon Rifle Range, Singapore. The remaining seven or eight prisoners were executed in like fashion a few weeks later. In order to cover up war crimes, the bodies were dug up on August 20th, cremated, and the ashes spread in the Johor Straights.



The government chose to withhold this information, we think, to spare the heartbreak that comes with such news. The withholding of this information also withheld

the proper honor due the fallen. Closure, which had been elusive for so many decades, could finally be had by my grandfather and his surviving siblings, only one of which remains alive today. The news was heartbreaking to hear, and it was difficult to inform my family what had happened to Uncle Bob. His memory lives on in the peach blossoms, in the walls of schools across the Commonwealth, and when viewing the farm he loved from atop the hills. We all still think of him from time to time, and though we've never met him, we know him. A plaque lies by his parents in the Cedar Hill Cemetery in Madison, and in 2015, the Commonwealth dedicated the bridge over the Robinson River in Banco to his memory.

Uncle Bob's story is only one story of many thousands of stories across this great nation and through the ages. One thing is for sure: without the brave sacrifices of these, our dead, America would not be what she is today. From the Revolution to unseen wars to come, we owe our gratitude to those who gave all. This Veteran's Day, thank a veteran, and when Memorial Day comes, take a moment before you enjoy a day off to remember those who fought and died for the freedoms you enjoy.



A. W. Yowell Family
Back row: Albon Waverly Yowell,
Robert "Bob" William Yowell, Mary Elizabeth "Beth"
Yowell, John "Jack" Albon Yowell,
Mary "Molly" Francis Yowell Rosson
Middle row: Elizabeth "Betty Jane" Yowell Hall,
Joel Byrd Yowell, Margaret "Peggy" Elizabeth
Yowell Eure, Everett Hale Yowell
Front: Walter Mayo Yowell
Photograph Courtesy Erin Yowell Estes

Erin Yowell Estes is a native of Etlan in Madison County. She graduated from Madison County High School before going to Christopher Newport. Today, she lives in Goodyear, Arizona, with her husband (from Michigan) and three children.

Beth Car Church is 200 Years Old

By

Gaye Goodall

Beth Car Baptist Church celebrated its 200th anniversary on Sunday October 15, 2023. The church was formed in 1823 and was the first church in the Town of Madison. The church began with 57 members and included men, women, and enslaved persons who came from the Robinson River Baptist Church in Criglersville. The current sanctuary was built in 1855. The roof trusses are supported by king posts secured with wooden pegs and attached to a massive 50-foot ridge beam.

Beth Car has been served by 23 pastors. The first one was Oliver Welch, who served the church for 6 years. The longest serving pastor was Thomas W. Lewis who served for 43 years from 1852-1895. Reverend Lewis built the house that is now known as the Madison County Library. He and his wife raised their 8 children there. Today there is a plaque at the library's front door commemorating the building as the "Thomas W. Lewis House."



View of Beth Car from Childrens' Room in Kemper Residence



*Moses and Judith Clore
(Troy and Karen Coppage)*

After the Civil War Reverend Lewis was the first minister in Madison County to marry African American couples. He also helped Beth Car's formerly enslaved members form Antioch Baptist Church, which sits just a little way down Mud Road from Beth Car. During Reverend Lewis's ministry he married over 1,000 people.

One of the founding 57 members of Beth Car was Moses Clore. He was the first member of the Clore family to make furniture, marking the beginning of six generations of furniture craftsmen. Moses died of smallpox in 1847 during the Madison County epidemic. During Beth Car's anniversary celebration, he and his wife Judith were portrayed by one of his descendants, Troy Coppage and Troy's wife Karen. Moses' grandson E. A. Clore established the well-known family business in 1921.

In 200 years, Beth Car experienced the Civil War, the Emancipation of Slaves, the Industrial Revolution, the Great Depression, two World Wars, pandemics and continues to serve the Madison community.

A Bit of Genealogy

One attendee at Beth Car's anniversary celebration was Cathi Clore Frost from St. Helens, Oregon. She came all this way to see her cousin Mr. Troy Coppage decked out as Moses Clore. Cathi is a member of the Board of Historic Germanna (formerly known as the Germanna Foundation) so she was able to attend a Board meeting while in Virginia. She is also a professional genealogist, who spent hours in the Madison County Clerk's office doing research on Clores and their kin. One of Cathi's current projects is writing the definitive genealogy record of the Weaver clan descended from 1717 Germanna colonists.

So why was Troy Coppage chosen to portray Moses Clore? In Cathi Frost's words:

"Troy is a direct descendant of Moses Clore. Specifically, Troy is the 3 x great-grandson of Moses or, if you prefer, Moses is Troy's 3 x great-grandfather."



*Cathi Clore Frost
at the Clerk's Office*

Open House at the Arcade

When the Society moved the Madison Museum from the Arcade to the lowest level of the Kemper Residence, the Arcade inherited a conference table and chairs but lost most of its exhibits. Things began to change in August of 2021 when the Society entered into a loan agreement with Murielsue Clark of Waynesboro, VA to display a 6-foot by 8-foot screen painting of Meander Farm as it existed in 1939. Ms. Clark writes that "the screen



The Meander Painting

was commissioned by George Shearer and was reportedly painted by an artist who visited from New York City. It depicts the property as seen by the artist including the pastures, manor house, and tenant houses and the numerous outbuildings including the kitchen and meat house, kennels, and milk barn. Insets include depictions of Shearer and his two daughters as well as a map of the 600-acre property as it existed in 1860." Jean Busboso coordinated the loan with Ms. Clark, and Jean's family transported the painting from Waynesboro to Madison. Troy Coppage designed the mechanism for hanging the painting on an empty Arcade wall.



*Connie Aylor, Max Lacy,
Janice Carpenter*

In early 2022, the Society was invited to meet with representatives of the Madison County Rescue Squad. By then the Volunteer Squad had voted to disband, and members were faced with the task of moving out of their space. What to do with all their memorabilia?? The Society agreed to be the keeper of the Squad's founding documents and subsequent minutes. Those are safely packed away in plastic tubs and stored on the second floor of the Arcade. Selected plaques, trophies, and scrapbooks are now on display on the lower level. Special guests on October 6th were Squad and Auxiliary members who were invited to see what Society curator Jennie Robinson did with some of their things.



Desk from Gibbs and Estes Store



Rescue Squad Memories

If you were not able to visit on October 6th, watch our publications and Facebook page for notice of future open houses. Or just snag a Board member with a key who can let you in.



Take Me Back to the Mountains

September 10, 2023

Early weather forecasts for September 10th seemed a bit ominous, but all turned out to be beautiful! The third annual Mountains Skills Demonstration was a huge success. Craftspeople, musicians, and reenactors provided the “program” and Kenneth Yowell’s Model A was a popular backdrop for photographs. Newcomer Sam Bartczak set up his display and interviewed attendees to gather their memories of Shenandoah National Park and the displacements connected with its formation. His findings will become part of his senior project report. Sam is a senior at Madison County High School and the Blue Ridge Virginia Governor’s School.

A few facts about the day:

- Max Lacy “invented” the event and coordinated everything!
- Four other Society members helped staff the museum and run errands.
- Twenty-two presenters educated, entertained, and fed us.
- Forty-four visitors signed the guest book in the museum.
- Who knows how many other folks came and just stayed outside?

And now some photographs:



*Sierra and Cheyenne Hester with
Max Lacy and the Model A
Photograph Courtesy Tiffany Hester*



*Madison Quilters Guild
The date 1915 is embroidered into this quilt
made by Davis/Blankenbaker/Yowell ancestors of
current quilter Laura Coppedge DeBoer.*



Frances Lacy



Hurt Hollow Band



Making butter with Betty Utz Mallory



*Sam Bartczak with Bill Henry, founder and
president of the Blue Ridge Heritage Project*

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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. (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.

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