

Preserving Yesterday Enriches Tomorrow



Madison County
Historical Society

www.madisonvahistoricalsociety.org

November 2024

FROM JAMESTOWN TO SYRIA



On Sunday November 17th Lynn Graves, an owner and Manager of Graves Mountain Farm and Lodges, will speak at the Madison County Historical Society quarterly meeting about the history of the Graves family in Syria. The title of his program is "From Jamestown to Syria." He will begin with the arrival of Captain Thomas Graves in Jamestown, review his undertakings, talk a bit about what happened until the arrival in Syria, but primarily the talk covers the history from Syria to the present.

Lynn is a 1995 graduate of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (a.k.a. VPI or Virginia Tech) and has been or still is board member or chairman of numerous committees and associations including the Virginia State Apple Board, the Madison County Tourism committee, Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Virginia Agribusiness Council.

Most every Madisonian is familiar with Graves Mountain Lodge in Syria and many thousands of individuals from elsewhere have either vacationed there or visited the Lodge. Many have also visited the Lodge and Farm during the Apple Harvest Festival weekends in October or the fireworks on July fourth. Some might even be able to say they visited before there were Lodges because the Graves families have long been in Syria and there is a lot of history there.

The history of Madison County is a fascinating story, and it is always quite interesting to learn about those who were a major part of making that history. We think everyone will enjoy hearing Lynn's presentation about his family's role in the hospitality, agricultural, and tourism story of Madison County.

The meeting will be held in the Madison County Administrative building auditorium on November 17th 2024 at 2pm and everyone is invited to attend.



Save The Date

The Kemper Tea Team announces Wednesday, April 9, 2025, as the date for the next Drive-By Tea. Reservation details will appear in the February 2025 issue of this newsletter. Spread the word!



A Note From The President

It's time to put together an article for the fall newsletter. We have been very busy with tours and programs since the last newsletter. "Home To the Mountains" was a huge success as we had a large crowd of visitors that seemed to really enjoy the skills of the mountain being demonstrated by an excellent group of volunteer crafters. These crafts were a way of life for many families prior to their removal from the mountain for the creation of the Shenandoah National Park. These were survival skills dating back to the late 1700s until the remaining ancestors were removed in the 1930s. A special thanks to all of the demonstrators and volunteers that made the day possible. Thanks also to the Hurt Hollow Band and Catch the Chef Food Truck for providing entertainment and food for the visitors.



Thanks to the "Tea Group" for another successful tea that always puts extra funds in our coffers. The group always donates all of the fixings, so all proceeds go to our Historical Society. If you missed this tea, another will be held in the spring.

Colonial Days for elementary students was cancelled during the covid years, but we are hoping to restart it this fall. The date has been set for November 25 at Waverly Yowell School. This program gives the 4th grade class an idea how things were done in colonial times. They will have studied colonial history prior to this program. We always like to share history with the young people of Madison County.

Mention was made in the last newsletter about the volunteers that helped make the new room at the Mountain Museum a reality. One of those volunteers was a young lady (Morgan McKinney) who was a student at James Madison University at the time. She was involved in a project for school that researched the history of her Mom's Jenkins family. While she was doing that research she told us that we were to get a report when her project was finished. She finished the project and has presented us with a copy of the book that she made. This family was mostly located in Rappahannock County on Hazel Mountain. We are very proud of Morgan as she has donated many hours along with her dad (Darren McKinney) to the Mountain Museum while she was still busy in school. Now she is doing her graduate work at the University of Dublin in Ireland. Her study is still focused on the people of the Mountain. We wish her well in her studies.

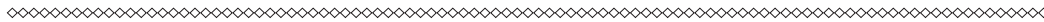
One thing that I have overlooked in doing my column is the fact that Essie Nicholson was one of the oldest of the displaced people when the Mountain Museum was formed. Essie cut the ribbon when we dedicated the Museum in Criglersville. When she came to the dedication, she brought some brooches that she had collected over a period of time. She has since passed away at the age of 101, but she was a teenager when her family was removed and she knew a lot about the other families that were in the proposed park. She told me that she escorted a new teacher to school one day when she was only 6 years old, because the teacher was afraid of snakes. What a wonderful lady, may she rest in peace.



Our volunteers are ready to welcome you to our museums. Watch our Facebook page for information about seasonal closings or special openings. We look forward to seeing you.

Thanks for reading this column!

Max Lacy, President
Madison County Historical Society



From the Editor....

I extend huge thanks to Martha Breeden for taking many and organizing all of the photographs that appear in this issue! The newsletter would be much drabber without her efforts!

Here are 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:

- Sunshine Goodwin—Orange, VA
- Vanessa Hackett—Rhodesdale, MD
- Brian & Charlotte Lenhoff—Etlan, 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

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY ON MADISON COUNTY COMMONWEALTH ATTORNEY ANGUS RUCKER BLAKEY (1816-1896)

By

Jonathan Noggle and Michael Noggle

Born at the family's farm near Wolftown in Madison County, Virginia on September 3, 1816, Angus Rucker Blakey was the oldest son of James Blakey and Margaret Rucker. Margaret was the daughter of Angus Rucker, Revolutionary War Captain of a local Virginia Militia unit, and James was the son of Churchill Blakey. Angus Rucker Blakey married Jane Eliza Johnston on September 11, 1844, in Rockbridge County. They had four children who lived to adulthood; James, Zachariah, Mary, and George (born in 1853, 1855, 1857, and 1860, respectively), and four who died between ages one and four years old.

Prior to enrolling at the University of Virginia (UVA) in 1834 to study ancient languages and mathematics, Angus Blakey received an early classical education in Madison County. After completion of his studies at UVA, Blakey studied the law under U.S. Supreme Court Justice Phillip Barbour, a Gordonsville, Virginia native, whom President Andrew Jackson nominated in 1836 to be a Supreme Court Justice.

After passing the bar exam, Blakey served as Greene County's Commonwealth Attorney between 1838 and 1850, and also became Madison County's Commonwealth Attorney between 1842 and January 1864, replacing James T. Hill. As the position in those early years was not considered full time, it was possible to serve two counties simultaneously as well as engaging in an active private legal practice.

Prior to 1850, political control in the state was held almost entirely by the large landowners in the eastern part of the state. However, increased migration (mostly by smaller farmers) into the western part of the state, created citizens who did not feel they were adequately represented in state government. In 1850, a convention was held for a new constitution, and by 1851, a compromise was reached. One of the democratic trending changes was that the county officers were to be elected, where previously they were appointed by the "Gentlemen Justices" of the county. Since the County's Commonwealth Attorneys were being elected by the voters starting in 1852, that may help explain why Blakey chose to work for only Madison County (his home county) from then on.

The first Madison County record found for Angus Blakey (other than him being deeded land by his father in 1840) was a coauthored letter dated January 19, 1842, written by Blakey, Milton Kirtley, and Thomas A. German. This letter was written to the Virginia legislature on behalf of the Madison County Library Association asking their association be registered with the state. This likely represents the first attempt to start (and fund) a Madison County public library. Blakey also appears in Madison County Personal Property Tax records starting in 1842 indicating he owned two to three enslaved persons, one horse, and a Gig (a light two-wheeled, one-horse carriage). He is on the Madison County payroll starting in 1842 as their Commonwealth Attorney showing he earned \$125 per year.

Angus Blakey is listed over one hundred times in the Madison County deed and court trial records from 1842 until his death. Often handling the legal transfer of land for estates (i.e., selling land as a Commissioner or Trustee), but a few times he bought or sold land as his own property. He also appears in many legal suits as the plaintiff in both Greene and Madison Counties.

In addition to serving as Commonwealth Attorney, Blakey had an active, private legal practice. No information was found on other attorneys with whom he might have had a partnership; however, a previous article



1936 WPA Photograph of Eve House

(Continued from Page 3)



*Law Office in 1984
Photograph Courtesy Jonathan Noggle*

in the Madison County Historical Society Newsletter (August 2007) references an 1858 letter to him from Thomas N. Welch (another Madison attorney) where Welch was evidently lobbying the state legislature on behalf of a client for Blakey. Brief biographical information on both was included in the newsletter. Additionally, Mr. Blakey was also a partner in the Leitch and Blakey Carriage Factory in Madison prior to the Civil War (per 1860 census).

In about 1850, Blakey constructed his "law office" at what is now 206 N. Main Street in Madison and resided next door at 202 N. Main Street. Around the same time, Blakey donated land next to his law office for the Madison Presbyterian Church (212 N. Main Street) where he was a Trustee.

In 1861, Blakey was Madison County's representative at Virginia's Secession Convention. He voted for secession (on both votes taken) from the United States.

During the Civil War, Blakey did not actively participate as a soldier due to medical reasons. He was ordered to serve with the Rockbridge Reserves in January 1864, but never saw action. After the war, in 1865, from his then residence in Rockbridge County, he wrote a letter to President Johnson requesting amnesty. In his letter he gave a few details of his service with the Confederacy. He stated his exemption from active service was due to "his disease," but no details on his disease were ever found. During his reserve duty, he was responsible for collecting taxes for tobacco sales in Nelson County for the Confederacy. He was granted amnesty August 9, 1865, and subsequently moved to Albemarle County.

Prior to leaving Madison County, Angus and Jane sold most of their acquired Madison properties (primarily Town of Madison lots) to his neighbor, William E. Banks for \$21,825 in Confederate Treasury Notes (sadly for him, the Confederate Treasury Notes were worthless after the war). They kept the remaining parcels until after the war, selling them over time to various individuals. No information was found for the reason for his move to Albemarle County. Most likely, personal and financial hardship ensued following the Civil War and he was looking for a larger market for his services. Also, his oldest son, James Blakey, enrolled at UVA at about that time. Regardless, prior to departing Madison County, Blakey left his mark on the Madison Court House where he carved his name in the courtroom banister. See the photograph provided by Clarissa Berry, the current Commonwealth's Attorney for Madison County.

Living in Albemarle County after the Civil War, Blakey did not try to reclaim his Commonwealth Attorney position in Madison County, although through his private practice out of Albemarle County, he continued to serve Madison County and area clients until shortly before his death.

While living and practicing law in the Charlottesville area, Blakey helped UVA procure endowments for scholarships and professorships during the 1880s. Additionally, Blakey was involved with the establishment of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN (via his association with UVA) by also assisting with their endowment process and obtaining funding for that University.

His wife, Jane Eliza Johnston Blakey, died September 7, 1884, at 60 years of age. Angus Rucker Blakey died February 2, 1896, at age 79. He and Jane are buried together at the Maplewood Cemetery in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Angus Blakey was instrumental in the affairs of Madison County and the surrounding region for much of his life. Being selected for 10 years by leaders of the County and then elected for 12 more years by his fellow residents was a statement of the regard Madison County citizens had for his integrity and competence.



Blakey's Initials

Burnt Tree Grange

By

Judy Mahanes

An organization officially named the National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry was founded in 1867. Its roots were in agriculture. Grange histories report that titles for officers (Master, Overseer, Steward) were derived from traditions on British estates. Rituals and secret passwords have played a significant role in Grange history; however, the organization has always welcomed men and women as equal members. Local granges in rural and small communities focus on education and community service. The National Grange is the oldest advocacy group for agriculture in the United States. Madison native Loretta Washington is the Sales/Benefits Director on the staff of the National Grange in Washington, DC.

The first local grange, the James Madison Grange, was organized in 1933 in the town of Madison. O. F. Carpenter was the first Master. Early meetings featured patriotic singing, social activities, and lectures on Grange history. By the 1950s, there was several local Granges in Orange County, and the Virginia State Grange undertook to expand into eastern Madison County. State Grange Deputy Harry Ellis led the effort. Community gatherings were held to educate local citizens about the Grange and to stir up interest. The Rochelle Grange was established in 1954 with Smith Estes as the first Master, followed by Alvin Lohr.



On May 1, 1954, Burnt Tree Grange, #957, was awarded its charter as a Subordinate Grange of the National Grange. Its original home was an old store building on route 685, now known as Burnt Tree Way. The organization derived its name from this neighborhood. Folklore attributes the name of the neighborhood to a burned out tree trunk that stood for years after a band of gypsies set fire to the interior of a hollow tree. Many long-standing Burnt Tree Grange (BTG) traditions, including the Thanksgiving dinner and community Halloween Party, began while the group was in this temporary home. At the same time, the group was raising funds and acquiring land for a permanent home. On September 27, 1958, dedication ceremonies were held for a new Grange Hall on Route 230 (now Orange Road) in the community of Radiant. The Master of the Virginia State Grange gave the keynote address.



Thomas J. Weaver was elected as the first Master of BTG. Later he and wife Juanita served as officers in the Virginia State Grange. They and their young sons Thomas G. Weaver and Erik J. Weaver were named state Grange family of the year in the 1960s. Later, Thomas Weaver served many terms as Treasurer of the organization and shared the officers table with his sister Anna W. Mahanes, a long-time Secretary of the Grange. Other Masters from the early years include Bennett Lohr, Pendleton Lohr, and Mildred Morrell.

In its commitment to Community Service, the BTG has sponsored first-aid classes and clinics for polio vaccines and flu shots. Members constructed a Little League baseball field for the Radiant Raiders and painted the roof on the old Radiant voting house. The Grange sponsored and housed the Radiant Garden Club and has reached out to assist residents in need, especially at holiday time. Throughout its history, Burnt Tree Grange has sponsored a wide variety of programs for the education and the entertainment of its members and the public.

Today, the Grange may be best known for its building. The Grange Hall hosts community events and is the polling place for the Radiant voting precinct.

Happy 70th birthday to Burnt Tree Grange!

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*A few final words: Highlighting the history of some county organizations raises questions about others, especially those that no longer exist. If any of you have records or anecdotal information about the James Madison Grange or the Rochelle Grange, please let us in the Historical Society know. My knowledge about Burnt Tree is mostly personal. My parents were charter members of the group, and I often tagged along to meetings. Some sixty or so years later, I'm assuming it's OK to admit that I along with a friend or two contributed to the wear and tear of the concrete floor at the Grange Hall by skating around on those old roller skates that had to be clamped to our shoes. JGM*

# Mountain Museum at Criglersville

## June 2014–September 2024

In June of 2014, Jim Lillard and Bill Henry hosted a public meeting in Madison to discuss plans for recognizing the life, contributions, and sacrifices of mountain residents displaced by the establishment of Shenandoah National Park. Jim, a Madison native, had long been searching for an appropriate way to honor his own friends and relatives affected by the displacement. Bill's passion for telling the story of these folks grew from seeing the remains of their homes as he hiked in the Park. Bill is the founding President of the Blue Ridge Heritage Project (BRHP).

The initial goal of the BRHP was to construct a rock chimney in each of the eight counties (Albemarle, Augusta, Greene, Madison, Page, Rappahannock, Rockingham, Warren) where land was taken for the Park and mount on each chimney a plaque listing names of displaced residents of that county. Madison's chimney was the first to be built. The Augusta county committee hopes to dedicate the eighth and final chimney this fall.

Here in Madison, the Historical Society has also sponsored a highway marker for the Old Blue Ridge Turnpike, added kiosks near the chimney, established a museum, and created a "mountain kitchen" in what used to be an open porch on an old school building. Most recently on September 8, 2024, the Society hosted the fourth annual "Home to the Mountains" event to provide visitors a chance to visit the museum, eat, hear some good music, and watch demonstrations of mountain skills.

We hope these photographs will really tell the story!



April 2015



2015



November 2018



November 8, 2015 Alvin Meadows & Culton Goodall waiting to unveil the plaque.



Chestnut Tree in 2016



June 2017



After the 2018 Flood



Constructing the Ramp



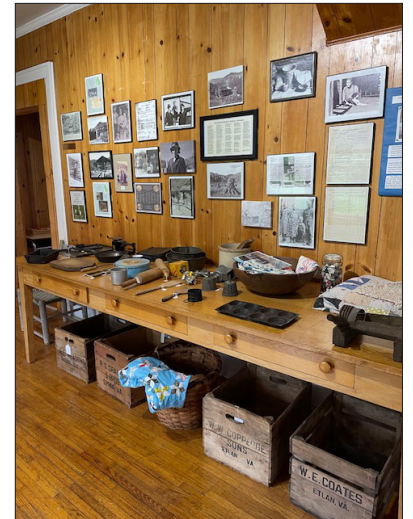
June 2021



June 27, 2021 Essie Nicholson Cutting the Ribbon



Summer 2022



2023



Chestnut Tree in 2024



2024



September 8, 2024 Madison Quilters



September 8, 2024 Frances Lacy & Vickie Watts



September 8, 2024 Craig Jacobs & Crew

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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 Museums and on-line at <http://www.madisonvahistoricalsociety.org> . (Click "About" and scroll down the page.)

For more information about any of our activities, or to schedule a museum visit outside of normal hours, call the Society's office at 540-395-5119. Leave a message if no one answers so we may return your call.

### *VISIT OUR MUSEUMS*

#### **Madison Museum and the Kemper Residence**

412 N Main Street  
Open Tuesday, Thursday, Friday  
10:00 AM to 2:00 PM  
(Closed mid-December - March 1st)

#### **Mountain Museum at Criglersville**

1128 Old Blue Ridge Turnpike  
Open Sunday, 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM  
*Memorial chimney and kiosks  
open all the time.*

#### **Graves Mill Park**

52 Bluff Mountain Road  
Open all the time.

#### **Arcade**

124 N Main Street  
Open by special announcement.