

Preserving Yesterday Enriches Tomorrow



Madison County
Historical Society

www.madisonvahistoricalsociety.org

May 2025

The Great Madison County Flood of 1995

The program for the May 18, 2025, meeting of the Madison County Historical Society will feature the flood of June 25-27, 1995. We will revisit the events of those days as we observe the 30th anniversary of this flood that had extraordinary impact on people and places in Madison County, Virginia.

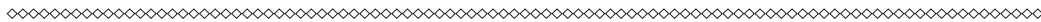
Our principal speaker will be Dr. L. Scott Eaton, Professor of Geology at James Madison University. In his talk about the Madison County Storm of 1995, Dr. Eaton will present "the science behind the storm, as well as "lessons learned" in identifying past and potential future flooding hazards--insights so helpful to communities within mountainous terrain. He will also briefly examine the recent flooding and landslides in western North Carolina from hurricane Helene.



Dr. Eaton received his Bachelor's degree in Geology from James Madison University and his Master's degree in Geology from Southern Illinois University before earning his doctorate from the Department of Environmental Sciences at the University of Virginia.

There will be pictures, videos and certainly many personal stories. Everyone who was resident in Madison county at that time has vivid memories of what happened- some more than others. The water and debris destroyed or damaged homes, roads, bridges, farmland, vehicles, and there was loss of life. Oldtimers will use this day to reminiscence about the water and its aftermath. Newcomers who have merely heard mention of The Flood can learn about the awesome magnitude of the event.

The meeting will be on May 18th, 2025, at 2pm in the Madison County Office Building auditorium at 414 N Main Street in Madison. Everyone is invited to attend.



Save the Date

The Kemper Tea Team announces Wednesday, September 24, 2025, as the date for the next Drive-By Tea. Reservation details will appear in the August 2025 issue of this newsletter. Spread the word!



A Note From The President

A lot has happened since I reported in the February newsletter. We opened for the new season in early March at both Museums. Thanks to Beply White and her helpers, we have a new exhibit about the Hunton House Hotel in the Madison Museum at Kemper. There are lots of new things to see even if you visited in 2024. The Mountain Museum is open as well and now has a Library of books about the Shenandoah National Park and other local history, some going back before the park. Thanks to Buddy Woodward and others for the donation of these books that can be checked out for you to read. We donated five duplicate copies in this collection to the Madison County High School Library as part of Alex Vandergraff's project for Governor's School.

Sorry to hear of Everette Weakley's passing. He was one of our strongest supporters, a truly knowledgeable and wonderful person. May he Rest In Peace.

We are planning to do the 4th Grade Walking tour on May 19, 2025. The students will be touring the town on foot to explore things that the town and County have to offer. They start at Waverly Yowell School, continue to the County Office Building and then through town to the Arcade, Beasley Park, Sheriff's Office, War Memorial lawn, and Social Services Office. They then cross the street to the Court House before returning to school for lunch. Be on the lookout for them as you travel through the town that day. We thank the Sheriff's Office for providing protection for the walkers as they cross the streets necessary to reach their destinations.

When you tour our Museums, you will meet some of our new volunteers: Frances Crebbs, Joyce Garrison, Virginia Utz, and Florence Simmers at Kemper and Vickie Brown, Essie Berry, and Noah Wharton at the Mountain Museum in Criglersville. Please let them know that you appreciate their volunteering. I want to thank all of our volunteers for their contributions to our mission of Preserving Madison County History.

We encourage members of the Madison County Historical Society to schedule a visit to your Museums and tell your friends about them as well. We hope they will become members, and we welcome all of you as volunteers. We hope you will enjoy our Museums as much as our volunteers enjoy showing you the exhibits in them. The Servants Quarters and Kemper's former Law Office are available for you to tour. You may also visit the upper floors of the Kemper Residence and view our collection of period furniture. The main floor of the Residence is available for rent by contacting Mary Haught at 540-547-3503. This is our Madison County History on display. Hope to see you soon!

Bill Price did a wonderful program on the history of Madison Wood at our February meeting. Our Program in May will feature the history of the "Flood of '95". See the article on page one for details. Special thanks go to Penn Bowers who organizes our Quarterly Programs for you to enjoy. If you haven't been to one, we would like to invite you to come and see for yourself what a great job he does.

Thanks to Fay Utz for planting flowers at the Mountain Museum sign in Criglersville. They add a lot to the beauty of the sign.

Finally, thanks to the loyal "Tea Group" for another great fundraiser. All the food and labor are donated by that group so all the monies that the teas bring in are donated to our Historical Society. If you haven't bought the goodies in the past, I suggest that you try next time as it is really "First Rate."

Max Lacy, President
Madison County Historical Society

Membership Report

We welcome the following members who have joined since our last newsletter:

Michael O. Noggle
Mechanicsville, VA

Bill & Pat Price
Madison, VA

Florence Simmers
Madison, VA

Virginia Utz
Pratts, VA

The support of all our members is greatly appreciated and we encourage you to stop by to visit and view our exhibits.

~~~ Arlene Aylor

## From the Editor....

At the time of the Flood of 1995, Nan Coppedge was Director of the Madison Department of Social Services. Please don't let the length of her article deter your reading of it. She gave me permission to shorten it, but I just couldn't.

Here are the usual reminders:

- Past issues of this newsletter may be accessed at [www.madisonvahistorical society.org](http://www.madisonvahistorical society.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](mailto:madhistory467newsletter@gmail.com) and PO Box 467, Madison, VA 22727.

~~~ Judy Mahanes

JUNE 1995: A FIRST PERSON ACCOUNT

By

Nan B. Coppedge

On Tuesday, June 27, 1995, my husband Dennis and I walk down the sidewalk, going to work that morning, and comment about how much it is raining. Our children (ages 11 and almost 15) are staying at home that day. Around 9:00 or 10:00, they call me at work to say rain is coming through our basement walls, we have lost electricity at home, and that our nephew is there with them. They stand at the top of the steps to the basement, and over the phone we can hear the water pouring into the basement. At some point that morning, the telephone goes out.

At work we had planned to have a retirement luncheon for a Department of Social Services (DSS) Board member at Graves Mountain Lodge. The bridge to the Lodge is flooded and the luncheon is cancelled. John Fray, the County's Emergency Management Coordinator, calls DSS to say the County is going to open a shelter at the Rescue Squad Building, per the County's Emergency Plan. We decide Dennis should go home to check on things.

Three of us had attended one training session about operating a shelter since it is the local DSS's responsibility. So, we pack up office supplies and head down the street to the volunteer rescue squad building. It doesn't take long to realize this is a major event, that there are going to be a lot of statewide rescue people involved, and that the Rescue Squad Building is going to be needed as an emergency control center. It is decided the high school will now house the emergency shelter.

Dennis can't get home from Culpeper as traffic is stopped at Banco because of flooding. Roads and bridges are flooded in Graves Mill, Criglersville, and Syria. Not very many people have cell phones, and even those who do find they're not working very well. In late afternoon, we learn the old, wooden, narrow bridge on Duet Road is still open and the Rescue Squad is going to the northern end of the County to assess the situation. I get my sister-in-law from her work to ride with them to stop at our house to be with the children. Even though we learn that one lane of Rt. 231 is washed out near our house, I "know" that Dennis's brother will get to our house and take care of everyone.

Communication is not very good. A fire truck is stuck at Ruth, and there are rumors that the White Oak Lake Dam has broken. Helicopters are flying in to rescue people from Criglersville; huge rocks and mud are coming down out of the mountain; and the Robinson River is out of its banks on Rt. 29. I am worried because I can't get home to my children, and if the White Oak dam has broken and flooded the farm, what is happening to others in my family? About that time my brother walks in; that was a wonderful sight to me. The dam has not broken, but huge trees and rocks are coming down, our "big" bottom has flooded. The bridge over the White Oak is out, but everyone is fine.

The shelter moves to the high school. Larry Carter is the principal and Allan McLearn the assistant principal. Allan gives me a master key to the school and is great to work with. The fire department members put up cots (old Korean War surplus cots) in the gym. We take over the school office, with a table in the foyer as an information center. TV and news reporters are coming by. Volunteers are showing up, the stranded motorists are coming in because they can't get through on Route 29. County road maps are important. Our neighbor comes to the high school to get his wife and tells me that our children did a good job of taking care of her Jersey cow in the rain and flooding; and that my brother-in-law had indeed gotten to our house, despite one lane of Rt. 231 being collapsed.

Owen and Erma Yoder show up and ask what they can do. The answer: cook dinner for an unknown number of volunteers and stranded people!! They cook a grilled chicken dinner for 100 people. We begin to think about working in shifts, preparing three meals a day, how to keep track of people, getting needed medications, etc. Lots of emergency responders come in. Where will we house them? How do we let families know who is at the shelter?

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We know of one missing person whose house has washed down the mountain with her in it in the Quaker Run/Lindsay Lane area. Ruth and Scootie Lillard's house has been moved off its foundation by rocks, mud, and rain coming down the mountain in Graves Mill. The rain is hung up in the mountains and is disastrous in those select parts of the county, while most of the county is "just flooding."

About 9:00 p.m. Dennis and I decide it is not safe for him to attempt to go home on the Duet Road bridge in the dark. I am "in charge" at the high school shelter so I attempt to sleep on a cot in the gym. There's not much sleep that night.

Wednesday, it stops raining, and people start asking what is needed. They bring in donations of underwear, money, and food and bottled water. We get toiletry kits, towels, etc. from the DSS office/Salvation Army food closet.

I am still wearing the same floral dress I put on the day before, and a co-worker brings me tennis shoes and socks from her house. The Board of Supervisors had declared a State of Emergency and had a briefing meeting at 6:00 a.m. Wednesday morning. How will the search for the missing person be conducted? How is it determined who is missing? Where will the emergency workers bunk? How will clean up from all of the rocks, debris, broken up roads be conducted? A district emergency services officer lived in Madison, and he is on the phone with a state resource person and asks me about using prisoners or welfare reform recipients to search the rocks, etc. I think about snakes in all the rocks and mud, supervision of the "workers," housing everyone, injuries, liability, etc. and say I don't think it will work right now. He says, "No, George, it won't work." I think he is talking to Governor George Allen, and that I have just told the Governor, "No." But it is not the governor; it is someone in Emergency Services—whew!

Everyone is still assessing, answering questions, and planning. Helicopters are landing at the driver's ed range at the high school. Lots of Madison people are volunteering and offering help. Wednesday morning my sister-in-law brings our kids to the shelter - we were so happy to see them; they had spent the night with grandparents and aunt and uncle. Wednesday afternoon we get to go home, and check on Dennis's parents, and fill them in on what was happening in the county.

Camp Varsity in Aylor is full of youth campers. The Board of Supervisors discuss the possibility of more mud/rockslides and the need for evacuating the kids, and how they can make out with no electricity. The owner/director of the camp is very much against evacuating. But a school bus is sent to Oak Grove Church, so kids hike down and are brought to the high school. We have begun calling parents (mostly in Northern Va.) to come pick up their kids. Just as the bus arrives, Governor George Allen arrives and steps on the bus. Ed Trimm is livid, thinking the evacuation is just an opportunity for a political picture. The bus takes the kids back, and we call parents again to say all are fine and kids are back at camp.

Welfare Reform is supposed to begin July 1, with our Planning District the first in the state to implement it. All this takes a back seat to the flood response, and the Regional DSS Director comes to help us at the shelter.

We bring a computer from the office (no laptops then!) and try to make a spreadsheet of who is staying at the shelter, who has come in, where people are, phone calls we receive, etc. We begin to balance out working at the DSS office and manning the shelter. A truck goes to Richmond to get water in gallon jugs to distribute. Monetary donations are used for volunteers to go to the laundromat to wash the sheets on the cots. News reporters are trying to film the spreadsheet with names, etc. and we cover up the screen. The County designates a Public Information Officer from the State Police.



The Flood Dress
Nan wore this dress at the 1995 Flood Shelter,
set up at Madison County High School

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Nothing like this has ever happened in Madison before, and everyone is really working together. I am interviewed by Channel 29 news on what we are doing at the shelter. Reporters from Charlottesville, Richmond, and Washington are hanging around to hear and report what is going on. We put limits on who has access to the building. Some pets are kept at the back door of the high school gym (sort of not allowed, but what do you do?). The rescue searchers are housed at Wetsel in classrooms for a while. The high school becomes a distribution center of the donated items - food, water, clothes, cleaning supplies.

When the Red Cross and National Disaster FEMA take over after a couple of weeks, we shut down our part at the high school. But people everywhere are donating money, and there is a lot of damage to farmland, fences, roads, electricity, etc. A Madison County Flood Relief Committee is established and checking accounts are set up at both banks in the county. Glenn Moreno is the chair, I am secretary, and Mike Hale and I are the authorized check signers. We figure out how to use word processing for letters, forms, applications, and receipts; establish criteria to distribute money in an equitable way; and meet every few days at Social Services to decide on allocations. There are others on the committee as well. The Red Cross had a bad reputation of putting the money in administration and not helping the people in need, so there is a little bit of a battle to get the money locally. Joe Daniel helps with that as well as matching donations received. Social Services provides my time, copying, postage, etc.

Later, I was part of several statewide presentations to speak on how to work in a disaster situation. Our local emergency services and I spoke at state conferences. We often met with and talked with others to share our experience and offer suggestions on what to do in a disaster.

The Flood was a horrible storm that affected a relatively small area of the county and people, but it had a major impact on everyone who lived here. It was stressful and demanding at work, and scary personally, but showed how well a small community can work together and get help to those who need it. The whole experience made me proud to be a Madisonian. Channel 29 and The Weather Channel TV made great documentaries about the flood.

Your Board of Directors 2025

Arlene Aylor, Membership Chair

Essie Berry, Director

Penn Bowers, Vice-President & Program Chair

Martha Breeden, Corresponding Secretary

Phil Brockman, Recording Secretary

Janice Carpenter, Director

Dennis Coppedge, Director

Max Lacy, President

Judy Mahanes, Treasurer

Pam Nelson, Director

Beppy White, Director

Nancy Garnett Williams, Director

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. Jud Buchanan is the liaison between the Historical Society and the Madison County Board of Supervisors.

In Memoriam Everette Daniel Weakley (1929–2025)

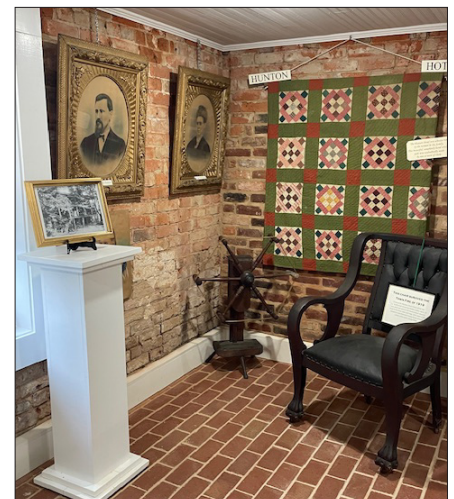
The Historical Society and all of Madison County lost a treasured friend on April 1, 2025, with the passing of Everette Weakley. And we lost a fount of information about the history and people of the county. It is not an exaggeration to say that Everette knew everything. If a question about events or people of the past arose that Everette couldn't answer, it is a safe bet that no one else could either. He knew people. He met students and parents during his early days as a schoolteacher. He met farmers as the local manager for US Department of Agriculture programs. He learned lots of names during his days as a rural mail carrier. He was active in his church at Etlan. And he spent thirty-nine years as insurance agent for Madison County Farm Bureau.

Then there are his hobbies. Visitors to the Madison Museum at Kemper see two things as soon as they walk in the door. One is the painting of the Madison County seal chosen by a Bicentennial Committee chaired by Everette. The other is his model of the Rapidan Railroad and the book of information about the railroad and the route it took through Madison County back in the 1920s. He has contributed posters, research, and money to both the museum in town and the Mountain Museum at Criglersville. And whether you referred to certain edible fungi as morels or merkels, Everette could match you story for story. We shall miss him. RIP



Everette Weakley & Polly Durham
Bare at the museum in 2021
Photo courtesy of Phyllis Poluito

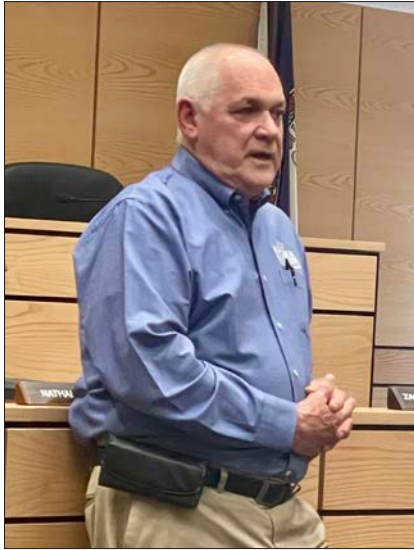
Visit the Kemper Museum & Residence



Bill Price Tells the MWP Story

By

Pam Nelson



The guest speaker for the Madison Historical Society on February 16, 2025, was Madison native Bill Price. Speaking without notes, Bill shared the history and success of Madison Wood Preservers (which now includes Cardinal Home Center) a local business since its inception in 1959. A Fork Union Military Academy graduate, Bill was an All-American swimmer earning degrees at the University of Alabama before returning to Madison to teach at Madison County High School. After three years, Bill joined his father William Price and began working at MWP on a full time basis in 1972.

The story of the Wood Preservers began in the 1950's when Bill and his father went to Rapidan to visit Angus McDonald's roof top garden. Angus was also using two large vats to treat fence posts and the Prices started to think there had to be a better way to preserve wood. In 1959 the Madison Wood Preservers was formed with a small group of local friends and relatives who became stockholders. Included were William Price, Charles T. Berrey, Tinsley Berry, Paul Cockrell, and J. Crigler (Kiggy) Price.

Beginning with a focus on agricultural fencing, Bill described the eight hour treatment process for each fence post. In the late 1970's MWP switched to a 1.5 hour treatment process that was cleaner and odorless. William died in 1990 and a year later the EPA notified the company of new treatment requirements. To meet the new guidelines MWP would need to spend \$1.5 million on the current facility and it would not improve production or efficiency. It was decided to build a new facility which was started in June 1991 and completed approximately one year later. In 2003 the EPA switched to a copper based treatment and MWP was in a position to comply with the new standards. Buying pine lumber in the South, treating it in Madison, and shipping it north proved to be a formula for success. Utilizing US 29 and two interstate highways, their market potential has reached north to Canada, west to Ohio, and south to Florida. And, MWP has even shipped treated wood to Ireland!

Today agricultural fencing represents 20-25% of MWP's business. Originally employing fifteen, the staff has grown by 100. The company has expanded to include six retail stores operating under the name Cardinal with approximately 135 employees. The local retail store moved to the Wrangler property in 2003. Blue Ridge Supply in Crozet, Lake Anna Tractor, and Valley Building Supply in Staunton are recent acquisitions. "Mad House," a recreational facility in Madison, provides employees with computer hook-ups and video games, and a new Receiving Center is in the works. While Bill now describes himself as "partially retired," he remains active in the community. His grandson, John Michael Price, serves as the current CEO and represents the fourth generation of Price family leadership with MWP.

In 2016 MWP was named "The Best Wood Preserving Plant in the World." It is also the world's largest wood preserver in one location. Bill concluded his presentation with several of his philosophies that have served him well through the years. "You can't stand still; you must keep growing" perhaps best exemplifies the history of Madison Wood Preservers.



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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.