

Preserving Yesterday Enriches Tomorrow



Madison County
Historical Society

www.madisonvahistoricalsociety.org

August 2025

The Madison County Flood of 1995: Response and Memories

The September 21, 2025, Madison County Historical Society program will feature memories of and response to the June 1995 historic flood in Madison County by those who lived it. Our last program was an excellent presentation by Dr. Scott Eaton on the science behind the storm as well as lessons learned in its aftermath. At that time, there was little time for pictures, videos, and personal stories.

This program will be held in the Madison County High School auditorium. There will be a table at the entrance with pictures and scrap books for perusal prior to and after the program. Randall and Ruth Lillard, residents of Graves Mill, will show the video they made of the flood as it *happened* at their home in Graves Mill.

On stage will be a guest panel of five individuals who will speak of their specific roles and experiences at the time of the flood.

Nan Coppedge will host the guest panel. Nan was Director of Social Services for the County and helped to organize relief immediately for the individuals directly affected by the flood.

Others on the panel will be:

Steve Utz, County Administrator at the time of the flood.

David Jones, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors at the time of the flood.

Mike Hale, Member of the "Flood Relief Committee" that aided citizens after the Red Cross shut down their programs in the County.

Steve Hoffman, Member of the Volunteer Fire Company at the time of the flood.

Following the speakers a microphone will be provided for questions, answers, and remarks from the audience.

The meeting will be held in the **Madison County High School auditorium** on Sunday September 21, 2025. The doors will be open at 1:30 pm and the program will begin at 2:00pm. Everyone is invited to attend.



Lillard House on the Move

**MADISON
FLOOD
RECOVERY**

Fall Teatime is Here!

On Wednesday, September 24, 2025, volunteers will again offer attractive bags filled with all ingredients for your personal Tea Party. Some participants serve the savories and sweets at a table fully decked out with linens and china. Others enjoy the treats in a more casual atmosphere with little work in the kitchen. The goodies are prepared and donated by our team of volunteers to help all of us support the Madison County Historical Society.

Call Mary Haught at 540-547-3503 or email her at maryhaught@hughes.net to make your reservations. Pick up your tea essentials at the Kemper museum entrance on September 24, between 11:30 and noon. The requested donation remains unchanged: \$30 for each serving.

The Tea Team appreciates your support of the Society and looks forward to seeing you on September 25!

A Note From The President

Newsletter time again as we edge closer to September. Our year has been busy since we opened for the season in early March. Our quarterly program in May was interesting as it was about the reasons that the "Flood of 95" happened the way it did. We want to do a follow up to that with a program about the County response to that same flood. That program will be held in the Madison County High School auditorium on September 21, 2025, at 2 PM. Further details are elsewhere in this newsletter.

The 4th grade walking tour held in May went well as the weather was nice and the students enjoyed the tour of different things on main street. Brittany Shifflett (4th grade teacher) took care of organizing things at Waverly Yowell School, and she did a great job as usual.



4th Grade Climbing Kemper Hill

We decided against doing the Mountain Skills Day at the Mountain Museum this fall as construction was planned at the former Criglersville School. There have been some delays in the construction, but "Children of Shenandoah" will have their Homecoming on the grounds of the Mountain Museum September 28, 2025. This will be special for Madison County as they usually have their homecoming in the valley. They will also tour the Mountain Museum as part of their picnic and artifacts sharing day.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of Kaci Coppedge Daniel who passed away at a very young 44. She accomplished more in that short period of time than most people do in a much longer span of years. Her 4-H families are blessed to have had her leadership over the years as they were her "Children."



Hunton Dining Room Chair

Thanks to Fay Utz for keeping the flowers looking great at our Mountain Museum sign. Fay also does a lot for the garden at the Arcade as part of the Madison Garden Club.

Please remember to visit our Museums and tell your friends to visit as well. Visits are very much appreciated whether from you members or friends you tell about us. New members and new volunteers are always welcome. We ask anyone interested in volunteering to get in touch to express their interests. We will work to find a good place for you. History is made to share so please help us do just that by passing the word along about our museums.

Don't forget the Drive By Tea which will be held on September 24, 2025. All proceeds benefit the Madison County Historical Society as the "Tea Group" provides all of the "goodies" that you consume.

Max Lacy, President
Madison County Historical Society

Membership Report

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

Frances Ann Crebbs
Brightwood, VA

Helen J Hammond
Rochelle, VA

Edward Willis Daniel
Orange, VA

Codi Koshaki
Madison, VA

The support of all our members is greatly appreciated, and we encourage you to stop by either Madison or Criglersville to visit and view our exhibits.
~~~ Arlene Aylor

## From the Editor....

Many of us drive along Main Street in Madison and wonder what is ever going to happen to the old Hunton Hotel building. The Madison Museum at Kemper can't answer that question, but it does have a neat exhibit of artifacts and photographs of the hotel in bygone days. The Hunton exhibit was curated by Beppy White and is new this year. Come see it and several other items added for this season. One of my favorites is a reproduction of a 1937-1938 local telephone directory. My grandfather's number was 46-F-31.

And when you go to the Mountain Museum at Criglersville, check out the little table and the mallet in the corner of the "old" kitchen. Then you'll know what inspired Max Lacy to research "beaten biscuits." I don't think he has made any yet so let us know if you want to be first!

Here are the usual reminders:

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

~~~Judy Mahanes

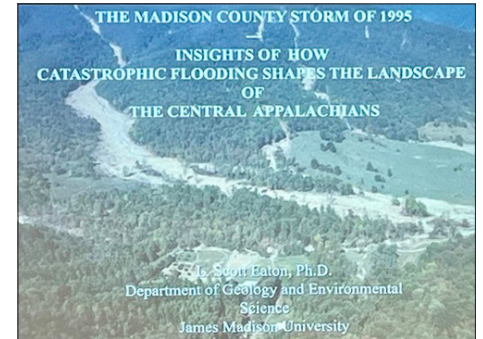
The Flood of 1995: Water & Devastation

By

Kathleen Hoffman

Ruth Lillard of Graves Mill in Madison County has been around for a while. But the octogenarian isn't particularly impressed by her own age now because she has something pretty remarkable to compare it to – a small piece of wood from a red spruce tree that probably lived thousands of years ago. The wood was uncovered during research following the historic flooding at Graves Mill in Madison in 1995 – carbon dating and other testing revealed that it had to be almost an ice age for the tree to have grown in this area. It was once a dominant tree in the Appalachians, but as the climate warmed it moved north to Canada and beyond.

Most of Madison remembers the June 27, 1995 flood that followed rainfall of about 30 inches as devastating to a small, mountainous area of the county, with disastrous effects as well on bridges and highways downstream. But to Dr. L. Scott Eaton, a geology professor at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, it was an opportunity like no other to learn about the past of the area. Eaton came to Madison on May 15, 2025, almost 30 years afterwards, as a speaker for the Madison County Historical Society to tell a full house about some of the discoveries made by him and others.



Ruth and Randall (Scootie) Lillard had long lived on and farmed the land hardest hit by the storm. Their house was moved by the tumbling waters a good 30 feet from its foundation, large rocks were everywhere, and farming as such couldn't be done for a while. When Eaton and others hopefully requested access to do some in-depth research on what must have been the devastating remnants of the Lillards' long-established agricultural way of life, the Lillards said yes. "We only asked that they not use any information as a way to control anyone," Ruth recalls. Results have met her criteria – better data for land-use choices and improved safety measures have been the outcome.

Interestingly, Eaton had a bit of a history with the area himself, he explained at the Historical Society presentation. He grew up in Crozet, toward the mountains from Charlottesville, and camped in the Graves Mill area as a Boy Scout. The scouts were a bit peeved because they couldn't get their tent poles in the ground in places, but they remembered the appeal of the place. Eaton, a boy with already a scientific bent, also observed Nelson County's devastation by Hurricane Camille in 1969, when a night-time flood in the mountains killed more than 150 people.

When what is known as the Rapidan Storm hit Graves Mill 25 years later, Eaton was working for the Virginia Department of Highways. But he was also a graduate student at the University of Virginia, and instead of Hurricane Camille he opted to do his doctoral thesis on the Rapidan Storm.



Scott Eaton

The bottom line was that a great deal was learned from this catastrophe, and it made knowledge available that will be used for many years. The research objective, Eaton explained in his presentation, was to examine both the hydrology and meteorology of the storm. Moisture came off of the Atlantic, from the Midwest and from the gulf. Moisture was pushed upwards along the mountain slopes, where it generally condenses quickly. There was a stalled cold front, which combined with the topography created the storm. The result, Eaton explained, was as much as 30 inches of rain in 18 hours in some places, and "Graves Mill was ground zero."

Radar was well-developed by then, and parts of the storm could be effectively tracked. There were more than 1,000 undivided landslides. It was a maximum recorded flood, according to the speaker, and since it went well beyond anything that had occurred before, "any evidence of past events was destroyed." The Lillards'

(Continued from Page 3)

farm was left covered with rocks, and huge boulders remained behind on the Jenkins farm next door. On their hillsides the debris flow of water, soil and rocks formed a slurry, and the less than robust coverings that might once have somewhat inadequately sustained a tent pole were swept away.

Researchers developed four different maps, where deposits such as the rock left behind when the slurry swept over them were laid bare for the first time in anyone's memory. Gentle slopes left behind by past events were visible, and some layering of sediments could be seen. And way down, leftovers of red spruce turned up.



The Blue Ridge Mountains are considered geologically dead, Eaton said, but were unquestionably destabilized by the storm. Eaton, who said he has now known the Lillards half his life, said the cooperation of the landowners was key. "We got a great dataset," he said, in areas where the underlying elements could be seen and documented for the first time.

On the Jenkins farm, researchers estimated not quite two inches of "land lowering." Eaton said the landscape, including mountains, can be lowered a small amount over time by events, but sometimes major storms can make a comparatively notable mark. "It takes a lot of energy to move big boulders," like those strewn on the Jenkins farm. It may be several thousand years between such "perfect storms." The researchers feel many of the mountain hollows are still "loaded" with materials to send down in huge storms but believe that "We know from the threshold curves when to issue warnings" far better than in the past. Also, only recently available for use is "LiDAR," a laser-based remote sensing technology that can indicate if an area will flood.

There has already been updating. Last fall came wide-reaching Hurricane Helene, with 250 casualties over multiple states. "It was the first regional event we could study," Eaton said, using the more advanced technology. Patterns could be seen. "We can make informed decisions about where building is questionable," with new information to be considered with other factors. "The Madison storm was the springboard to better understand these things."

The researchers are now working on making landslide maps of multiple counties. As hazard maps are developed, existing features are often key to locating dangerous deposits that can be hard-hit in storms. For example, orchards – farmers often plant their orchards in questionable spots because the soil is ideal for fruit trees.

The good news for Madison is that while some areas stayed unstable for a while, they have settled back down. Up and down the Blue Ridge, there are places that have the markings of this sort of experience, and mapping may be the early warning people need. The fairly new information is widely available with research reported widely by Eaton and others in U.S. Geological Society publications and other scientific journals, one published by the Geological Society of America.

But what did all this mean for people who lived the flood? "I'll never forget going into the kitchen and seeing muddy water pouring in through the broken window," says Ruth Lillard. It wasn't the first flood or other threat for their house. They had been told by an elderly neighbor that the house, originally located nearer the river, was in danger of flooding in 1893. A couple of years later the structure was moved nearer the hillside, using horses to tow it. Graves Mill had also experienced an earthquake, and one year the inhabitants could see the flames from a fire higher in the mountains.



Randall Lillard with Jenkins Boulder

Back in 1969, Scootie Lillard, who had been down to help with the devastation in Nelson County, came home to say if such a storm hit them, their house was gone for sure.

(Continued on Page 5)

(Continued from Page 4)

But after the 1995 calamity, they found a purpose in allowing and encouraging the research on their land. They also were overwhelmed with help from neighbors and others. The rest of the house was taken away, and Mennonites from the Shenandoah Valley came with heavy equipment to help make the land usable again. Another Mennonite offered cheap hay for the livestock and ended up delivering it and giving it to them. They got help with salvaging what could be saved from the house. And “we made new, dear friends,” Ruth Lillard says. The friends include a Ph.D. geologist who gave her a piece of wood from centuries ago.

In accordance with “life goes on,” there is now an effort to restore the tree to the mountains. Not only climate, but later logging, acid precipitation and invasive insect pests contributed to the loss of spruce-fir forests. Like people who immediately begin hauling boulders out of fields, the trees tend to respond to changes in their ecosystem.



General Banks Lane bridge-across Rapidan River looking towards Graves Mill Rd

The Fourth Grade Comes to Town

On May 19, 2025, the Society welcomed Waverly Yowell fourth graders for a Walking Tour of Madison. Six groups of students with their teachers and chaperones left school in fifteen-minute intervals. The first stop on this year's tour was the county administration building at 414 N Main Street. Max Lacy and Dennis Coppedge greeted them on the lawn before each class went into the Board of Supervisors auditorium for a presentation from Deputy County Administrator Brian Gordon. The tour then proceeded through the backyard of the Kemper Residence to the Library Lawn where Frances Lacy and Joyce Garrison told them about county offices down the hill at 410 N Main Street and encouraged them to visit the library often during the summer.

After that, Judy Mahanes led the classes to the Arcade in the center of town. Virginia Utz and Beppy White told them about the historic Arcade building and Fay Utz introduced them to the Garden Club's Memorial Garden. Joe Goodall and Florence Simmers then took the groups to Beasley Park before leading them to the War Memorial lawn for presentations and activities led by Sarah Henshaw, Phil Brockman, Nan Coppedge, and Essie Berry. Sheriff's Deputies stopped traffic to permit safe passage across Main Street to the Courthouse and Clerk's Office complex where Commonwealth's Attorney Clarissa Berry and Circuit Court Clerk Leeta Louk planned the activities. After this final stop, the students crossed back across Main Street to return to school in time for lunch!



Frances Lacy & Joyce Garrison
with 4th Graders

Teacher Brittany Shifflett worked with Historical Society President Max Lacy to organize the morning. The Society offers thanks to the teachers and parent chaperones who accompanied the students, to county officials who greeted them, and to our own members who kept things moving along.

The weather was beautiful for this busy, but very worthwhile, morning!

On the Making of Biscuits

By

Max Lacy

The Mountain Museum at Criglersville is full of interesting items that folks have brought in to help us tell the story of life in bygone days. Every now and then, we are puzzled about just what the item might have been used for. Research is needed. Excitement ruled when we realized that two items (a little table and a mallet now in the "old" kitchen at the museum) from two different donors played a big role in old-time cooking.

BEATEN BISCUITS*

About Forty-Four 1½-Inch Biscuits

To win unending gratitude, serve to any homesick southerner this classic accompaniment to Virginia ham. The following lines by Miss Howard Weeden in *Bandanna Ballads* sum up in a nutshell the art of making biscuits:

“Of course I'll gladly give de rule
I meks beat biscuit by,
Dough I ain't sure dat you will mek
Dat bread de same as I.

“Case cookin's like religion is—
Some's 'lected an' some ain't,
An' rules don't no more mek a cook
Den sermons mek a saint.”



Sift 3 times:

1 tablespoon sugar
4 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
(1 teaspoon double-acting baking powder)

Cut into the flour, with a pastry blender or 2 knives:

¼ cup chilled leaf lard

When ingredients are the consistency of cornmeal, add to make a stiff dough:

Equal parts of chilled milk and ice water, approximately 1 cup in all.

Beat the dough with a mallet until it is well blistered, or put it 10 times through the coarse chopper of a meat grinder. Fold it over frequently. This is a long process, requiring ½ hour or more. Miss Weeden's verse goes on to say:

“Two hundred licks is what I gives
For home-folks, never fewer,
An' if I'm specting company in,
I gives five hundred sure!”

When the dough is smooth and glossy, roll it to the thickness of ½ inch and cut it with a floured biscuit cutter. Spread the tops with:

Melted butter.

Pierce through the biscuits with a fork. Bake about 30 minutes in a preheated 325° oven.

(*This recipe comes from *Joy of Cooking* (1980, p. 634) by Irma S Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker.)

These biscuits were traditionally used to make "ham biscuits," a traditional Southern canape, where they are sliced horizontally and spread with butter, jelly, or mustard and then filled with pieces of country ham or used to sop up gravy or syrup. They are sometimes called "Sunday Biscuits" and can be stored for several months in an airtight container. Beaten biscuits were once so popular that machines, called biscuit brakes, were manufactured to knead the dough in the home kitchen. A biscuit brake typically consists of a pair of steel rollers geared together and operated by a crank mounted on a small table with a marble top and cast iron legs. Due to the amount of work required to make them, beaten biscuits are no longer popular. Ham biscuits are still widely found in the United States, and are very popular at "potluck gatherings, or even as main meat at regular meals. They are now made with standard biscuits that are easier to mix and bake. Some people even use bought dinner rolls (not as good as biscuits) to make their ham rolls. A good biscuit makes the country ham taste better. If you think there is no difference between the roll and the biscuit, try them both and let me know what the verdict is.



Table & Mallet for
Beaten Biscuits

Now let's tell the story about a southern lady who wrote poetry about life and times in the South during and after the "Civil War." Her name was Maria Howard Weeden. She was an American artist and poet whose pen name was "Howard Weeden." Many thought that she used her middle name because at that time women were not as recognized in the literate world as men. It may have helped her get published. Maria was born July 6, 1846, in Huntsville Alabama. She wrote poetry and painted her own illustrations. After the Civil War she began to sell works that she painted including portraits of African American freedmen and freedwomen. She attended the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. She was dismayed by other artists whose works featuring freedmen and freedwomen showed them in the caricature style of "minstrel shows." She returned to Huntsville determined to express the full humanity and dignity of freedmen and freedwomen. A lot of her images included pictures of many freed African- Americans who worked as slaves for her and her friends' families. While she painted, she listened to their stories and adapted some of them to poems, which she wrote in the "black dialect." Today it is called "African American English." At least one poem made it into a cookbook!

She exhibited her work in Berlin and Paris in 1895 and was well received. She published four books of poetry from 1898 to 1904 illustrated with her own art. Her books were: 1898 "Shadows on the Wall"; 1899 "Bandana Ballads"; 1901 "Songs of the South"; 1904 "Old Voices". All were published under the name of Howard Weeden.

She died on April 12, 1905, of tuberculosis at the age of 59 in Huntsville and was buried in Maple Hill Cemetery. She was posthumously inducted into the Alabama women's Hall of Fame in 1998.

Between 1866 and 1896, Weeden also contributed numerous essays and short stories to the Presbyterian Christian Observer, under the pseudonym "Flake White". These *Lost Writings of Howard Weeden as "Flake White"* were collected and reprinted in 2005 by Big Spring Press, Inc.

Historic Germanna's 68th Annual Reunion & Conference

Descendants and friends of the Germans who came to Virginia in the early 1700s gathered in July to greet cousins, share genealogical tidbits, learn about religion in colonial Virginia, worship at Hebron church, and eat! Three of the major events of this year's reunion took place in Madison County.

On Thursday, July 17th, the Sip and Learn Lecture Series at Revalation Vineyards featured a presentation by Cathi Clore Frost. Cathi is a Board member of Historic Germanna. She also maintains the Germanna Database of Descendants and has researched and written several Germanna Records, the highly regarded publications of the organization. Her own family history highlights the migration of 1717 immigrants from the Hebron area across the country to Oregon where she lives. The standing room only audience at Revalation was treated to a comprehensive presentation of the who, the why, the when, and from where story of the Germans who settled the Robinson River Valley.



James Monroe &
James Madison
Arrive for Church

On Friday, twenty-four reunion attendees boarded a trolley for the 1st (1714) and 2nd (1717) Colony Germanna Heritage Tour. They visited Hebron Lutheran Church and the Madison Museum at the Kemper Residence in the town of Madison. Earlier in the day, the tour explored significant Germanna related sites in Culpeper and Fauquier counties.

The 2025 Conference concluded on Sunday with a full day of activities at Hebron Lutheran Church. The worship service featured traditional Lutheran liturgy and was attended by reenactors James Madison and James Monroe. Music was provided by violinist Heather Schoenborn and organist Martha Mikula, who played Hebron's 1802 Tannenberg organ.

Future Presidents Madison and Monroe gathered on the steps of the German Church (Hebron) on a cold January day in 1789 as part of their campaigns to represent the Fifth Virginia Congressional District in the new United States Congress. The race was close and both candidates sensed that winning over this bloc of Lutheran votes could be the key to victory. They came together at Hebron to debate the issues and plead their cases (Madison too old, Monroe too inexperienced, for example.) In the end, Madison won the election by about 300 votes.

The 1789 debate may have been shortened by the freezing weather; the 2025 version ended promptly for bag lunches from Graves Mountain Farm and Lodges and desserts provided by Hebron members.

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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.