

Preserving Yesterday Enriches Tomorrow



Madison County
Historical Society

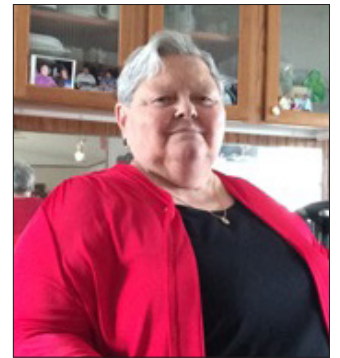
www.madisonvahistoricalociety.org

February 2026

After Virginia 250: James Madison

As everyone knows, this year we are celebrating the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. A Continental Congress was formed after independence was achieved, but it proved to be inadequate for governing the new country. Several individuals determined that a new form of government would be necessary, and some men of genius ultimately managed to create a constitution to bind the states together. One of these men was James Madison who is called, and rightly so, the Father of the Constitution.

On February 15th at the quarterly meeting of the Madison County Historical Society, the speaker will be Jayne Blair, research assistant with the Orange County Historical Society. The topic of her talk will be JAMES MADISON AND THE U.S. CONSTITUTION.



Jayne has long had a love of history and calls the Historical Society her "playpen." She has also had a remarkable employment history, having worked at both Montpelier and Monticello. In addition, she was employed by the Dallas police department for 25 years and spent six years with the U.S. Navy. At times she calls herself the "Female Forrest Gump" for having been on the edge of history in much of her past work. She has written two books on the Civil War, one of which, *Tragedy at Montpelier*, she reviewed at the MCHS program in February 2005.

The meeting will begin at 2:00 pm on February 15, 2026, in the Madison County Administration auditorium at 414 N. Main Street in Madison. Everyone is invited to attend. Come to refresh your minds anew with the remarkable history of this country's founding.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

Article IV, Section 3 of the Society's By-Laws states:

The Madison County Historical Society Board of Directors shall be elected by the general membership. One third of the Board shall be elected at the first designated regular membership meeting of the calendar year. A Nominating Committee shall nominate members. Nominations may also be made from the floor. Anyone so nominated must have agreed in writing to serve prior to the nomination. A Board member whose term has expired may be re-elected.

The four members whose terms are expiring in 2026 are Janice Carpenter, Beppy White, Nancy Garnett Williams and Phil Brockman. Present Board members Phil Brockman and Beppy White are each willing to serve another three year term if presented by the nominating committee and re-elected by the membership. The nominating committee presents Laura DeBoer and Vicki Brown to replace the retiring members Janice Carpenter and Nancy Garnett Williams.

On February 15, 2026, the first scheduled meeting of this year, the nominating committee will place this slate of Brockman, Brown, DeBoer, and White before the membership.

If any member wishes to serve on or nominate someone else for the Board, please speak with any current Board member prior to the election.

A Note From The President

Although both the Madison Museum at Kemper and the Mountain Museum at Criglersville are currently closed for the season, we are busy getting things ready for their reopenings in March. Plaster is being repaired in two upper bedrooms at the Kemper Residence. This work has been needed for quite some time as we think damage was done during the 2011 earthquake. This is the second phase of plaster repair. In the first, Bob Powell did a great job of repairing extensive damage in the Clore bedroom on the upper floor. It should be noted that Bob donated all of his labor for this first phase and was planning to do the next phase when he was stricken with what turned out to be fatal cancer. David Amerose is doing the current work; he comes highly recommended for the job. The final step will be to get the two rooms painted when the plaster work is finished.



The wall being prepared

A window heating unit failed at the Mountain Museum this fall just as it started to get cold outside. We are in the process of getting bids on replacing existing heating and cooling systems with a split-level heating/air conditioning system that will make heating and cooling the building much easier to control. I am also excited to report that Vicki



Ready to apply new plaster

Brown has agreed to be in charge of the Mountain Museum, so please give her the assistance that she needs to make things go well. Vicki has a vested interest in the history of the area before the Shenandoah Park as her grandfather William Austin Brown was the Postmaster at Old Rag for many years. Her brother Jimmy Brown, an area mail carrier for many years, was very instrumental in the formation of "The Children of The Shenandoah" group that has worked to educate a lot of folks about what actually happened when the people were displaced to form the Park.



Adding hair to the mix

Colonial Days at Waverly Yowell School went well as we had the following demonstrations: basket making with Clyde

Jenkins, quilting with the Quilters Guild, spinning and weaving with Vickie Watts and Frances Lacy, cookware with Jayne Penn Hollar and Judy Mahanes, paper making with Katie Giolotti, and Mountain Memories with Jim Lillard. Jacey Howell was there to help with whatever was needed as part of her Governor's School project. See page five for photographs of the day.

Thanks to all for renewing your memberships; income from dues is our lifeblood. Thanks also for supporting our quarterly programs. The February program will be held at 2 PM on February 15, 2026, at the county office building auditorium. See the article on page one for more information. It is fitting to have a program about our US History on the day before the President's Day holiday. I hope you can all attend.

A final plea: we need to fill several slots in the volunteer schedule at the Madsion Museum for the coming season. If you are interested in giving a few hours per month, please contact a Board Member or leave a message at 540-395-5119 so we can put you in touch with someone who can help you get started.

Thanks for your support.

Max Lacy, President

Madison County Historical Society

From the Editor....

This month's feature article comes to us from the computer of Bob Haught. During his professional life, Bob worked as a correspondent and then State Bureau Chief for UPI and served as the District of Columbia based editorial writer for *The Daily Oklahoman*, Oklahoma's largest newspaper. In retirement, he and Mary settled in Madison County where Bob became a student of local history and an active member of the Historical Society. Many thanks to Mary (leader of our Tea Team) for sharing this article with all of us.

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

# FRANCIS HENRY HILL

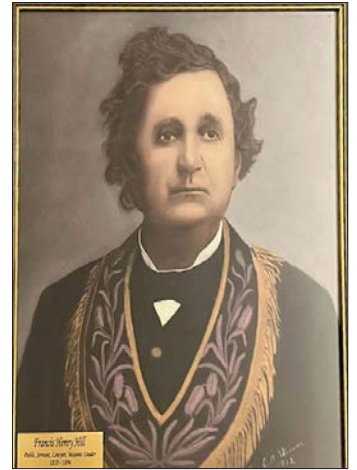
By

Robert L. Haught  
(1930–2025)

Francis Henry Hill, Madison public servant and Masonic leader, was born on November 26, 1818. He was the second of seven children born to Henry Hill, Jr. (1782-1846) and Matilda Susan Payne Hill (1797-1889). Research indicates he was born in the family home, a large frame house lying west of what is now US Rte 29, about 7 miles north of the Town of Madison in the hamlet of James City (now Leon).

Hill spent his lifetime farming properties he owned. He purchased 13 acres of land in the Town of Madison in 1842 and soon thereafter acquired a white frame house lying on the north side of and adjacent to the Court House in the Town of Madison which he occupied as his home. Later, in 1858, he bought a large frame house on the west side of Main Street which had been built in 1856. It was sometimes referred to as the "Carl Eddins" house. Following his marriage to Anne Steele McChesney in 1846, it became their home for the rest of their lives.

At the age of 22, Hill was appointed Postmaster of Madison. Nineteen years later, in 1859, he became Clerk of the Circuit Court, a position he held until 1875 when he entered the practice of law. He was very well liked and respected as the Court Clerk and his obituary, published in the Fredericksburg Free Lance Star on February 2, 1894, noted that he had served as the Clerk for a number of years "discharging his duties so neatly, accurately and well that it was claimed that he was the best clerk in the State."



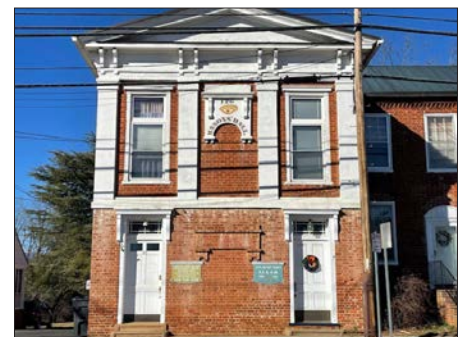
*Francis Henry Hill*

He became an outstanding figure in the history of Free Masons in Madison County and the State of Virginia. He was raised a Master Mason in Linn Banks Lodge No. 126 in 1865 and served as its Worshipful Master.

In 1884 Brother Hill served both as Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge AF&AM of Virginia and Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter, Royal Arch Masons in Virginia (an appendant body) of Free Masonry in Virginia. Upon the death of the Grand Master of Masons in Virginia in 1884, Hill succeeded to that position, serving through December 1886.

As Grand Master, he dedicated Lee Lodge No. 209 in Waynesboro and participated in the public Cornerstone laying of the Statue of General Robert E. Lee in Richmond where he was asked to offer remarks in honor of General Lee. He also laid the cornerstone of Rose Park Methodist Church in Wolfstown in Masonic form. On February 21, 1885, he was invited by the grand Master of Washington, D.C. to participate in the Dedication ceremony for the Washington Monument.

Brother Hill was recognized by the Grand Lodge as a man of "magnificent physique, level headed", speaking in a clear voice, and very knowledgeable in both the written and unwritten work of the Fraternity. He was one of the first four District Lecturers appointed in 1887. It was said he cheerfully took on the task of teaching Virginia ritual in District 3, his assigned 28 Cities and Counties from Arlington to Danville. He served as the District Lecturer of District 3 from 1887 until his death in 1894. In 1888 he reported that he had met at Luray with the several Lodges located in the Valley and stayed there five days teaching any interested brother who had a desire to learn, and spent a large amount of time helping them improve their work. He was an advocate for teaching and qualifying more men as District Lecturers, which



*Linn Banks Lodge Building*



(Continued from Page 3)

was the forerunner of the current Grand Lodge Committee on Work. It is with interest that he was allotted \$250.00 per year for travel and other expenses.

Francis Henry Hill and his wife, Anne, had five daughters, all born in Virginia. They were:

Frances Jane "Jennie" Hill *Hume*, born in Leon, Virginia in 1846, died in Madison in 1931. She married Robert Thomas Hume in 1872 and lived in a house formerly owned by Horace Lohr located on the easterly side of Main Street. She and her husband are buried in Cedar Hill Cemetery in Madison, a short distance from the graves of her parents.



*Horace Lohr House*

Henrietta "Etta" Matilda Hill *Fry*, married Hugh N. Fry and lived in a white frame house (the William b. Yager House) on the west side of Main Street in Madison.

Emma Gold Hill *Cave*, was born in Madison County in 1850 and died in Charlotte, N.C., in 1914. She married Benjamin Belfield Cave and lived in Madison until 1899 when she moved to Charlotte to live with her son P.M. Cave.

Mary Aurelia "Relia" *Hill*, who was born in 1854, died on January 2, 1929. She married first a Mr. Sublett and then Terrell Crawford Taylor. She and her husband are buried in Cedar Hill Cemetery, near the graves of her parents.



*Carl Eddins House*

Serena Moore Hill *Jeffries*, was born in 1861 and died on New Year's Day, 1941. She married John L. Jeffries and they had four sons. She is buried in the Masonic Cemetery in Culpeper, where her husband and two of her four sons are buried. Her son, John L. Jeffries, Jr., grandson John L. Jeffries, III, and daughter in law, Helen M. Jeffries, were prominent attorneys in Culpeper, Virginia, and all are buried in the Masonic Cemetery in Culpeper.

Anne Hill died in 1890, and Francis Henry Hill's health began to deteriorate in 1892. He became bedridden shortly before his death on January 28, 1894. As is noted above, his obituary was lavish in praise and included this observation:

He was a man well known throughout our borders and was universally honored and respected and by those who knew him best greatly beloved ... He was a man of fine personal appearance, generous impulses, benevolent disposition and strong attachments. He was pleasant and entertaining in conversation, which always contained a vein of humor that was much enjoyed by his companions.

The Hill family tombstone marking the graves of his wife and him bears the fitting epitaphs:

"Well grounded Hope  
A well spent life"  
And  
"The memory of the just is blessed."



*Rose Park Methodist Church  
Wolfstown, VA*

# Colonial Day 2025

On November 24, 2025, the Historical Society, led by President Max Lacy, set up six demonstrations for the six classes of fourth graders at Waverly Yowell Elementary School to visit. Here are scenes from the four stations set up in the school gymnasium. Waverly Yowell art teacher Katie Gigliotti demonstrated paper making in her classroom. Society member and museum volunteer Jim Lillard also set up in a classroom where he could show short videos and old photographs from the days before Shenandoah National Park was formed.



Laura DeBoer & Pam Nelson with students



Frances Lacy  
& Vicky Watts



Clyde Jenkins



Jayne Penn Hollar

## THE MUSEUM AT KEMPER NEEDS YOU!

A key responsibility of the Madison County Historical Society is to operate the Madison Museum at Kemper. The museum is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm. That works out to fifteen slots, four hours in duration, which need to be covered. We began the 2025 season with twenty-two volunteers to fill the slots. Most people work one day per month but some cover two or even three slots. Our goal is to have two docents on duty any time the museum is open.

With these needs in mind and knowing that several seasoned volunteers must step back a bit in 2026, we seek your help. Novices are welcome! It helps if you know a bit about Madison County and its history, but you certainly don't need to be an expert on history or museum exhibits and procedures. You can learn on the job! Every effort is made to pair new volunteers with someone who knows many things about the museum and society. Nobody knows everything!

### Why volunteer?

- Support Historical Society.
- Welcome visitors to the town and county.
- Get to see new exhibits without even trying.
- Increase your knowledge of local history by "pawing" through our holdings.
- Make new friends among the volunteer team.
- Visit with your volunteer partners.

### How to volunteer?

- Call the office at 540-395-5119 and leave a message.
- Call or email Max Lacy at maxlacy40@gmail.com .
- Tell any current volunteer or board member about your interest.

Please join us!

## Madison County Historical Society

### Finances in Review

2025

#### Income

|                                 |           |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Membership Dues                 | 13,775.00 |
| General Donations               | 816.94    |
| Donations for Facility Use      | 950.00    |
| Tea Income                      | 2,235.00  |
| Gift Shop Sales                 | 939.00    |
| Royalties on <i>Images</i> book | 337.43    |
| Interest                        | 4.95      |
| Designated Donations            | 125.00    |
| Total                           | 19,183.32 |

#### Expenses

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Arcade Utilities & Security    | 2,885.84  |
| Kemper Utilities & Security    | 430.00    |
| Mt Museum Utilities & Security | 5,200.02  |
| Insurance                      | 936.00    |
| Graves Mill Park Expenses      | 572.75    |
| Office & Exhibit Supplies      | 434.72    |
| Postage & PO Box Rent          | 748.85    |
| Printing                       | 1,829.27  |
| Web & Software Fees            | 275.03    |
| Gift Shop Inventory            | 359.51    |
| Sales Tax to State             | 47.31     |
| Miscellaneous Expenses         | 594.71    |
| Total                          | 14,314.01 |

*Judith Mahanes, Treasurer*

## Spring is Coming: and So Is the Spring Tea



THE TEA CREW

Martha Breedon, Chris Lattin,  
Esma Owens, Mary Haught, Katy Cashman,  
Pat Lattin, Arlene Aylor

The spring luncheon tea will continue the Drive-By format on Wednesday, April 15, 2026. You will receive delicious food prepared and donated by our team of chefs and packaged in attractive bags ready for your personal tea party. The requested donation to Madison County Historical Society is still only \$30 for each serving. Start thinking about getting your group together and making reservations. Email [maryhaught@hughes.net](mailto:maryhaught@hughes.net) or call 540-547-3503.

Thank you for supporting the Society.

## Membership Report

Welcome to the following new members who have joined the Society since our last newsletter:

N. Gordon Lohr ~ Richmond, VA

Jacey Howell ~ Culpeper, VA

Margaret Gilley ~ Madison, VA

Jeff & Clare Schapiro ~ Richmond, VA

Richard A. Dulaney ~ Culpeper, VA

Many thanks to those who have sent in your 2026 membership renewals. Your continued support is greatly appreciated!



# Remembering Robert Yowell

The guest speaker for the November 16, 2025, quarterly meeting of the Historical Society was Albert Yowell. Yowell is a Madison County native, graduate of Madison County High School, and alumnus of the Virginia Tech Air Force ROTC Cadet Corps. Commissioned in 1973, he has accumulated more than 21,000 flying hours in the Air Force and as a commercial pilot. He continues his lifelong love of flying and airplanes as a Flight Instructor.



*Albert Yowell*

As part of his tribute to Veterans on this Sunday just days after the National Veterans Day holiday, Yowell suggested that there are four categories of veterans:

1. Those who did service: Experienced no war, no combat and just had fun.
2. Those who did service: Went to Nam or Iraq and came home with lots of war stories.
3. Those who did service: Went to combat and came home with significant injuries or PTSD.
4. Those who did service: Didn't make it home.

Speaker Albert Yowell placed himself in the first category and then went on to tell the category four story of the service and sacrifice of Robert W Yowell, his Uncle Bob. Robert Yowell was the oldest of the eight children of Elizabeth and Waverly Yowell of Etlan. Shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, Bob left a job as a schoolteacher near Woodstock and joined the Army Air Corps. He wanted to become a pilot but was declared too old for that and offered work with the new, secret, and confidential technology of RADAR.



*Robert Yowell*

Robert Yowell became a B-29 Radar Guy and was assigned to the 444th bomb squad stationed in India. By rule, B-29 crews were relieved of combat duty after their 50th mission. On January 11, 1945, Yowell was filling in with an eleven-man crew when he took off on his 72nd mission, targeting Singapore Harbor that was under Japanese control. In response, Japanese anti-aircraft forces detonated a bomb in the plane. Four crew members were killed instantly; others jumped down and were picked up by a Chinese underground group. Bob Yowell was one of four who were moved to a "prison" site in Singapore where they were subjected to ten days of interrogation and torture before being executed by beheading.

These details were not released to the family for decades; the Yowell family knew only that Bob was captured and executed. In 2007, his great niece Erin Yowell Estes unearthed the gruesome details during internet searches for **B-29 tail number 42-65226**. Many thanks to Erin and to Albert Yowell for helping us all comprehend in some small way the horrors of war and the bravery of those in the midst of action.



*Editor's note: Erin Yowell Estes shared family memories of Uncle Bob and described her search in the November 2023 issue of this newsletter available on the Historical Society web site. Go there to read more of the story of Robert Yowell.*

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

Address Service Requested



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

The Madison County Historical Society is a non-profit organization founded and operated for the perpetuation and preservation of Madison County heritage and traditions. The mission of the Society is to record, preserve, and stimulate interest in the history of Madison County, its families, occupations, and way of life.

Memberships and donations, major sources of income for the Society, are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. Membership application forms are available at the 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.