

Preserving Yesterday Enriches Tomorrow



Madison County
Historical Society

www.madisonvahistoricalsociety.org

May 2026

Madison 250 Salutes the Culpeper Minutemen

Our speaker for the May 17, 2026, quarterly meeting of the Madison County Historical Society will be Colonel Bill Schwetke, past president of the Culpeper Minutemen Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution. In this year when we are celebrating all year long the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, Colonel Schwetke will tell the story of the original Culpeper Minutemen.



In a very general description, the Minutemen were originally formed in late 1774 by the Massachusetts Provincial Congress as tension increased with Great Britain. They functioned as a specialized colonial fast-response force trained to assemble instantly and respond to threats "at a minute's warning." Lacking a central command structure they eventually became part of the regular army.

Colonel Schwetke is a native of Texas; he graduated from Texas A&M in 1970 with a degree in Aerospace Engineering and was commissioned in the Air Force through ROTC. During his twenty-six years in the Air Force, he saw the world as a pilot, staff officer and commander, and is a Vietnam veteran. Upon retirement from the Air Force, Colonel Schwetke flew for Southwest Airlines for nearly seventeen years before retiring in 2012. From then until now, he has served his church and in the Sons of the American Revolution.

Most all of us have heard of the Minutemen but probably in a very general sense. Colonel Schwetke will give us more detailed information about how those in Culpeper County (of which Madison was a part at the time) participated in the American Revolution.

The meeting will begin at 2:00 pm on May 17, 2026, in the Madison County Administration auditorium at 414 N. Main Street in Madison. Everyone is invited to attend.



UPCOMING EVENTS IN THIS YEAR OF CELEBRATION

- **May 23, 2026:** Tour de Madison Family Route (Cycling) will be based at Criglersville School, 1120 Old Blue Ridge Turnpike. **The Mountain Museum at Criglersville will be open from 12:30 pm until 3:00 pm on the Saturday of this event.**
- **July 2, 2026:** Madison County's official 250 celebration, 5:30pm -9:00pm on the Library lawn, 402 North Main Street, Madison VA. Plans include Culpeper Minutemen reenactors, Austin Boggs Music, and food trucks from Over the Top and Guilty Cravings. Go to www.madisonco.virginia.gov/250 for updates about activities in the county.

A Note From The President

This newsletter finds us having opened the Madison Museum at Kemper (MMK), and the Mountain Museum at Criglersville (MMC) will be open by the time this hits the press. The Madison Museum has had a very successful opening as the attendance was greater than last year's numbers. We will have a new volunteer (Vicki Brown) in charge of the museum at Criglersville. Vicki fits right in with our idea of honoring those that were displaced to form the SNP as she is the great-granddaughter of William Austin Brown who was the Postmaster at Oldrag. She has done a super job of getting things ready for the opening on April 12. MMC will be open every Sunday from 1 until 4 PM. Vicki still needs a few more volunteers to cover all of the Sundays we will be open. If you would like to volunteer, call 540-395-5119 and leave a message and we will get in contact with you. You can also contact Vicki at themountainmuseumatcriglersville@gmail.com and she will answer your email. The heating and cooling system has been upgraded so the museum should be very comfortable for visitors and volunteers alike.

The plaster restoration in the Madison Museum at Kemper is nearing completion and it is really looking good. The painting will be finished soon as well. David Amorose has done an excellent job of restoring the plaster and painting the walls and trim. His work on the sun porch should be complete as this goes to press. It will be nice to have all of that done so the visitors can tour the two upper floors and enjoy the Kemper Mansion as it may have looked when Gov. Kemper was living there. We could use a few volunteers to give the Law Office and Servant's Quarters a thorough cleaning now that the weather is warming up.

Our next program will be on May 17, 2026, in the County Auditorium at 2PM. Read about it in the article Penn Bowers prepared for the first page in this newsletter. Penn always does a great job of putting our programs together. This one will be special as well.

Our organization survives because of our membership dues. If you are seeing this newsletter for the first time and like what we do to preserve Madison's History, we hope you will become a member and help us achieve that objective. When you become a member, you will receive a newsletter with your choice of getting a hard copy in the mail or receiving it electronically via email. Make sure you write your addresses clearly on the application and mark your choice of how you wish to receive your newsletter. We are looking forward to your becoming a member. If you know of someone that might be interested in becoming a member, get them an application form to fill out and return with their dues.

May Steve Hoffman rest in peace. He has done a lot of wonderful things for Madison County and will be greatly missed.

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

From the Editor....

Deciding how to observe Virginia 250 has been difficult for me. For starters, I don't know what I want to celebrate this year; I don't want to jinx anything. Then I keep reminiscing about what happened fifty years ago. Here is how Ed Berry put it in his Timeline of Madison County History:

1976 *The American Revolution Bicentennial was celebrated with events coordinated to mark two hundred years of independence. Among the accomplishments of the Bicentennial Commission were the design and selection of a county seal, the initiative to restore the County Courthouse, the selection of a county song, the publication of a revised county history, and the formation of the Madison Heritage Foundation (later to become the Madison County Historical Society.)*

1976 was a good year. So was 1956 when the organization now known as Historic Germanna was founded. Many current day residents of Madison County descend from Germans who came to Virginia in the early 1700s. Some of us are members of Historic Germanna and talk about it a lot. Other folks assume that the organization has something to do with Germanna Community College. I invite you to look for that connection as you read the article by Cathi Clore Frost that appears on page five of this newsletter. The founding of community colleges in Virginia had a visible effect on the town of Madison. The start of Germanna Community College led to the closure of the University of Virginia's Madison Extension Center, housed on the Kemper property. We now attend meetings of the Board of Supervisors and cast early ballots in a building originally constructed for this college. Without "classes in the way," the Kemper Residence gradually changed from a school facility to a museum and future home of the Madison County Historical Society.

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

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

Jayne E. Blair—Ruckersville, VA

Mike & Randee Powell—Madison, VA

Laura DeBoer—Etlan, VA

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

~~~ Arlene Aylor

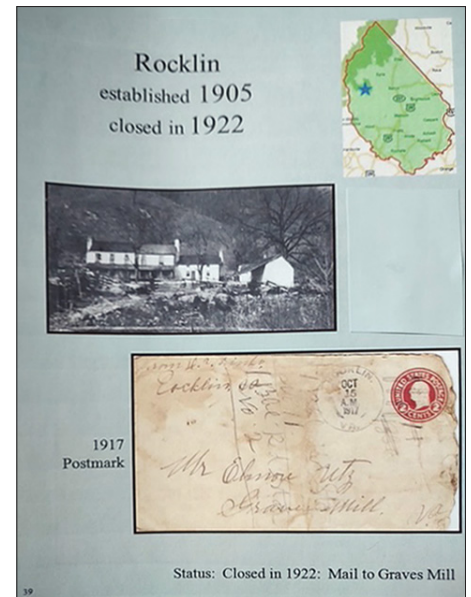
Post Offices in the Mountains

By

Max Lacy

The mountains were full of Post Offices back in the days before Shenandoah National Park (SNP) came into being. The Rocklin and Oldrag Post Offices existed on land now part of SNP, and both were discontinued before SNP was officially dedicated in 1937 by President Franklin Roosevelt. Other offices located near the Park included Graves Mill, Syria, Nethers, Etlan, Peola Mills, and Criglersville. Of these only Syria remains open today and like several other offices in Madison County, it is open for only two hours a day.

Rocklin was established on June 21, 1905, with Claude Clinton Goodall as the first Postmaster. He was married to Fannie Gilbert Graves and was a grandson of my great-grandfather Philander Goodall. The first Post Office was located near the Silas Utz Mill which was near the base of Utz Hightop Teacup. Silas was married to Elizabeth Daniel. Claude Goodall served until 1911 when Charles Edgar (Ed) Hawkins was appointed. Ed was the father of Ralph Hawkins and grandfather of Nancy Hawkins Knighting (Ralph's daughter). He served until 1914 when Fannie Belle Sparks Utz (wife of William Thadeus Utz, son of Silas Utz) was appointed. She served until Dathon Finks (husband of Ella Seal) was appointed in 1917. According to the Scheel Map of Madison County there were two PO locations at Rocklin. The assumption is that the office moved when Finks became Postmaster. The Post Office was then located near the upper bridge close to the Seal's property (D Finks Distillery). Hawkins School was located between the original and second Post Offices. That PO was discontinued on June 15, 1922, with Dathon Finks being the last Postmaster. Mail for Rocklin was sent to Graves Mill which was two to three miles away. That does not sound far, but it was not close time wise. Walking was probably the main mode of transportation at that time unless you were lucky enough to have a horse to ride. The horse might also have pulled your buggy if you had a buggy. An interesting finding concerns the



annual salary of Post Masters. In 1908-1909 the pay of Claude Goodall was \$75 for the year, and the salary of the Graves Mill Postmaster was \$110 dollars for the same time period.

Much of my information about Rocklin came from conversations with Doug Graves, Nancy Knighting, and Randall Lillard. They received a lot of their information from Ralph Hawkins during a hike up to Rocklin in 1995. This hike formed the basis for a DVD program *A Neighbor to Hoover's Camp* that Nancy has presented numerous times. She has also donated many pictures and helped to arrange the Rocklin corner at the Mountain Museum at Criglersville. Most Post Offices of this era were housed in General Stores of the time, but Graves Mill had a building of its own. A replica of this Post Office is the center piece of the Graves Mill Historical Park, begun by Doug Graves in 2007. A plaque in The Park at 52 Bluff Mountain Road



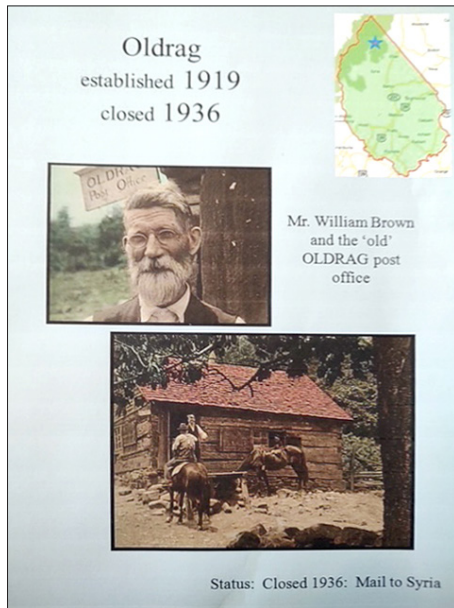
(l-r) Ella Green Berrey Goodall and her husband, Benjamin Franklin Goodall, Leah Lillian Estes Graves, Mandy the *mule*, Lucian Wilhoite Graves, Nina Belle Graves Jarrell, Fannie Gilbert Graves Goodall, Abraham Franklin Graves (wearing hat), Thomas Abraham Jarrell, and Claude Clinton Goodall.

Photo was taken about 1912
Graves Mill, Virginia

(Continued from Page 3)

lists the names of families who lived in and around Graves Mill over the years. Doug donated the park to the Madison County Historical Society in 2022.

The Oldrag (Post Office Department spelling) Post Office was established on March 3, 1919, with William Austin Brown as the first Postmaster. The village of Old Rag (spelling on most maps) was located near Weakley Valley (later changed to Weakley Hollow), which separated "Ragged Mountain" from the rest of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Weakley Hollow was originally settled in the 1770s and eventually grew into the village of Old Rag. It had two stores, two churches, and a school by the early 20th century. When the Post office opened in 1919 it was located in a very small store that was located at the junction of Old Rag Saddle Trail and Weakley Hollow Fire Road. The Post Office operated in two stores that belonged to Mr. Brown and was later moved to Butler's Store most likely when Mrs. Corrie Bell Smith Gallihugh (wife of Weldon T. Gallihugh) was appointed acting Postmaster on April 1, 1935. She remained acting Postmaster until the office was discontinued on January 15, 1936. The Old Rag School was located near the Post Office, and Highland Church and the Meyers School were in the area as well. Mail was delivered to and from Oldrag via horseback. I am sure the Post Office Department closed this office to make way for SNP's opening.



The Post Office Department was a branch of the US Government until it became the United States Postal Service September 1, 1971, and ceased being a government agency. Mail for Oldrag was sent to Syria.

I can imagine that a lot of those people living at Old Rag probably used the Post Office that was closest to their home whether it was Syria or Nethers. Those areas were inside the original boundaries for the Park, but they were not in the final area for SNP. The acreage was revised, at the request of the State Of Virginia, because funds were lacking to buy all of the proposed land. A copy of the original map that was done in 1932 showing the area of Madison County that was proposed for the SNP hangs at the Mountain Museum at Criglersville (1128 Old Bue Ridge Turnpike).

Other Exhibits at the Mountain Museum at Criglersville present lots of information on these two Post Offices and the communities that they served. There are many donations from families of the "Displaced People" who came before and gave so much in order for our generation and future generations to have a Park to visit and enjoy. Archaeological digs over the years suggest that these mountain folks had basically the same material things found in other parts of the United States in that era. They certainly had food to eat during the depression as they raised most of it themselves and preserved it for later use by canning, salt curing, and burying things like potatoes and cabbage in the ground. The more we learn about these people the more we realize that the families were so much stronger and smarter than the Government made them appear to be.

The book *Hollow Folk* written in 1933 by Mandel Sherman and Thomas R Henry tells that dark side of the story. Jimmy Brown, a great-grandson of Postmaster Brown, was very instrumental in the formation of "The Children of the Shenandoah" Organization. This group was very involved in getting SNP to recognize the displaced families for what they were instead of what the Government tried to portray them to be in pictures taken by Arthur Rothstein in 1935. Prints of the Rothstein photographs are on display at both the Madison Museum at Kemper and the Mountain Museum at Criglersville. Both museums also have copies of the Scheel map of Madison County on display.



Syria, VA Today

Historic Germanna Celebrates 70 Years

By

Cathi Clore Frost

Many residents of Madison County trace their ancestry back to the immigrants of the 1714 (First) and 1717 (Second) Germanna Colonies and later German immigrants associated with them. A large number know the story of the Germanna Colonists indenture to Lt. Gov. Alexander Spotswood. Some have also heard of the organization that commemorates those ancestors - The Memorial Foundation of the Germanna Colonists in Virginia, Inc., also known as Historic Germanna. 2026 marks the foundation's 70th anniversary. Perhaps you, your parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents were early members.

The late 19th century saw growing interest in history and genealogy in the United States and during the 1890s several Germanna families (including Garr and Kemper) published genealogies. In the early 1900s pieces about both the 1714 and 1717 Germanna Colonies appeared in scholarly periodicals such as the *William and Mary Quarterly* and the *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* drawing further attention to these ancestors. Over the ensuing decades additional family genealogies were published referencing these articles.

Following World War II, Germanna descendants in Virginia began holding informal picnic gatherings near the site of the original Fort Germanna. In 1949, an organized picnic was held for the purpose of establishing a formal "Society of Germanna Colonists." This group held well attended annual picnics in the following several years and published an annual journal. Late in 1954, C. H. Huffman, then president of the society, wrote a letter of congratulations to the Nicholaikirche (St. Nicholas Church) in Siegen, Germany, a church in which some Germanna immigrants had been baptized. The church had been reconstructed after being destroyed by Allied bombing during World War II and Huffman's letter was sent to coincide with its dedication. That letter was translated and published in that city's newspaper - the *Siegener Zeitung* and came to the attention of a New York investment banker and stockbroker by the name of Ernst Flender.



Flender, a native of Siegen, wrote to Huffman in early 1955. The two exchanged historical and genealogical information and were also able to meet a couple of times. During these meetings, Flender indicated interest in assisting the descendants group in forming a nonprofit to acquire the original Germanna tract and offered his financial support. The Memorial Foundation of the Germanna Colonies in Virginia, Inc. dedicated to preserving the heritage of the earliest organized settlement of Germans in colonial Virginia was granted a charter of incorporation on March 14, 1956. Although the foundation's board was disappointed to learn the site of Fort Germanna and Spotswood's Enchanted Castle was not available, they soon purchased a nearby 279 acre tract and named it "Siegen Forest" in honor of the homeland of the 1714 First Germanna Colonists.

Over the following decades, the foundation has accomplished much. The original picnic gatherings continue and are now a four-day Conference and Reunion with multiple opportunities for learning and socializing. In 1969 100 acres of the Siegen Forest was donated to Virginia for the establishment of Germanna Community College in Locust Grove. The Germanna Visitor Center was constructed on the remaining 179 acres. Additional properties were donated to the organization, including the historic Salubria mansion in Culpeper County. Twenty-four volumes in the Germanna Record series have been published. The database of Germanna descendants is continuously growing. The most exciting development has been the transfer of the Fort Germanna / Enchanted Castle site from the University of Mary Washington to Historic Germanna and the subsequent decade of archaeological exploration.

The 70th Anniversary Conference & Reunion will be held July 16-19, 2026. Come on out and visit us!

Historic Germanna, 2062 Germanna Highway, Locust Grove, VA
Germanna.org



Editor's Note: Cathi Clore Frost lives in Saint Helens, Oregon. She is a member of the Board of Historic Germanna and a descendant of more Germanna settlers than we have room to list! As a professional genealogist and author, she is currently putting finishing touches on the definitive genealogy record of the Weaver clan descended from 1717 Germanna colonists.

Your Board of Directors 2026

Arlene Aylor, Membership Chair

Essie Berry, Director

Vicki Brown, Director & Manager of Mountain Museum

Penn Bowers, Vice-President & Program Chair

Martha Breeden, Corresponding Secretary

Phil Brockman, Recording Secretary

Dennis Coppedge, Director

Laura DeBoer, Director

Max Lacy, President

Judy Mahanes, Treasurer

Pam Nelson, Director

Beppy White, Director

Laura DeBoer manages the Society Facebook page. Judy Mahanes and Martha Breeden are Editor and Photography 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.

Meet the new Board members elected at our February meeting:

Laura DeBoer is a native and lifetime resident of Madison County. She graduated from Madison County High School and Roanoke College. An artist, she taught ceramics and fine arts at Highland School in Warrenton from 2005- 2019 and currently has her own pottery business Old Orchard Pottery. Laura played a key role in establishing and promoting the Madison County Barn Quilt Trail. Other interests include fabric quilting and "reading" audio books. She has volunteered each year at the Historical Society's Mountain Heritage Day at Criglersville Mountain Museum and with the annual Heritage Days Program for fourth graders at Waverly Yowell Elementary School. Laura lives in Etlan with husband Chris, son Sam, and daughter Hannah.

In Vicki Brown's own words: *I was raised in beautiful Madison county and graduated from MCHS in 1977. My parents were Grady and Betty Brown. My brother was Jimmy Brown, who was a founding member of the Children of Shenandoah. Our great grandfather was the Postmaster at Old Rag before being displaced by the creation of Shenandoah National Park. Jimmy was passionate about sharing the history of the sacrifice that many made and making sure SNP shared the real story. I am attempting to take over part of his mission by managing the Mountain Museum in Criglersville. We must ensure that this history is not forgotten or minimized! My heart is in Criglersville as I went to Criglersville Elementary School for seven years. The museum has a room dedicated to both Criglersville Schools. Every time I host at the museum, I hear stories I've never heard before. It's always a learning experience for all involved! I know Jimmy Brown would be proud of all that has been accomplished!*

Remembering Steve Hoffman (1945–2026)

On April 2nd, 2026, Steve Hoffman, long time member and friend of the Madison County Historical Society, passed away. For years he was a period furniture restorer and finisher for antique shops, individual antique collectors and museums. Along the way he became a historian and collector of historical items such as old firearms and even stills, antiques of a kind.

Steve began helping out the MCHS as early as 2006 by conducting a fundraiser Antiques Appraisal where for a small fee individuals could bring their precious possessions for an evaluation of their worth. He repeated the antiques "Roadshow" the next year evaluating furniture, toys, tools, antique arms and armor, paper and documents.

At the November 2006 quarterly meeting of the Society Steve did a "Show and Tell," having brought many items of historical interest which he called "stuff." This included many items from Revolutionary and Civil War times, including money, tax bills and Civil War muster rolls.

At the February 2017 quarterly meeting Steve spoke to the Society about the history of the "moonshine industry" in this County and the laws that apply. Old stills were on display, and we learned how to make moonshine.

At the August 2019 meeting of the Society Steve spoke to us about "Old Madison Stores." His talk included Ag and Business industries including stores, blacksmith shops, distillers, farmers, doctors and tanners. All of the business industries about which he spoke are now closed.

Steve was a wonderful raconteur, extremely knowledgeable about and collector of old things and quite genuinely happy to show, tell and talk about all of it. His final appearance on our stage was in September 2025 when he was part of the panel discussing responses to the flood emergency of 1995.

To a great friend of the Society, we say "Thank You, Steve." You are and will be missed.

~~~~Penn Bowers



Steve Hoffman on  
Madison County  
Commerce

# The US Constitution, according to Jayne Blair



At the February 15, 2026, meeting of the Madison County Historical Society, Jayne Blair led us on a verbal tour of the negotiations involved in creating a functional government for the new United States of America. Ms. Blair spent six years in the US Navy and is retired from the Dallas Police Department. In this area, she has worked at both Monticello and Montpelier and is currently the Research Assistant for the Orange County Historical Society. She calls that Society her “playpen” because she “loves getting into the files.” At this presentation, she led us through the story of how our government came to be.

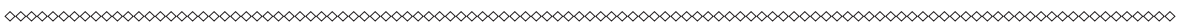
In this year when we are observing the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Ms. Blair credits that document with explaining why we exist as a nation. The next step after that was determining how to hold thirteen former colonies together as states. During the Revolutionary War years, the “Articles of Confederation” guided the new country. An interesting sidelight is that one of its provisions allowed Canada to join the new country when she wanted to. By the time the treaty of Paris was signed in 1783, it was apparent that the “Articles of Confederation” document was no longer sufficient. The country was financially broke, and the states weren’t anxious to donate their money to a national government.

The “founding fathers” knew something had to be done, and so a meeting was convened in Philadelphia. James Madison left Orange County to attend and picked up George Washington along the way. Thomas Jefferson, principal author of the Declaration, was not a delegate to the convention; he was serving as Minister to France and hence out of the country and unable to serve.

Delegates to the Constitutional Convention studied many proposals (the Virginia Plan, the New Jersey Plan) and found them lacking. A major issue was how to balance the needs and responsibilities of small states with those of large states. Any decision based on population was controversial and there was no obvious path to reaching a necessary compromise. Finally the delegates hit on the idea of having a bicameral legislature with a House of Representatives based on population and a Senate where each state had equal representation. Unfortunately, the controversy did not end with this Connecticut Compromise. The next issue was whether and how to count enslaved people in the southern states. Northern states were opposed to counting slaves because that would boost southern population and give southern states more power. Hence the 3/5 compromise found its way into Article I, Section 2. The original document does not mention slavery. It took the 14th amendment to codify counting “the whole number of persons in each State.”

Then came the “invention” of the Electoral College for selecting the President and Vice-President. The founders did not want to give this power to the legislative branch; nor were they comfortable letting the general population vote directly. The original plan was “cleaned up” by the 12th amendment to the Constitution.

Ms. Blair concluded by saying the 1787 Constitution has 4,543 words and was written on four pages. No words in the original document can be changed. Any changes to the constitution must occur through the amendment process defined in Article V. Over 11,000 amendments have been proposed; twenty-seven have been fully ratified.



## Spring Tea Report

The spring drive by tea was once again a capacity event! There were two large groups that took this opportunity to gather with a group of friends without having to cook! Others ordered one or two servings for themselves or family. The fall drive by tea is planned for October 28, 2026, so start thinking how you prefer to enjoy lovely homemade tea goodies: with a group of friends or individually.

As always, thank you for choosing the tea as one way to support the Madison County Historical Society.

~~~Mary Haught



Madison County Historical Society
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540-395-5119

Address Service Requested



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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.