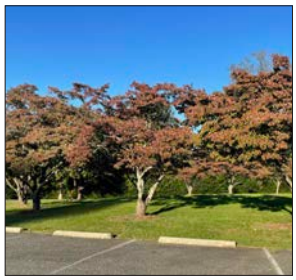
Preserving Yesterday Enriches Tomorrow







Madison County
Historical Society

www.madisonvahistoricalsociety.org

November 2026

Madison Fire Company: Past, Present, and Future



Have you ever wondered when our local fire department started? Or how? Find out more at our November quarterly membership meeting, where the speaker will be Troy Coppage, Chief of the Madison County Volunteer Fire Company. Troy is also President of Clore Furniture.

Troy will speak about the history of the MCVFC and his family's role in its founding during the 20th Century. He is the third generation of Clore descendants to serve in a leadership role with MCVFC, and the fifth family member to serve as Fire Chief.

The fire company was founded in 1946, succeeding an existing fire department for the Town of Madison. The Clores' furniture factory had burned down twice, and the family was instrumental in getting a new fire department going with a larger service area in the county.

Troy has spent his whole life around the MCVFC and spent much of his childhood at the firehouse. He first joined as an official volunteer at the age of 14 in 1980 and completed his Firefighter I certification at 16. His program will cover the founding of the company through its move to its current location and advances in technology that have changed the causes of fires and how they are handled.



Since its founding, the fire company has served an important role for county residents even beyond keeping us safe, through community gatherings and support of the wonderful people and organizations in the county.

This general membership meeting will be held at 2 pm on Sunday, November 15, in the Madison County Administration Building Auditorium, 414 N. Main St. The program is open to the public, and all are welcome.

Find us on: facebook

If you're on Facebook, have you seen our weekly "Museum Monday" posts? Intended to give followers a taste of what our museums have to offer, these posts also help us connect to people both near and far about the rich history of Madison County. Please feel free to share posts and comment on them! In the past six months we have gained hundreds of new followers and reached tens of thousands of views. Be sure to follow **Madison County Virginia Historical Society** to see each week's snippet of Madison County history, as well as to keep up to date on Society happenings.



A Note From The President

As Interim Society President, I have some very big shoes to fill. Max Lacy was the heart and soul of our organization, and quite a busy bee for getting things done for events, exhibits, and research. I am new to the Board but am a lifelong Madisonian who loves to learn about and share its history. I've been learning on the job, and I deeply appreciate how other members of the Board and museum volunteers have stepped up greatly to keep things running and even growing.

I have volunteered with Society events for years and the past few months have been a great opportunity to do even more. I have loved learning more about the museum collections and the Society's activities. I have helped at every Open House and Mountain Skills Day through the Madison Quilters Guild, and I enjoyed playing a larger role in that event this past September. I've spent much more time in the museums since joining the Board. Two favorite new finds for me this past summer were my parents' wedding announcement in a 1976 Madison Eagle newspaper (they're celebrating 50 years this month!), and learning to operate an antique Victrola once used at a dance hall in Wolftown.

I am excited for upcoming events such as learning more about our local fire department at our November program, as well as the annual 4th Grade Walking Tour (moved to the fall instead of spring). It was so rewarding last year to see the kids get interested in history and realize that we have so much right here in our own backyard—or more precisely, the backyard of the Kemper Residence, which is where I was stationed. I continue to hear from parents whose kids have been on the tour how much they got out of it. Even though I wasn't the one to show them the holding cell in the Courthouse, which was a favorite stop for many kids, I was thoroughly entertained at the kids' reactions to learning about chamber pots.

Even before being made Interim President, it was important to me that our collections be more accessible. This year we have increased our online presence via Facebook to share snapshots from our two museums, as well as to stay in contact with our members and the public. At the annual Taste of the Mountains street festival, I wanted to make sure the Arcade was open while we had so many people literally at its doorstep. The building has not often been open since the Madison Museum moved down the street to the Kemper Residence. In preparation for the day, I got to walk through the archway for the *very first time*! Visitors got to walk through it, too, and then step inside to see items housed at the Arcade, plus some from Kemper and Criglersville. We are also planning a future Open House at the Kemper Residence and Madison Museum to allow visitors to come in on a weekend outside of regular museum hours. We will definitely let you listen to songs on the Victrola!

From the Editor....

It is my pleasure to begin sharing this page with Laura DeBoer. Laura brings to our organization love and respect for history, enthusiasm for the future, and lots of energy! And she's not shy! She will not hesitate to remind us "old-timers" that information we consider common knowledge is hardly that for younger generations. She also has much to teach us all. Laura is the person who researches, writes, and posts the "Museum Mondays" items on the Society Facebook page. To Laura, thank you, and to the rest of you, check them out.

Thanks also to the Noggle family for another in depth article about property in the town of Madison. That reminds me to invite others of you to follow their example and write for this newsletter. The deadline for articles for the next issue will be in late January, so you have time to put pen to paper…or should that be dictate your thoughts to a software app?

Best wishes for the upcoming holidays!

Here are the usual reminders:

- Past issues of this newsletter may be accessed at www.madisonvahistoricalsociety.org.
- Print subscribers can go to the same site to enlarge photographs.
- For feedback and letters to the editor, our addresses are: madhistory467newsletter@gmail.com and PO Box 467, Madison, VA 22727.

~~~Judy Mahanes

Membership Report

Below are listed those who became new members during the third quarter:

Evelyn & Bob Chehi
Orange, VA (Madison County)

Jeff Buddington
Charlottesville, VA

Be on the lookout for your renewal letters for 2027. Just fill out the form on the back of the letter and return it along with your tax-deductible dues. Please make any necessary changes in your personal information to help us keep our records up to date. Your support of the Society is greatly appreciated.

~~~ Arlene Aylor

Madison Museum: From the Attic and Beyond



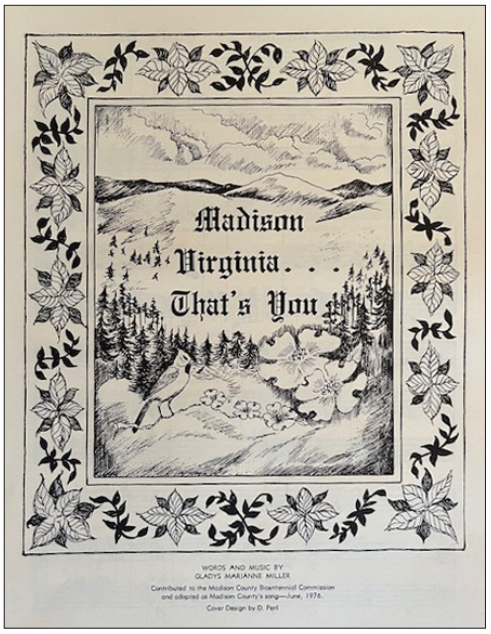
The Historical Society has accepted donations for its exhibits for years. The first record in the official inventory list is Dena Willcox Dean's painting of the Madison County Seal. You can see that today as you walk into the Madison Museum at Kemper (MMK). A photograph of it also appears at the top of each issue of this newsletter. In 1989, sisters Martha Yowell and Lucy Yowell Faulk from Rochelle donated a cannon ball, a dress worn by Martha when she was 15, and a wedding photograph of their parents. The groom was James B. (Sonny) Yowell (1861--1944); the bride was Elizabeth (Lizzie) Kipps (1862--1962) attired in a dark colored dress. They were married on November 10, 1891. The couple had four children: Martha, Lucy who married Hoy Faulk, Mary who married Carter Mahanes, and Yancey who married Ruth Carpenter. Older locals will remember Mrs. Faulk as a teacher at Criglersville School and Mrs. Yowell who taught elementary grades in Madison.



Becky Claxton Welch and Jayne Penn Hollar with the dress

Back to the dress: the Madison Museum at Kemper now has it! At some point the dress moved to Weaverville, NC where a granddaughter (Martha Ann Mahanes Claxton) displayed it in her mountain home. As happens, the Claxton children eventually had the responsibility of clearing out their family home. What to do with the dress? It first moved to the nearby home of Becky Claxton Welch, Lizzie Yowell's great-granddaughter. This summer, another great-granddaughter from New York visited Claxton Farm and agreed to help find a permanent home for the dress. Linda Globuschutz called MMK, sent photographs, and convinced us that the dress should return to Madison. It wasn't a hard sell. On September 30, 2026, Becky and Wayne Welch delivered this treasure to Kemper. The dress is a lovely shade of brown with many fine touches. It is stunning! And tiny! Come visit it in the parlor of the Kemper Residence.

Madison History on the Sixes
Compiled by Edward DeJ. Berry



1716 Governor Alexander Spotswood and his "Knights of the Golden Horse-Shoe" expedition to explore to the Blue Ridge Mountains started from Germanna and crossed over the Rapidan River into what was to become Madison County on their way to Swift Run Gap.

1906 A church census was conducted in Madison County. Out of a population of 10,226, 4,528 claimed memberships in some church: 2,248 Baptists, 1,181 Methodists, 150 Christians, 66 Primitive Baptists, 38 Dunkards, 389 Lutherans, 12 Presbyterians, and 17 Episcopalians.

1906 The Clore and Hawkins factory began the manufacture of chairs. Hawkins and Sons began in 1910. It is believed they were the first to have a factory devoted to the manufacture of chairs.

1916 The Radiant community added a third classroom to its school. A fourth room was added in 1920.

1926 Mr. Claude Yowell's *History of Madison County* was published. This is the first history of the county.

1946, October 25 The first football game for Madison County High School was played against Orange High School at White Oak Stadium near Hebron Lutheran Church.

1976 The American Revolution Bicentennial was celebrated with events coordinated to mark two hundred years of independence. Among the accomplishments of the Bicentennial Commission was 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.)

DON'T SELL WHAT YOU DON'T OWN

By

Michael Noggle and Lorrie Noggle

The authors discussed the history of the early recorded ownership of the town of Madison and surrounding area, tracing the Northern Neck Proprietors (Lord Fairfax)-Eddins-Lynn-Finnie-Duncanson-Porter-Major-Carpenter chain, in the August 2026 issue of this newsletter. This follow-up article begins with an 1806 lawsuit and examines the resulting ownership dispute and the court decision that ultimately resolved it.

At the midpoint of Main Street in the town of Madison, Virginia, stands an unassuming, single-story blue brick building. For nearly 60 years, it was home to the Madison County Eagle newspaper. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed the newspaper's employees out of the office and into their homes. That move became permanent, and the 800-square-foot building went up for sale. It sat empty for a year before new owners took possession. Seeing potential for a new life in the old structure, they began a renovation that would celebrate the building's history while creating a place to serve visitors to Madison and the surrounding area.



The building's age quickly became a central question. The Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey dated the Madison Eagle building to the 1940s, while the Madison County Historical Society walking tour placed its construction around 1800. The new owners also planned to seek state and federal historic tax credits for the renovation and preservation work, which required establishing that the structure was old enough to qualify as historic. Answering that question led to a search through more than two centuries of deeds and legal records, reaching back to the land claims of English kings.

The research ultimately contributed to the Madison Eagle building's successful listing on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places in 2022. Along the way, however, another puzzle emerged. An early deed for the property contained an unusual provision. In the 1813 deed from James D. Markham (grantor) to Leonard and Henry Barnes (grantees), Markham stated, "it is hereby expressly agreed and understood by and between the parties to this indenture that if the aforesaid tenements or lots of land and improvements herein shall be owned by the Dunkanson (sic) heirs for which suit is now pending in the Circuit Court of Orange . . . that they . . . do agree . . . to refund to said Leonard and Henry Barnes the sum of seven hundred and fifty dollars the consideration money mentioned in this deed."[1]

The provision raised a larger question: If Markham did not have clear title to the property, who else claimed it, and on what basis? What began as a question about one small parcel soon revealed a dispute affecting a much larger tract and numerous landowners. The records uncovered during the research make it possible to trace that dispute through the courts and clarify both who ultimately held legal title and why.

Land ownership carried enormous economic and social importance in early Virginia, for farmers and non-farmers alike. A title dispute that reached the courts could affect not only the parties named in the case but also neighboring landowners whose claims depended on the same chain of title. The records also suggested that later accounts of the dispute may have misstated its origin. Reconstructing the case therefore became important not only to the history of the Madison Eagle property but also to the broader history of land ownership in Madison.

First Court Involvement

An 1806 Fredericksburg District Court record appears to provide the earliest evidence found of a legal contest over this property. William Carpenter, William S. Leckie, James Clarke, John Wright, James D. Wickham, Joseph Slater, Joseph Thompson, George Good, and William Kemper jointly reported that on January 2, 1806, Richard Roe, a justice of the Fredericksburg Court, "with force and arms (that is to say) with swords, staves, and knives entered into the said tenements with the appurtenances . . . and ejected the said [complainants]."[2]

Roe represented Charles and Fanny Urquhart, William and Polly Porter, Ann Hackley (widow of Edward S. Hackley), and the heirs of the deceased James Duncanson Jr.: Mary Duncanson, Robert Duncanson, and Edward Stevens Duncanson. James Jr., Fanny, Polly, and Ann Duncanson were children of James and Mary McCauly Duncanson. Together, these heirs-at-law of Mary Duncanson initiated the court-ordered ejection through the Fredericksburg District Court.

On April 1, 1806, Roe responded by letter to Carpenter, Leckie, and the others, recommending that they retain an attorney practicing before the Fredericksburg Court and respond there as complainants. The heirs of Mary Duncanson later elected to refile their ejection suit in the Orange Court of Law, possibly on the advice of counsel, because of jurisdictional issues, or in search of a more favorable venue. A Madison County deputy sheriff delivered Roe's letter concerning the ejected landholders to the Orange Court.

Orange County Superior Court of Law (1806-1824)

No records were found detailing the case as it proceeded in the Orange Superior Court of Law. In 2022, the authors contacted the Orange County Court Clerk by telephone, but the clerk's office reported that it found no record of the case. The principal surviving account of the Orange Court action appears in the later opinion from the Virginia Court of Appeals. That opinion indicates that the Orange Court ruled in favor of the ejected landholders and against Mary Duncanson's heirs, while leaving the legal questions associated with the ruling unresolved. The Orange Court's decision effectively canceled the Fredericksburg District Court's ejection order, subject to appeal.[3]

Virginia Court of Appeals (June 1824 Decision)

Mary Duncanson's heirs appealed the Orange Superior Court of Law decision to the Virginia Court of Appeals. In June 1824, Judge Coalter wrote the court's decision. The judges focused primarily on Dr. William Lynn's 1757 will and the 1780 deed recording James and Mary Duncanson's sale of the 420-acre tract to Thomas Porter. The Court of Appeals questioned the Orange Court's decision to validate the Duncansons' sale and warranty of the property. The written opinion indicates that the lower court's verdict rested on legal questions concerning whether the Duncansons held title to the land they had conveyed and what effect any warranty could have on later purchasers.



Under Dr. Lynn's will, as interpreted by the Court of Appeals, Mary Duncanson, his only grandchild, would inherit Ann Dent's property through her mother, Hannah McCauly, only if Ann Dent died without children, which she did. James Duncanson's 1791 will names Hannah McCauley as his executor. But Hannah Lynn McCauly and Ann Lynn Dent Finnie were both still alive when James and Mary Duncanson sold the land in 1780. Mary therefore could not yet have inherited property from either her mother or her aunt. On that reasoning, the court concluded that the relevant property did not belong to Mary or James Duncanson in 1780. The judges also indicated that even if James Duncanson's warranty to Thomas Porter had been valid, it applied between Duncanson and his heirs and Porter, not to subsequent purchasers.

Judge Coalter wrote, "this renders it unnecessary for me to decide, whether, if this was a conveyance and warranty, to bar them, they must have assets, those assets must be by descent." Put more plainly, the Virginia Court of Appeals reversed the Orange Superior Court of Law. It reinstated the ejection sought by Mary Duncanson's heirs, effectively recognizing the heirs' claim to the 420-acre tract.

The consequences extended well beyond a single parcel. The May 1826 grantor list for Madison County deeds identifies approximately 40 grantees who had to repurchase their land from Mary Duncanson's heirs. Madison County itself had to repurchase properties on which it had already constructed buildings.

The 1926 and 1976 histories of Madison County describe the ownership conflict in essentially the same terms: "The Duncanson heirs challenged title to the 420 acres Carpenter had bought from Major. The conflict of ownership goes back to the conflict of ownership between Spotswood and Lord Fairfax . . ." The Virginia Court of Appeals decision does not support that explanation. As the court record indicates, the dispute instead arose from an invalid ownership claim and the 1780 sale of property by James and Mary Duncanson to Thomas Porter.

1 Madison County Deeds: Deed Book 5, page 394, May 24, 1813, Markham to Barnes

2 Virginia Historic Courts Collections: Fredericksburg (Spotsylvania) District Court: Collection CR-DC-L, Record ID 575-16

3 "Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Court of Appeals of Virginia, Volume II" by Peyton Randolph, Richmond, VA Published by Peter Cottom 1824 (Republished by Forgotten Books), pages 549-562

Taste of the Mountains 2026

September 5, 2026, was quite the day. At first, it was humid but dry. Booths were quickly erected. Visitors strolled leisurely along Main Street even as they and event officials kept glancing at weather apps on their phones. Then came a late morning thunderstorm with thunder, lightning, a massive downpour of rain, and some wind. Many street festival vendors closed up after that, an easy decision after their wares floated along the curb. Those who stayed enjoyed a beautiful afternoon with many visitors who arrived after the storm. The Historical Society lost one poster board sign, but the Arcade stood strong throughout the day. The building, considered the oldest in the town of Madison, protected the north end of town from fire in 1919 and the tunnel provided shelter for many people who crowded in during the deluge of 2026.



We regret that nobody counted how many folks were actually in there.



Inside the building, visitors viewed the six-foot by eight-foot screen painting of Meander Farm as it existed in 1939 and studied a sampling from the Donald Strode collection of native American artifacts collected within Madison County. The photographs and the large desk from Gibbs and Estes store gave a hint into what the town's Main Street was like before the Peterson Building (home to DMV and town offices in 2026) was built. The wall covered with plaques from the Madison County Rescue Squad reminded everyone of the valuable service provided by that organization for many, many years. The conference table was covered with items brought in from our other museums. The bound set of 1976 Eagles and photographs from the founding days of Shenandoah National Park were especially popular with visitors.



Almost one hundred people signed our guestbook that day! Our volunteers had a great time discussing local history with these visitors from all over. Thanks go to Laura DeBoer for coordinating the event and to volunteer hosts Beppy White, Vicki Brown, Carolyn Yowell, Arlene Aylor, Leeta Louk, Sarah Henshaw, Judy Mahanes, and Nan Coppedge.





Celebration at Criglersville

The Mountain Museum at Criglersville hosted an Open House and Mountain Skills Day on September 13, 2026. The weather was nice despite a few threatening black clouds. Almost one hundred people signed the museum register, and we know many more enjoyed outdoor activities. Some folks were very familiar with the history of the displacement for the creation of Shenandoah National Park and shared stories of their own. Others took advantage of the opportunity to learn about the mountain ways and the history of the displacement. Everyone enjoyed demonstrations, food from Catch the Chef food truck, and music from Waterfalls band. The band sang an original song about the displacement. We offer huge thanks to all who participated and attended and to Graves Mountain Lodge for providing picnic tables.



Clyde & Debbie Jenkins



Clyde Jenkins showed folks how to make baskets and had many beautiful ones for sale. His lovely wife, Debbie, had some yummy homemade goodies for sale. The Quilters Guild displayed beautiful quilts and showed folks how they were sewn years ago. Vickie Watts and Frances Lacy demonstrated the amazing steps of transforming wool into stunning clothes and art. Heather and Brie Campbell were there to explain foraging and how the mountain people knew exactly what they could and could not use from the woods and mountains around them.



Heather & Brie Campbell

We also had author Stephanie Gardner who has written three books as well as Bill Henry, the founder of the Blue Ridge Heritage Project. Both have very interesting backgrounds and have devoted much time to recognizing the sacrifice that was made by the mountain folk. Ken Yowell rounded up three antique automobiles for all to admire.

New this year was Max's General Store in honor of Max Lacy, the late President of our Historical Society. The Store was a yard sale of interesting items donated by board members and museum volunteers. All proceeds benefited the Mountain Museum. We know Max was smiling from above!



We love it when people visit and learn about the history of the displacement for the creation of Shenandoah National Park. The Mountain Museum at Criglersville is open every Sunday, March through December, from 1 to 4 pm. If you are interested in volunteering, please email mountainmuseumatcriglersville@gmail.com.

Editor's note. Huge thanks go out to Vicki Brown and Laura DeBoer who planned the entire afternoon and to Jayne Penn Hollar who coordinated Max's Store.

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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.