



Gateway to the West



Lee County Historical and Genealogical Society P. O. Box 231 Jonesville, Virginia 24263

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The President's Report
..... 1

*Jonesville Rail Road
Company..... 1*

Cudjo's Cave.....2

*William E. "Bill"
Smith..... 2*

*History of Jonesville
Methodist Church
Stained Glass.....5*

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President's Report

By Becky Jones

It seems like little time has passed since our last newsletter went out. We are still meeting each month and having the most interesting programs. There have been several visitors doing research in our Library and we try to answer what queries we get. Powell Valley News and Jonesville Drug have our book for sale or they can be ordered by mail.

Our meeting in January was about a proposed railroad from Ben Hur to Jonesville so the people in the eastern part of the County would have a better way to get to the Court House. See article by Ken Roddenbury.

We did not have a program in December.

November's speaker was Libby Laforce. She talked about her family research she had been doing and how nine pages her mother left her turned into 500 or more pages.

In October Donnie Campbell talked to us about his new book *Early Settlers of Harlan County Kentucky*. Donnie has been doing Genealogy for thirty years. This is his third book. He got his families information from

Continued on page 3

Jonesville Rail Road Company *by Ken Roddenberry*

In 1881 there were no railroads in Lee County. However, two railway companies were interested in transporting the county's coal and iron ore to markets in the East. The Richmond and Southwestern Railroad in Wise County proposed to extend its line down the Powell's River to Pennington's [Iron] Forge, then onward to Jonesville and continuing westward by Bales Forge in Powell's Valley to Cumberland Gap. The Bristol Coal and Iron Railroad Company proposed to extend its line down the Powell's Valley uniting the iron ore and coal of Wise, Lee, and Scott counties with the Atlantic, Mississippi & Ohio Railroad at Bristol. It was anticipated in 1881 that Lee County would be in the front rank of advanced communities when these lines were completed. [Boyd, C.R., *Resources of South-West Virginia*, 1881. John Wiley & Sons, New York]

Imagine what a railroad would have meant to the people of Lee County: a reliable means of transportation, movement of commerce,

Continued on page 4

Cudjo's Cave *by Libby Laforce*

Most of us have known about Cudjo's Cave in western Lee County and many of us have toured the cave. The cave was discovered by Dr. Thomas Walker in 1750. Dr. Walker was a physician but also an explorer. He named the cave "Gap Cave." Over many years, the cave has had gone by many names: King Solomon's Cave, Soldiers Cave, Big Saltpeter Cave, Wellhole, Gap Cave and Cudjo's Cave.

The name Cudjo's Cave came about because of popular book by J.T. Trobridge called "Cudjo's Cave" written in 1864. The book was about a runaway slave who hid and lived in a cave in the Cumberland Gap Area. The owners of the cave changed the name to Cudjo's Cave to attract tourists.

The cave is located underneath the Pinnacle Overlook. It has a surveyed length of 18.5 miles and is the 42nd longest cave in the United States and the 154th in the World. It has six known entrances. The cave has four levels, 183 steps and 1.5 mile is open to the public. The cave has several large chambers and over the years the Masonic Blue Lodges of Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee have held ceremonies there.

In the 1800's it was used to mine Saltpeter. Saltpeter is Potassium Nitrate which is principal ingredient in the making of gun powder.

The first commercial tours were in 1890 under the East Kentucky Land Company. Lincoln Memorial University bought the cave in 1920 and reopened it to the public. In 1947 the title was transferred to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The cave was vandalized with lights broken, graffiti on nearly every wall, the bridges and stairs became unstable. Between the 1990's into the year 2000 the cave was nearly restored back to its original condition. The name has been changed to its original name "Gap Cave". Tours of the Cave are available during certain times of the year. Tours will resume on Memorial Day weekend 2020 until Sept 30, 2020. The cost will be \$8.00 for Children age 13 to Adult and \$4.00 for children 5 to 12. For times and dates please call the Cumberland Gap National Park at 606-248-2817.

William E. "Bill" Smith *by Kim Hurst*

It is with great sadness we report the passing of one of our Lee County Virginia Historical and Genealogical Society members.

Mr. Bill Smith was born in Louisville, Kentucky on May 27, 1939 and passed away on August 8, 2019. He was an avid historian and was such an asset to our society, often leading the programs and sharing his vast knowledge of his family, the community, and various other topics.

Mr. Smith did not often discuss his personal life and achievements, yet he led a very interesting life. He graduated from the United States Senate Page High School in Washington, D.C. in 1957 and after serving in the U. S. Army 92nd Field Artillery Regiment in Germany from 1957 to 1960, he was a successful entrepreneur in the insurance field and hotel business. He was very active in the political arena for several years and was nominated as the 1972 Kentucky gubernatorial candidate on the American Party ticket, running against Wendell Ford and A.B. "Happy" Chandler. Bill was a political appointee to the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and retired in 2014 after a successful and lengthy civil service career.

He then relocated to Rose Hill, Virginia and completed a major renovation of the home where his father, Virgil Smith, grew up which was owned by his grandparents, William Worth and Mary Bell Cawood Smith.

Mr. Smith had deep roots in the Rose Hill area, as well as Harlan County, Kentucky area, being related to many current and former residents in the Smith and Cawood families. He was very active in his community, being a member of the Morgan Memorial United Methodist Church as well as a member of the Sons of the American Revolution in addition to the Historical Society.

Bill was an avid writer; having completed several genealogy books and fiction books during his life as well as contributing articles to the local paper.

Bill loved his community; he loved exploring his community and was continuously searching for his next "adventure". He enjoyed discovering new "family" and connecting the various branches of his family tree.

He was always willing to share information and knowledge with anyone who was interested. He enjoyed delving into the past, yet he lived very much in the present and was constantly looking toward the future. He will be very fondly remembered and greatly missed.



Ronald Wayne Willis



Ken Roddenberry



William Smith

President's Report from page 1

the 1820 Harlan County census. A second volume is planned. He presented the Society a copy of his book for our Library. Donnie sold his book and our books at the Genealogy Jamboree in Cumberland Gap in October.

Libby Faforce talked to us about Herbal Medicine and the healing plants that our earlier people used especially in the rural areas where there were few doctors. Each family had many of their own remedies. She shared several remedies with us.

At our September meeting we learned that our beloved member and Director, William E. Smith, had died. Mr. Smith was such a good member of the Society, with his knowledge of genealogy and willingness to help in anyway. See article enclosed.

We appointed Ken Roddenberry to replace Mr. Smith as one of our directors.

We were visited by Boy Scout Troop # 333 in August. Ten young men told us about their goals as Scouts and their projects in the community. They checked out our research library and asked many questions about things in the museum.

Ronald Wayne Willis was our speaker in July. He had recently joined the Martin Station Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution. While researching William Granger Willis he found he had two other patriots who fought in the Revolution War: Enoch Dan Bowen and Elisha Wallen. There were several Willis men who fought in the Civil War. His Willis ascendants first settled on a land grant at Kyle Ford, TN. He gave the Society a book written by his cousin Marvin Newton Willis.

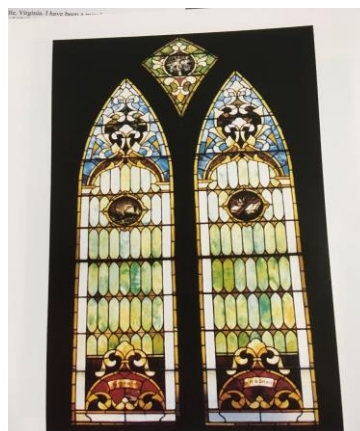
I hope you will renew your dues and keep supporting the Society. If you can send a donation with your dues it would greatly help. The insurance on the building, electric bills and filing of our 501C papers keep getting higher.

It was voted on to keep the same officers for another year. The Society would like to hear from some of our members who have stories, pictures or articles about this area they could share.

If you're in the area, you're more than welcome to join us for our meeting, second Saturday at 2 o'clock.



Stained Glass Window from
Jonesville Methodist Church
During repairs.



Stained Glass Window from
Jonesville Methodist Church
After repairs.



Original 1845 bell of Jonesville Methodist Church

Jonesville Rail Road by Ken Roddenberry

industrial development, increase in property value and standards of living, jobs, and the list goes on.

For reasons not known to the writer, another ten years would go by before Lee County would see a railroad through its county. In 1891, the Louisville & Nashville Railroad Company's Cumberland Valley Division, headquartered in Middlesboro, Ky., extended its road into Lee County from a tunnel beneath Cumberland Gap. Less than two years later, the L&N RR had reached the Wise County coalfields. However, the route through Lee County did not follow the route previously proposed by the two other railway companies mentioned earlier. Instead the L&N RR chose to follow the valley between Poor Valley Ridge and Cumberland Mountain thus bypassing Jonesville completely. I believe that geography and geology played a determining role in the railroad's decision.

Meanwhile, a group of investors, primarily from Jonesville area, sought to build a railroad connecting Jonesville with the L&N Railroad somewhere between Pennington Gap and Hubbard Springs.

This group introduced an Act to the General Assembly of Virginia to incorporate the Jonesville Rail Road Company. Approved on March 3, 1892, this act approved the construction, equipping, and operation of a railroad either narrow or standard gauge in Lee County, Virginia, to a convenient point at or near the town of Jonesville and thence through said county to a point on the Virginia and Tennessee state line at or near Mulberry Gap. [Acts Passed, Gen. Assembly of the Commonwealth of Va., 1892]

The Act identified the following persons from Lee, Scott, and Wise counties, the first nine being the Board of Directors: H. J. Morgan, B. H. Sewell, C. T. Duncan, J. A. G. Hyatt, H. C. T. Richmond, C. Slemph, Harvey Young, M. S. Ball, E. W. Pennington, H. C. Joslyn, A. M. Goins, A. W. Couk, A. M. Brown, J. R. Gibson, C. A. Russell, W. N. McNeil, D. O. Woodward, M. C. Parsons, E. S. Woodward, B. F. Kincaid, J. B. McLin, C. E. Baylor, I. S. Anderson, Wright Stickley, Carr Bailey, E. W. R. Ewing, E. W. Pennington, William S. Hurst, L. C.

Shelburn, S. S. Sergner, and J. M. Tate of Lee County Virginia; R. A. Ayres, J. B. Richmond, and Patrick Hagan of Scott County Virginia; [and] E. M. Fulton, C. F. Flanary, J. K. Taggart, J. B. F. Mills, W. S. Mathews, and W. E. Harris of Wise County Virginia.

The company was to raise at least \$25,000 in capital stock that would be divided into shares of \$25 each. Each share would be entitled to one vote. Subscriptions to the capital stock were made in money, labor, materials, or lands, and the company had the power to acquire lands, sell and convey land, at any one time. E.W.R. Ewing recorded in his 1892 Subscription Book [Library of Cridlin Law Office, Jonesville, Lee Co., Va.] the names of subscribers to the capital stock with the amount subscribed. The following subscriber names were listed:

I. S. Anderson, Wm. B. Andis, R. A. Ayers, W. A. Baker, H. O. Ballou, George W. Blankenship, J. G. (or J. S.) Browning, A. J. (or A. M.) Brown, L. M. Carmical, A. W. Couk, Nathan (or N. S.) Cox, Jno. Cridlin, W. S. Crowell, C. T. Duncan, Sorah C. Ely, J. R. Ely, W. R. Everhart, E. W. R. Ewing, C. E. (or C. F.) Flanary, E. M. Fulton, J. O. Gibson & Co., J. R. Gibson, A. M. Goins, Claiborne Hamblen, Jo. Harris, J. A. G. Hyatt, M. H. Jamison, H. C. Joslyn, I. P. Kane, O. C. Lee, M. B. Martin, W. S. Martin, Dr. H. M. Miles, Wm L. (or W. T.) Miller, H. J. Morgan, James W. Orr, M. C. Parsons, E. W. Pennington, John L. Pennington, James Pennington, A. L. Pridemore, J. B. Richmond, S. V. F. Richmond, L. C. Roop, C. A. Russell, B. H. Sewell, Madison Sims, M. B. Spencer, John B. West, W. O. (or W. P.) Wood, Newton Wygal.

On May 24th, 1892, shareholder and attorney-at-law, Auburn L. Pridemore, offered a deed-of-gift of one acre of land, to be laid out in streets and alleys, in a 16 acre field south of the Court House that he purchased from J.C. Joslyn, for each \$1000 cash subscription to the capital stock. [I believe a depot in Jonesville would have been located near here.] He called the railroad the "Dummy line" and made reference to its connection at or near "Ben Hur" on the L&N Railroad. The offer

Continued on page 5

Jonesville Rail Road by Ken Roddenberry

quickly generated \$16,000 of subscription money and on June 8th, over \$32,500 had been subscribed to the Jonesville Railroad Co.

On June 11th, 1892 the stockholders met and elected officers: A. L. Pridemore, Pres., C. T. Duncan, Vice Pres., H. J. Morgan, Treas., and J. A. G. Hyatt, Sec. A week later, on the 17th, the directors met and it was decided: (1) to assess 5% of the subscription stock from each stockholder; (2) to direct Gen. Pridemore to negotiate with Major W. F. Gordon, Jr., Chief Engineer, So. Atlantic & Ohio R. R., Bristol, Tenn., for preliminary surveys from Ben Hur to Jonesville; (3) to request a county election in August, submitting the questions concerning the railroad company and an opportunity to take stock in this company to the extent of \$15,000; and, (4) to request Judge Duncan to confer with L&N R Co. in regard to connections with said road. A committee was appointed to draft by-laws and an Election committee appointed to look over the business of the company.

At the July 29th meeting of the Board of Directors, Pres. Pridemore presented Major Gordon's report with a map and profiles. Gordon proposed two lines: a Northern line from the west hill of Ben Hur's "mail catch" on the L&N RR, and a Southern route from the East hill of Ben Hur toward Sulphur Springs. Owing to the number of trestles required on the Southern route, Gordon recommended the northern route saving an estimated \$4000. Overall, the line to Jonesville would have a maximum 2 percent grade and a 16

degree curvature. Gordon stated it was "heavier" than he desired but "some of the best roads in the country are using the same". Gordon estimated a total cost of \$18,558 and called it a "remarkable line as to cheapness for a mountain country". Pridemore added that he would round the sum to \$20,000 for the construction of the 5 1/4 mile line.

Pridemore concluded his remarks by saying, "Your work is now ready to proceed or come to a halt as you deem best. The situation is as well known to each of you as to the undersigned. I have pushed forward the work as rapidly as I could so that you might determine what further to do. The right of way should now, if we proceed, be at once secured, all stock required paid in. If we are not to build the road, the sooner we abandon the undertaking the better for all concerned."

Following the reading of Gordon's report and Pridemore's remarks, the Board of Directors voted to approve the construction of the Northern route as surveyed. A call was ordered of the stockholders for 15% to be paid by Sept. 10th. A mass meeting was called for August 15th.

The story of the Jonesville Railroad Company appears to end here. But somewhere the answer lies in the court house records, newspaper articles, or someone's trunk of letters. If any one has information on the Jonesville Railroad, letters from names mentioned herein, please contact Ken Roddenberry or the Lee Co. Va. Historical and Genealogical Society.

History of the Stained Glass Windows by Becky Jones

I attend the Methodist Church in Jonesville, Virginia. I have been a member there since my family and I moved back in the spring of 1968. My contact with this church and its members go further back to 1942 when my father was the pastor there. We lived in the old parsonage next to the church. My brothers and I played in and around the church grounds. We knew better than to throw rocks near the church, because the stain glass windows were something special and amazing with all the colors and shapes of glass.

The Jonesville Methodist Church was organized in 1845. The present Church was built in 1885. The current stain glass windows were added while renovating the Church in 1907. The earliest

windows had been covered with oil paper that looked like stained glass windows. The new windows have many Christian symbols each window different from the other, given in memory or dedicated by different families who were active in the church and community. Those who had dedications to them: Mae E. Morgan, Judge Henry Jasper Morgan was her uncle, Dr. M.B. Spencer, who lived across the street from the church was a physician in the county and a political leader in the town and county representing Lee County in the Virginia House of Delegates. Charles Aston Russell was a merchant in Jonesville. His store was on the

Continued on page 6



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History of the Stained Glass Windows continued

North corner of Main and Church Street. N. S. Cox was 2nd Sergeant in Co A 50th Virginia Infantry Regiment in the Confederate Army, his sons Charles S. Cox and William S. Cox, who was father of William Frederick Cox.

Pattie Orr was the wife of Judge James Wesley Orr who was a Lieutenant in the C.S.A. and after the war served as Lee County sheriff, County Clerk, County Judge, representative in the Virginia Assembly for eight years and represented Lee in the Constitutional Convention in 1901. He planted the Constitutional Oaks. Judge Orr was a layman in the Methodist Church South and very involved with the Methodist Camp Ground. His father David Orr was one of the first trustees and did the scoring of the logs used for the large posts, plates, and rafters of the permanent Camp Ground Shed built in 1824. The shed is still standing and camp meetings are held every August.

In memory of Rev. S. E. Houk was pastor of "The Jonesville Charge" from 1889-1901.

Dedicated by Epworth League: The Methodist Youth Adult Association for people age 18-35 was organized in 1889.

Dedicated by W.H.M.S. (Women's Home Missionary Society). The women of the Methodist Church have always played an important roll in home and foreign missions of the Church.

One of the stain glass windows was dedicated by the Sunday School classes. A few of the Christian Symbols are: Crown, and Cross, laid on an Open Bible which signifies Prophecy, Bible, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Glory. The Sheath of Wheat and a Scythe symbolizing Harvest and Witnessing for The Lord The Bread Of Life. The Torch Held by A Hand and the inscription The Lord Is My Light, which denotes Passing The Torch To The Next Generation.

This past fall the members of my Church had to have the large window on the west refurbished. It was a big undertaking and was expensive and took several months for the window to be removed, repaired and then put back into place. I am thankful the members decided to keep passing "The Torch to the Next Generation".

Our church was able to obtain the original Church Bell that was in the original 1845 Methodist Church on the corner of Institute and Palace Streets. The old church, before being torn down, served as a Masonic Lodge (Blue Lodge) and Franklin School (a public school). Charlie Harris was contracted to tear the building down in the 1950s. So Mr. Harris ended up with the bell, which he ended up giving to his son, Joe. When Joe passed away, his son Scott reached out to our church to see if we would like to have the old bell back. Our church members made the decision to travel to Ocala, Florida, to purchase the old church bell. Since then, the bell has been restored and a mount was made by one of our current members and my nephew, John W Hines. The bell is rung each Sunday to chime in the hour of morning worship.

There is a lot of history in the Jonesville United Methodist Church.