



Gateway to the West



Lee County Historical and Genealogical Society P. O Box 231 Jonesville, Virginia 24263-023

July 2021



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**Please renew
your
Membership.**

Dues may be sent to:

Lee County HGS
P O Box 231
Jonesville, Va. 24263

President's Report

By Becky Jones



Things are slowly getting back to normal. We were able to meet in June, it was the first time since January 2020. We had a great meeting with 15 of our members attending. Thank you to those who came out to join us, it was a good time.

Our speakers for June were Fuller Cridlin and Tyler Hines. Mr. Cridlin is our Commonwealth Attorney here in Lee County. Tyler was a student at Emory & Henry College, he was an intern in the summer of 2019 for the Commonwealth Attorney's Office. Which was when the research presented at the meeting took place.

The first Commonwealth's Attorney was Pete Mayo back in 1812. In his research, Cridlin found that his grandfather had been Commonwealth's Attorney for a short period of time. At one time our member H. Ronnie Montgomery was Commonwealth's Attorney. Tyler and Fuller have put in a great deal of time going through old records to find out who had been our county leaders.

At our meeting we also discussed the many projects we need to do to our building and grounds. We are working on a show case for the Civil War

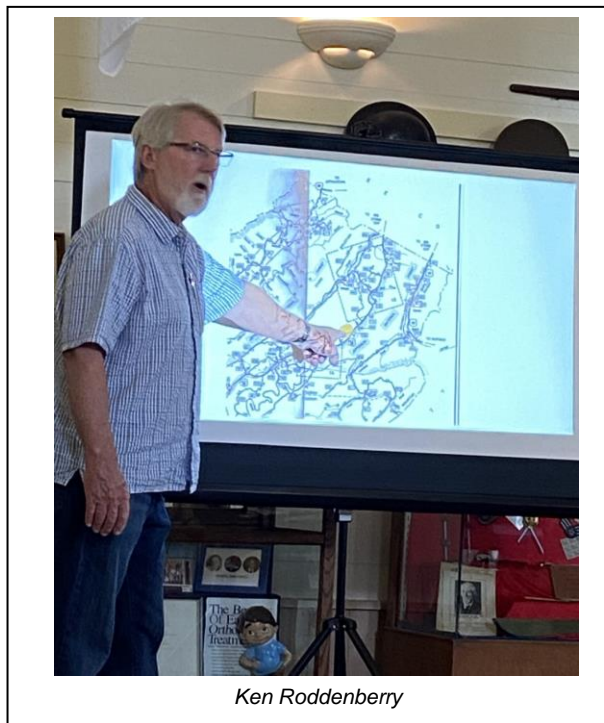
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Franklin Academy *by Ken Roddenberry*

The Franklin Academy may be the oldest school in Yokum's Station of Lee County. It is located about 4.0 miles east of Dryden. It was built in the early to mid-1800's in an area known as Turkey Cove. At their 200th anniversary, Deep Springs Missionary Baptist Church held their "Homecoming" in Sept. 1996 and celebrated historic milestones, one being that the church moved to the Franklin Academy building in 1830. This is the earliest reference I have found to the Franklin Academy however the following information suggests a later date in the 1850's. Regardless of who has the correct date, the Franklin Academy still ranks today as one of oldest schools in Lee County.

In the school's beginning, John Skaggs donated a one-acre plot of land for the "*building of a public school for higher learning*". He met with several citizens of Turkey Cove and all agreed that a school house should be built and made of brick, a lasting testimony to the community. Unfortunately, the minutes of this meeting have not been found. Where did the name come from? Perhaps it was to recognize the achievements of well-known Ben Franklin. We may never know.

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Ken Roddenberry

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relics that have been found in the Jonesville area. Most of these relics have come from the Baker Farm.

We had a visitor to our building last week. Lovie Winmer and her husband drove down from Richlands, Virginia, to see the Andrew Baker Bible. She was very excited to see her ancestor Elijah Baker's (May 8, 1779) name listed in the Bible. She was able to see two books about Andrew Baker that were donated to the society by Dolores Ham. She has been looking for information for some time and was very enthused to find a little bit of what she has been searching for. Before they left the county, they found his place and visited the Thompson's Settlement Baptist Church where he had preached. The Winmers had a successful day in Lee County with our Societies help.

Donnie Campbell has completed his second Volume of "Early Settlers of Harlan County". He presented the Society with a copy at our meeting.

If there is anyone who would like to come and use our resource library we will be glad to make an appointment for you. All we ask is a donation to help cover our utilities.

Ken Roddenberry was our speaker for July. See his article on the Franklin Academy.

In this newsletter we are enclosing articles about Lee County we thought you would enjoy.



Current Lee County Commonwealth's Attorney Fuller Cridlin & former Commonwealth's Attorney H. Ronnie Montgomery

We are going to be going paperless over the next 6 months. We hope by January 2022, that we will have collected all emails for our members. With that being said, please send your email to: **fsgtcheek@gmail.com**. In the subject line please just say contact information. We would greatly appreciate a timely response.

Have a great rest of summer.



Lovie Winmer who visited to research her Baker ancestors.

Franklin Academy *continued from page 1*

Below is a photograph of the Franklin Academy as it appeared in 1936. Bascom Slemph in the foreground at the southwest corner.



John Skaggs was born in 1795 in Russell Co. He was married to Cynthia Horton, daughter of John Horton and Jane Sargent, in 1818. They had 10 children. He accumulated considerable land holdings in Russell County, Virginia. He removed to Lee County a few years after his marriage to Cynthia and became a prominent landowner and a progressive farmer in the Turkey Cove area. John Skaggs was described as a man who possessed a *valuable estate of both realty and personality*. He owned over 400 acres of land covering portions of the Stocker's Knob and the Deep Springs community. In 1860 his real estate was valued at \$16,500 and his personal property at \$3,000. He owned two slaves per the 1850 census, a thirteen-year-old mulatto girl and a nine-year-old black boy. The young boy's name was Henry who claimed that, "*John Skaggs owned me as a slave... until I was made free at the close of the late war*", in a deposition concerning the estate of John Skaggs in 1879.

A chancery cause was brought before the Honorable Judge H.A.W. Skeen of Lee County, in 1900, the petitioners were A.D. Litton, James F. Willis, P.M. Reasor, Wm. A.J. Reasor, and Harvey Young, who were duly appointed and confirmed Trustees of Franklin Academy would show that sometime between the years 1850 and 1860 one John Skaggs, now deceased, entered into an agreement with certain citizens of Lee County, residing in the country known as the Turkey Cove, contracted to donate one acre of land for the purpose of erecting thereon a public school building for higher institution of learning, and pursuant to said agreement... erected upon the said tract of land a brick school building.

Construction of the Franklin Academy

There were at least three brick masons in Turkey Cove in 1850's and were likely employed by the Trustees to construct the building. Their names were Abram S. Schoolcraft, John Bridgman, and John Kelley. Slave labor was commonly used or hired out by their owners and probably helped in making the brick. The source is thought to be near the building site next to a spring feeding Camp Creek [Reasor property]. The brick building measured 28 ft. by 46 ft. with 18-inch walls. There was a large entry door on the eastern wall. It had four large windows evenly spaced along the southern wall and two on the northern wall. There was one chimney near the center of the building. '*Lights and putty*' were purchased for the Academy in Dec. 1856 by a number of individuals, who were John Skaggs, John Reasor, Dickson S. Litton, George W. Young, Peter Reasor, Jeremiah Skaggs, and Carl Bailey, Jr. as recorded in the Richmond Store ledger in Turkey Cove. Elkanah Flanary sent a bottle of 'sweet oil' [commonly used to treat ear infections] to the Academy in April 1855 and later sent ½ dozen steel pen points in Feb. 1856. John Skaggs purchased 41½ yards of calico curtain fabric and a pair of hinges for the "Trustees of the Academy" in June 1856.

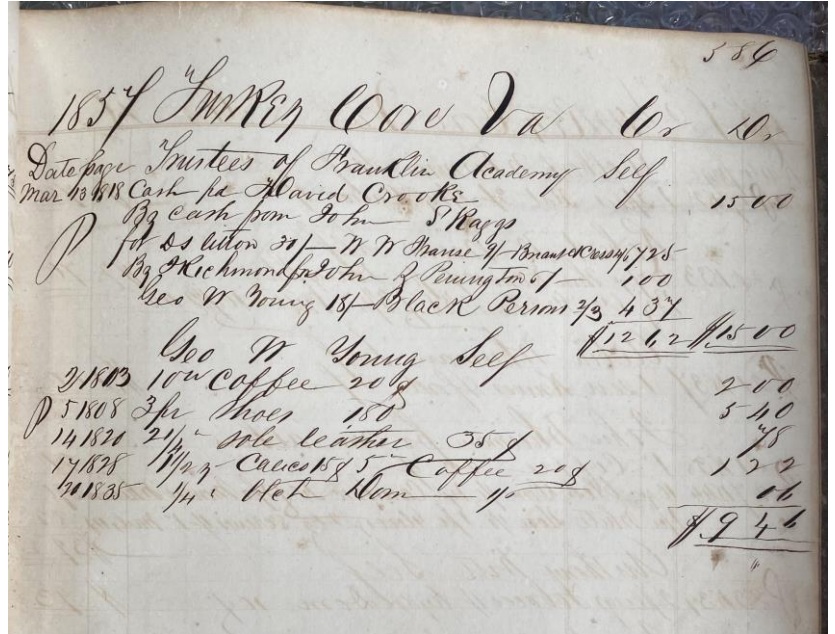
We also know from the store ledger that the Trustees hired David Crooke, a carpenter from Russell County who probably worked on the roof, doors, flooring, and window sashes as well as bench seats and desks. Furthermore, we find in the Ledger that a load of "plank" was delivered to the Academy in July 1856. David Crooke was supplied 16 lbs. of nails and 8½ dozen screws from the store in September and another 10 lbs. of nails, ½ gross of sandpaper, and ½ lb. of putty in October. The following March 1857, Crooke was paid \$15.00 in cash by

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John Skaggs from the Trustees for his carpentry work. Crooke had already removed to Scott Co. where he lived with his family near Estillville until his death in 1880.

On April 1st 1876, one day before his death, John Skaggs willed his estate to his two daughters, Elizabeth and Valerie. However, a title for the Franklin Academy was never recorded nor was the one acre plot it lies on excepted from his estate. Several years later this was brought to his heirs' attention by the then Trustees of the Franklin Academy [Alexander D. Litton, James F. Willis, Peter M. Reasor, Wm. A.J. Reasor and Harvey Young]. As a result, a deed was prepared in 1893 between Daniel S. Reasor and wife Elizabeth Skaggs, and William A.J. Reasor and wife Valerie Skaggs Long, and the lawful Trustees of the Franklin Academy conveying in fee simple the one-acre plot donated by John Skaggs. Furthermore, the deed affirmed the government of the Academy as intended by the founding trustees, **First**, it will be used as a public school house; and **Second**, that the following religious denominations will have the privilege of worshipping in said house: (1) the Missionary Baptist [John Skaggs family were Baptist] will have the first Saturday and Sabbath of each month, (2) the Methodist South will have the second Saturday and Sabbath of each month, (3) the Protestant Methodist will have the third Saturday and Sabbath of each month, and (4) the Presbyterians will have the fourth Saturday and Sabbath of each month. The trustees were to be represented by three Baptists, one Southern Methodist, and one for the Presbyterians and or Protestant Methodist.

**Teachers and Curriculum**

Based on the proceeding information, I believe the Academy received students and allowed religious gatherings by the mid-1850's. Tilghman H. Mason and his wife may have been teachers at the Franklin Academy during this time period. He and his wife were living as boarders in Turkey Cove on or before 1854 and purchased school supplies and books from the Richmond store. He received payment for boarding and tuition fees from local residents. Here are some entries from the store ledger:

3-Oct-1854: T.H. Mason. [3rd] 1 Primer, envelopes 18c; [19th] 1 Davies Algebra, \$1.00; [28th] 1 small slate 16c.

1-Nov-1854: Alfred C. Lloyd. 1 Fowlers Arithmetic pr T.H. Mason 37c

10-Jan-1855: T.H. Mason. 1 Peter Parley's History 33c

12-Dec-1855: T.H. Mason. Cash in change at the Academy [for] Examination \$2.00

24-Feb-1855: T.H. Mason. To Boarding Self & Wife; 1st Session 20 weeks ea. \$40.00; Cr By: My Tuition Fee My children \$20.00; To Boarding Self & Wife 5 weeks ea. 2nd Session \$10.00

10-Feb-1855: Alexander Maynes, per son Isom. Tuition fee pd T.H. Mason 53 days \$2.65; 10 1/2 weeks Boarding \$10.50

Tilghman/Tilman H. Mason was born in Tenn. in 1827 and married Lecada S. Salling in Scott Co., VA, in 1852. After a brief stay in Turkey Cove, presumably teaching, they removed to Duncan's Mill, Scott Co. and were listed their occupations as "teacher and teacheress" per the 1860 U.S. Census. Mr. Mason later listed his occupation as a medical physician in 1870. According to the Virginia Dept. of Public Instruction report of 1872, there were 70

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Franklin Academy *continued from page 4*

schools in Lee County. Of these there were 64 log houses, 5 wood framed buildings, and 1 brick building, the latter being the Franklin Academy. There were 69 schools for white pupils and 1 for colored. The total enrollment was 3,292. Pupils studied spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and geography. They were required to supply their own textbooks.

Franklin Academy was a private high school for white male and female pupils. In 1872 the principal was J.F. Johnson. He and one other male teacher (name is unknown) taught 57 students for five months during the year. Each student paid \$10.00 per month for incidental expenses and \$6.00 per month for board. In 1873 the Franklin Academy received \$300 in appropriation funding from the Peabody Fund. In Feb. 1877 the *Big Stone Gap Post* reported that Dr. Thomas D. Walthall of Bristol [Va.] was "running a flourishing school" in Turkey Cove. About 1882 Turkey Cove emerged in the Yokum District as one of Lee County's seven "graded" schools. Some referred to Turkey Cove as the "Old Academy" ca. 1887

In the 1883-84 school year the Franklin Academy's principal was J.D. (or J.E.) Graham. There were four grades, two teachers, and 140 pupils. The cost of tuition was \$35 per month. In the 1888 school year the Franklin Academy's principal was D. Zion Parsons (see photo above). There were three grades, two teachers and 75 pupils. Tuition was \$49 per month for five months of instruction. In the following years there was limited information concerning the status of the Franklin Academy. However, the *Big Stone Gap Post* reported on Aug. 3rd 1899 that Dr. [D.F.] Reasor of the Franklin Academy will be a speaker at the Sunday School Conference and that the Franklin Academy choral class will participate in the music program. Also reported was that the Yokum Station District School board met on Saturday Aug. 4th 1900, and J.R. Bailey and Miss Ticia [or Tricia] Duff were assigned teachers at the Franklin Academy.



Old Franklin Academy Building

School Closure

The liability of the private Franklin Academy must have been a lingering concern for the Trustees. Public school instruction was taking the lead and supported by County and State taxation. In 1910 the Trustees petitioned the Circuit Court of Lee County for authorization to sell the school and grounds and apply the proceeds to the Yokum District public school fund. They said that the school had ceased to be used for the intended purpose and claimed that the religious congregations had abandoned the use of the building to their own houses of worship.

In Dec. 1910 Judge H.A.W. Skeen ordered the sale of the Franklin Academy and it was sold on Aug. 31st 1912 to William and Rebecca Bailey. It changed ownership several times. The first in 1926 to the M.H. and Winnie Young and E.C. Blair. In 1932 it was conveyed to the Trustees of Blair's Chapel Primitive Baptist Church, who



Current Franklin Academy Building

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Genealogical Association

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were W.C. Fannon, Marshall Coomer, and E.C. Blair, with an agreement that should it no longer be used as a place of worship for a period of three years it would revert to E.C. Blair. A small 80 square foot cemetery [known as the Blair Cemetery] was established on the lot during this period and currently is over 4,000 square feet with at least 14 graves. The property again changed ownership in 1944 to J.J. Ward and in 1983 to Rex Barker before the current owner, Ronald W. Collins, bought it in June 1989. From all outward appearances the Collins have preserved the character of this piece of Lee County history and are to be commended.

Sources:

Big Stone Gap Post, Virginia Chronicle, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va.

Bicentennial History of Lee County, Virginia, 1792-1992; Lee County Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc. and Don Mills, Inc.; Fourth Printing, 2000.

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Commissioner of Revenue, Lee Co. Courthouse, Jonesville, Va.

Court Order Books & Deed Books, Clerk's Office, Lee Co. Courthouse, Jonesville, Va.

Chancery Cause files, Lee Co., Va., Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va.

Early Settlers of Lee County, Virginia and Adjacent Counties, Vol. I & II, Media Inc., Greensboro, North Carolina, 1977.

Lee County Virginia Pictorial, Lee Co. Historical and Genealogical Society, Jonesville, Va.

Turkey Cove Store Ledger, Richmond family, Lee Co. Historical and Genealogical Society, Jonesville, Va.

U.S. Census, Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration.

Virginia Dept. of Public Instruction, 1872-73. Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Richmond, Va.

Historical Society Books on Sale!

Bicentennial History of Lee County 1792-1992

Regular \$65.00 – Sale \$52.00 Book

2.75 Tax (VA Residents) 5.00 S & H \$59.75 Total Cost

Volume I Cemeteries of Lee County

Regular \$40.00 - Sale \$32.00 Book

1.70 Tax (VA Residents) 5.00 S & H \$38.70 Total Cost

Volume II Cemeteries of Lee County

Regular \$45.00 – Sale \$36.00 Book

1.90 Tax (VA Residents) 5.00 S & H \$42.90 Total Cost

Volume III Cemeteries of Lee County

Regular \$50.00 – Sale \$40.00 Book

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A Pictorial History of Lee County

Re-print of the First Volume

Regular \$49.99 - Sale \$40.00 Book (Tax Included) 5.00 S & H 45.00 Total Cost

Our Library and resources are available for use by appointment.

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