



Gateway to the West



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

January 2018



President's Report

By Becky Jones

That time of the year again for the Lee County Historical Society's newsletter. I think 2017 was a good year for the Society. We had some interesting programs, seven new Life memberships, ten new local memberships and several visitors to use our research library and several donations to the Society.

In our July, 2017, newsletter the Historical Society's members visited the D.C. McClure's house. A long-time member and friend of the Society, Jett S. Croy, of Moultrie, Georgia, saw the picture and wrote her memories of growing up around the McClure house. Jett just had her 100th Birthday in November.

The Society donated four of our books to the Virginia Room of the Fairfax County Library in Fairfax, Virginia.

Larry Gullion of Kingsport, Tennessee was a speaker in July. Larry is the President of the Keokee High School Reunion Committee. The committee has done a lot of work in their community. There is a big reunion each year, they have restored the old gymnasium, and have given many scholarships to students in their area.

Our own member, William Smith, talked to us in August about DNA. I think we understand more about our DNA each time we hear someone talk about it.

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The Marion Family of Lee County *by Freddy Marion*

The following is a short synopsis of my family's route to Lee County, Virginia. Many from Lee County believe that the Marion family is a recent addition to the area, arriving when my Uncle John Marion and my father Fred Marion located here in the early 1970's, but the Marion family's connection to Lee County began long before that.

The Marions began their journey to North America in 1685, when King Louis XIV of France cancelled the Edict of Nantes, which essentially outlawed non-Catholic religious practices. Benjamin Marion, born in 1662 in La Chaume, Poitou, France was one of the French Protestants called Huguenots whose life was drastically affected by this royal decree. Benjamin and other French Protestants decided that North America offered better opportunity without the possibility of the church confiscating one's property or imprisonment and execution. The effect of this royal decree deprived France of its middle class.

Benjamin Marion left France and journeyed to South Carolina, where many of his countrymen had re-located, in the Charleston and Georgetown area. From this area the Marion family began to expand. One of Benjamin's grandsons, Francis

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Love Outreach Program and Cemeteries *by Rev. Bruce Johnson*

"Gone But Not Forgotten" is a phrase often found inscribed on many of the grave stones throughout Lee County Cemeteries. In the hearts and minds of family and community friends love ones are not forgotten. However, memories cannot do the physical labor in maintaining cemeteries. Reasons for neglect could be families have to move away seeking work, some who stay may be in poor health or aging condition or they may be deceased.

Therefore, it is up to us who remain to share in the responsibility of reclaiming these over-grown cemeteries and trying to maintain the ones that are in good condition. The program we have begun is called Love Outreach Community Help. It is a community work of people helping people. We are Non-profit tax exempt. Staffed by volunteers consisting of a president, secretary/treasurer and two board members. Volunteers come from church groups, civic groups, families and Lee County Sheriff's Office jail trustees all working together serving the needs of others. Love Outreach is financed by donations from caring people, love offerings from Churches and civic groups. This money helps defray some expense for chain and weed eater blades as well as gas for mowers. Funds are also used to pay a

caretaker to mow once the cemetery is cleaned. In three reclaimed cemeteries families have donated specified amounts to keep up with summer mowing. We are very thankful for this. In a most recent letter of thanks an 86 year-old lady remarked "I had no hope of visiting my family cemetery anymore because we had no one to clean our backwoods cemetery. When we contacted Love Outreach Help program we are now able to drive to cemetery and decorate our family graves."

I close this article in saying a special thank you to a gentleman in western Lee County in his efforts in cleaning up cemeteries there, to a lady in Fleenortown, to one in St. Charles and the five men that have been so faithful in helping in Keokee on those cemeteries. Again, thank you. As we work together we can reclaim all our cemeteries one cemetery at a time and bring new life to our family cemeteries.

Respectfully,

Rev. Bruce Johnson

President Love Outreach Community Help Program

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The Gentleman of Checkers *by Teresa Susong*

How many of us knew that a Lee County businessman had been a national champion in a sport and gone on to play internationally? Probably not many. But it's true! The sport is checkers and the man is Paul McDaniel Davis of Rose Hill.

Paul was born in Hagan, Virginia in 1919 to Flora Gobble Davis and Elmer Davis, whose father, C.C. Davis, had founded the Silver Leaf Nursery Company around the turn of the century, specializing in the sale of ornamental shrubs and fruit trees. Elmer was Postmaster and Flora Assistant Postmaster in Hagan when Paul and his five siblings were growing up in the exciting era of the construction of the Hagan tunnel through Stone mountain to Harlan, Kentucky.

At only about 15 years of age, Paul struck up an interest in the game of checkers. While at the time, checkers was a popular game that the "loafers" played as the men visited around the pot-bellied stove at the general store, Paul came to learn that there was a less well-known, scientific type of checkers played by some of the greatest minds of the time.

He sent off for checker books and monthlies and began to study them with tremendous enthusiasm. He was

soon able to beat almost anyone he came across who played informally and began to enter the Lee County tournaments held at the Independence Day Celebration at Cumberland Bowl Park in Jonesville, and win them as well.

Finding it difficult to find competition near home, serious checker players would play by mail. The professional checker board, with its buff and green squares, also had an invisible numbering system which all the players had memorized. Each one would plan his move and mail the numbers to his checker opponent by postcard. The opponent, in turn, would send his move by return mail until the game was finished, sometimes lasting months!

Checker enthusiasts were interested in promoting checkers as a serious sport. Around the early sixties, Tom Wiswell, checker book author and national championship player, arrived for a checker exposition and competition held in Pennington Gap. He later became Paul's friend, spending the night at his home near Rose Hill.

Meanwhile Paul and his wife, Mary LeMarr, were working hard to establish their own company, Davis Brothers Nursery, a landscaping business in partnership with his brother Claude C. Davis. Despite the heavy demands of the nursery business in the spring and fall, the slow, cold winters

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The Gentleman of Checkers continued from page 2

provided a perfect time for Paul to study his checker books and hone his game. He memorized hundreds of lines of play, how to set traps, and became adept at two types of formal checker playing: "Three Move Restriction" and "Go as You Please." He entered the Virginia State Tournaments, winning them multiple times, as well as the Northern States and Southern States open tournaments in the "Checker Master" division.

Despite its reputation as being a simple child's game, serious checker enthusiasts knew better. During his career, Paul competed with all the famous national and international checker champions including Dr. Marion Tinsley, a college math professor, who was voted to be the "International Brain of the Year" in 1995. Paul would often comment that the famous chess champion, Bobby Fisher, said that checkers, played seriously, was a deeper and more difficult game than chess!

In 1974, Paul and Mary retired from their successful nursery business, leaving it in the hands of fourth and fifth generation Davis nurserymen: son, James L., and later, grandson, Jason Davis. Paul's retirement provided time to dedicate himself to diligent study of the game he loved, and to travel with Mary and play in more tournaments. In 1979 his hard work finally paid off and Paul won the title as the National "Go as You Please" Tournament Champion. Having been a lifetime member of the National Checker Federation, he helped in the organization of an international match held at the International Checker Hall of Fame in Tupelo, Mississippi in 1983.

The crowning accomplishment came in 1988, when Paul went on to win the National Championship in Three Move Restriction checkers. Then in 1989 he was chosen as a member of the U.S. International Team that traveled to Avon, England, and played in the 5th International Checker Championship and the team came home as winners. During his career in the nursery business and as a checker player, Paul was featured in many newspaper articles and periodicals, including the *Smithsonian* magazine, where his grandson, Tim Hensley, published an interesting article about checkers.

Later, due to failing health, Paul Davis, nicknamed The Gentleman of Checkers, retired from championship play. But one can often find him today at age 98 with the board and checkers out at Lee Rehab Center, playing and amazingly beating anyone and everyone who ventures to challenge him!

The Lee County Historical Society fondly salutes Lee Countian, Paul M. Davis, Master Checker Player.



Paul Davis holds the first trophy he received for winning the Lee County Championship (small one) in the early 1960's along with a trophy for winning the National Championship.



Paul Davis demonstrates the move he used to win the National Checker Championship.



Fuller Cridlin



Rev. Bruce Johnson

President's Report from page 1

If you look through our cemetery books you will see the name "Bruce Johnson." He helped do the leg work on our books along with Nancy Fenn, Henriette Smith, Edgar Cress and many more who spent hours canvassing cemeteries and/ or historical records. Bruce is helping to reclaim our cemeteries with a group called "Love Out Reach." He spoke to the Society on his work at our September meeting and has an article in this newsletter.

Lucas Hobbs a native of Lee County spoke to us in October about a paper he had researched while in law school. He told us about the politics in our area and across the State in 1920 and how it has changed.

Fuller Cridlin Lee County Commonwealth Attorney was the guest speaker at our November meeting. Fuller is the son of Attorney George Cridlin and the grandson of the

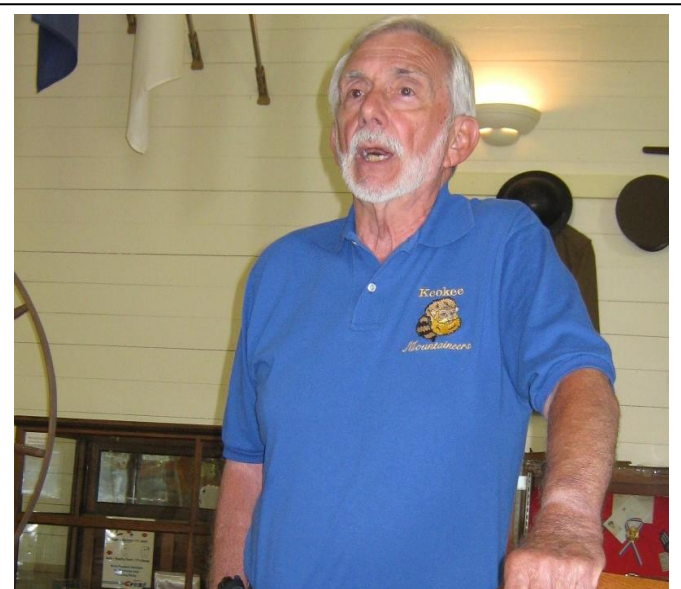
late Judge Joe Cridlin who served as Judge for many years. Fuller stated he found a November 19, 1959, Powell Valley News newspaper and shared some information about a few articles in the old paper. He left the paper for the Society to be used for display and information. Each person in attendance was given a lapel pin with the Virginia Seal on it.

Freddy Marion shared his love of Genealogy and History at our December meeting. See Freddy's article on the Marion family beginning on page 1.

We still need our members to pay their dues (\$10.00 per year, Life membership \$100.00) and to support us with their articles. We can use help with research and work at our building. We still have books for sale and we are working on the new book.



Lucas Hobbs



Larry Gullion

The Charles C. Russell Store - Hagan, Virginia: How A Bowl Revealed The Store's History

by Ken Roddenberry

I discovered the inscription, "*Made Especially for Chas. C. Russell, Teach your dollar to have more cents by trading here, Hagan, Va.*", on the bottom of small serving bowls from the estate of Joseph and Fay Fuller Cridlin, Jonesville, Va. This inscription sparked my desire to learn more about these bowls, their manufacturer, and the local history of the Russell's store in Hagan. Collectors of pottery identify their wares by examining the manufacturer's mark. Without a mark or backstamp, the stencil decal or pottery shape may reveal the maker. In this case the manufacturer's mark, an upright bow and arrow with words, 'semi-porcelain', identified the pottery maker as Harker Pottery Company.

Harker Pottery Company was established by Benjamin Harker, Sr. near East Liverpool, Ohio in 1846. The firm made Rockingham pottery which was much like Wedgwood Pottery in England. In 1890, Harker gave birth to the signature 'bow and arrow' mark. Impacted by frequent flooding of the Ohio River, Harker moved its operations across the river to 'higher ground' in 1931. Harker Pottery Company was sold to Jeannette Glass in 1969. Jeannette retained most of their employees and kept the Harker Pottery name. After two years of major losses, Jeannette Glass closed Harker Pottery Company ending one hundred thirty-one years of continuous pottery production.

Harker Pottery Company used over two hundred backstamps and marks to document production of their wares. The bow and arrow backstamp was used between 1890 and 1931. As you will see, the history of Russell's store helps narrow this range. The bowl's pattern is called Empress Shape - Yellow Band Roses. The piece in question is a 5" Empress fruit bowl. The slogan, found on the bowl's reverse, was commonly printed in newspaper advertisements during the 1910's to 1920's. From the turn of the century to the Depression years, Harker's advertising and sales practices grew from door-to-door, and mail order, to give-away "Dish Night" at motion picture theaters. All of this was designed to attract customers and sell more dinnerware.

Edward Rufus King, a merchant from Harlan County, Kentucky, moved to Lee County, Virginia, in the 1890's. In June, 1895, E.R. King was living on 33 acres near Hagan, Virginia, where he was 'selling goods and doing business'. King built a store building with limestone rock 'hand-cut' on his property completing it about 1902. Built in two phases,

a western addition was added later. In 1905, King built a home south of the store where he and family to Pennington Gap leaving the operation of the store and farm to his sister, Sallie J., and husband, Charles C. Russell. King remained engaged in the mercantile business until his death in 1944. His obituary in the *Powell Valley News* read, Mr. King owned and operated the General Merchandise Store known as "E.R. Kings" for more than thirty years.

Charles Russell and Sallie J. King were married in 1894 and had four children - Lila, Ina, King, and Neal. In 1920, Lila, at age 25, worked as a store clerk. Census data does not support Sallie's employment with the store but undoubtedly, she worked there too.

Charles continued his previous occupation as a farmer into the 1930's. Sallie's health declined and, at age 56, died on April 1, 1933. Charles moved in with his daughter, Ina, and son-in-law, Morgan Dale Edds in the King homeplace. Morgan and Ina had two children - Betty Lou and Winona. By 1940 Charles listed his occupation as a merchant. The *Chas. C. Russell* store had begun a new chapter, one that Charles lived to see. At age 85, Charles died on May 19, 1955.

Morgan D. Edds was a merchant on his 'own account' per the 1940 census. Morgan built a furniture shop and a two-story kiln along the main road, same side as the store. He built household furniture out of locally sourced walnut, cherry, and cedar. "Every home needed a cedar chest" said Mr. Hilton Tunnel, and wife, Winona. In 1947, Morgan doubled the square footage of the store adding furniture to the dry goods, hardware, caskets, and clothing sold.

Locally produced 'Matlock hams' were sold at the store made by William Lee Matlock and son, George, of Rose Hill. "These were some of the very best hams in the area", Tunnel said. Marvin Matlock grew up around the store and said his father, George, his Uncle Noel, and Nobel "Nob" Fee worked in the furniture shop. His Uncle Dewey worked in the store after he returned home from the service, as well as his grand-father, Fred Hobbs. Morgan closed the store in 1964. He rented out the store building but it never returned to its glory days of years ago.

Morgan was a story-teller and known for his passion of local history. He collected Indian and Civil War artifacts and virtually turned his home into a museum.

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The Charles C. Russell Store – continued from page 5

Photos of Morgan with his walnut shadow boxes, built by George Matlock, can be seen in the Lee County Historical and Genealogical Society book, *Lee County - Virginia - A Pictorial History*. Hilton Tunnel said that Morgan kept a log book of the many visitors who toured his 'museum'. At age 87, Morgan Dale Edds died on Dec. 28, 1983.

Remember the serving bowl with the inscription, *Made for Chas. C. Russell...*? It was probably in the store as a customer give-away from 1925-35. When asked if they have one like it, Hilton and Winona said 'yes'. Marvin and Faye Matlock also have one of the store plates where the inscription on bottom reads, "*Made especially for Chas. C. Russell, The Tireless Toiler for Trade, The Premium Store, Hagan, Va.*" What a tribute.



Serving bowl from Russell's Store from the estate of Joseph and Fay Fuller Cridlin

Comments on the McClure House

by Jett Croy

The picture from the McClure's house, in the "Gateway to the West," brought back some memories from my childhood. I started school in 1925. My brother Mac drove a school bus (don't know who owned it), but it was parked overnight at the McClure's farm. Our farm (Spanglers) joined the McClure farm on the South. That year I walked with Mac down there and rode the bus with him to Jonesville School. While he was getting the bus ready to go, Mrs. McClure and Estelle, their daughter, took me to the kitchen, let the door to the stove down and let my feet warm in my shoes (not slippers, as there was a difference then). They took my overshoes (rubbers) off before warming my feet. It must have been at least 1.5 miles from our house.

The first thing I meant to mention was that the house was not originally built as it is now. It seems to me that someone we never knew first bought the house and made changes, but I'm not sure. I am sure the columns were added on, as well as the side extensions. Folks were sorry to see all this happening. My thinking is the changes were made before the Warners bought it, but maybe not.

Now they had a store on the left and below the house, just off US 58. That's where we carried our eggs, chickens, or hens and traded them for what we needed. I say we, but I was too young to do much of this. I remember going with my sister, Ruth, but we were afraid of all their cattle, especially the bull, "male cow" to us then.

Now, as to whether it was built in 1910 I can't say, but I heard what my parents said. This is how it went. Mrs. McClure said to Mr. McClure "I want us to build a house." He said to her "Sha! Sha! Mary, there's a war going on (World War I) Mary, and we can't build a house. Her reply "We can add a cent or two to our merchandise."

I looked at the 1910 census and they did live there, because of the neighbors whom I knew lived close, the Yates and Laforce's.

Mrs. McClure died March 19, 1942, and he died July 20, 1947. (From Cemeteries of Lee County Virginia Volume 1) After she died, he married Mary Emma Hyatt, who was Mrs. McClure's nurse. Mrs. McClure was a member of Friendship Baptist Church and he was a Methodist. It seems there was a little church named Wesley Chapel and he taught Sunday School there I believe.

The Marion Family of Lee County *from page 1*

Marion also known as the "Swamp Fox" reached the rank of brigadier general in the American Revolution. Some of his other descendants looked for opportunity in other areas of the colonies. One of his descendants relocated to a French speaking settlement located on the James River, in Virginia.

This French settlement around Goochland, Virginia was where Samuel Marion was born in 1756. When the American Revolution began, Samuel enlisted in 1776 under Captain Morris in the 7th regiment of the Virginia line. He served for his initial enlistment of two and a half years and enlisted for two and half more years after that. Samuel took part in many battles with the British, one of the better being Saratoga and was at York when Cornwallis surrendered. While on furlough during his enlistment, he was wounded and captured by British and Hessian soldiers, but managed to escape one night and had to hide from them for nearly a week while subsisting on what he could find to eat before he could make his way back to Continental troops. After the end of hostilities, Samuel was discharged by General George Washington who also signed his discharge papers.

Seeking new opportunity after the war, Samuel migrated from his home in Goochland, Virginia to Lee County Virginia, making his home near the Tennessee line. The deed to his property can be found in Deed Book One in the Lee County Virginia Courthouse.

The Marions continued on as small farmers up until the time of the Civil War. Several of the Marion men were killed on the battlefield during this conflict. Jackson Marion was killed at the battle of Piedmont and now lies in the Confederate cemetery at Emory and Henry. Pleasant Marion was killed during the battle of Chickamauga or one of the surrounding skirmishes and now lies in a mass grave

of about 30 Confederate soldiers in Cleveland, Tennessee. Some of the Marion's decided to leave during this time with some heading to Texas. Several remained in the area.

My great grandfather James Marion was born in 1872 or 1873 and lived in Mulberry Gap just across the line from Lee County, Virginia in Hancock County, Tennessee. He lived the life of a subsistence farmer but his true occupation was making moonshine. By all accounts he was known for making good moonshine and had customers from the coal camps in St. Charles, Virginia and Harlan County, Kentucky. Mahalia Mullins the famous Melungeon bootlegger was said to purchase moonshine from my great grandfather. It was a good arrangement since he sold by the barrel and she sold by the drink.

My father Fred and my uncle John moved back to the area after having lived several years in Indiana. Like so many other families from the mountains during the 1950's my grandfather had moved his family to Indiana to seek better fortunes and to pastor a church for all of the transplanted mountain people from Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky that moved to Indiana and Ohio for jobs. After both of them finished college they returned to the area that had been home to the Marion family since the end of the American Revolution and have remained here. Now, with the birth of my daughter Alani in 2012 and my son Preston Jackson Marion in 2017 they are the 8th generation of Marions since the Revolution to call Lee County home. My wife and I chose my sons middle name Jackson, from Jackson Marion that died at the battle of Piedmont. It was only after my son Preston Jackson was born that I found out Jackson Marion's full name was Jackson Preston Marion. I think it was a sign we picked a good name.



William Smith

LCH& GS Director and speaker at our August meeting



Very unusual headstone of Martha and Harvy (son) Weddle locate in Weddle Cemetery on Elmer Montgomery farm south of Rose Hill. Photo by Phillip Cheek.



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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

2.10 Tax (VA Residents)

5.00 S & H

\$47.10 Total Cost

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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