

# Monroe County Historical Society

## Winter Quarterly Meeting

Union Library

Sunday, January 14, 2018, 2:00 P.M.

Fred Ziegler will present the lecture, "Life on the Western Virginia Frontier" for the first quarterly meeting of the year. The talk will draw on the remarkable 1770-75 records of the Mathews Trading Post, the Walmart of its time, located on the Greenbrier River just downstream from Caldwell. Some 391 customers visited this store and chose from a selection of 133 products and these provide insight into life during the early settlement of our area. The same records also list the 18 trades and professions of some of the shoppers which range from blacksmith to pack horseman and schoolmaster. This information will be integrated with contemporary accounts of how houses were built, and how families were fed and clothed. Also, records are now emerging concerning the early milling of corn, and the first mining and refining of saltpeter, the key ingredient of gunpowder.

Fred retired from the faculty of the University of Chicago in 2003 and, with wife Barbara, moved to Cooks Old Mill in Greenville. Fred became interested in the history of our area and has served on the board of the Historical Society for the past ten years. He spearheaded the Carriage House project and wrote, *Carriages of Monroe County, WV*, to stimulate donations for this new museum. His work on the early settlement of the trans-Allegheny region is based on original records gleaned from courthouses in Fincastle, Greenbrier and Monroe, as well as museums in both Virginias.

## 2017 Fundraiser

### Featuring an Award for Ron Ripley

This year's fundraiser at Salt Sulphur Springs was the most successful ever with 99 attending and 180 contributing altogether.

Dr. Ronald Ripley was awarded the "Dr. Emory Kemp Lifetime Achievement Award" which was presented by Lynn Stasick, Field Representative of the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia. Ron has been a leading member of the Monroe County Historical Society since he returned



to Monroe County almost 30 years ago. The Caperton Museum features many of the books and manuscripts he has donated and the result is that our collections constitute a viable research tool, as a number of local authors have discovered. Ron was instrumental in moving our two log houses to our "Museum Campus" and provided many of the period antiques to furnish them in a very tasteful manner. Also, Dr. Ripley worked with our Landmarks Commission to place five Monroe buildings and two districts on the National Registry of Historic Places, including Union. In short, Ron has had a profound influence on every aspect of our Historical Society and for this we are all very proud.

Also featured at the fundraiser were two local authors with new books to sell. Lana Martindale's offering is entitled, "Highways to Health and Pleasure: The Antebellum Turnpikes and Trade of the Mineral Springs in Greenbrier and Monroe Counties Virginia". This volume first appeared as a thesis in

1994 and draws on records from state, county and our historical society. In fact, Ron Ripley, Bob Conte and other local authorities worked with Lana on this well-researched book. It makes the connection between the resort spas and the need to improve the roads at a time

when tourists traveled many days by stagecoach just to get into the mountains for their summer vacations. This volume is a publication of the Monroe County Historical Society and will be for sale in our museum.

The second book is by Becky Crabtree and is entitled "Try and Be Somebody: The Story of Dr. Henry Lake Dickason". This is

the Monroe County story of the grandson of a slave who attended the "Bluefield Colored Institute" as a high school student, earned a Masters Degree from Ohio State, and eventually became the President of

the renamed Bluefield State College. The story is well illustrated with vintage photos, newspaper articles and personal letters. Becky's book is for sale on Amazon.com.

