

Crabtree to Present Program for Quarterly Meeting.

The Monroe County Historical Society's Summer Quarterly Meeting will be Sunday, **July 9, 2023, at two o'clock at Ames Clair Hall in Union.** Noted author Becky Crabtree will present the program, "Uncovering Black History in Monroe County."

Crabtree lives near Lindside, in Monroe County, in the midst of reminders of rural America's history. She has explored cemeteries of enslaved people, listened to tales of Indian captures, and helped document structures built over a hundred years ago. Currently she teaches science at nearby James Monroe High School and helps husband Roger tend a mountain farm complete with sheep, dogs and one cat. Her interests include watching high school sports, gardening, reading, participating in environmental activism, and advocating for voices that are not heard.

She is a prolific author, whose most recent works include *Try and Be Somebody: The Story of Dr. Henry Lake Dickason* and *John Campbell Miller, Builder of Fancy homes in Rural West Virginia*. Dr. Fred Ziegler co-authored the *John Campbell Miller* book.

In the Monroe County Historical Society sponsored presentation, she will explain the process of discovering details of local Black history: researching Henry Lake Dickason and his family's cemetery on Peters Mountain and the discovery of a possible Black cemetery located in Peterstown's Orchard community.

The public is invited to attend this meeting and presentation. For more information, contact Ward Lefler, 304-772-3739.

Monroe County Historical Society

P.O. Box 465

Union, West Virginia 24983



Becky Crabtree
July Meeting Speaker

Monroe County Historical Society

July 2023 Newsletter



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Union, West Virginia
24983**

MONROE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Enslaved Persons in Monroe County

Have you ever wondered about the history of enslavement in Monroe County? To satisfy your curiosity, The Monroe County Historical Society has their publication, Slaves of Monroe County, Virginia, for sale in the Caperton Museum. Nearly 1000 enslaved persons gleaned from ledgers in the Monroe County Courthouse containing wills, birth, death and marriage records are listed in the book. This valuable publication was compiled by Sandra White and edited by Dr. Fred Ziegler.

The following are quotes from the book's "Foreword" written by Dr. Ziegler:

"Slaves were used in our area from earliest times. Morton, in his History of Monroe County, records that "Old Christopher," a slave, was a victim of the Massacre at Baughman's Fort in 1755 (Modern Alderson) and this was prior to the permanent settlement of the Trans-Allegheny area. By 1792, 10.8% of the families living in the area now comprised of Monroe County were slave owners. Morton, writing in 1916, makes the claim, 'the institution of slavery was never popular in this region.'

"Monroe was subdivided from Greenbrier County in 1799 and by 1810 there were 376 slaves here. This constituted 6.9% of the population, while by 1860 the number had risen to 1114, or 10.4% of the total. Slave percentages in western Virginia were in general far lower than in the eastern counties in 1860, 4% versus 30%, respectively."

"Much of Greenbrier and Monroe is centered on the limestone terrain of the Greenbrier Valley and this generates rich soils and relatively level farmland. Accordingly, plantations were established in the more open savannah-like areas and slaves were used to farm them. This accounts for the majority of the slaves used locally, while others became servants in homes or in spas like Sweet Springs and Salt Sulphur Springs.

"Table 1 lists the 24 slave owners of 10 or more slaves. The big owner category constitutes just 15% of the owners but they collectively controlled 50% of the slave population in the county. They must have farmed huge plantations and produced well in excess of what could be consumed on the county level. Hugh Caperton had 117 slaves at the time of his death in 1846. In a family history, Bernard Caperton writes of him, 'He amassed a large fortune from land transactions and business interests in Monroe County, and he had mercantile establishments in Richmond and other parts of Virginia.' Morton says Robert Campbell 'owned 1500 acres of the best land in (Pickaway) and from 30 to 40 slaves.'

"Chapter 1 includes interesting comments from the will writers, and most touching are the ones giving freedom to their slaves. Some owners included money or real estate and these offers seem to have occurred throughout the slavery period. In 1838, James Ellison of Hans Creek gave his two slaves, Jenny and Barsheba 'their freedom, house, and 2 acres of land, including garden and spring, firewood and pasture for cow.' "

Are you intrigued? Do you wonder how your Monroe County family history fits into the giant patchwork quilt of our history? If so, the book Slaves of Monroe County, Virginia can be obtained by visiting our

Caperton Museum in Union from June through October from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. Or, if you're from out-of-town, you may order books through our web page: www.monroewvhistory.org.

It is also worthy of mention that not all families of that time made wills or recorded vital statistics in the courthouse. Perhaps you have access to letters or other written materials that would help us flesh out our information. If you do, we'd appreciate receiving that information so that it may serve as an addendum to the Slaves of Monroe County, Virginia book when it's next published. Information can be emailed to the society at monroecountyh@gmail.com.

Old First Baptist Church



One of the properties the Monroe County Historical Society owns is the Old First Baptist Church which stands near the north end of Main

Street in Union. The Executive Board members have been in discussion recently about prospective uses of the building. A committee has been formed to suggest how the building could be best utilized. If you have thoughts on the subject, please send them to Larry Emerson at ldemerson55@gmail.com or call Larry at 304.661.6551.