

# Hampshire County Historical Society

1993

Newsletter

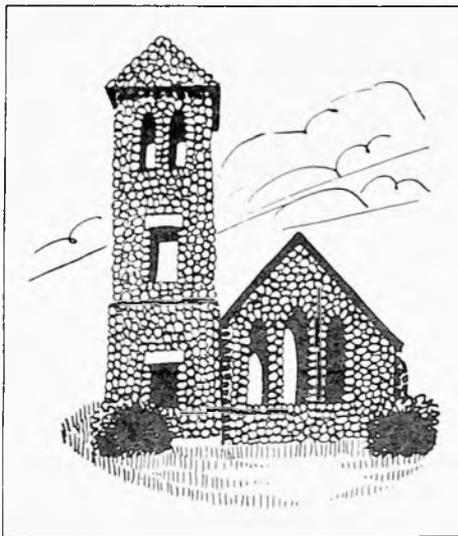
Second Quarter

## PARSONS BELL TOWER SELECTED AS 1993 ORNAMENT

The Parsons Bell Tower in Indian Mound Cemetery, Romney, has been selected for the 1993 Christmas Tree Ornament.

The Bell Tower was commissioned to be built in 1925 by Edwin Jacobs in memory of his grandparents, James Gregg and Catherine Forman Casey Parsons.

Ms. Janet Harlow of Augusta, WV, has been selected as the artist for the aqua colored 1993 ornament. It is hoped the ornaments will be available at the Hampshire County Fair this year.



## LEGACY OF STONE WORK DISPLAYS FINE CRAFTSMANSHIP BY W.W. KEISTER FAMILY

Hampshire County has been given a legacy of stone work by the W.W. Keister family. Just look around you and you'll see many examples of their fine craftsmanship of the 1920's and 1930's. You may be surprised to realize how many you have passed in your daily travels without knowing that they all came from one talented and highly skilled family. The signature of Keister built structures is quartz stones with cobblestone or mountain sand stone.

When you see the wall along Rt. 50 in front of the Deaf and Blind School, the porch of the Hockensmith's Century 21 Real Estate at 169 E. Main Street, Romney, and the spectacular and unique Bell Tower in Indian Mound Cemetery, the grave marker in Indian Mound Cemetery of Mary Harmison, who died in 1919, you are just beginning to discover the creations. Others include the Grady Sanders home (across from the Dairy Queen), Roy Keister's original home on the corner of Depot Road and Bolton Street; Mike Keister's original home on the street behind Roy's home and Ivan (Duffy) Orndorff's residence on Rt. 28 near Blacks Hills area. A unique fireplace of mountain stone, featuring fossils, civil war shots, and arrows imbedded in them was built for Charlie Long. The Long home is at the intersection of Birch and Bolton, directly across the street from the Old Farmers Exchange, now known as Shorty Mauk's Meat Market. Hubert Keister also helped to build a part of the Romney jail, a WPA job in 1934.

The Bell Tower in Indian Mound Cemetery was commissioned in 1925 by Mr. Edwin Jacobs of St. Louis, MO, for members of his family buried there. W.W. Keister and his brother Ira, along with their sons, Hubert and Lelan, built this outstanding landmark.

## GENEALOGY CORNER

Ronald A. Glaze, 474 San Luis Ave., Los Altos, CA 94024 is searching for the parents of his great-great grandparents. Robert Madison Glaze and his wife Catherine (Taylor) Glaze are believed to have been born in Virginia before 1800.

Alma Finney, 393 Lakeview Court, Lowell, IN 46356 seeks information on the following: Elijah Skidmore (1787-1860) and wife Margaret (Cunningham) Skidmore. Noah Skidmore, born 1816 and wife, Susan (Workman) Skidmore, born 1823. Lewis Skidmore (1824-1934) and wife, Annie (Puder) Skidmore, born in Germany (1845-1925).

Lewis Skidmore was a Civil War Veteran (Union) and served in the Co. C 2nd Regiment Potomac Home Brigade. Particular information is requested on Lewis Skidmore's Civil War record.

*Anyone who has genealogical information or can assist these researchers in any way, please contact them at the address given.*

(Continued on Page 3)

## MEMBERSHIP

Hampshire County has an abundance of historical facts and sites. The Historical Society is trying to assemble and record it's history. We welcome new members to participate in this important undertaking. Check with friends and neighbors to see if they would like to become members of the group.

Hampshire County  
Historical Society  
P.O. Box 549  
Augusta, WV 26704

## ~ PRESIDENT'S CORNER ~

The 2nd quarter of 1993 has arrived, along with the newsletter. The blizzard in March wreaked havoc with our plans for the Dunmore Ridge cemetery cleanup. With perseverance we did complete the Cooper Mt. fountain cleanup. Soon repairs to the stonework will begin. We also sponsored a trash clean-up at the Parker School and planning is continuing for moving the building. Nancy Feller's tour of the courthouse vault was both interesting and informative. The Society was privileged to tour the fascinating and unusual home of Ernestine "Ernie" Frieria.

First a church, then a hospital, school and private residence, the structure is unique. We are currently planning for Confederate Memorial Weekend and hope to see many members participating on June 5 & 6.

Until next quarter, Brenda Hielt

## FOUNTAIN RESTORATION MAKING GREAT PROGRESS



Great progress is being made with the restoration of the fountain on the west side of Cooper Mountain by the Hampshire County Historic Society. The fountain was constructed around 1938 with the old Northwestern Turnpike bordering on the rear while the front faced Rt. 50. In the thirties, fountains were necessary for the dual purpose of providing water for cars that overheated easily, as well as for beauty and refreshment for tourists.

West Virginia State Road Commission records indicate the water rights from a spring 400 feet south of the area were conveyed to the Commission by F.M. and Salome McCormick in March, 1938. This spring fed the fountain by gravity through a pipe that ran under Rt. 50.

The fountain and walls were built by Mr. Hubert Keister under the supervision of his father, W.W. Keister.

Because the fountain area was abandoned in 1952 due to unsafe drinking water, forty years of undergrowth, dirt and debris had accumulated when Society members started the restoration. All of this has been cleared away to give a clear view of the stone walls and fountain. Although the years have taken their toll on the structure, it is in relatively good shape.

Mr. Bill Unger, who owns William Unger Construction Company in Capon Bridge, has volunteered his labor to repair the stone work at no charge to the Historic Society. Mr. Unger and his wife, June, work from their home on Cooper Mountain and have lived in the area for about 8 years. Mrs. Unger says that Bill takes a lot of pride in his work and enjoys being creative.

Mr. Ronnie Wolfe, who now owns the fountain property, has given the Historic Society permission to restore it and has also hauled away brush from the site. Mr. Arlie Davis and Mr. John Province voluntarily cut away the trees and undergrowth. We appreciate the help these men have given.

Plans are underway to landscape the area with flowers and shrubbery to create a setting the fountain would have had when it was built 55 years ago.

## LEGACY OF STONE WORK

(Continued from Page 1)

Around 1938, a fountain at the western base of Cooper Mountain was built by Hubert Keister under his father, W.W.'s supervision. The State Road Commission of West Virginia contracted the Keisters to build the structure. Recently the Hampshire County Historic Society has begun the restoration of this landmark.

The Keisters built a monument in Ebenezer Cemetery of mountain stone and quartz, for "Gin" Carder's baby in return for "Gin's" help in getting the stone and quartz used in the building of other fountains and monuments. Another monument was built for George Marble, grandfather of Gordon Marble Keister, Hubert's wife, in Luke cemetery near Slanesville, WV.

Another fine example of their work is the Pin Oak fountain. This unique fountain structure has an intricate framework, with the roof quartzwork hanging down on the inside as well as crowning the top. A wooden frame was filled with sand, to hold the quartz upright and in place, then cement was poured over the sand to seal the quartz in place. When the cement dried the wooden frame was removed, then the concrete slab was placed on the fountain pillars, quartz facing down. Pillars were continued on top of the slab and topped with more quartz.

Other Keister works are the piers at the Berkeley Springs Fish Hatchery and the stone wall at the home of the late Ralph and Minnie Combs, beside the post office in Augusta. Hubert, his brother, Roy, and W.W. built a fountain on the Allegheny front.

Hampshire County is not the only area honored with their work. The Washington Post and Weekly Grit ran articles in May 1932; May and July 1933; showing a monument built in Chenango Valley Cemetery, Binghamton, NY in memory of Audrey Martin Keister, 1903-1932. Audrey was the 3rd oldest son of W.W. and Nellie Keister who died in a plane crash while barnstorming at Bennett Field, Binghamton NY on May 29, 1932. At age 19, Hubert and his mother, Nellie, drove 340 miles with stone and quartz from the WV mountains to erect the monument in Audrey's memory. Police protection was needed to keep people from taking the stone and quartz. W.W. was ill at the time and unable to travel.

William (W.W. or Will) Keister was originally a school teacher, then he and his wife owned a restaurant in Franklin, WV and finally he became a stonemason. His son, Hubert, carried on the family trade. All their work was done by family members and close friends leaving a legacy for generations to come.

If you know of other work done by the Keister family, please contact Debbie Boyce, 856-2577.

## CALANDAR OF EVENTS

**MAY 13, Thursday 7:00 p.m.**  
Board of Directors meeting at Bank of Romney, Augusta branch.

**MAY 28, Thursday 7:00 p.m.**  
General meeting at Capon Chapel Church. 1-1/2 miles on Christian Church Road, Capon Bridge.

**MAY 29 - JUNE 6**  
Placing of Flags on county graves.

**JUNE 5 - 6, Saturday & Sunday**  
Confederate Memorial Holiday ceremonies to commemorate the soldiers in blue and grey.

**JULY 8, Thursday 7:00 p.m.**  
Board of Directors meeting at Capon Chapel Church. 1-1/2 miles on Christian Church Road, Capon Bridge.

**JULY 17, Saturday 5:00 p.m.**  
General meeting at Capon Valley Ruritan Shelter, Yellow Spring, for annual picnic along the Capon River.

**AUG. 12, Thursday 7:00 p.m.**  
Board of Directors meeting at Capon Chapel Church. 1-1/2 miles on Christian Church Road, Capon Bridge.

**AUG. 23 - 28**  
Society should be present at the Hampshire County Fair.

**SEPT. 2, Thursday 7:00 p.m.**  
Board of Directors meeting at Capon Chapel Church. 1-1/2 miles on Christian Church Road, Capon Bridge.

**SEPT. 10-11-12, Friday-Sunday**  
Hampshire Heritage Days

**SEPT. 23, Thursday 7:00 p.m.**  
General meeting at Senior Center, Capon Bridge. Slides on Antarctica by Mr. McCleary.

### HAMPSHIRE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY YEARLY MEMBERSHIP

\$10.00 Individual

\$18.00 Couple

\$35.00 Organizations

Members Receive  
Quarterly Newsletter,  
Field Trips and Tours

Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

~ ACQUISITIONS ~

The Society has been given three journals originally from Henderson's Store in Slanesville, WV. The journals were donated by Mrs. Fraya Clark. The group thanks Fraya for her contribution.

We have also received slides of the Mytinger House at Romney, WV. The slides were taken in August, 1955. They were given by Miss Helen Vogt of Brownsville, PA. The slides include Literary Hall and the Wirgman Building. The Society thanks Miss Vogt for her generosity in sharing them with us.

All donated items are currently being stored until the museum is ready to open.

Hampshire County  
Historical Society

Post Office Box 549

Augusta, West Virginia 26704

