

From the Chairman

Dear Docents:

This first year of my chairmanship is ending. It has been productive. Goals set by your board are well on the way to being accomplished. Excellent programs have been presented by program chair, Wanda. Valerie, the treasurer, has kept us fiscally sound and has documented docent property. Vi served briefly as secretary for which we thank her. I commend Carolyn for assuming the secretarial responsibilities. June is our capable Hospitality chair. And this newsletter is the masterpiece of Camille. I am fortunate to have these remarkable women working with me and for our docent committee.

I look forward to 2006 and the opportunities it will bring for us to share with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community our high regard for history demonstrated through preservation, education, and publication.

Our next meeting will be on January 3, 2006, at Historic Rosedale. Refreshments will be served at 9:30am.

Our 10:00am business meeting will feature the 2005 reports from the following committees: Hospitality, Hours, Newsletter, Historical Cooking Guild, Library, Nominating, Guidelines, Journal, Passports, Book Club, and Fashion. Chairmen are requested to prepare a written report which will be filed.

At 11:00am "Carolina Places in Time" will be presented

On January 16, 17, and 18, 2006, the Docent Board will meet in retreat. Members and committee chairmen are invited to submit topics for discussion and/or to present same in person. Kindly notify me by January 13, 2006, of your intention.

My wish for each one of you is that you enjoy a blessed holiday and a new year filled with good health and peace.

Sincerely,
Barbara

Docent Dues - 2006

Dues are payable January 1 each year. Our "dues" year runs from January 1 -December 31. Please make checks payable to "MHA Docents." Give checks to Valerie Jones, docent treasurer, at the monthly meeting or mail to her at 4700 Coronado Drive, Charlotte, NC 28212

Questions? Call Valerie at 704-567-0599 or email her at jvkjones@bellsouth.net

Levels of Membership

	<u>Single</u>	<u>Couple</u>
General	\$25.00	\$45.00
Senior (over 60)	\$12.50	\$20.00
Patron	\$50.00	\$90.00
Life (single payment)	\$300.00	\$500.00
Student	Free	N/A

*Program Schedule*Wanda Hubicki

Refreshments 9:30 am — Meeting 10:00 am — Program 11:00 am

January 3, 2006

Beverly Lawing and Chaula Jain of Mecklenburg County Mapping/Geospatial Information Services will make a PowerPoint presentation at 11:00am on “Carolina Places in Time,” an interactive website where historic maps can be viewed, at the next monthly meeting of the Mecklenburg Historical Association Docents.

February 7, 2006

Janet Dyer, Karen McConnell, and Ann Williams will offer a program on the book *A Life in Antebellum Charlotte: The Private Journal of Sarah Frew Davidson, 1837*, based on the original manuscript. The three MHA Docents researched and transcribed Sarah Frew Davidson’s writings. They also researched and added meticulous supplementary historical details that provide a comprehensive background for the events and people mentioned in the journal.

March 7, 2006

We have been invited to hold our March meeting at the Afro-American Cultural Center. Vikkii Beckwith Graham, Director of Community Cultural Programs, will lead us on a tour of the AACC and exhibits in honor of Black History Month and South By South Africa, an exciting partnership between Charlotte and South African museums (exhibits and programming January–May 2006).

April 4, 2005

Sandra Reinhardt, staff archaeologist at the Catawba Cultural Center in Rock Hill, SC, will present a program on the life of the Catawba people, both before and after European settlement of the Carolinas. (Tentative; to be confirmed.) Do you know that these former British allies fought with the colonists against the British and the Cherokee in 1776?

May 2, 2005

Linda Dalton and Jane Estep will present an update on the Catawba River Valley Decorative Arts Survey and the status of plans to establish a Survey website and hold an exhibition with a printed catalog.

On Freedom

No man is good enough to govern another man without that other man’s consent.

Abraham Lincoln

A slave is someone who cannot speak their thought.

Euripides

We don’t want our chains made more bearable. We want our chains removed.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Grant us faith and understanding to cherish all those who fight for freedom.

Stephen Vincent Benet





South By South Africa — Crafting Cultural Understanding

An exciting partnership between Charlotte and South African museums — January–May 2006

Submitted by Dr. Tom Hanchett

This January through May, cultural institutions in Charlotte and South Africa launch an exciting partnership to explore history and folk traditions. For complete information visit the website at www.southbysouthafrica.org.

Among the programs are:

January 9 – May 15 – FROM APARTHEID TO DEMOCRACY, an exhibit tracing South Africa’s racial history and exploring parallels with the American South, opens at the Levine Museum of the New South.

January 13–May 29 – BEAUTIFUL THINGS, an exhibition of South African crafts, on display at the Afro American Cultural Center.

March 15–19 – GCINA MHLOPE, renowned South African musician and story teller, collaborates with Charlotte’s Moving Poets Theater of Dance.

March 20 – SOWETO GOSPEL CHOIR, whose high-energy a cappella vocals were recently featured on NPR, performs in concert at the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center.

FORGING ALLIANCES

A multidisciplinary experience exploring the parallel histories of South African and the American South filtered through the wholeness of the racial, cultural, healthy and emotional body.

Schedule of Events

- January 13, 6–8pm **Gallery Talk:** Opening of “Beautiful Things”
- February 3, 6–8pm **Gallery Talk:** Opening of “Body Maps”
- February 3, 7:30pm **Soul Cinema – South African Film:**
Cinema and Conversation: “One Week” [HIV/AIDS]
- February 10, 7:30pm **Soul Cinema – South African Film:**
Cinema and Conversation: “State of Denial” [HIV/AIDS]
- February 24, 7:30pm **Soul Cinema – South African Film:**
Cinema and Conversation: “Sophiatown” [S. African Harlem]
- March, 10 7:30pm **Soul Cinema – South African Film:**
Cinema and Conversation: “Beat The Drum” [Contemporary drama]
- March, 17 7:30pm **Soul Cinema – South African Film:**
Cinema and Conversation: “Bopha” [Apartheid] Morgan Freeman, Dir.
- March, 18 7:30pm **Artistic Body Maps Workshop:** With Regional Aids Interfaith Network [RAIN]
- March, 24 7:30pm **Soul Cinema – South African Film:**
Cinema and Conversation: “Amandla! A Revolution in 4-Part Harmony”
- March, 31 7:30pm **Soul Cinema – South African Film:**
Cinema and Conversation: “Last Supper at Horstle Hotel” [Apartheid]
- April 7, 6–8pm **Gallery Talk:** Opening of “Close Inspection: The Laws of Jim Crow”
- April 28, 8pm **Performance:** “Salt Chocolate” – McGlohon Theater @ Spirit Square \$20–\$25
- May 5, 6–8pm **Gallery Talk:** Beautiful Things
- July 7, 6–8pm **Gallery Talk:** “Close Inspection: The Laws of Jim Crow”

(Continued on page 4)



South By South Africa — Crafting Cultural Understanding

(Continued from page 3)

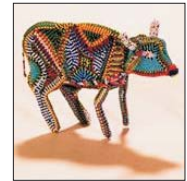
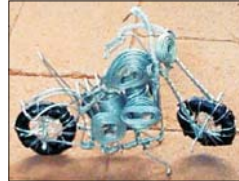
Ongoing

January 13 – May 29

“Beautiful Things: A Showcase of South African Craft” - Exhibit

An elegant, geometric, earth quilt exhibition of authentic South African craft objects is presented in collaboration with the Craft Council and the Design Center of South Africa.

[Focus on the cultural body]



February 3 – March 31

“Body Maps” – Exhibit

The exhibition is a collection of colorful life-size renderings created in South Africa by HIV-positive individuals. The large-scale art allows the ‘artist’ to visualize the virus and articulate their individual histories.

[Focus on the physical body]

April 7 – August 31

“Close Inspection: The Laws of Jim Crow” – Exhibits

A retrospective and reflective look at segregation and apartheid as it impacted the South and South Africa.

[Focusing on the racial body]

Charlotte Museum of History

Twelfth Night: A Scots-Irish Holiday Celebration

Saturday, January 7, 6:30–8:30 pm

Celebrate the old tradition of Twelfth Night at the Hezekiah Alexander House! Enjoy open-house tours of the 1774 Rock House, storytelling around the bonfire, the opportunity to participate with colonial dancers at the Twelfth Night Ball, and open-hearth cooking demonstrations. At 7:30 join in the cutting of the Twelfth Night cake and learn about the traditions of this historic celebration, including a holly toss and musket firing! Space is limited.

Reservations required by calling 704-568-1774.

\$6 per person, all ages over 3.

Upcoming 2006 Latta Plantation Events

Winter Quarters: January 7 (10am–4pm) – January 8 (1pm–4pm)

Ladies of the House: January 21 (10am–4pm) – January 22 (1pm–4pm)

Civil War Ladies Workshop (Preregistration required): February 4

Back of the Big House: February 11 (10am–4pm) – February 12 (1pm–4pm)

A Victorian Valentine Program for Homeschoolers of all ages: February 14 (12pm–4pm):

Civil War Cavalry Weekend Horse soldiers on the grounds providing demonstrations:
February 18 (10am–4pm) – February 19 (1pm–4pm)





*Levine Museum of the New South Receives
National Award for Community Service*

Submitted by Wanda Hubicki

Levine Museum of the New South was today named one of six recipients of the 2005 National Awards for Museum and Library Service, the federal government's highest honor for community service provided by museums and libraries. The annual award, made by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) since 1994, recognizes institutions for outstanding social, educational, environmental or economic contributions to their communities.

"Levine Museum of the New South is not afraid to tackle challenging, social issues in order to build a better community," said Mary Chute, acting director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services. "In 2004 the museum embarked on an extraordinary project that enabled the citizens of Charlotte to examine issues of equity, race, and inclusion in the context of the history of school desegregation. It left a deep impression with the residents of Charlotte and earned the museum a place among the 2005 recipients of the National Award for Museum Service."

"In our rapidly growing and increasingly diverse community, our mission is to bring people together to explore where we've been and where we're headed," said Emily Zimmern, executive director of Levine Museum of the New South. "All of us here at the Museum are deeply honored and humbled that our efforts are being recognized with this prestigious award."

Levine Museum of the New South was founded in 1991 to preserve and present the diverse history of the American South since the Civil War, with a focus on Charlotte and the surrounding Carolina Piedmont. As an institution deeply committed to the public role of history and its ability to build community, the museum presents exhibits and programs that provide historical context to contemporary issues, raise important questions, spark dialogue, and bring people together to share their stories and foster understanding.

The annual awards are selected by the Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services with advice from the National Commission for Libraries and Information Science and the National Museum and Library Services Board. Each winning institution will receive \$10,000 and be honored at an upcoming ceremony in Washington D.C. To learn more about IMLS, visit www.imls.gov.

Excerpt from ***Scotland: The Story of a Nation***

Magnus Magnusson
©2000 by Magnus Magnusson

Scotland: In the Beginning

England is the southern, and Scotland is the northern part of the celebrated island called Great Britain. England is greatly larger than Scotland, and the land is much richer, and produces better crops. There are also a great many more men in England, and both the gentlemen and the country people are more wealthy, and have better food and clothing there than in Scotland. The towns, also, are much more numerous, and more populous.

Scotland, on the contrary, is full of hills, and huge moors and wildernesses, which bear no corn, and afford but little food for flocks of sheep or herds of cattle. But the level ground that lies along the great rivers is more fertile, and produces good crops. The natives of Scotland are accustomed to live more hardily in general than those of England.

From Tales of a Grandfather, Chapter 1, by Sir Walter Scott

(Continued on page 6)



Excerpt from *Scotland: The Story of a Nation*

(Continued from page 5)

For three billion years Scotland was on a collision course with England.

I am talking in terms of geology. Scotland's geological past involves a barely believable story in which whole continents moved around like croutons floating half submerged in a bowl of thick soup; a story of great oceans forming and disappearing like seasonal puddles, of mighty mountains being thrown up and worn down, of formidable glaciers and ice-caps advancing and retreating behind mile-thick walls of ice as they melted and reformed again. Scotland itself has been a desert, a swamp, a tropical rainforest, and a desert again; it has drifted north over the planet with an ever-changing cargo of lizards, dinosaurs, tropical forests, giant redwoods, sharks, bears, lynx, giant elk, wolves and also, in the last twinkling of an eye in the geological time-scale, human beings.

And always it was on that inexorable collision course with England. In their learned writings, geologists tend to toss millions of years around like confetti. About three billion years ago what is now (largely speaking) "Scotland" was part of a continent known as Laurentia, one of the many differently sized "plates" which moved slowly around the surface of the globe. Some eight hundred million years ago it was lying in the centre of another super-continent thirty degrees south of the equator. Over aeons of time it wandered the southern hemisphere before drifting north across the equator. By six hundred million years ago Scotland was attached to the North American continent, separated by an ocean called Iapetus from the southerly part of what was to become Britain and which was then attached to the European continent.

And then, some sixty million years ago, the Iapetus ocean began to close. North Britain and South Britain came together, roughly along the line of Hadrian's Wall. That collision produced the Britain we know today (although it was still connected to Europe). But the weld continued to be subject to stress and strain long after the land masses had locked together: over a three-million-year period a chain of volcanoes erupting off the western seaboard of Scotland created many of the islands of the Hebrides, including Skye, Mull, Ailsa Craig, St. Kilda and Rum.

The foundation of history is geology and its related subject of geomorphology. The underlying rock has shaped the landscape and has influenced, through the soil, the kind of plants, animals, birds and insects in every part of the countryside; it has thereby shaped the lives and livelihoods of the human communities which have lived here.

Agriculture would flourish on the productive farmland on the flatter east coast of Scotland. The more mountainous landscape of the west with its thin, acid soils was suitable only for subsistence husbandry. In the Central Belt of Scotland the abundance of coal and oil-shale entombed in the underlying rocks fuelled the Industrial Revolution and would foster the growth of the iron, steel, heavy engineering and shipbuilding industries.

Edinburgh Castle, at the heart of what became the nation of Scotland, would be built on the eroded roots of a volcano which had erupted some 340 million years ago, when Scotland still lay south of the equator. Castle Rock itself was carved into a classic crag-and-tail shape by the gouging passage of ice during the last glaciation.

When Sir Walter Scott opened his *Tales of a Grandfather* with his summary description of the difference between Scotland and England, the modern science of geology was in its infancy (that science, incidentally, was created by Scotsmen like James Hutton and Sir Charles Lyell). Scott did not know why Scotland was so different from England; it took the pioneers of geology to explain it.

2006 MHA Docents' Board

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Vice Chairman	Wanda Hubicki	phubicki@carolina.rr.com
Secretary	Carolyn Dilda	cdilda@dasia.net
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Committee Chairmen

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Library	Janet Dyer
Historical Cooking Guild	Barbara Goodwin
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Book Club	Rachel Abernathy
Passport to History	Hazel White, Millie Hodge
African American	Karen McConnell
Nominating	Rachel Abernathy
Database	Jane Estep

*Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County**Beatties Ford Road Branch Exhibits*

Isabella Wyche School Remembered
12/3/2005 – 1/30/06

Ask Isabella Wyche alumni what made their school so special, and most would say it was a good solid education, learning to strive for excellence and building self-esteem— all of which led to their future success. Many Isabella Wyche alumni have gone on to have impressive careers in education, business, medicine, federal and legislative government, the military, acting, music and other areas - and become proud parents.

Isabella Wyche was built in the city's Third Ward in the early 1930s as a feeder school for Second Ward High, against a backdrop of the depression, war and segregation. The school was named for Charlotte's first African American female principal Isabella Wyche, and led mainly by women principles: Beulah D. Moore and Mary C. Henderson-Byrd. The school building was torn down to make way for Charlotte's Ericsson Stadium, but the memory of Isabella Wyche School lives on.

The exhibit features nearly 100 items, including original photographs of the school's history from the early 1930s, some from Moore's personal scrapbook. The pictures capture students wrapping the May Pole, performing in colorful Operettas and the school's highly touted "Tonette" groups, and providing outreach to area churches. Also included are original attendance certificates, and other memorabilia and artifacts donated by Henderson-Byrd. There will also be career highlights from some alumni

For information, call 704-432-6706.

(Continued on page 8)



(Continued from page 7)

*The Legacy of the Swank Club
2/7/06 – 3/31/06*

The Swank Club was founded in August 1934 by a small group of students at Second Ward High School. The late John Merrick Spears founded the social club with original members Ray Booton, John Brooks, Elliot Samuels, John Breeden and Thomas Wyche; and as time passed, additional students with similar interests were asked to join. After World War II caused the club to temporarily disband, the group reunited 1946. After high school, some members continued their education while others moved away to pursue careers.

Since then, the club has broadened its purpose from purely social to providing financial and volunteer support to organizations such as the United Negro College Fund, the YMCA, the Mecklenburg Court Volunteers, Johnson C. Smith University, Metrolina Food Bank and others. Over the years, members of the Swank Club have excelled in professions like medicine, dentistry, law, education, business and government. Now, celebrating 71 years of service, the Swank Club will share their legacy in an exhibit of historical photographs and memorabilia

For information, call 704-336-2882.

Sarah J. Hale: Editor's Table, January 1856

Sarah J. Hale, editor of *Godey's*, wrote an extensive editorial each month. Here is an example:

"The sword may pierce the bearer—
Stone walls in time may sever;
'Tis heart alone, worth steel and stone,
That keeps man free forever!" — *Moore*

A New Year! Yes, a new year — and a happy New Year may it prove to our beloved country — has dawned on the world. Though many prophecies are abroad, which designate this year as not only the time for the great comet to make its visit, but also for awful catastrophes and cruel wars, we, who live under the protecting banner of that true freedom which emanated from the hearts of noble Christians, men and women, who feared God, and, therefore, were freed from the fear of wicked tyrannies — we may rejoice and be glad that the year eighteen hundred and fifty-six has come with its hopes, its promises, and its opportunities. We might give a true and most pitiful description of the sufferings which now pervade Europe. To wars of the most destructive character are added the scarcity of food and the fears of bloody revolutions. These are, however, well known to our readers through the journals of the day; and we prefer to go beyond the present surface of things, and trace the source from whence such evils flow, and we find it in the selfishness, blindness, and wickedness of heart which rejects the true freedom that only can come through the Bible way of peace and happiness. Nations must fear God and obey his laws; men and women must make the gospel precepts their rule of duty; then the New Year would be the harbinger of hope and rejoicing to the whole world.

This heart service in the cause of humanity belongs naturally to women. We cannot take the sword to defend the right; we must aid by holier means. There are so many opportunities in our country both of improvement and of employment that we are in danger of forgetting the oppressions of our sex in the Old World. England we have always been in the habit of considering the bulwark of law and of freedom through the law in Europe; the injustice and cruelties which the law in England sanctions respecting women have never been sufficiently considered by us. We have lately had our attention called to this subject; and, partly to illustrate the blessings we American women enjoy under our better system of laws and usages, and partly to awaken public attention to the still existing defects in our own institutions, we show a glimpse of married life in England; and, while we commiserate the sufferings of our sister women on the other side of the Atlantic, we give a warmer grasp of friendship to the hands that are reaching out to us on all sides, and from every section of the Union, as we wish each household, where our influence enters a happy New Year! a heart happy New Year!

UNC Details Past Slavery Ties

Wednesday, November 02, 2005

By Natalie Gott, Associated Press

Submitted by Wanda Hubicki

In the early decades of the University of North Carolina, servants kindled fires in students' rooms and cut wood to fuel stoves. The 216-year-old school, which takes pride in being the nation's oldest public university, is now airing a shameful side of its past — those servants were slaves.

The university is using records and photographs that archivists have uncovered to present a fuller story of the school's beginnings.

"This university was built by slaves and free blacks," said Chancellor James Moeser. "We need to be candid about that, acknowledge their contributions."

The University of North Carolina, chartered in 1789, is among several universities, banks and financial firms that have tried to set the record straight on their historical ties to the slave trade.

North Carolina archivists were researching the university's first 100 years when they found records that confirmed slaves helped construct campus buildings. Other records showed that both faculty and university board members owned slaves.

Some of that research is on display in "Slavery and the Making of the University: Celebrating Our Unsung Heroes, Bond and Free." The on-campus exhibit includes photographs, letters and documents such as bills of sale for slaves.

In one letter, the wife of the school's first law professor wrote her husband that university President David Lowry Swain wanted to hire "Harry" for work. She pledged she would "hire Harry out whenever I can."

The exhibit is among several recent efforts by the university to acknowledge its past links to slavery. It offers a class on the history of blacks at the school, and a monument honoring the slaves and free blacks who helped build the school was installed in May.

Other universities that have shed light on their historical ties to slavery include the University of Alabama, where the faculty senate last year apologized to the descendants of slaves who were owned by faculty members or who worked on campus in the years before the Civil War. The school also erected a marker near the graves of two slaves on campus.

A committee at Brown University in Rhode Island is examining the school's past ties to the slave trade and recommending whether and how the college should take responsibility. A report on the findings is due by the end of the fall semester.

"We clearly do live in a society that has a persistent pattern of racial disparity and I think most people would agree that that has something to do with our history," said James Campbell, a history professor at Brown and the chairman of the committee.

"If you care about that pattern of disparity, then it seems to me one of the things that is incumbent on you is to try to find out how we got here," Campbell said

Just how many schools have ties to the slave trade remains unknown, since so much information has been concealed, said Harvard law professor Charles Ogletree. But he believes those found to have had links to slavery should pay reparations.

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UNC Details Past Slavery Ties

(Continued from page 9)

Some banks and financial services firms have made donations after conducting investigations into their own past ties to slavery. Often the research in those case was prompted by local governments demanding an accounting. Charlotte-based Wachovia Corp. committed an undisclosed sum to support black history education in June, a few days after announcing that two of its predecessor banks owned slaves. Also this year, New York-based JPMorgan Chase & Co. gave \$5 million to support college scholarships for black students in Louisiana, where two of its predecessor banks received thousands of slaves as collateral.

The researchers examining the University of North Carolina's past say they hope the new exhibit in just the beginning of a renewed effort to create a more complete understanding of the school's early years.

"I think it is important that we do this since we are the oldest university," said Susan Ballinger, assistant university archivist. "The chancellor has said over and over again that it's critical for the university to be honest about its past. He wants our history told fully, warts and all."

The Farmhouse Inn Workshop

We are pleased to announce our first workshop in a series of workshops entitled "Farmhouse Schoolhouse". We wanted to offer adults the chance to learn something new and have fun doing it in the beautiful and relaxed environment of Hundred Acre Farm. This first workshop will be our Shaker Workshop, Saturday January 28, 2006 from 10am till 4pm. This fun, educational day will be held in the Red Barn and will be lead by noted historian and craftsman Chris Brooks. Chris is Administrator and Curator of Tullie Smith Farm at the Atlanta History Center. He is also an authority on the Shaker culture and their crafts which have influenced our American design for more than two hundred years. The day will feature a lecture on the Shaker culture and their crafts, an excellent film about the Shakers, and lunch featuring Shaker recipes that will be shared. The highlight of the workshop will be in the afternoon when attendees will learn the art of "listing" or Shaker taping as we call it today. Each participant will cover the seat of their own Shaker foot stool with this colorful cotton fabric tape. These small stools will make a great addition to a room of any style. The entire days activities are included in the \$95 registration fee. Please call our office to register at 706-342-7933.

Contact us for details on our gift certificates and about our special Workshop Weekend Package!

Melinda Hartney, The Farmhouse Inn
706-342-7933
Thefarmhouseinn.com

Note:

Wes Holt, manager of Hundred Acre Farm, is the former Gardens Director at the Atlanta History Center, and Chris Brooks, the workshop instructor, is the Tullie Smith Farm manager at the Atlanta History Center. Chris is an archaeologist, historian, and skilled woodworker who also teaches Shaker box-making at the John C. Campbell Folk School.

*Living-History Museums Struggle to Draw Visitors
Creativity Drives Changes in Hunt for Attendance*

By David A. Fahrenthold — Washington Post Staff Writer

Sunday, December 25, 2005

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Submitted by Wanda Hubicki

STURBRIDGE, Mass.— Historical fact: In the 1830s, many rural New Englanders followed a religion so strait-laced that they did not celebrate Christmas.

Accordingly, at Old Sturbridge Village — an outdoor museum where an 1830s town has been re-created down to the cider mill and the Gloucester Old Spots pigs — they used to ignore the holiday as well.

Used to. Until, in the past few years, attendance started to slip.

“How many times can you tell the story, ‘They didn’t celebrate it?’” asked Susanna Bonta, a museum spokeswoman.

Now, in December the village gets a makeover that might make a Puritan — or a historian — blanch. There is a Christmas tree (not popularized in the United States until the 1840s), a visit from Santa Claus (who didn’t take his current form until after 1850) and a series of nighttime tours showing the village lit by (electric) candlelight. These are times for creative thinking at the country’s “living history” parks, where officials worry that their old formula of restored buildings, costumed interpreters and anvil-banging demonstrations is losing its tourist appeal.

Museums from Virginia to Michigan are trying to add an edge. How about a walk-through theatrical production? An overnight stay in a pilgrim’s house? Who’d like to try on 19th-century replica underwear?

In this fast-moving age, apparently, just making the past come alive isn’t enough.

“It’s just a larger, competitive world,” said John Caramia, a North Carolina museum official and past president of the Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums.

There are dozens of living or “outdoor” history museums around the country, offering strolls through such attractions as a cowboy camp, a prairie farm and a Shaker village. The largest of these parks is Virginia’s Colonial Williamsburg, a 301-acre re-creation of the state’s 18th-century capital.

There, historical re-creation is big business: The park sold 729,000 tickets last year, about the same visitor total as Washington National Cathedral, and pulled in about \$188 million in revenue.

But, in the past few years, business has been getting worse. The Williamsburg park’s ticket sales were down 5 percent in 2004, and 9 percent the year before that. Other parks tell similar stories. At the Jamestown Settlement, a Virginia park re-creating an even earlier era of colonial history, paid attendance fell from about 521,000 in 2002 to about 423,000 last year. A decline in visitors led Old Sturbridge to make its first cuts of costumed staff in recent memory.

“We have a lot of trouble, much more trouble than we used to, in getting them here,” said Beverly K. Sheppard, president and chief executive officer of Old Sturbridge, a cluster of relocated buildings around a town common, about 55 miles west of Boston.

Part of the problem, undoubtedly, has been factors affecting travel in general, including terrorism scares and high gasoline prices.

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Living-History Museums Struggle to Draw Visitors Creativity Drives Changes in Hunt for Attendance

(Continued from page 11)

But some museum leaders see a scarier trend: They're losing the interest of today's kids, who more than ever are driving families' vacation decisions.

This may have to do with the agricultural theme of many living-history museums, which might not resonate with urban children whose grandparents didn't work on a farm.

"They get farming, stability, barns and sheep, and that is irrelevant," said Mark Leone, a professor of anthropology at the University of Maryland, who thinks that these museums should undergo radical changes to embrace high-tech media and to show a less sanitized picture of the past.

But beyond their subject matter, museum officials also wonder about their methods, which tend to be watch-me-do-it instead of do-it-yourself.

"I don't think people want to be shown as much," Sheppard, of Old Sturbridge, said. "They want to do more."

So here come the changes, many of them taking cues from the hands-on exhibits popular at children's museums. Jamestown offers chances to grind corn and scrape animal hides with an oyster shell. Young visitors to Old Sturbridge can build a New England-style wall out of foam "rocks" and try on 1830s-style children's undergarments over their clothes. Even greater immersion was available this year at Massachusetts's Plimoth Plantation, whose name comes from an old spelling of "Plymouth." A few families were allowed to spend the night in a re-created Pilgrim house or in a Wampanoag Indian wetu, or dome-shaped dwelling.

In the spring, Williamsburg will aim to add drama to its dusty streets by putting on a pair of theatrical performances that simulate events in the city during the 1770s and 1780s. These performances, which repeat every two days, will allow tourists to feel as if they're walking through the city both before and during the Revolutionary War.

Living-history parks say everything is on the table – or most everything. Caramia, who is chief operating officer at a restored Moravian community in Winston-Salem, N.C., said there was one historic item that he couldn't ever see winding up the hands of modern tourists.

"People would love to shoot period guns," he said. But "all you need is a little accident with black powder, and there's going to be all kinds of legal issues."

For now, however, it might be too early to tell if the changes are having the desired effect. At Old Sturbridge, even the spiced-up Christmas offerings didn't seem to hold everyone's attention – while a tour guide talked about the holiday, many of the children in her group tuned out and started kicking snow at one another.

And for one group of visitors, the park still functioned as the vacation equivalent of spinach, something you try because Mom knows it's good for you. Californian Sarah Peickert, 40, said she brought her son Samuel, 10, and daughter Phoebe, 7, here because she had fond memories of candle-making and sleigh rides during a visit to the park about 30 years ago.

Of course, back then, Peickert said, "I would rather have gone to Great Adventure," an amusement park.