

Mecklenburg Historical Association Docents

Promoting Local History through Education and Research



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Look Inside This Issue

- Journey to Fort Defiance
- Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence with Ken Burns
- Ivan Day from Cumbria Cooks with the MHA Cooking Guild
- Rare Book Road Show at UNCC
- Regional History Course a Great Success

From the Chairman

The month of May has returned to remind us of our rich Revolutionary War heritage. The docents are ready after the excellent April program Tom Phlegar presented on the battles that took place in Charlotte and the surrounding region. Tom is a docent at the Charlotte Museum of History and his docent skills were apparent as he brought this rather complex topic to life in a way that was easy to visualize. Good docents always do that! I hope you are joining us for the trip to Fort Defiance where the story of General William Lenoir, a hero of the battle of Kings Mountain, will be featured on May 6. Mark your calendar and get your 18th century clothing out of the closet in preparation for all the wonderful Meck Dec events in Charlotte during May. Keep reading this newsletter for more details!

What a wonderful time to be alive for those who love history! All over the world historians and archeologists are using methods not available until recently to make new discoveries. This challenges us to think differently as we learn new facts about the lives of ancient peoples as well as those who lived during more recent times. Sometimes it stirs controversy but, it does make us realize that perhaps we don't have all the answers after all. History is not a dead subject but an evolving mystery that we work on solving.

June will bring our monthly meetings to a close until September. Plan to join us at Rosedale on June 3 for another delicious potluck picnic under the Swamp Chestnut Oak. We hope that some of our busy museum staff can join us.

Over the summer all of our world travelers need to remember that we love to hear about where you have been and ideas for historic sites we might enjoy visiting too. So take a few notes and send them to Ann and Jim for a future newsletter. Have a wonderful summer and return to us rested and ready for a busy fall on September 2nd.

Alice Bostic

Newsletter Deadline

The time has come to say good-bye for the summer. Thanks to all who have helped make this year's Dandelion informative and filled with a variety of good things. The deadline for the Sept – Oct issue is August 12th. Should you travel back in time this summer, or read a fine history related book, we'd love to hear about it. Send your contributions to Ann and Jim Williams, 1601 S Wendover Road, Charlotte, NC 28211; or email:

mhadandelion@mindspring.com.

A Note from the editors: There has been some confusion about our deadline dates. The date listed in the Dandelion is the day we begin work. We mail copies about a week before the next docent meeting. If you can get

information to us by the deadline date, great; but we'll continue accepting material throughout the working period. However, the closer it is to the mail date, the less likely we'll have time or room to work more articles in.

May and June Docent Programs

Tuesday, May 6th

Journey to Fort Defiance

We will meet at Sugaw Creek Presbyterian Church for a bus trip to Fort Defiance. Plan to be there about 8:45, so the bus can be loaded and ready to go by 9. There will be drinks and a light snack on the bus. Although the deadline to register for the trip has passed, there may be a space or two left on the bus. Call Valerie Jones or Ann Williams if you have not signed up, but would like to go. The all inclusive cost is \$50.

We will arrive at Fort Defiance, between Lenoir and Wilkesboro, about 10:30 – 11. We'll have a tour of William Lenoir's 1792 farmhouse. Nestled in beautiful Happy Valley, it is filled with many of Lenoir's original furnishings. We'll enjoy a box lunch, then be treated to a discussion about the extensive collection of Lenoir papers and family memorabilia. There will also be time to walk through the family burial ground. We'll get back on the bus for a trip to Whippoorwill Academy, a small village of reconstructed log and frame buildings. We'll leave there for Charlotte, arriving about 4:30 – 5. Remember May 6 is primary day, so plan to vote early or late in the day, or take advantage of one of the early polling places.

Tuesday, June 3rd

Annual Docent Picnic

We will meet in the picnic area at **Historic Rosedale at 10:30 am**. We'll have a short business meeting followed by our annual docent picnic. There will be no program, just camaraderie and fun. Meet under the Swamp Chestnut Oak, and bring a covered dish to share. We hope to be joined by staff members from several historic sites. The hospitality committee will provide disposable plates and utensils, and something to drink. Should we have rain (which is still not a cause for complaint) we'll picnic in the basement.

MHA Dinner Meeting

The next MHA dinner meeting will be Monday, May 19th at Trinity Presbyterian Church. Dinner is at 6:30 followed by the program at 7:15. Those not having dinner are welcome to enjoy the program at no charge. To make dinner reservations contact Kath Herran at 704-553-0936 or kathyherran@hotmail.com.

Paul Buckley and Ellen Poteet will give a program about Elmwood Cemetery. The land which was once the site of a gold mine was purchased by the city in the 1860s for a new town graveyard. Paul and Ellen will discuss the Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society's project to research and produce an Elmwood Cemetery book series. They will share stories about the famous and infamous folks who are buried there.

Final Call for 2008 MHA Dues

If you've not paid your dues for the 2008 calendar year, please send a check to Valerie Jones as soon as possible so she can confirm our roster and make one payment for our entire group to the MHA treasurer. If you are unsure of whether you've paid or not, call Valerie at 704-567-0599. Mail your check to Valerie at 4700 Coronado Drive, Charlotte, NC 28212. Membership categories:

General:	\$30 (single)	\$50 (couple)
Senior (60+)	\$15 (single)	\$25 (couple)
Patron	\$60 (single)	\$100 (couple)
Life Member	\$300 (single)	\$500 (couple)

Docent Book Club

The Docent Book Club will not meet in May or June. Last month we decided to postpone our discussion to *A Magnificent Catastrophe* by Edward L. Larson to September, as the book will be out in paperback in June. The book tells the story of the contentious election campaign between Jefferson and Adams in 1800, and the birth of our two party system. It should be a great read before our 2008 election, and following the fine HBO series on John Adams. So find a copy in the library or your favorite bookstore, and join us for a lively discussion following our September meeting.

Meck Dec Events

Opening Salvo - Meck Dec Celebrations through the Years

Many generations of Mecklenburg residents have celebrated our Declaration of Independence at picnics and patriotic gatherings. The Charlotte Museum of History is hosting such a gathering on May 17th from 4 to 9 pm. Representatives from many historic sites including The Charlotte Museum of History, Historic Charlotte, Latta Plantation, Historic Rosedale, Levine Museum of the New South, Lincoln County Historical Association, May 20th Society, MHA, James K. Polk Historic Site, Reed Gold Mine, Rural Hill, and others will be on hand. Each of them will recreate celebrations from the past, or interpret the meaning of the Meck Dec from the perspective of their site.

In addition there will be colonial music and dancing, a slavery interpretation in the kitchen, a reading of the Meck Dec, historic games for children, and the opening of a new exhibit, *Charlotte Stories: Our Collections, Your Treasures*. The event is hosted by the Emeritus Board of the Charlotte Museum of History, in memory of Betty Nisbet. Museum admission will be free all day; a catered barbeque dinner will be available for \$10 for adults, \$5 for children. Everyone is invited to join the festivities honoring this fascinating event in our county's history. Call The Charlotte History Museum to make a reservation for barbeque.

Revolutionary War Battle Reenactments



On Saturday and Sunday, May 17 and 18, Rural Hill in Huntersville presents a full-scale Revolutionary War Battle Reenactment each day. If you haven't seen one recently, or if you just like the grand sweep and pageantry of these events, start your Meck Dec celebration here. You can walk through the British and American encampments and talk with the participant, the visit the Suttlers' Tents (vendors of 18th century goods). Then enjoy the battle itself with all of the music, pageantry, action and adventure of the original battle of Cowan's Ford.

The camps are open to visitors from 9 am to 5 pm and the battles start at 2 pm each day.

Tuesday, May 20 - The Great Day Itself



Charlotte Center City Partners is managing the event again this year and they want to grow it over the next few years to make this a weekend encampment. Again this year they will block off a block of Tryon street so that we can fire the cannon along with the muskets. What a thrill to see the windows on the bank buildings bulge and hear the car alarms go off. The replica courthouse will again be constructed on the corner. It will be up for several days with a banner telling of the Tuesday ceremony.

Interpreters should arrive at the square at 11:00, or earlier if possible, mingle with the crowd and hand out Meck Dec copies while the soldiers play music and march up and down. Parking is available on the streets around the square – 8 quarters for 2 hours.

At noon they will block off traffic and we will move to the area in front of the replica courthouse. The cannon will be positioned pointing down Tryon Street with the muskets flanking it. Being an election year, we will have the usual political speeches. Then the reading of the Meck Dec, the toasts from 1825, with the Huzzahs!, and firing the muskets and the cannon. We will fire the cannon 5 times, just like last year.

With the streets blocked off, we will parade to Settlers Cemetery and honor Thomas Polk with wreath, fife tune and volleys.

Ken Burns at Spirit Square

This year's special guest, courtesy of the May 20th Society, is Ken Burns, whose films you have seen on Public Television. He will meet with school children in the morning and perhaps attend the celebration at the square. In the evening he will attend a reception at the Mint Museum of Craft and Design uptown. Volunteer interpreters in 18th and early 19th century dress are invited to attend this reception and meet Mr. Burns. Then we will all escort our honored guest up Tryon Street, with flags flying, fife and drum, and military escort, to hear his address at the McGlohon Theatre at Spirit Square. Likewise, Volunteer interpreters in 18th and early 19th century dress are invited to attend this presentation.

This will all be on Tuesday evening and the exact schedule will be announced closer to the event. For the general public (those not in 18th century dress), the admission charge for this event will be much more reasonable than in previous years, so you might plan to attend. And watch your email for prices and schedules for this excellent event.

If you are able to participate in any or all of this, email Jim and Ann Williams, or call us at 704 365 2402 by May 8 if at all possible. So dust off your costume, and get ready for this grand weekend of events celebrating the first formal declaration of independence from Great Britain by any of the American Colonies.

May 20th Society Fund Raiser - Thursday, June 5th

On Thursday evening, June 5, we have been invited to attend, in costume, another major fund-raising event of the May 20 Society. This will be like the one held last year at the Norman home on Sharon Road, except this year it will be an evening of bluegrass and barbeque at the home of Claudia Belk on Hempstead Place in Myers Park. Send us an email or give us a call at 704 365 2402 if you can make it. It should be loads of fun.

Jim Williams

Ivan Day Visits Charlotte

You may remember previous articles in the Dandelion on the Georgian cooking class Carolyn Dilda took in England that was taught by Ivan Day. When the MHA Historic Cooking Guild of the Catawba Valley heard that Mr. Day would be in the US, they made arrangements for him to visit Charlotte. After lecturing for two days at Harvard, he arrived in the Queen City on Sunday, April 13th. He spent the entire next day with the cooking guild in the restored Polk kitchen. A report on that magnificent day of “cookery” will be in the next newsletter. On Tuesday morning Mr. Day was Mike Collins’ guest on WFAE’s “Charlotte Talks,” and on Tuesday evening he gave a slide show and talk at the Charlotte Museum of History. He was wonderful!

Mr. Day fell in love with cooking as a small child, and as a young man began collecting cookery books and antique cooking equipment. He has become a recognized world expert in cooking methods and recipes from the 16th to the 19th century, specializing in elaborate meat dishes, ornate desserts and sugar sculptures. He designs dining table displays for museums, including Windsor Castle, generally for very elegant meals. Yet he is not a stranger to the hard work performed behind the scenes.

After spending two days in the professorial environment at Harvard, he gladly welcomed the retreat to a smoky log cabin with the cooking guild. He said he was most at home among such a harem, to whom he could issue orders with the assumption they would be carried out promptly and correctly. Some samples of their work were on display. The most impressive was a meat pie, which was baked in a mold the size and shape of a large basketball, and lavishly decorated with pastry cutouts. Inside it was filled with layers of various meat fillings. It was gorgeous, and probably delicious.

Mr. Day leads a movement to bring back old breeds of animals, and old varieties of food plants. He talked about the wonderful flavor of bacon and hams made from mutton. There is very little mutton any more; most sheep are slaughtered as lambs. He is also an advocate of the slow food and eat local concepts. On hand for the evening were several purveyors of unusual and local foods, and some had samples to munch on. Ivan Day’s talk was very informative and entertaining, and was enhanced by his beautiful slides.

Ann Williams

Rare Books Roadshow

Borrowing the concept of the PBS Antiques Roadshow, the UNCC Atkins Library hosted a Rare Books Roadshow on April 17th. The public was invited to bring precious old volumes for appraisal, and a large enthusiastic crowd attended. John Sharpe, who spent thirty years as Duke University’s curator of rare books, talked about the care and handling of old books, and provided an evaluation for audience members, although most had no intention of selling their treasures. Mr. Sharpe took obvious delight at unusual finds, and was diplomatically polite about others. For instance, old Bibles rarely have more than sentimental value as so many have been printed. The value of a book is a factor of its age, rarity, condition, binding, illustrations, or inscriptions. One man brought his grandmother’s volume of Longfellow poetry with a handwritten inscription stating Huntersville High School had awarded it to her for excellence in spelling – in 1882. It was a pleasure to watch Mr. Sharpe handle books, fragile or not, with great tenderness as if they were new-born babes. He is obviously a man enamored of his profession.

Ann Williams with help from a Charlotte Observer article by Steven Brown.

Regional History Course Report

The MHA Docent’s history course ‘From Wagon Roads to New South City’ was a huge success with about seventy-five attendees at each of the five sessions, and a waiting list for next year’s class. The committee (Alice Bostic, Barbara Jackson, and Rachel Abernathy) has met several times and they are making plans for next year’s course. It will probably be taught in January and February again, but will involve fewer refreshments and larger meeting spaces. The committee appreciates the diligence and active participation of the attendees, and the warm welcome they gave to the course presenters. Thanks to all who took the class, and those whose hard work made it happen. They extend a special recognition to the twenty-one people who attended all five sessions:

Charlotte Cannon	Rhyn Cannon	Lynne Carroll
Marilyn Clayton	Shirley Dannels	Virginia Dunn
Hugh Dussek	Bob Giguere	Jennifer Hurlbart
Cynthia Jentz	Michael Johnston	Ellen M. Jones
Lex Jones	Paula McCafferty	Gary McCullough
Katherine McGlothlin	Margaret Taggart	Tremaine T. Tyson
Debby Wood	Malcolm Wright	Barbara Wright

Book and Author Review

The Land Breakers
The Winter People
 by John Ehle

John Ehle is a native of Asheville, North Carolina. His genealogical roots are deep in Appalachia. Both his parents are mountain people, but it is from his fourth-generation Appalachian mother that he credits his story-telling abilities. Educated at UNC-Chapel Hill and a veteran of World War II, he has written 17 books, eleven fiction, 6 non-fiction. Known for his extensive and thorough research, it is his sensitive treatment of subjects and characters that sets him apart from other authors.

In our Docents Book Club we have concentrated for the last few months on authors from North Carolina and particularly fiction set in our state. Although Ehle was not on our list of authors, I have enjoyed reading his *Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation* and re-reading some of his fiction.

The scope of *The Land Breakers* (published in 1964) is 1779 to 1783. It is the story of the settlement of an isolated valley and the hopes, dreams, loves, and deaths of the handful of pioneers who must battle the wilderness

and each other. Ehle draws each character in a believable and straight-forward way involving the reader in their everyday lives and the hardships that they face. My favorite part is the pig 'drive': an unsuccessful attempt to move their swine to the nearest but far-off market, Morganton.

In *The Winter People* we meet Collie, a young woman who lives alone with her out-of-wedlock baby son. Her home is near that of her parents and not far from the home of her now-despised lover's family. Her life is changed forever when a man and his daughter (who are walking to Tennessee!) take a wrong turn and find refuge at Collie's homesite. Her efforts to ease the feud between her family and their neighbors bring her pain, but what becomes a new relationship brings joy.

If you would like to read some excellent historic fiction set in North Carolina, please read John Ehle. His emphasis is on the daily life of the people (perfect for MHA Docents) and is a quality read.

Rachel Abernathy

The History Calendar

Admission charged at all event unless otherwise noted.

The History Calendar generally does not include programs for children, however at the end of this section is a list of summer day camps. Call the sites for details.

Latta Plantation

5225 Sample Road, Huntersville, NC, 704 875 2312, <http://www.lattaplantation.org>

Bluegrass and BBQ Fundraiser May 3, 4:30 – 8 pm.

Eat great Carolina BBQ, listen to the timeless sound of bluegrass music, and know you're doing so for a great cause \$20 per person. Includes BBQ dinner and music; house will be open.

Living History Day May 24, 10 am – 4 pm

Living history demonstrations such as blacksmithing, open hearth cooking, spinning and knitting, children's games, and tea etiquette will take place through the day.

Gold Panning & Civil War Music June 14, 10 am – 4 pm

Enjoy Latta's first gold panning event of 2008 and the sound of Civil War fife and drum music by the Carolina Legion Fife & Drum Corps. Your first pan is included in regular admission, additional pans \$2/ea.

Gold Panning June 28, July 5 & 19, and August 2 & 16. 10 am – 4 pm

Your first pan is included in regular admission, additional pans \$2/ea.

Historic Rosedale

3427 N. Tryon Street, Charlotte, NC, 704 335 0325, <http://www.historicrosedale.org>

The Art of Craft May 10, 10 am – 4 pm

This will be Rosedale's third annual craft show and sale featuring many of North Carolina's finest potters. A must do for collectors. Other craftsmen include glassblowers, basket makers, metal artists and more. Costumed interpreters will demonstrate period crafts. You will also enjoy a silent auction, a story teller, children's crafts, pony rides, and a visit from the Carolina Raptor Center. Adults \$10; children \$5.

At 9 am there will be a sumptuous patrons' breakfast and sneak preview of the show. \$75 per person. For reservation call Historic Rosedale or visit their website.

Mothers Day House and Garden Tour May 11, 1:30 pm & 3:30 pm

Visit Rosedale's gardens including the newly restored secret garden. Refreshments will be served. House tours for mothers will be half price.

Civil War Hospital May 24. Call the site for times.

In April 1865 Lee surrenders at Appomattox Court House, but fighting continues in the Carolinas. A field hospital has been set up in Charlotte by the 13th NC (reenacted by the Living History Association of Mecklenburg). The people of Charlotte form an ambulance committee to gather food for the patients, and ladies of the town are staffing the various wards to ease the suffering.

The Charlotte Museum of History

3500 Shamrock Drive, Charlotte, NC, 704 568 1774, <http://www.charlottemuseum.org>

Mec Dec Celebration May 17, 4 – 9 pm

See "Mec Dec Events" elsewhere in this newsletter for details about this very special collaborative event celebrating our unique heritage.

WWII Encampment June 7, 11 am – 5 pm; & June 8, 1 – 5 pm

See interpreters of both the Allied and Axis armies, and learn about WWII and its effects on Charlotte. There will be activities for children, and the event will conclude with a Remembrance Ceremony.

Charlotte Folk Society Ice Cream Social July 13, 1 – 5 pm Free event

Andrew Jackson State Park

196 Andrew Jackson Park Road, Lancaster, SC 803 285 3344
www.southcarolinaparks.com/park-finder/state-park/1797.aspx

Spring Living History Day May 3, 10 am – 4 pm

Discover the spring chores of the early settlers in the garden of the Waxhaws. Carolina Woodcrafters will have period style furniture and other woodcrafts for sale.

Schiele Museum

1500 E. Garrison Blvd., Gastonia, N.C. 704 866 6900 <https://www.schielemuseum.org>

Gardening in the Backcountry May 25, 1 – 5 pm

Practicality was a guiding theme for gardening in the 18th century frontier settlements. Each plant served a purpose for food, for seasoning, for medicine, for dye, for insect repellency and for scent. Visit the *dooryard garden* to learn about tansey, fever few, teasel or thyme and other interesting herbs, flowers, and vegetables grown in early Carolina gardens. Watch as costumed interpreters go about their work preparing beds, planting herbs and weaving the garden fence. Take home a sprig of rosemary for remembrance of you Backcountry visit.

Gaston County Museum

131 West Main Street Dallas, NC. (704)922-7681, #2 www.gastoncountymuseum.org

Making Faces with Catawba Valley Potter Mike Ball May 31, 10 am – noon.

This program offers everyone from novice to professional an opportunity to put their own hand-sculpted face on a jug, pitcher, or vase made by Ball. Ball will be available to assist you with the application of your hand sculpted work. Upon completion, Ball will glaze the pieces in a traditional Catawba Valley alkaline glaze and fire them in his wood-fired kiln. RSVP required to Jeff Pruett at 704.922.7681 x105 for this program by Tuesday, May 27.

Prices are: Half gallon jugs, pitchers, and vases: \$50 each. One gallon jugs, pitchers, and vases: \$100 each. Cost for museum members is \$10 less for each item.

Annual Family Fun Day Aug. 3 & 4, 2 – 5 pm.

In addition to visiting the museum and carriage house, families can help hand-crank ice cream and sample their efforts. Visitors to the museum can also play games on the back lawn. Planned games include rolling hoops, Jacob's ladders, toss toys, graces, checkers, sidewalk chalk, and badminton.

Blues Out Back Concert Series 6:30 – 8 pm. Bring your lawn chairs. Free admission

May 9 – Andy Schneider; 8 string guitar, harmonica, drums, and song; blues and country

June 13 – Abe Reid; harmonica, guitar, and song; old tunes and blues

July 11 – Geoff Achison from Australia; guitar; blues and ballads

Aug. 8 – Tad Walters; guitar and harmonica; piedmont blues and old time jazz

Children's Summer Camps

James K. Polk State Historic Site

- July 21, A Day on the Farm Camp
- July 28, Be President for Day
- August 4, War With Mexico! Soldier Camp.

All camps are for children 8 – 12, and will be from 9 am – 3 pm. \$30 per child includes lunch

Reed Gold Mine

- June 18, Junior Prospectors Day Camp

For children 9 – 11; 9 am – 4:30 pm; \$25 per child includes snacks.

Gaston County Museum

- June 25, Mini Art Camp
- July 23, Mini History Camp

For children 10 – 12; 10am – 3 pm. \$15 per child includes lunch.

- Drop-In Day camps – For children 5 – 12. 10:30 am – noon. Free. Dates: June 12, 19, & 26, and July 3, 10, & 17. Bring children 10 minutes early for orientation.

Charlotte Museum of History

- June 17 –20, Museum Camp
- July 8 – 11, Colony Camp

Each weeklong camp will have two sessions, 9 am – noon, and 1 – 4 pm. \$125 for nonmembers, and \$75 for members includes snack, and carry home craft.

MHA Docents
Jim and Ann Williams
1601 South Wendover Road
Charlotte, NC 28211