

Mecklenburg Historical Association Docents

Promoting Local History through Education and Research



September/October, 2007
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From the Chairman

How could it be that summer is almost over and the busy fall season is approaching so quickly? Our September meeting will be on Tuesday the 4th and I am looking forward to seeing all of you. We have a real treat in store with our speaker Robin Brabham. I hope you have had a wonderful summer full of adventures. Other than my trip to Rhode Island, mine has been filled with the challenges of downsizing to fit into the patio home I am buying and preparing to sell my house. It has been more work than I anticipated but I am certainly in better physical shape and my possessions are streamlined like never before. Where do we get all this stuff anyway?

The Library and Education committees have been working over the summer to get the library back in operation and prepare for the training course on local history. Both committees have found that the completion of their projects has been difficult due to the summer schedules of their members. The Library committee will be finishing up the library during the fall. The Education committee has made good progress on the training course but has decided to launch it after the holidays rather than this fall. The first class will meet at the Polk Historic site on January 26. The classes will meet on Saturday mornings through February. We will have more information to share at the September meeting.

October will bring an opportunity to see all the wonderful work done by staff and volunteers at the McEwen Historical Village in Mint Hill. They have been working hard preparing to add a new building to the village. It is an old assay office that is an important part of the history of gold mining in this area. We will enjoy a tour and refreshments at this meeting. It is going to be an interesting year with many opportunities to learn about and share Charlottes' history at our sites and meetings.

Alice Bostic

Newsletter Deadline

Many thanks to those who submitted articles to The Dandelion. We're sure others have interesting tales. We especially need information on past events – successes, lessons learned, etc. Send them along. Deadline for the November – December issue will be October 17th. Mail your contributions to Ann and Jim Williams, 1601 S Wendover Road, Charlotte, NC 28211; or email to mhadandelion@mindspring.com.

Hart Square Tickets

For more than thirty years, Dr. Robert Hart of Hickory has rescued and restored Carolina life of the nineteenth century, recreating an entire village, Hart Square—the largest collection of original historic log buildings in the United States.

Each year on the fourth Saturday in October, Dr. and Mrs. Hart open this restoration project to the public. Dating from 1782 to 1873, the seventy log structures—chapels, barns, houses, shops, and more—are all furnished, and around 220 volunteer artisans demonstrate the period techniques of flax breaking and hackling, spinning, weaving, herb dying, open-hearth cooking, broom and shoe making, shingle riving, wheelwrighting, tinsmithing, and moonshining.

To get tickets (\$25.00 each) call the Catawba County Museum of History in Newton on October 1 at 9:00 am. Keep dialing back until you get through. The tickets will all be gone that day or the next. As participants, we can order tickets for you in advance. Mail your check (\$25.00 per ticket) and a self-addressed stamped envelope to:

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

We must receive your check by September 10 to get these tickets. We will receive the tickets by mid-October and mail them on to you.

September and October Decent Programs

Tuesday, September 4, 2007

Exploring the Archives

We will meet in the Fellowship Hall of Sugar Creek Presbyterian Church. Refreshments – 9:30 AM; Business meeting – 10 AM; program – 11 AM. Visitors are always welcome.

Our speaker will be Robin Brabham, Associate University Librarian for Special Collections, UNCC Atkins Library. He is an expert on the rare books, manuscripts, and archives housed at the library, and a vast collection it is. As the University and its library have grown, the numbers of family papers and primary documents have increased greatly. Those of us who have done research at UNCC have benefited from Robin's knowledge and willingness to dig up anything we need. Robin is entering into "phased retirement" after more than thirty-nine years with the university. We look forward to hearing his reflections on the past, present, and future of the Special Collections Library, and the highlights of his career.

Tuesday, October 2, 2007

Carl J. McEwen Historical Village

Please Note: **Change of time; Change of place!** We will meet at the **Carl J. McEwen Historical Village at 10 AM**. The village is at 7601 Matthews-Mint Hill Road (Highway 51), a few blocks north of Lawyers Road and next door to the Scottish Bank.

The old Mint Hill Doctors' Museum is now part of a village surrounded by a general store, a one-room school house, outbuildings, and gardens. An old assay office was moved to the property in 2005 and placed on steel beams. Now all the permits have been acquired to dig footings, pour a foundation, and lower the building into its new home. Perhaps it will be so seated by the time of our meeting. We will have a tour of the site and refreshments, followed by a short business meeting in the schoolhouse. June White (704-333-5912) will provide a map to the site at the September meeting, and can upon request arrange transportation from Sugar Creek Church.

MHA Dinner Meeting

The next MHA dinner meeting will be Monday, September 24. The meeting will be held at Trinity Presbyterian Church. Dinner is at 6:30, followed by the program at 7:15. Those not attending the dinner are welcome to attend the program at no charge. To make dinner reservations, contact Kathy Herran at 704 553 0936 or KathyHerran@hotmail.com

Joe Howard Griffin, Sr., a 5th generation Pineville resident will present a program on his book, *My Hometown - Pineville* which is now in its second edition. It is a compilation of history, memories, hearsay and scrapbook items about the town of Pineville, originally called Morrow's Turnout. Chase Saunders

MHA Docent Scholarship Program

The Docent scholarship program was begun by the docent board under the leadership of 'Queen' Jane Estep about six years ago. As fees for seminars and conferences have continued to escalate, the board felt that helping to defray some of the cost would encourage our docents to take advantage of these resources and share their new skills and knowledge with the membership. Since then several grants have been awarded to docents for this continuing education. Any docent is eligible to receive this stipend after a simple application process and approval by the Docent Board. This is a grant of up to \$50 per docent per calendar year. If the conference fee is less than \$50, the entire fee would be reimbursed.

You are probably thinking, "This sounds too good to be true!" For once, though, this is exactly what it appears. There are only a few thin threads (we don't 'do' strings) attached.

The recipient must agree:

1. To prepare, within two months of the conference/seminar's end, a report for the docent library that includes copies of handouts or other materials including any notes taken.
2. To make an oral report at the next docent meeting.
3. To write an article and submit it to the editor of the *Dandelion Press*.

Also, if the subject matter would lend itself to a program of general interest to the docent group, this should be offered to the vice-chairman for inclusion in the program schedule. For all the details, see your copy of the Docent Committee Guidelines, Revised 2005. And for an application see your Docent committee treasurer. We have unspent money in the budget every year for these scholarships, and your Docent Board would like to see it all awarded. Valerie Jones

Book Club

After the September program the book club will discuss *Ghost Riders* by Sharyn McCrumb. It is a wonderful historical novel whose primary character is Zebulon Vance, North Carolina's Governor during the civil war. McCrumb mixes characters of the present with real and imagined historic people to tell her tale. A review will appear the next issue of *The Dandelion*. The book is in paperback and in the public library. It's a reasonably quick read, so it's not too late to grab a copy. Anyone is welcome to join the discussion whether you've read the book or not. Bring suggestions for a November book. The Book Club will not meet in October due to our off-site location.

Come Welcome Our Liberty Tree

On Sunday, November 11, from 3 to 5 pm, the May 20th Society will host a dedication ceremony in Freedom Park for North Carolina's Liberty Tree. The original Liberty Tree was a large elm on Boston Common that was a rallying point for the growing resistance to British rule. It was cut down in 1775 by loyalists and used for firewood. Following the revolution nearly every town had a liberty tree as a living symbol of patriotism. The last remaining liberty tree, in Annapolis, Maryland, was badly damaged by a hurricane in 1999 and had to be removed. It was a tulip poplar and over a thousand seeds were harvested. Only fourteen saplings survived. This year

thirteen of them are being distributed to the original colonies, and Freedom Park was chosen for the home of North Carolina's tree

The May 20th Society has asked for costumed docents to participate in the dedication ceremony. Mark your calendars now. More details will appear in the next issue of The Dandelion.

Historical Cooking Guild of the Catawba Valley

The Cooking Guild is resuming its regular schedule. They will meet the 2nd and 4th Thursdays in September and October at the Polk Historic Site at 9 am. If you would like to join them to cook and learn call Barbara Goodwin (704-821-4810) or Carolyn Dilda (704-596-8834) for details.

In Memory of Jeff

As many of you know, the history community lost one of its heroes with the death of Rev. Jeff Lowrance on May 28th after a three year bout with cancer. Jeff became pastor at Hopewell Presbyterian Church in 1993, and preached his last sermon on Easter Sunday.

Jeff was committed to preserving the Hopewell community's place in our history. He served on the boards of Hugh Torance House and Store, Latta Plantation, and Rural Hill Farm. He was active in locating, preserving, and interpreting slave cemeteries; adding Hopewell Presbyterian Church to the National Register of Historic Places; and in celebrating our history through the naming of schools, parks, and developments. While on a pulpit exchange to England in 2000, he found the document wallet of Revolutionary War General William Lee Davidson. Gen. Davidson (buried at Hopewell) was killed in the battle of Cowan's Ford, and apparently relieved of his clothing and possessions by the British. Jeff discovered his wallet at the British Museum, and succeeded in bringing it back to North Carolina on loan for a year. These are only a few of his many accomplishments.

While Jeff preached the gospel to his congregation, he preached love, respect, and preservation of history to the rest of us. Although his presence is deeply missed, his legacy will be with us for a long time to come. A memorial service for Jeff was held at Hopewell on June 1st. He was buried in his hometown of Mooresville at Prospect Presbyterian Church. Jeff is survived by his wife Anne, and his daughters Claire and Erin.

Ann Williams, with help from the Charlotte Observer, May 30 and 31, 2007

Our Region's Smallest Museum?



Located in southeast Charlotte may be one of the smallest, most intriguing museums in our region, maybe in our state. Off Park Road, Smithfield Church Road leads to the new community of Heydon Hall. Before that entrance, on the right, a wrought iron fence surrounds the cemetery of the former Smithfield Baptist Church.

The tool shed located on the cemetery grounds holds a wonderful surprise. A visitor realizes this is not an ordinary storage unit for lawn equipment but an interesting small museum that tells the story of the church, the cemetery, and the restoration of the later because of the concern of one teenager and her family.

Smithfield Baptist Church was organized in 1881 by a group of African American tenant farmers who lived nearby in what was known as the Sharon Township Community. The building, a small frame structure painted white, was abandoned when the congregation moved to another

location. The Rev. Lawrance Mayes, who is a descendant of some who are buried in the cemetery is the principal of the nearby Smithfield Elementary School. Rev. Mayes attended services at the church as a child, and his memories were helpful during the restoration. Sometime in the early 1970s the church was burned by vandals, and after that it became a gathering place for young people who came there to party and who gave it the nickname, "The Devil's Church".



In the summer of 1989 a tombstone was found in some woods near Freedom Park with the inscription "Ester Wallace, Aug. 5, 1885--Dec. 1, 1950, Age 65 years--Resting in peace." Research found the stone was from the Smithfield Church Cemetery. The correct location for the gravestone was found next to that of the grave of Isiah Wallace who had died in 1974 at the age of 99. The empty granite base next to his headstone had a footstone reading "E.W." It was assumed that the tombstone found nearly 10 miles from the cemetery had been stolen by vandals. A search was begun for the Wallaces' relatives, and Henrietta Wallace Wilcox and Annabelle Wallace Price, in 1989 ages 81 and 87 respectively, were found. Henrietta was the daughter of Isiah and Ester, Annabelle was her cousin. When the tombstone was returned to its original location, they visited the cemetery with Polly Paddock, Charlotte Observer staff writer, who recorded their memories in an article in the paper. The ladies were heartbroken to see the damage and the overgrown conditions at the final resting place of their loved ones, but they were too advanced in years to take on the project of restoring the place of their childhood memories. Another 13 years passed and the cemetery languished in its neglected state.

Ashley Halsey and her Dad, Bill, were looking for the cemetery marked on the plat of land near the Cameron Wood Community where they lived, and when they found it they were saddened by the sight of the sunken graves and the damage done by nature and vandals to headstones which were jutting from a jungle of weeds and debris. Ashley had recently lost her grandmother and aunt and the thought of their burial places being neglected was hard for her to imagine. She told her dad that they had to do something about this cemetery to return it to the place of tranquility it should be. Her family probably had no idea what her commitment to this project would mean to all of them as they began the restoration in February of 2002.

Many people, including descendants of those buried there, were involved in this project which resulted in the rededication of the cemetery on March 8, 2003. For her hard work Ashley received the Girl Scout Silver Award, the highest honor for the cadet level Girl Scout. She also won awards from the Kohl's Kids Who Care youth volunteer recognition program in 2003. Her sister Brittany was awarded the Silver Award in May of 2004 for her creation of three meditation areas in the cemetery which feature benches, a birdbath, angel statues, and plantings of bulbs and flowers. The sisters, along with their parents, Bill and Marcia, and a host of volunteers have brought a place of neglect to a place of tranquility for meditation and peace for any visitor.

At the rededication ceremony, Rev. Mayes conducted the service, and a large crowd was educated as to how services had been conducted when Rev. Mayes was a child. The original cornerstone of the church had been dug from the charred remains by a relative of Ruth Stewart, whose family had owned much of the surrounding land. She had saved it, hoping someday to return it to its rightful place. After she learned of Rev. Mayes appointment as principal of the Smithfield Elementary School, she gave him the cornerstone, and he passed it along to the Halseys who had it cleaned and polished for its return to the cemetery.

During the restoration, much research was done regarding the burials, traditions, and stories about the church which were collected by the Halsey family. These are in the "museum", as well as artifacts found during the restoration and photographs of the site. Rev. Mayes was instrumental in the project as well, and his congregation, Grace Memorial Missionary Baptist Church, has now taken responsibility for the upkeep of the cemetery.

The beginning of this small museum was simply a yearning one teen-ager had to see things put right and her dedication to seeing that accomplished. Through her inspiration the little museum at the Smithfield Church cemetery tells the story of a once nearly forgotten place and the surroundings provide a pleasant spot, a quiet retreat for all who wish to visit. The many volunteers who worked with Ashley and her family are to be praised for their assistance in this most worthwhile project. Through the inspiration of one and the generosity of many a lovely spot has been given a new life.

Lisa Tappy, with assistance from Bill Halsey and Lawrance Mayes

Additional information, courtesy of Bill Halsey, Sunday August 12.

I went to the cemetery today just to look around. Five minutes after I arrived a relative of the Wallace family came by with family that was visiting from New York. You do know that the members of the church were buried **IN** the cemetery with the grave going east to west. If you had sinned, you are buried on the church property, north to south, but not **IN** the cemetery. There are three or four buried along the fence, north to south. I know about two of them. I got the names today. James Wallace and Walter Wallace were brothers. They went to a bar near South Tryon & York Road named Red Egypt. James got into a fight, and Walter was killed trying to help his brother in the fight.

There were two splits in the church. In the first split, some members went to Greater Galilee on South Tryon below Yorkmount Road, the others went to Smithfield/White Rock off South Tryon and May Street. In the second split, members followed Rev. Hazel Washington to a church near Tuckaseegee Road and Parkwood Ave.

The Romance of Tall Ships

When I planned a trip to visit family in Rhode Island this summer and learned that the Tall Ships Challenge would bring those wonderful vessels to Newport I knew I wanted to be there. The Tall Ships of the 21st century compete in an annual race series sponsored by the American Sail Training Association. There are more than 250 tall ships and sail training vessels, representing 26 US states and 30 countries, sailing around the globe. This year the Challenge Race Series has been on the US Eastern Coast. Next year it will be on the Pacific Coast. Like the tall ships of old they evoke a sense of mystery and adventure for those who sail them and those who come to admire them. I have often marveled at the courage and determination it must have taken to embark on trips to other continents on these small vessels before the age of modern communication and navigation devices.

The Newport Harbor was crowded with visitors and ship crews from all over the world. The masts of the ships glistened in the sunlight and their graceful lines were thrilling to see. Listening to the different languages and the excited voices of the visitors, I could imagine what it must have been like when one of these ships sailed into the Newport Harbor during the 18th century. Newport was a busy place and the arrival of a new ship would have been an event for its residents. We were able to tour the Tarangini, a 177 foot long Naval Training Vessel from India that had won the first race from Charleston to Norfolk. Her proud crew conducted tours that allowed us to learn

about life aboard a tall ship. These young men enjoy the convenience of flying to a port and spending two months aboard the ship and then flying home. It took six months for the Tarangini to sail from India to the US. How different their experience is from the men who sailed similar ships at an earlier time. Yet, the lure of an adventure and the opportunity to see the world would be similar no matter what time in history you set sail on one of these beautiful ships.

During the summer I also spent a wonderful afternoon in a house in Little Compton, Rhode Island, that dates back to 1690. The Wilbor House is a large house that is beautifully restored and furnished. As I learned about the five decades it took to complete the restoration, I was amazed that this was all done by a small group of dedicated volunteers. Carlton Brownell, president of the Little Compton Historical Society, is now a vigorous 91 years of age. As a young high school teacher, he began to restore this house with the help of his students. He gathered the furnishings during the 1960's when owners were glad to get rid of them. He is still busy leading the historical society in this tiny town and the passion that drove him all these years is clearly evident. Alice Bostic

Meck Dec Celebration, 2007

The Meck Dec Day celebration this year rose to a new level. The torch has been passed to the May 20 society and the event was managed by Charlotte City Center Partners, although the MHA docents still play a central role.

The celebration started on March 29th with a fund-raising event at the Norman Mansion on Sharon Road. This was to kick off the campaign to finance a statue of Captain James Jack to be erected in the Little Sugar Creek greenway near CPCC. MHA Docents and members of the 6th NC Regiment, all in 18th Century dress, provided local color while the attendees tasted very fine wines and cheeses from Reid's Grocery, heard a number of speeches and saw Captain Jack arrive on horseback and ride off with a proclamation.

The May 20th Celebration at the square was held on Friday, May 18th. On Thursday night there was a fundraising at the City Club, again peopled by MHA Docents and the NC 6th in 18th Century dress. The highlight of the evening was a talk by David McCullough, author of *1776* and *John Adams*, followed by a book signing. The evening before, Mr. Adams acknowledged the authenticity of the Meck Dec in an interview with Leigh Dyer of the *Charlotte Observer*.

You might notice the benefits that sometimes accrue to those Docents who can appear properly costumed in 18th Century dress, hint, hint.

The celebration on the square followed the usual pattern, with MHA Docents and the NC 6th in 18th Century dress, political speeches, a reading of the Meck Dec, Captain Jack on his horse, and a new feature this year, a Cannon! Members of Kingsbury's NC Artillery Co. fired their cannon six times down Tryon Street, to the great delight of the crowd. Then, accompanied by His Honor the Mayor, we paraded to Settler's Cemetery and placed a wreath on the grave of Thomas Polk. We had extensive television coverage which, unfortunately, included an interview with Dan Morrill who as usual pooh-poohed the whole event. Your Humble Servant, Jim Williams

The Charlotte Folk Society Celebrates 25 Years of Playing Well With Others

Banjo picker Wayne Erbsen, on a North Carolina Arts Council visiting artist residency in Charlotte, must have wondered whether he was barking up the wrong tree, playing old-time stringband music amid the skyscrapers and suburban sprawl of the biggest city in the Carolinas. But it wasn't long before he met up with homegrown guitarist/square dancer Marilyn Meacham Price, who loved the music as much as he did. With Wayne's encouragement, Marilyn started presenting traditional music events. In 1982 she sent out a call to those who shared her love of traditional music. The result became the Charlotte Folk Society.

Today CFS celebrates its 25th anniversary, looking back on a quarter century of promoting enjoyment and preservation of traditional and contemporary folk music, dance, crafts, and lore in the piedmont Carolinas. It turns out that even big city residents – native Southerners and newcomers alike – are hungry for connections to tradition.

The heartbeat of CFS is the regular public “Gathering” held the second Friday of each month. It’s still at Central Piedmont Community College, where Wayne Erbsen taught all those years ago. And it’s still free, with a hat passed for voluntary donations. Each evening kicks off with an hour-long concert, followed by refreshments, visiting, jamming, and a song circle – time for folks to get to know each other and build a community. Every season’s lineup of local and regional performers reflects interests in old-time, bluegrass, Celtic, black string band, gospel, Native American, contemporary folk, storytelling, and ballad traditions.

Over the years, the Society has introduced thousands of people to the roots and branches of piedmont Carolinas music. In the 1980s the Society held festivals at Latta Plantation Park and presented concerts with the likes of Jean Ritchie and Doc Watson. Members hosted programs on cable television and public radio, including Fiona Ritchie, whose *Thistle & Shamrock* has become one of America’s most beloved and enduring radio offerings. Closer to home, Marilyn Price coordinated folk instrument classes at CPCC including a “Sunday Night Jam Class” that for fourteen years gave hundreds of players an opportunity to experience the joy of communal music making.



Collaboration is an important strategy for the organization, which is completely volunteer-run. In the 1990s, CFS launched a seven-year partnership with the Charlotte Blues Society, Levine Museum of the New South, and CPCC to mount an annual spring *Folk Frolic* festival. In 2004, grants from Foundation for the Carolinas and the local Arts & Science Council enabled CFS to offer summer Folk Arts Camps for children. Another exciting collaboration came in 2005 when CFS teamed with the Charlotte Museum of History to bring performers from Appalachian State University’s Black Banjo Gathering.

The North Carolina Folklore Society honored the CFS for its contributions to the state folklife with its 2002 Community Traditions Award. Today CFS is as active as ever. A newsletter goes out to members each month, bolstered by a constantly updated website www.folksociety.org. In July 2007 the fifth annual CFS Ice Cream Social & Old Time Jam drew 1500 people to the tree-shaded grounds of the Charlotte Museum of History. In September, thousands more will enjoy four days of music and storytelling presented on the CFS Folk Stage at Charlotte’s long-running Festival in the Park.

The highlight of 2007 comes in October. The Charlotte Folk Society celebrates its 25th anniversary with a trio of events: a reunion potluck on October 12th; free workshops, jams, demonstrations, and mini-concerts during the daytime on October 13th, and a ticketed concert the evening of October 13th. Wayne Erbsen will come down from Asheville with his banjo to make music once again with Marilyn Price. African American fiddler Joe Thompson – just named a National Endowment Folk Heritage Award winner – will share the stage with dozens of other local and regional favorites. You are invited to join the Society in celebrating its past as it prepares to move into its future! See the Calendar section of this newsletter for details.

Wanda Hubicki

The Scots Mindset Confirmed



Last Spring Jim and I had a delightful journey to Scotland. We armed ourselves with a very short “must do” list, and a long, long list of places to visit if they happened to turn up on our path. When the path meandered the Scottish countryside between Stirling and Melrose, we decided to stop in Dunfermline to visit the birthplace of Andrew Carnegie (they accent the second syllable on their side of the pond). The cottage where Carnegie was born is now a small but very informative museum. It was our good luck that the market town of Dunfermline was having a festival that weekend, and a man who claimed to be Mr. Carnegie himself was in residence. As we had arrived before the festivities began, we had the gentleman all to ourselves and had a great long conversation with him. The man looked amazingly like his photograph, including the shape and color of his beard.



Carnegie, born in 1835, was the son of a linen weaver. His father, though uneducated, wove complex damasks and was probably considered middle class. Andrew had no formal education, but was encouraged by his father and especially his uncle to read broadly and think for himself. At the age of 13 he came to America where his first job was as a bobbin boy in an Allegheny, Pa. cotton mill. From there he worked his way up through the railroad industry and then founded a steel company to produce railroad bridges. His industrial interests multiplied until his companies produced about one-quarter of all US iron and steel. All the while he immersed himself in science, the arts, and literature. Though he became immensely rich from steel, it was his love of learning instilled in boyhood that shaped his life.

Over his lifetime he gave 350 million dollars back to mankind, including education and cultural institutions, numerous libraries, and the enormous beautiful park in Dunfermline. His philosophy of creating libraries was to give a town a building, but its citizens, through donations and fundraising, were to acquire the books and manage the library’s operation. People need to work for a thing in order to appreciate it. That sounded sensible and very Scottish to us. We asked the gentleman if his Presbyterian upbringing had an influence on the man he became. Absolutely! Presbyterians were taught not only to read, but to examine multiple sources, understand and question what they read, and think for themselves. Our preconceived notions about the lowland Scots, and consequently the Scots-Irish, were confirmed.

Ann Williams

*Book Review**Realistic Visionary: A Portrait of George Washington* by Peter R. Henriques

So many of our founding fathers, when their lives are brought up close and scrutinized under a microscope, when looked at through the lens of late 20th and early 21st century revisionism, break apart. One man stands head and shoulders above the crowd, George Washington. When Peter Henriques spoke at the Charlotte Museum of History in February, reviewing his new biography of our first commander-in-chief and president, my admiration for the man was confirmed as valid. When others of his generation declaimed and postured, proclaiming lofty ideals that they never carried forward in their personal lives, Washington quietly and with great deliberation carried out those ideals, and by sheer force of character molded our newly hatched country into a representative republic that is still the envy of the world. As Dr. Henriques said, “He was the right man in the right place at the right time.”

George Washington was undoubtedly an ambitious and passionate man. Otherwise we would have never heard from him. But to the world he presented a cool visage (gleaned from his private classical education) exemplifying Epictetus’ description of what a man should be: “No man is free who is not master of himself.” This biography of Washington tackles a number of issues including his religious views, his ambivalence when wrestling with the thorny issue of slavery, his personal life – his marriage to Martha and the Sally Fairfax question – his friendship with Alexander Hamilton, and his feud and break with Thomas Jefferson.

Greatly desiring to be a warrior, and having some experience despite losing a disastrous engagement in the French and Indian War, he presented himself to the Second Continental Congress as a military leader they could rely on. By his character and demeanor he commended himself to those men as sober, calm and steady, the complete embodiment of an 18th Century gentleman. He presented himself as enlightened, amiable (courteous and courtly), virtuous and as a warrior. This combination of humility and power was very attractive. He exemplified dignity with likeability; he was athletic and graceful. He not only looked the part (and the fact that he arrived at the Second Congress and took his seat in full military uniform probably did not hurt), but he really was the man he projected. He understood power and in that respect he was indeed a very shrewd ‘politician’. He worked well with subordinates, and was aware of his limitations – he was not a very good orator or speaker – but he used the gestures of theater, which he loved, to make his points. He was not a pretender, but was the image of classical virtue, a superlative leader, using every gift he had to reach his goals. Today we would call him a hands-on manager. He did not sit in a tent miles from the battlefield directing his troops. He was not a brilliant strategist, but he learned from his mistakes which only added to his tremendous popularity. His idea of civilian control of the military came directly from classical antiquity and as soon as the war ended, he resigned his commission and returned to his home in Virginia.

This kind of humility in the face of overwhelming popularity only endeared him more to the country, making it evident that he had used all this power and his forceful gifts of leadership as a military commander for the country’s supreme good. Then when a civilian leader was needed, they were eager to trust this fledgling country to the man who had secured it for them on the battlefield. Setting about doing what he had been entrusted to do, this time he secured the country with a form of government that would be strong and stand up to outside pressures. His task was to keep the union from unraveling in the face of Britain’s continued hostility after the peace had been won and treaties signed, and not to get caught up in the British-French conflict that emerged on the heels of the French Revolution which had engulfed France just as Washington began his first term as president. Time after time Washington made the right decisions to steer the new ship of state through these turbulent waters, in fact to chart the way where no ship of state had ever been.

George Washington’s great virtues of character, his fortitude, his temperance, his prudence and his justice, made him the best president we have ever had. He sought honest fame and earned it. Abigail Adams realized he could be a “very dangerous man”, but it was the greatness of his character that caused him to use his gifts in the service of his country and its people. As William Shakespeare said of another, “Take his character all together, and we shall not look upon his like again.”

A word about the author: Peter Henriques is a lecturer in history such that, even if you hated history in school, if you took a class from him, you would immediately head to the registrar's office to change your major. He is Professor Emeritus at George Mason University and has written extensively on George Washington, including *The Death of George Washington: He Died as He Lived*. Both books are available at local booksellers and through Amazon. Valerie Jones

Historic Site News

Volunteers Needed!

Most historic sites mentioned in *The Dandelion* tell us they need volunteers. If you can commit to a few hours a month, a few hours a day, or anything in between, call the site of your choice and ask about their volunteer program. Many sites need docents to do tours for children and/or adults. Some require (and may provide) costumes, others do not. There may be a need for gardening, office work, or any number of things. For special events help is often needed taking tickets, parking cars, or handling other logistics. The history community stays vibrant from the work of many volunteers, so whatever your cup of tea, consider trading some of your time for the chance to meet great folks, learn neat stuff, and have some fun.

Latta Plantation

Kristin Toler is the new site director at Latta Plantation. For several years Kristin was Latta's education director, then with the birth of her second child, she decided to work from home on grants and other special projects. Now that her children are somewhat launched, she has agreed to come back as site director. Kristen is full of energy and ideas, and is a delight to work with. Latta is lucky to have her. Congratulations Kristen!

The Schiele Museum

Suzanne Simmons is the new director of the Schiele's backcountry farm. Her title, according to Kay Moss, is 18th Century Woodswoman and Backcountry Wench. Suzanne has been associated with the Schiele for many years, is thoroughly familiar with 18th century farm life, and will surely do an excellent job. Congratulations, Suzanne!

Carl J. McEwen Historical Village

At last, the permit for the Assay Building is in hand and work will soon begin on the footings and foundation. Rotary International of Mint Hill is building a large freestanding rest room facility within 200 feet of the Assay Building.

The Mint Hill Historical Society anticipates expanding the site as fundraisers are planned to provide school bus parking, a tenant or sharecropper home, country church, barn, a bigger garden, and NC information signs on Hwy 485. Birdhouses, bird feeders, a butterfly garden, and a water source are in place. Scout projects include handicap ramps, a brick patio and path, and a blacksmith shop.

Historic Rosedale

If you've not visited Rosedale recently prepare to be impressed. Mountain of vines and underbrush have been cleared from much of the old garden area, paths are being made, and "secret gardens" with little patios have been discovered. These were the tea party spots enjoyed by Rosedale's last residents when they were children. The site plans to restore them for today's children.

Visitation has increased and three part-time people have been hired to share the week-end tours. However, more volunteers are also needed. Camille trained the new folks in a one-on-one basis, and found it very successful. If you've never done a Rosedale tour, or if you took the training and think your skills are rusty, she will be happy to work with you and bring you up to speed. If you can help with adult or school tours, call Camille at the site.

The History Calendar

The Charlotte Museum of History

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

New Exhibit - Toy Time: Larger-Than-Life Folk Toys Sept. 8 – Dec. 31. Public Opening Sept. 8, 11 am – 4 pm
Toy Time is an interactive exhibit of larger-than-life Folk Toys. Visitors can “play” with large-scale versions of Whimmy Diddle, Jacob’s Ladder, Pecking Chickens, and other tumbling, flipping and climbing toys.

Battle of Charlotte September 29, 2007, 11:00 am – 4:00 pm

Discover Charlotte’s revolutionary roots and learn about The Battle of Charlotte through military drills by American and British reenactors and living history activities at the home of local patriot, Hezekiah Alexander.

Haunted Homesite October 27, 2007, 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Bring the family for a howling good evening at the Hezekiah Alexander Homesite that will include ghost stories, guided tours of the historic grounds haunted by family-friendly ghouls, and other festive fall activities. Children are encouraged to come in costume and compete for prizes. Reservations required.

Latta Plantation

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

Revolutionary War Reenactment Sept. 15, 10 am–4 pm, Sept. 16, 1-4 pm

Historic Latta Plantation remembers the American Revolution! Witness demonstrations, sutlers selling their wares, a reenacted battle, and more!

What's Cookin' at Latta Oct. 6, 10 am-4 pm

An event that celebrates the food and culinary ways of the past. Come out for a day of great smells and sights.

Folklife Festival and Craft Show Oct. 13 & 14, 10 am-4 pm

Celebrate autumn the 19th century backcountry way! Visit Latta to see traditional crafts, artisans, and more.

Hauntings At Latta Oct. 26 & 27, 7 -10 pm

Every past has its ghosts... come discover ours (if you dare).

Historic Crossdale

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

Lately Purchased From Philadelphia & New York: Merchant Business in Antebellum Mecklenburg

Sept. 15, 11 am, Admission charged.

Well-known Charlotte historian Jane Starnes will enlighten the audience with rare tidbits and facts about what was available from local merchants from 1820 – 1865. Did you know that ice cream was sold in uptown Charlotte in the 1830’s? There is a limit of 32 attendees, so make your reservation or purchase your tickets at the web site.

Oyster Roast Fundraiser Saturday, October 20th 3:30 – 7:00 pm, Admission charged.

Guests will see a demonstration of Town Ball and be invited to play a game of this predecessor of baseball. Children’s activities include pumpkin painting, hay rides, and making hollyhock dolls. Docents will conduct

house tours. The admission fee includes oysters, chicken, and other delicious goodies. Reservations are required so make your reservation by purchasing your tickets at the web site.

Stephanie Burt Williams Reading & Book Signing Saturday October 6th, 7 pm, Admission charged.
Ms. Williams is the author of *Ghost Stories of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County*, *Wicked Charlotte: The Sordid Side of the Queen City*, and *Haunted Hills: Ghosts Legends of Highlands & Cashiers*. She will read from and sign these books and co-host a spirit walk through the house, using her skills as a former docent to answer questions. Make your reservation or purchase your tickets at the web site.

Rosedale Midnight Ghost Tour Saturday, October 27th, 11:30 pm – 12:30 am \$100.00 per person, limit 12
For ONLY those who are not afraid and truly interested in the spirit realm, we offer a special tour to possibly encounter Rosedale's previous residents. Hear about the planters, slaves, farmers, and children that inhabited Rosedale. Pre-paid reservations are REQUIRED so make your reservation by purchasing your tickets at the web site.

Rosedale Grounds Ghost Tour October 31st, 6-7 pm & 7-8 pm, \$5.00 per person, limit 75 each hour
Listen to tales documented from staff, visitors and docents about experiences with Rosedale's past of a very different sort – supernatural. Walk through the mist and ancient boxwoods where those now long departed once worked, played, lived, and died. See contact information above

Historic Rural Hill Farm

4431 Neck Road, Huntersville, NC, 704 875 3113, <http://www.ruralhillfarm.org>

The Amazing Maize, Maze Aug 25 – Oct 21, 10 am – 5 pm, Admission charged.
Bring you friends and family to Historic Rural Hill and get lost in the Amazing Maize Maze.

Historic Brattonsville

1444 Brattonsville Rd., McConnells, SC, 803 684 2327
<http://www.chmuseums.org/ourmuseums/myco/index.htm>

Sweat of our Brows: The African American Experience Sept. 15, 10 am – 3 pm, Admission charged.
This is a living history program that chronicles the lives of Africans from their homeland to the site of Historic Brattonsville and beyond. Ongoing activities will take place throughout the day and center around five key themes: kinship bonds (extended family practices), family, religion (the invisible church), work (house and field labor) and achievement. The event includes dancing, singing and other performances.

Piedmont Pottery Festival Sept. 29, 10 am – 4 pm, Admission charged.
This is a celebration of the region's rich pottery traditions featuring potters and dealers from North Carolina and South Carolina who specialize in traditional southern pottery. Visitors are invited to bring their own pieces to be identified by pottery experts. A selection of pottery from the Culture and Heritage Museums' collection will be on display.

Civil War Reenactment Oct. 27- 28, Saturday 10 am – 5 pm, Sunday 11 am – 4 pm, Admission charged.
This Civil War reenactment brings to life the war that ravaged America. Activities include battle reenactments, cannon firing demonstrations, camp life activities, historic music, firearms presentations and children's military drills. Shopping and family friendly foods will be available. Battle reenactment will take place at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

The Carl J. McLewen Historical Village

7601 Matthews-Mint Hill Rd. 704-573-0726

Hours Tues. - Sat. 10:00am-2:00pm

The Mint Hill Historical Society will have a booth at Mint Hill Madness at Fairview Park (Hwy. 218), September 28-30.

Autumn Jubilee will be at the Village location October 13

Schiele Museum

1500 E. Garrison Blvd., Gastonia 704 866 6913 www.schielemuseum.org

Autumn in the Piedmont Backcountry Sunday, September 30, 1:00 - 5:00 pm

Join us for a simple autumn afternoon on the farm as interpreters in 18th century dress go about daily life and chores in the Piedmont Backcountry.

Scottish Heritage Festival Sunday, October 7, 1:00 - 4:00 pm

Celebrate the Scottish and Scots-Irish history and heritage of our area with music, dress, and customs of the Highland and Lowland Scots. Search for family tartans, enjoy Scottish country dancing, and explore the lifestyle of Scottish immigrants in the 18th century Carolina Backcountry.

Fare Game: Hunting, Flaying & Roasting Sunday, October 28, 1:00 - 5:00 pm

Wild game was important fare in the 18th-century backcountry. Learn how settlers hunted and processed wild game native to the region. See interpreters in period dress prepare 18th century "receipts" using wild game.

Charlotte Folk Society

www.folksociety.org

Charlotte Folk Society Gathering featuring Original Country Roots Music by Polecat Creek September 14: Free, and open to the public; donations are appreciated. An hour-long concert, followed by jam sessions and a song circle. In the Bryant Recital Hall of the Sloan-Morgan Building, 1220 Elizabeth Avenue, on the CPCC Campus. Free parking is available in the CPCC Staff & Theater Deck, off Fourth Street, between Charlottetown Avenue (formerly Independence Boulevard) and Kings Drive.

Charlotte Folk Society Stage at 43rd Annual Festival in the Park, Freedom Park, Charlotte. September 20-23 Showcase of old-time, Bluegrass, Celtic, country, and Americana music, as well as singer-songwriters, storytellers, and many aspects of folk music, dance, crafts, and lore. Free. www.festivalinthepark.org

CFS 25th Anniversary Homecoming Gathering October 12, 5:30-10 PM, Broach Hall, St. John's Baptist Church, 300 Hawthorne Lane, Charlotte. Bring a dish to share/donate \$5. Jamming, Covered Dish Dinner, Socializing & Reunion Concert.

Charlotte Folk Society Celebrates Music, Dance, Crafts & Lore October 13, 10 AM-4 PM, Levine Museum of the New South, 200 East 7th Street, Charlotte. Singing, Dance, Storytelling & Instrument Workshops; Mini-Concerts, Demonstrations & Jams with Master Performers and Instructors. Free with museum admission: \$6/person; \$18/family.

The Charlotte Folk Society 25th Anniversary Concert October 13, Presented by Tosco Music Parties, Inc., Halton Theater, Overcash Academic & Performing Arts Center, CPCC, Charlotte. Stringband, Bluegrass, Cajun, Celtic, Gospel, Native American & More; 25 Acts Featuring Wayne Erbsen, and many others. Tickets available by phone at 704-330-6534; online at <http://halton.cpcc.edu/tickets>. Adults \$12; adults 65+ years \$10; ages 15 & under \$6.

Gaston County Museum

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

Blues out Back – The Circuit Riders Sept 14, 6:30-8:00 pm, Free
Playing everything from smokin instrumentals to country ballads, The Circuit Riders are: Greg Luck, Greg Corbett, Darin Aldridge, Billy Gee, and Jaret Carter.

Quilt Exhibit opens Sept 12. Quilts from the museum's permanent collection.

Victorian Winter Decorations Workshop October 16 and 25, 3:30-6:00 pm
Participants will learn how Victorians decorated for the holidays, and make several holiday decorations. Reservations required by October 9. The fee including materials is \$15 non-members, \$12 for members. To register, contact Jeff Pruett at 704 922 7681 x 105

Afro-American Cultural Center

401 North Myers Street (at E. 7th and N. McDowell), in the restored Little Rock A.M.E. Zion Church
704 374 1565 www.aacc-charlotte.org

AACC Shotgun House Tues. – Sat., 10 am – 6 pm, Admission: \$5.00; Sun. 1 – 5 pm Free
Deeded to the Afro-American Cultural Center in 1986, the shotgun houses, built during the late 1890s, were originally located in the former Third Ward neighborhood called “Blandville.” One house is now fully furnished with 1940's period furniture and open to the public.

Andrew Jackson State Park

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

An Evening of Bluegrass October 19. Andrew Jackson State Park Amphitheater
For more information, please contact the park at the phone number above.

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