



1780 Council Oak  
at Quaker Meadows

# MUSEUM MUSINGS

## History Museum of Burke County Newsletter Fall 2020

### Help “Raise the Roof”

The Museum has two buildings, both in need of attention, as referenced in a recent letter to friends of the History Museum. The most immediate need is to replace the roof on the Annex building at a cost of \$45,000. Over the past 18 months, we have spent more than \$8,000 on roof repairs.

Many items donated to the Museum are fragile, and to best protect all the wonderful items donated, we need to replace both roofs. Roof leakage and mold present significant danger to artifacts, visitors and all who enter the Museum. While the Annex is not open because of COVID-19, it provides important storage for items not currently on display. Heat and air must be kept at a constant temperature for control of moisture and humidity. Since our founding the Museum has collected over 22,000 artifacts, of which approximately 60% are on display. Others are rotated due to space limitations. The Museum has been blessed with donations of artifacts that have cultural and historical value to our geographic area.

This holiday season please consider making a contribution to the Museum. Donations may be mailed to the Museum. We accept major credit cards over the phone, on our website or in person.

If you wish to donate in honor of someone, we will send a card to that person, advising them of your gift.

Even if you cannot contribute, please stop by the Museum (by appointment) when we reopen and experience the many items we have on display. You can also find us on our website and on Facebook.

Finance Committee of The History Museum of Burke County-Claude Sitton, Waits Gordon, Betty Whitaker, John Greene, Jim Brinkley, Chair/Treasurer

---

### History Museum Opens By Appointment Only

For six months the History Museum buildings just did not seem like themselves. Doors were locked, the parking lot was almost empty most days, and the halls, exhibits, and offices were eerily quiet. There were no students from local schools touring the building and discovering the past, no visitors from outside the county wanting to learn more about the history of Burke, no grandparents bringing grandchildren to check out the exhibits and tell stories about “back when,” no guest lecturers, no browsing in the gift store. Strange times. In October, the History Museum re-opened “by appointment only” as a trial run after volunteers received training in how to follow CDC protocols. Thus far, with temperature checks, health questions, mask wearing, and social distancing, there have been no problems. Tours are only available Tuesday through Friday 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM so that appropriate cleaning can be done following each tour. If you are interested in visiting the museum or the Railroad Depot Museum please call the History Museum at 437-1777.

---

*The History Museum of Burke County has IRS approval as a 501 (c) (3) private nonprofit educational organization. Financial information about this organization and a copy of its solicitation license are available from the NC Charitable Licensing Service at 1-888-830-4989. This license is not an endorsement by the State.*

## Pandemics - History Repeats Itself

What place does a hoop skirt play in a pandemic?

Social distancing, hand washing, and masks are the norm now. The 2020 pandemic will be vividly in our memories as a life-changing event, never experienced before and (hopefully) never again in our lives. Such events have been recorded twice in the history of the United States.

The first was the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918—1921. Approximately one in 10 Americans was afflicted during that epidemic, known both as the “Spanish flu” and “the grippe.” Believed to have started in the United States on a Kansas Army base, and coming towards the end of World War I, the “flu” spread quickly as soldiers were traveling around the world and living in close quarters. All people could do was wash their hands, isolate, avoid public gatherings, and quarantine those already sick. The Red Cross strongly encouraged mask-wearing as a “patriotic” duty.

The first licensed “flu” vaccine was not available until 1941.

That pandemic was another time when the wearing of masks was considered important to prevent the spread. The Red Cross promoted the slogan “Wear a mask, save a life.” The slogan was not deemed as affiliated with a political party, but as a duty.

The flu epidemic began to appear in Burke County in early October 1918. Schools, churches, and entertainment venues were closed. The Morganton Town Council passed a stay-at-home order. All public gatherings were prohibited. Quarantine laws were put into effect. Due to World War I, there were only four medical practitioners in the county. A number of people died, including a nurse and a young student at the North Carolina School for the Deaf. Dr. Issac Montrose Taylor, an ancestor of singer James Taylor, was selected as the “town physician, health and quarantine officer.”

The second event was the polio epidemic in 1948. There were 105 reported cases in Burke County; it is believed that many cases were not reported. Grace Hospital was designated a center, and the pediatrics department was filled throughout the summer. The disease disappeared after the Jonas Salk vaccine was put into use.

We hope this pandemic will pass, quickly, and our lives can return to normal.

By the way, hoop skirts in the 19th century helped maintain a “social distance”!



### The First Item Donated to the Museum

The Museum's first artifact, donated in 2003 by Executive Director Claude Sitton, is a flintlock rifle with a 33.5 inch sawed-off barrel. Sitton found the rifle in a feed barrel on a farm between Drexel Road and Parker Road that his father purchased in 1945. Sitton has been told the rifle might have been used in the past by someone “ridin’ shotgun” on a stagecoach in Burke County. The shotgun is on display in the “Civil War” exhibit on the upper level of the Museum.

---

## Looking Forward to Opening New Exhibit in 2021

Burke County native son Jim Warlick is working with Museum Executive Director Claude Sitton, Curator Phyllis Wogan, and Assistant Curator Wayne Hitt on preparations for a new exhibit that will open in 2021. It will honor the work and legacy of mill workers in Burke County. Warlick, who grew up in the Chesterfield community and graduated from Oak Hill High School, owns White House Gifts in Washington, DC and provided the artifacts that comprised the popular Presidential Memorabilia exhibit at the Museum several years ago. That exhibit included a replica of the Oval Office.

Warlick has established the Workers' Legacy Foundation in honor of his mother, who worked for more than three decades at the Garrou-Morganton Full-Fashioned Hosiery Mills, now the site of Morganton City Hall. The Foundation is sponsoring the new exhibit which will be named "Workers' Legacy."

Warlick is the leader of an initiative to erect a monument, "Dignity of Work," on the grounds of the Museum to honor Burke County's mill workers. The monument will be surrounded by a brick walkway for which individuals and organizations may contribute bricks to honor or memorialize specific mill workers. For a donation of \$100 (4" X 8" brick) or \$200 (8" X 8" brick), bricks may be purchased to become part of the pathway leading to the monument. All proceeds from the Walk of Honor Fundraiser will help to purchase, engrave, install, and maintain the walkway and the monument.

The standard 4" X 8" brick may contain up to three (3) lines of text with a maximum of 14 characters in a line, counting spaces and punctuation. Lettering will be UPPERCASE and centered on each brick. The standard 8" X 8" brick may contain up to six (6) lines with a maximum of 14 characters in a line, counting spaces and punctuation. Lettering will be UPPERCASE and centered on each brick.

Brochures containing the brick brochures may be picked up at the History Museum, 201 W. Meeting Street, Morganton, NC Tuesday through Friday, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM. For more information, email [info@workerslegacyexhibition.org](mailto:info@workerslegacyexhibition.org). Completed forms with a check for either \$100 or \$200 may be sent to:

The Workers' Legacy Foundation Exhibit Fund, LLC  
c/o Alesia Jones  
1125 Capitata Crossing  
Apex, NC 27502

---

### The Most Recent Item Donated

The Museum's most recent artifact, donated by Board Member Debbie Bradley, is a painting done by her great-grandmother, Belle Turner Lane, in 1892. The landscape of a cabin and mountain stream in the fall now hangs in the "McCall Bedroom" exhibit on the lower level of the Museum.



## 2020 – 100 Years of Women’s Right to Vote

The History Museum  
of Burke County, Inc.  
P.O. Box 416  
Morganton, NC 28680  
201 West Meeting Street,  
Morganton, NC 28655  
828-437-1777  
[burkehistory@compascable.net](mailto:burkehistory@compascable.net)

Executive Director

Claude S. Sitton

Curator

Phyllis Wogan

Board of Directors

- Waits Gordon, Chairman
- John Greene, Sr. Vice Chairman
- Sandra West, Secretary
- Jim Brinkley, Treasurer
- Louis Asbury, III
- Debbie Bradley
- Sue Cozort
- Albert Dale
- Laura Gilliam
- Shirley Helms, Registrar
- Wayne Hitt, Assistant Curator
- Winston Lear
- Linda Lindsey
- David McGalliard
- Sarah Owens
- Robert Patton III
- Velma Sanders
- Fred Smith
- Dana Whisnant
- Phyllis Wogan

History Museum Hours:  
Tuesday - Friday 10:00 - 4:00  
Saturday 10:00 - 2:00  
Rail Road Depot  
Saturdays  
1:00 - 3:00  
R. Douglas Walker  
Curator Emeritus

Museum Musings Staff  
Debbie Bradley  
Linda Lindsey  
Sarah Owens  
Pat Page

Happy Holidays,  
and Best Wishes for  
2021!

On August 26, 1920, the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed. The federal women’s suffrage amendment was originally sent to the U.S. Congress in 1878 but was not ratified and sent to states until 1919. It would be interesting to know all the reasons for that 41-year delay! Five territories allowed women the right to vote before they became states. North Carolina did not allow this right until the Amendment was ratified.

The late Dr. Edward Phifer, Jr., notes in his book “BURKE: The History of a North Carolina County” that there were sporadic efforts to extend suffrage to the female population before 1900 but no intense interest was shown until the summer of 1913. Under the leadership of local businessman Sidney Gaither, the advocates of Women’s Suffrage marched in the 1913 Morganton Fourth of July parade. Later that month, a small group of women organized an equal suffrage league.

In 1917 when a bill to extend the vote to women reached the floor of the N.C. House of Representatives, John Pearson of Burke County spoke in favor of it. Although it failed to pass, the 1920 ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment by the requisite three-fourths of the state legislatures made legislative action in North Carolina unnecessary. Our neighboring state legislature in Tennessee is credited with helping the country reach the required three-fourths of ratifications by states.

Isn’t it ironic that men had to vote in the affirmative, to allow women to vote?

**From the Membership Committee:** Thank you to all our Museum supporters, especially members whose regular yearly donations through membership provide essential support for the numerous expenses. Your support helps protect the history in your Museum and enables us to make it accessible to you with no admission charge. If you are not currently a member, please consider becoming one.

***Form for Membership, Donation, Brick Orders***

Your Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Tel \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership** (Check appropriate category level)

<input type="checkbox"/> Youth (to 8) - \$5	<input type="checkbox"/> Conservator-\$500-\$999
<input type="checkbox"/> Family--\$50	<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor-\$1,000 and above
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual --\$35	<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Patron- \$250-\$499
<input type="checkbox"/> Contributor--\$75	<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Conservator-\$500-\$999
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron--\$100-\$499	<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Benefactor-\$1,000 & +

**General Donation \$** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pathway to History Brick Order (\$100 per Brick)**

Memorial       Honorarium

(Up to 3 lines, 15 characters per line, spaces count as ½ character)

**Line 1** \_\_\_\_\_

**Line 2** \_\_\_\_\_

**Line 3** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total amount enclosed \$** \_\_\_\_\_