



1780 Council Oak
at Quaker Meadows

MUSEUM MUSINGS

History Museum of Burke County Newsletter Spring 2023

20th Anniversary Celebration is Saturday, May 6!

When you put this newsletter down, go directly to your calendar and add Saturday, May 6 as a “must-attend” event. That will be the day the History Museum celebrates its 20th year of operation. You won’t want to miss it! Governor Roy Cooper and other elected state and local officials, as well as Burke County Commissioners, elected officers and staff from all cities and towns in Burke County, and other dignitaries are invited as are all Museum members and the public.

The celebration will begin with the Annual Meeting for History Museum members during a brunch meeting 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM in the Museum Annex. The meeting will include the Annual Report and the election of officers.

From 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM, Museum members, invited guests, and the public will be treated to a variety of events and activities inside the Museum and Annex and on the grounds. Jim Warlick, sponsor of the new “Dignity of Work” monument on the Museum grounds and the corresponding exhibit inside the Museum, will unveil the monument on the front lawn of the Museum, and speak about the significance of the exhibit to Burke County’s history. “Dignity of Work”, dedicated in honor and memory of Warlick’s mother, pays tribute to the thousands of textile, hosiery and furniture workers whose labor helped drive and build the county’s economic engines for decades. The monument, permanently installed on West Meeting Street, a major entrance to downtown Morganton, will be a daily reminder for passers-by of the inestimable contributions textile and furniture workers made to Burke County.

Inside the Museum, a number of exhibits will “come to life” as visitors tour the Museum and encounter Board members or Docents who will be prepared to discuss the historical importance of the specific exhibits. The exhibits include “The Revolutionary War in Burke County”, “Granny’s Kitchen”, “Lake James”, “Photos/Camera”, “Frankie Silver”, “1950’s Bedroom”, “Desegregation”, “Music Room”, and “Veterans”. Whether you have visited these exhibits before or not, May 6 will be the perfect day to tour and enjoy them.

Come help celebrate the History Museum’s first 20 years as it prepares for the next decade!

May 25 “Coffee at the Museum”

Dr. Gerald Nieters is the guest speaker for the May “Coffee at the Museum.” Dr. Nieters will discuss his book, “Cryless”, about his experience in Vietnam right out of medical school. His book is a fascinating read, and is available in the History Museum Gift Shop. The event is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.



During the January 26 “Coffee at the Museum,” Mark Patrick, School Director at the North Carolina School for the Deaf, presented an overview of services provided to deaf and hard-of-hearing students, pre-school through high school, on the campus in Morganton. Serving students from 36 of North Carolina's 100 counties, the school is dually accredited by the Council of Educational Administrators for Schools for the Deaf (CEASD) and Advanced Education.

On February 23, Brenda Gilbert, archdeacon for the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina, was the presenter for the February “Coffee at the Museum.” She presented information about the Breaking Barriers project recognizing local African American churches. The project honors the legacy of historically African American congregations in the district and tells a powerful story of the legacies of many individuals who contributed to the churches.



The History Museum of Burke County has IRS approval as a 501 (c) (3) public nonprofit educational organization. Financial information about the History Museum 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.



Dr. Joel Welch, President of Western Piedmont Community College, was the March 23rd “Coffee at the Museum” speaker. He gave an interesting overview of the many programs at the College, including the new Trades Building and curriculum. The building is scheduled to open later this year.

“Like” the History Museum on Facebook and look for trivia questions related to Burke County history!

Docent Tales

Docents tell the stories of the Museum exhibits, and bring history to life! In turn, they learn from visitors. Docent and Museum Board Member Scott Whisnant summarized his recent experience in what is considered the most popular exhibit.

“As Docents we get to meet many different people from all walks of life. I have had the pleasure of aiding visitors from Japan (who spoke no English), as well as Great Britain and other countries.

One of our most popular exhibits involves Frankie Silver, who allegedly killed her husband Charles in 1831, chopped him up with an axe, and was subsequently hanged.

On one occasion I had the pleasure of meeting Roy Haskett, from Cullowhee, NC. As it turns out he is a direct descendant of both Frankie Stewart Silver and Charles Silver. His forebears were raised in the Kona community in Mitchell County.

Frankie and Charles Silver had a daughter, Nancy Silver.

As it turns out, according to Roy Haskett, there is still bad blood between the Stewarts and Silvers. Both continue to have family reunions in the Kona community.” (We assume not in the same time, same place!)

Pathways to History

Brick Prices to Increase

Due to increased costs for the bricks, the suggested donation for a brick is increasing July 1. Orders placed by 5:00 PM on June 30 will be honored at the old price. The form to order bricks is included with this mailing.

Newly Renovated Photography Exhibit

After two years of planning and an additional year of construction, the new photography exhibit is finally finished. Located on the lower level in the same location as before, it now looks far larger with sleek glass cabinetry, pale gray walls and a woodgrain floor.

Thanks to the tireless work of Assistant Curator Wayne Hitt, the camera collection has been sorted and identified. Never-before-seen vintage items from a 2020 donation (the Hart collection) is just one of the highlights. You don't have to be a photography enthusiast to appreciate the thoughtful presentation in this room.

Naming opportunities from the Sydnor and Ola Oden Foundation and a donation by Henry Liles, Jr. and Doris and Bill Beedie in honor of Henry V. (Sr.) and Evelyn Liles supported this renovation.

Volunteers Help Power The History Museum

The importance of volunteers to the History Museum and many other non-profit organizations can never be underestimated. They are essentially vital to its operation and success.

In 2022 alone, volunteer hours provided to the History Museum amounted to 7,638, the equivalent of 954 eight-hour workdays or 180 full-time work weeks. This number is actually down from pre-pandemic years and is expected to rise.

If you know someone who volunteers at the History Museum, please thank them for their gifts of talent and time!

Don't Miss the Morganton Railroad Depot

The Railroad Depot is open on Saturdays, 1:00 PM—3:00 PM and by appointment. The Railroad Depot is located at 624 South Green Street in Morganton.

Admission is free; donations appreciated. Call 828.437.1777 to schedule a visit!

What Does 23,129 Mean?

As of March 31, 2023, Board meeting, a whopping 23,129 artifacts had been donated to the History Museum since its beginning. These include furniture, paintings, prints, photographs, maps, clothing, uniforms, farm equipment, musical instruments, cooking utensils, currency, stamps, arrowheads, pottery, firearms, paper documents, and the list goes on. Each artifact is meticulously documented in electronic files and then appropriately displayed or stored for future use.

The Acquisition Committee reviews all items offered to the Museum, makes a decision about whether to accept the items, and then takes responsibility for documenting the gifts and turns them over to Museum Curators for use in various permanent and rotation exhibits. This is a time-consuming and sometimes tedious task but is vital to the creation of the beautiful exhibits the Museum now has.

Email the History Museum at burkehistory@compascable.net

A Look Back at the Start and Early Days of the History Museum

On May 6, 2003, a group of local citizens interested in preserving our county's heritage received its State Charter for The History Museum of Burke County, Inc., a soon-to-be IRS approved 501(c)(3) tax exempt nonprofit. Its stated mission is to promote the collection, preservation, interpretation, and display of those artifacts, documents, and events most representative of Burke County—its prehistory and history, its cultural and economic development, its people and institutions.

The History Museum of Burke County adopts logo: The newly formed Board of Directors approved an official logo for its letterhead and publications. This silhouette of a large white oak tree is reproduced from an old photograph of the original “Council Oak” at Quaker Meadows where local patriots gathered before marching to the Battle of Kings Mountain, South Carolina, a major victory against the British during the American Revolution.

Local efforts earn compliments from a two-day visit by consultants of the North Carolina Museum Council's FOCoS Project: Although The History Museum is among the newest county museums in the state, the report found “...the Museum has taken a lot of well-considered, impressively-organized and mature steps to reach the point where it is today...(and) right actions to professionalize the Museum and put its operation in the mainstream.”

The History Museum of Burke County finds a home, of sorts, with an office and limited work areas in the old Morganton City Hall building on West Meeting Street. Eventually Burke County Commissioners and Morganton City Council agreed to provide this building as a permanent home. Later, The History Museum opened the renovated Railroad Depot as a special museum exhibit of local railroad memorabilia.

The North Carolina Society of Historians, at their annual awards ceremony in Morehead City, chose the History Museum to receive its prestigious Evelina Davis Miller Museum award in recognition of the “progress made in just three short years...to develop a most amazing dream to house the ‘treasures’ of its county...”

And the good news does not stop here. The old City Hall was in need of renovations for the hundreds of artifacts being collected. A somewhat silent capital fundraising campaign, “Join Us In Making History,” was progressing well — but a real push came with a \$500,000 matching grant from the Phifer-Johnson Foundation of Spartanburg, South Carolina. No one should have been too surprised that this challenge was accomplished within 18 months. After all, Burke County wanted — and needed — its own history museum.

Membership & Donors

We value our financial supporters who are Museum Members and those who make financial contributions. They help us to meet our financial needs. Last calendar year, the total monies donated for membership amounted to **\$23,245.00**. Our membership levels range from \$5 for a youth membership to the Benefactor Membership at \$1,000 and above. See the form included in this newsletter for membership details.

The History Museum
of Burke County, Inc.
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Form for Membership, Donation, Brick Orders

Your Name(s) _____

Address _____

Tel _____

E-mail _____

Membership (Check appropriate category level)

___ Youth (to 18) - \$5

___ Conservator-\$500-\$999

___ Family-\$50

___ Benefactor-\$1,000 and above

___ Individual -\$35

___ Corporate Patron- \$250-\$499

___ Contributor-\$75

___ Corporate Conservator-\$500-\$999

___ Patron-\$100-\$499

___ Corporate Benefactor-\$1,000 & +

General Donation \$ _____

Pathway to History Brick Order (\$100 per Brick until June 30; price will increase July 1)

___ Memorial

___ Honorarium

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

Line 1 _____

Line 2 _____

Line 3 _____