



1780 Council Oak
at Quaker Meadows

MUSEUM MUSINGS

History Museum of Burke County Newsletter
Summer 2023



Jim Warlick, second from left, cuts the ribbon for the new “Dignity of Work” monument he gave to the History Museum of Burke County as part of a permanent memorial to his mother, represented immediately behind him on the monument, and so many others who devoted their lives to building the furniture and textile businesses that were the backbone of the Burke County economy for a century.

History Museum Celebrates 20 Years, Dedicates New Monument to Honor Burke County Workers

Saturday, May 6 was an extraordinary day in the life of the History Museum of Burke County. More than 400 gathered outside under blue skies to acknowledge the 20th anniversary of the Museum and to celebrate the remarkable contributions of those who built the furniture and textile industries for which the County earned national fame. Thanks to the vision and generosity of native son Jim Warlick and his Workers’ Legacy Foundation, a new, permanent monument on the front lawn of the Museum was dedicated. The monument honors all the workers and features three actual workers, one of whom was Warlick’s mother. The only one of the three who are still living, Anne Ramseur, was on hand to help cut the ribbon and welcome guests.



Board member Dave McGalliard and Executive Director Claude Sitton work on the brick sidewalk that is the entrance to the History Museum.

“Pathway to History” and “The Dignity of Work” Walkway Provide Opportunities to Honor or Memorialize Others

Next time you visit the History Museum, be sure to see the bricks in the “Pathway to History” and “The Dignity of Work” Walkway. Many of the bricks are inscribed and honor or memorialize individuals, couples, Burke County organizations, and historical figures. If you would like to contribute one or more bricks for a birthday, anniversary, retirement, or memorial, please request the Museum’s brochure that provides everything you need to know and do. If you have questions, please contact Terry Self at the Museum by calling 828-437-1777.

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

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.

**Four Fascinating Programs Featured at
“Coffee at the Museum” In Recent Months**

Burke County Manager Brian Epley, accompanied by Scott Mulwee, Chair of the County Commissioners, reviewed and discussed the County budget during the April meeting of “Coffee at the Museum.” The presentation gave attendees an upfront look at the budget in detail as well as a lesson in the budget development and adoption process.

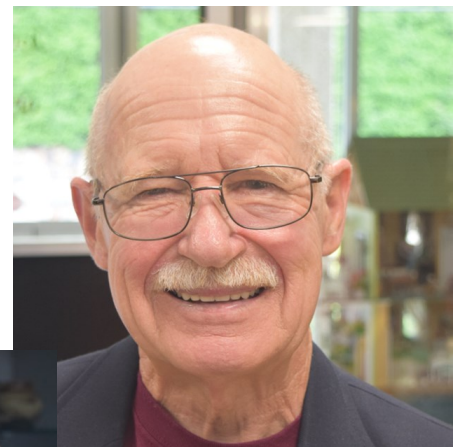
Dr. Gerald Neiters, a Vietnam veteran who earned both Bronze Star and Silver Star medals during his military service, discussed his new memoir of combat and performing surgeries on wounded soldiers, “Cryless”, in the May program. He wrote the book, in part, to help other Vietnam veterans process their own experiences. “Cryless” is available for purchase in the History Museum Gift Shop.

Historian Richard Eller of Hickory, the featured speaker in the June program, discussed his new book, “Well-Crafted: The History of the Western North Carolina Furniture Industry.” The book examines the origins and evolution of this industry, from the hand-crafted production of the industry’s first 150 years to the mass-produced production that has been a hallmark of the second 150 years. The book is available for purchase in the History Museum Gift Shop.

Sherrie Sigmon, accompanied by Rhodhiss Town Manager Rick Justice, spoke at the July program about her new book, “Weaving the Heart Threads of a Mill Village: Rhodhiss, North Carolina”. The book is filled with photographs and interviews of more than 100 who grew up in Rhodhiss and provides a thorough history of the Catawba River town on the border of Burke and Caldwell Counties. The book is chock full of stories of everyday people and their everyday living and working conditions – an important historical record. The book is available for purchase in the History Museum Gift Shop



Pictured l – r: Burke County Manager Brian Epley and Board Chair Scott Mulwee; Dr. Gerald Nieters, Richard Eller and Sherrie Sigmon





Betty Royall Pottery Exhibit Now Open

The History Museum is proud to display a new exhibit featuring the pottery of Elizabeth Birdwell “Betty” Royall (1926 – 1990). Betty was a multi-talented artist who produced many paintings, sculptures, and collages in the 1970’s but was best known for her

sculptures. She was one of the first local artists to share her artistic knowledge and expertise with special groups such as the handicapped, juvenile offenders, and youth groups at Broughton Hospital. She took great pleasure in introducing all people to varied media and creative experiences.

Betty taught pottery for many years at Western Piedmont Community College and in private lessons at her home studio. She was a charter member of the Burke Arts Council, the Asheville Gallery of Art, Ltd., the N.C. Watercolor Society and the N.C. Arts Council. As an exhibiting artist, she won numerous prizes throughout Western North Carolina.

The exhibit is just outside the office of Museum Executive Director, Judge Claude Sitton, in the room where the monthly “Coffee at the Museum” programs are held. Plan to stop by soon!

Pictured right are new items in the Museum Gift Shop, commemorating the 20th Anniversary



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!

Email the History Museum at burkehistory@compascable.net

Hmong Story Cloth Exhibit Is Beautiful and Compelling

Extraordinary art often tells extraordinary stories. That is the case of the new Hmong Story Cloth exhibit in a hall on the lower level of the History Museum. Two distinct styles of Paj Ntaub Dab Neeg, Hmong textile art, are included in this exhibit.

One unique form of Paj Ntaub, known as flower cloth, is very traditional to the Hmong culture and was practiced only by women. The designs include many forms of embroidery techniques, such as cross-



-stitch, chain-stitch, running-stitch, and satin-stitch. They may also include applique and reverse-applique as seen in the red and green cucumber seed pattern flower cloth on display. The skills learned to produce Paj Ntaub were taught to girls at a very young age by women in the family and often played a role in their later courtship and marriage prospects. Traditional Hmong clothing for both men and women and other decorated textiles contain these elaborate, complex designs.

Story Cloths are a modern form of Paj Ntaub meant to be a narrative. They often depict Hmong folk tales, creation stories, and accounts of traditional Hmong life and culture. Many of them focus on military occupation, forced migration from Laos, and refugee life. The first Story Cloths of this type were produced by Hmong women in refugee camps in the 1970s during the Vietnam Conflict. The design for each story cloth was sketched by a man onto the fabric and then embroidered by women. They were generally produced for sale to supplement the family's income.

Hmong Americans have lived in the United States for more than three generations. Beginning in 1975, they arrived as refugees after the United States withdrew troops from Vietnam. They were allowed into this country because Hmong men had been recruited by the CIA for a covert operation to fight a "Secret War" in Laos against Communist forces. More than 17,000 Hmong soldiers and more than 40,000 Hmong civilians lost their lives during that time (1959 – 1975).

Hmong families who have settled in this part of western North Carolina came here in the 1980s from other parts of the United States specifically because our area feels like home—the mountains, the climate, and the welcoming support of the community to immigrants. Most of them lived in refugee camps, sometimes for years, before moving to the United States. Currently, North Carolina has the fourth largest population of Hmong in this country, with most of them living in Burke, Catawba, and Caldwell Counties.

This new exhibit reflects a newer part of Burke County History than many of the other exhibits, but it reflects a story everyone in Burke County can benefit from knowing.

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

Your Name(s) _____

Address _____

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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 (\$125 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 \$ _____