



**1780 Council Oak  
at Quaker Meadows  
September 2017**

The History Museum  
of Burke County, Inc.  
P.O. Box 416  
Morganton, NC 28680  
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Morganton, NC 28655

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**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

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**Museum Musings Staff**

Debbie Bradley

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# MUSEUM MUSINGS



Phyllis Wogan, History Museum Curator, is shown standing in the remodeled minerals exhibit which features the Burke County Gold Rush from 1828 to 1833. She is holding the Bechtler Gold Coin which is on display in the exhibit. Bechtler's Mint, begun in 1832 by German immigrant Christopher Bechtler, three miles north of Rutherfordton, produced gold ingots and coins in \$1.00, \$2.50, and \$5.00 denominations. The gold coin in the exhibit was struck at the Bechtler Mint sometime after 1832 when the one dollar coin was first produced. Bechtler's Mint was the only successful private mint ever established in the United States. In 1835 when the federal government failed in its legal attempt to close it, a branch of the U.S Mint was opened in Charlotte. The coin was donated to the History Museum by the late Charles Graham from Glen Alpine.

## Burke County Gold Rush is Featured in Exhibit

Cabarrus County was the site of the first discovery of gold in the United States. The year was 1799. Conrad Reed, a 12 year old, found a 17-pound nugget while fishing. He took it home where his family used the nugget as a doorstep until they learned it was gold. Soon after, gold deposits were discovered in Anson, Mecklenburg, Montgomery and some western North Carolina counties.

Almost three decades later, in 1828, gold was discovered in Burke County. Samuel Martin, a gold prospector who had been to South America to seek his fortune, was on his way home to Connecticut, penniless and weary from travel. He had been robbed of his last money while in Charleston and was on foot, walking home, dependent on the kindness of strangers to give him a day's meals and lodging in exchange for work. As Martin came through Burke County, he met Bob Anderson, *(continued on page 4)*



Alexandria Franklin, a Docent for the History Museum in the summer of 2017, is shown here with Board member and Docent Coordinator, Dana Whisnant, who recruited her. They are standing in front of an exhibit honoring the accomplishments of Alexandria's grandfather, Joe Franklin, a well-known musician in the region whose works are memorialized in the "Music Room".

### **Summer Intern Honors Forebears Memorialized in Museum Exhibits**

Hello! My name is Alexandria Nora Franklin and I was a docent at The Burke County History Museum. I am 22 years old and about to begin my junior year of college at East Carolina University. I became a docent at the museum this past March after meeting Dana Whisnant while I was a waitress at King Street Cafe. I overheard her discussing how she was in need of docents for the museum and, being a history major, I thought I would be perfect for the position. I also felt doubly obliged to take the position due to my own family history that is showcased in the museum. My grandfather, Joe Franklin, a regionally well-known country and gospel musician, is memorialized in the music room, along with the two bands named after him: Joe Franklin and the Mimosa Boys and Joe Franklin and the Hi-Liters. My 5x great-grandmother is also memorialized within the museum with her own room but for a more infamous deed. Her name was Frankie Silvers, the only woman to ever be hung in Burke County. She continues to live in infamy for the murder of her abusive husband, Charlie. While I was only a docent at the museum for a short time, I was honored to be able to give tours to all those who were interested in Burke County's extensive and interesting history and to honor the memory of my ancestors by educating others on their famous accomplishments and infamous deeds.



**Molly Eller, the Veterans' Service Officer for Burke County, was the guest speaker at the Thursday, August 24 "Coffee at the History Museum". She provided an overview of services available to veterans in Burke County through her office which is located in the Burke Senior Center at 110 N. Green Street, Morganton ([828-438-5420](tel:828-438-5420)).**

Assault of East Cemetery Hill at Gettysburg by  
Hoke's and Hays' Brigades of the Army of Northern Virginia  
on July 2, 1863

*Second of a Multi-Part Article by History Museum Board Member Benjamin O. Williams*

A portion of the 6<sup>th</sup> North Carolina (including their regimental commander Maj. Samuel McDowell Tate and several men of Company D) fought their way through the final Union line. Approximately seventy-five men from the 6<sup>th</sup> North Carolina and several each from the 9<sup>th</sup> Louisiana and 21<sup>st</sup> North Carolina, succeeded in capturing several guns of Rickett's Battery while elements of Hays' Louisiana Brigade captured Wiedrich's battery. In his official report, Hays related that his force (Hays was the senior officer for both brigades) captured "several pieces of artillery, four stand of colors, and a number of prisoners."

Capt. Neill Ray of the 6<sup>th</sup> North Carolina wrote, "our men...went on up the hill, drove off the canoneers, spiked their guns, and took, for the time, complete possession of East Cemetery Hill. We supposed that we had won the battle...[W]e could hear [Federals] attempting to rally...[and] as he approached we fired a volley...which drove him back. This occurred at least twice. No one who has never been in a similar position can understand how anxiously we looked for reinforcements. None came, however." Maj. Samuel Tate (commander of the 6<sup>th</sup> North Carolina), "realizing that the moment of decision had arrived, issued a desperate call for reinforcements.... Hays also sent for reinforcements and then went himself only to find Gordon's Brigade too far away to provide timely assistance.

Historian Glenn Tucker wrote, "It was an instant of which the people of the South who had been eagerly awaiting reports from Pennsylvania might well take note. Here was a high point, possibly *the* high point, of Lee's invasion of the Free States." Union reinforcements of nine regiments from the west side of Cemetery Hill counterattacked and "found the [Confederates] up to and some of them in among the front guns of the batteries on the [Baltimore Pike]..." Maj. Tate, "looking down the hill saw masses of the enemy in the hollow attempting to cut off his line of retreat. Reluctantly he ordered his men, unsupported and outnumbered, to withdraw down the hill toward the Confederate lines."

The coordinated attack that was planned with Robert Rodes Division and the support by John Gordon's Brigade did not materialize. Rodes had the Federal position scouted and determined the position was too well entrenched to attack. With no attack by Rodes, the nine Federal regiments were free to travel from the opposite side of the Union line and repel the Confederates. Also, without an attack by Rodes, General Ewell determined not to send Gordon's men forward.

"It was 9:30 p.m. when the last of Avery's and Hays' men were back within the Confederate lines. They had held a portion of the Federal line on the Cemetery Hill for a short time, and had brought away between 75 and 100 Union prisoners.... Beyond this, their sacrifices had been made in vain. The Union Army was still firmly entrenched atop Cemetery Hill." Hoke's Brigade sustained 200 casualties at Cemetery Hill. Included in the casualties were a horrendous 29 company officers for the three regiments (almost one for each company represented), one regimental commander, and the brigade commander—Col. Isaac E. Avery.

Many consider Cemetery Hill to be the key to Meade's position and are impressed what an undertaking it was to storm those heights. Even though this was a relatively small-scale operation, the results were impressive when compared to the much larger Pickett—Pettigrew—Trimble Assault ("Pickett's Charge") of the next day.

The next installment of this article will follow and will feature Gettysburg. Visit the History Museum to see many artifacts from this era.

a cobbler (shoemaker) in Brindletown, a community at the foot of Pilot Mountain. Anderson agreed to mend Martin's tattered shoes and give him supper and a bed for the night in exchange for 25 cents. As the story goes, Martin was stung by a yellow jacket and, while trying to swat it, hit his knuckles on the clay chinking between the logs of Anderson's cabin. In the clay Martin saw flecks of gold. He told Anderson what he had noticed and the two men panned for gold in Brindle Creek, returning with a small amount of gold dust. At dawn the next day, they started panning and found much more gold during the remainder of the day. Martin and Anderson struck a deal: they would work together for six months, with Martin teaching Anderson all he knew about gold mining, and they would evenly divide the proceeds.

Martin ended up staying eight months and left in a horse-drawn carriage with \$20,000.00 in gold. Anderson's family began squandering their new wealth on luxuries. Bob quit farming and purchased slaves to do the mining. He paid for all food, clothing, and supplies for his family and slaves, paying inflated prices to have the goods hauled long distances over rough roads. Several years later, Bob Anderson was broke and sold his gold-rich land to Joseph McDowell Carson whose descendants, the Mills family, worked the mines for an additional 40 years.

Visit the History Museum of Burke County and learn more about the gold and, yes, diamonds, that Burke County has produced and probably still has below its soil and in its creeks and rivers

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## September Special “Coffee at the Museum”

The September “Coffee” featured Dr. Omar Ali, Dean of the Lloyd International Honors College and professor of African-American and Latin-American history at the University of North Carolina – Greensboro.

Dr. Ali spoke on the “Resistance to 16<sup>th</sup> Century Iberian Expansion in the Carolinas: At the Intersection of Indian, Spanish and African Encounters”. His presentation reviewed the unique history of Burke County’s Fort San Juan and the story of Spanish efforts to establish outposts in the Carolinas.

Please visit the Museum, tour the Fort San Juan exhibit, and marvel at this special historical location, [right here in our county.](#)

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**Waits Gordon, History Museum Board Member, helps serve a Fatz chicken dinner to guests who attended the Friday, August 4 fundraiser in the History Museum Annex. The History Museum appreciates the support from members and the wider community for this event.**