

Family and Local History Research Collections at the Chatham Community Library

The largest collection of source materials for Chatham County genealogy and local history is maintained at the Chatham Community Library in Pittsboro, although both Wren Memorial Library in Siler City and the Goldston Library still maintain research collections of local interest.

CCHA has long supported the improvement of resources for local history and Chatham family research through donations of funds and materials to the local history area of the Chatham Community Library and continues to collaborate with the library staff to develop the local history-genealogy collection.

Family History Files

In addition to published books, which are cataloged as part of the library collection, CCHA volunteers maintain a variety of notes and papers accumulated about local families at the Chatham Community Library. CCHA volunteer Edith Calhoun organized the family history collections into notebooks containing information on almost 400 Chatham families and materials are added as they are donated. These documents are archived “as is”—some of the information is more elaborate and more thoroughly researched than others—so users must make their own judgments about reliability and accuracy. Some of the histories are detailed narratives covering several generations, others are simple pedigree charts. Nevertheless, the collection provides a good starting point for local history research. A [family name index](#) includes main family entries.



An addition to the family history files housed at the Chatham Community Library was generously donated in 2017 by Neil Avent of Coats, North Carolina. Mr. Avent’s personal collection of genealogy reports and longhand family group sheets covering his Avent family ancestry and related families have been organized by Reece and Ruth Jones in thirty-one notebooks now on the library shelves. An [index of the Avent collection](#) provides brief descriptions of the notebook contents.

Obituary Files and Central North Carolina Obituary Genealogies

A collection of more than 4000 recent obituaries from Chatham and surrounding counties published in the Chatham News/Record from January 2012 through December 2018 has been developed by CCHA volunteer Reece Jones. The original newspaper clippings of the obituaries are filed at the library in notebooks. From these and other sources, such as CCHA’s Cemetery Survey, a genealogy database of local families has been constructed

and can be accessed at the library and online at [Central North Carolina Obituary Genealogies](#).

Clipping and Subject-Matter Files

The clipping and subject-matter files once kept at the Wren and Pittsboro libraries have been culled and consolidated by CCHA volunteers into loose-leaf binders, filed by subject. Section headings include Artists, Churches, Education including individual schools and class reunions, Real Estate Developments, Communities, Jordan Lake, Folk life, Law Enforcement, People, and more. Some of the contents describe events or places as early as the late 1800s. The file was created and indexed by CCHA volunteer Jane Pyle and is updated regularly by CCHA volunteers with articles from current newspapers as well as older papers that have been donated to CCHA. A [detailed index](#) is available to facilitate research use.

Other Library Resources

Other resources in the local history-genealogy area at the Chatham Community Library, some of which are maintained in cooperation with the Chatham County Historical Association, include:

- Reference works on history and genealogy (see library catalog)
- A collection of Chatham County school yearbooks
- Genealogy assistance by CCHA volunteers—[click here](#) for more info
- Microfilms and reader-printer, copy machine
- Two dedicated computers with access to Ancestry.com and other research databases

For more information on resources available in the Local History and Genealogy Collections at Chatham Libraries, [click here](#).



How You Can Help:

- Consider donations from your attic, bookshelf, or desk: newspaper clippings of grandpa's wartime exploits, a church history, or the program from your community reunion. School yearbooks are especially valuable reminders of Chatham life in the past.
- Donate a copy of your family's history to the library to benefit researchers in future years.
- Volunteer to help manage the family history or subject file collections. Interested? Contact us at Collections@chathamhistory.org.