



CCHA Newsletter



Volume 22 — Issue 1

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First Quarter 2010

FAMILY HISTORY TALK INSPIRES CHATHAM RESEARCHERS

James Vann Comer is a man who loves his job. That was clear on Sunday, 15 November 2009, when the professional genealogist gave a lively presentation to a large crowd at CCCC. The talk, sponsored by the Chatham County Historical Association and open to the public, provided both inspiration and tricks of the trade for the many people interested in tracing their family's history.

According to Comer, who began his own genealogy work at age nine, "Genealogy is about recording your family's story in your own creative way." There's no "right" way to do it, he assured the group, but he encouraged all present to "get going" before the resources available to them, particularly older family members with stories to share, are lost forever. "Don't wait," he said. "Start with what you've got and stay focused."

Comer mentioned a number of less obvious sources of information to help the search for family history. For example, he noted much Chatham news for the early

days of the county was covered by the *Alamance Gleaner* newspaper, a source not readily coming to mind for those researching Chatham families. Those looking for free persons of color, he suggested, should always check the apprentice bonds.

Comer presented Chatham County Historical Association president, Barbara Pugh, with a folder containing a bibliography of useful sources. The Historical Association will make this list available on its website so that it will be widely accessible.

Comer also talked about his experience with Bible projects in Lee and Moore counties. The Chatham County Historical Association is planning to conduct a similar project to collect and preserve the family records old Bibles often contain.

Comer's enthusiasm was contagious. A large group surrounded him and his display materials long after the presentation ended and many attendees left with new ideas and renewed determination to tackle their own family "cold cases."

GRIFFIN FUNERAL HOME BUILDING PASSES

The building of the Griffin Funeral Home since 1936 at 396 West Street is now a memory. The building was taken down and on the property stands the Hall-Wynn Funeral Service and Cremation, Griffin Chapel. Cousins Jeter and Sam Griffin started the Griffin Funeral Home in the early 1900's, offering products ranging from shoes and clothes to coffins. About 1916 the businesses separated and Sam Griffin took the shoe and clothing business with Jeter Griffin taking the funeral service. The funeral home business remained in Jeter Griffin's family for three generations currently through Bill Griffin. Even though the building has gone, the memories exist for the staff and all whose families and friends have passed through.



NORTH CAROLINA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY SPRING LECTURE

"Farmhouse, Meeting House, Court House: Breathing Life Into Your Family's Story" with J. Mark Lowe, CGSM, will be presented by the North Carolina Genealogical Society and the Wilkes County Genealogical Society at the North Wilkesboro Elks Club.

The program includes "Making Those Early Census Records Talk to You," "My Ancestor, the Farmer: Shaping a Profile for your Rural Ancestor," "Bible Thumper or Pious Pilgrim: Religious Ancestors on the Frontier," and "Follow a Case through Court." Book and map vendors will also be present.

For more information and a registration form, visit ncgenealogy.org or write to the North Carolina Genealogical Society, Post Office Box 30815, Raleigh, NC 27622-0815.

CEMETERY PROJECT THANKS - 2009

Thanks are due the following people for helping in various ways with the Cemetery Project; guiding us to sites, serving as site stewards, conducting inventories or taking photographs. Allen Dew keeps the cemeterycensus.com website up to date, and David Peterson keeps meticulous records in our master database. Bev Wiggins serves as cemetery project coordinator.

Don Comer
Mike Cox
Allen Dew
Harvey Gunter
Trudy Harris
Linda Hester
Johnnie and Karen Hensley
Kathleen Hundley
Janie Johnson
Rupert Johnson
Harold Marsh
Bill Oestereich
Barbara Perry
David Peterson
Jeremy Poss
John Powell
Walter Rone
David and Rebekah Smith
Joe Smith
Charles Thomas
Paul Wilson

Mr. Earl Ijames

Curator at the North Carolina Museum of History

Colored Confederates

and

United States Colored Troops

Sunday, 28 February 2010, 2:00 p.m.
Central Carolina Community College
Pittsboro Campus
Multipurpose Room

Many people find it hard to believe any African American, slave or free, would have willingly served on the side of the Confederacy in the American Civil War, but Earl Ijames, a curator at the North Carolina Museum of History, says hundreds did just that, and their reasons for fighting were as varied and complex as those of white soldiers. These black soldiers, as well as the blacks serving the Union cause, will be the topic of a presentation sponsored by the Chatham County Historical Association on Sunday, 28 February 2010. The public is welcome at this free program, entitled "Colored Confederates and United States Colored Union Troops," held at the Pittsboro campus of Central Carolina Community College at 2:00pm in the multipurpose room.

"The historically accurate term for the African Americans in the service of the Southern cause is 'colored Confederates,'" Ijames says, and thousands of them went to war from Southern states, including North



Carolina. Some were slaves sent in place of their masters, or were forced or volunteered to serve alongside them. Others were free blacks offering their services. Whatever their reasons for serving, Ijames says, these men deserve to be recognized for their valor. "It's a miscarriage of justice for this many people to be just blotted out of history," he believes.

Ijames has spent some fifteen years studying this interesting and controversial topic. At the presentation on 28 February, he will present some examples and discuss the historical evidence available to document them. He will invite questions following the presentation.

The public is invited to attend the program to learn more about this fascinating and often ignored subject.

For more information, see the Chatham County Historical Association website: WWW.CHATHAMHISTORY.ORG, or call 542-4478.

NEW DIRECTORS TO BE VOTED

The Nominations Committee presents the following persons for addition to the Board. The three current Board members ending their terms include Bev Wiggins, Judith Peterson, and Chris Poston.

Robert Britson is a bright face to add to the Board. Bob's long association with Chathamites allows the association to reach even more folks living here. After going through the Siler City schools and graduating from Jordan Matthews, his next educational endeavor was NC State University where he studied Design and Textiles. He spent eight years in the textile business in eastern North Carolina and South Carolina before changing career interest, attending UNC-Greensboro to get some business courses under his belt and then spent his work career with various divisions of Carolina Farm Credit. Through his work and living here, his contacts in Siler City and the County are numerous. Since his retirement in 2001, he and wife Janice live in Pittsboro, where he enjoys volunteer work with Volunteers in Mission, Habitat for Humanity, church programs, and walking with Janice.

Dan Perry is not a new name or face to the Association. He has previously served on the Board 2002 through 2006. His hard work has benefited the Association in numerous ways including, but not limited to, working on the log cabin and tremendous assistance with our "information technology" system as well as whatever we ask him to do. His real love of genealogy through his Chatham and Alamance family trees is very evident. His family members have reached maturity and have left him and wife Cindy empty-nesters.

Kenneth Crabtree has a historical connection to the lovely community of Frosty's Store as that was his boyhood home. Being a Pittsboro graduate, attending Durham Tech and then being in the Navy for six years as an electronics technician prepared him for his later work at Research Triangle Institute and NC State College of Textiles. At the School of Textiles for twenty-two years he served as an electronics technician expanding into computer repair, networking, etc. In 2002 he retired from NCSU and now can often be found in Chatham County. He has a strong interest in local history and promoting it. He is also an active participant in the Snipes and Hackney family associations and their research and place in our history.

ODD STUFF FROM CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORY

Ever see one of the items pictured to the right? Ever actually USE one of these? Have your children and/or grandchildren ever seen one? This is just one of the items you will encounter on a visit to the Chatham County Historical Museum, making such an excursion well worth the effort. Reach back into your heritage with us, and be sure future generations do not lose sight of our past. Let them know what such things are. Oh, we forgot to say. It is a washboard from the days before washing machines.

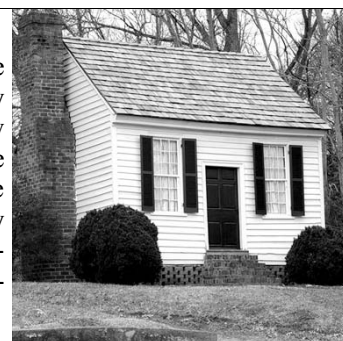


CCHA Calendar for 2010

February 24	Wednesday's Open Museum Day 12:00PM to 3:00PM
February 28	CCHA Annual Meeting and Program
March 3	Wednesday's Open Museum Day 12:00PM to 3:00PM
March 10	Wednesday's Open Museum Day 12:00PM to 3:00PM
March 17	Wednesday's Open Museum Day 12:00PM to 3:00PM
March 24	Wednesday's Open Museum Day 12:00PM to 3:00PM
March 31	Wednesday's Open Museum Day 12:00PM to 3:00PM

ALL DONE

The photo to the right shows the Manley Law Office with its new roof in place. Read the story below for more information on this very old and historic structure and Pittsboro landmark.



MANLEY LAW OFFICE ROOF REPAIR

One of CCHA's major accomplishments of 2009 was the repair of the Manly Law Office. The tiny building behind the Masonic Lodge in Pittsboro has a long and interesting history. Tradition holds that this is the same one-room building constructed in 1842 by local craftsman George Ellington for Charles Manly, a Chatham-born, UNC-educated attorney. That year, Manly purchased land near what is now Sun Trust Bank on Hillsboro Street for this law office, which he called "*Fort Snug*," and it became a meeting place for area lawyers.

Adding to the building's importance is the fact Charles Manly was elected Governor of North Carolina in 1848, and served one term in that office. "But mostly," said Barbara Pugh, President of CCHA, owners the structure, "the building serves as a small, but fine example of an ordinary nineteenth-century office." Rare these days because few have been preserved, these small structures were once common in towns like Pittsboro as offices for lawyers, doctors, dentists and other professionals.

"We have the building today because of some generous and forward-thinking Chatham citizens," said Pugh. Manly sold the property in 1857, and the building was eventually moved to the back of a lot on Salisbury Street owned by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Blair, who offered the building to the newly-formed Chatham County Historical Association (CCHA) in 1966. That group voted to accept the building from the owners, and to move and restore it as part of the county's bi-centennial celebration. The Columbus Lodge No. 101 agreed the building could be located on its Masonic Street property, and the move was carried out in 1969. Harvey Gunter, former Pittsboro resident and a dedicated benefactor of the Manly office, loaned furnishings for the structure. The CCHA opens the building for tours and by special request so that others can see what a nineteenth-century

office was like.

As with all old structures, the Manly Office requires periodic maintenance and repairs. "Over the years, donors and volunteers have cared for the office building. We are grateful to Mr. Gunter for making a large contribution toward the accomplishment of the roof repairs," said Pugh. When asked why the Manly Law Office is so dear to him, Mr. Gunter explained the structure had been located in the lot behind his childhood home. "The little building brings back pleasant memories of growing up in Pittsboro," he said. "I've been known to take a lunch there, just to sit and enjoy it."



In December 2009, workmen replaced the "tin" roof of the structure with a cedar shake roof likely more closely approximating the original, and carried out repairs to rotting sills under both doors. As weather permitted, the front door was painted also. Very soon *Fort Snug* will be showing off the new plaque on the newly painted door.

Now work is nearly complete, the Manly Law Office will again be open for tours and by request. Donations to support the ongoing maintenance of the Manly Law Office and grounds will be gratefully

received, and volunteers to serve as caretakers and docents are welcome. If you are interested in helping, contact the Chatham County Historical Association at HISTORY@CHATHAMHISTORY.ORG, or write to CCHA at Post Office Box 93, Pittsboro, NC 27312.



Jane Pyle, museum curator, with Harvey Gunter, Manly Law Office benefactor, in front of the Manly Law Office. Photo by Walter Harris

**Always Remember to
Bring a Friend to
CCHA
Both of you will be
glad you did!**

CCHA 2009 EVENTS

Museum Wednesdays

The CCHA Chatham County Museum of history in the historic Chatham County Court House is open every Wednesday from 12:00PM to 3:00PM.

First Sundays

The CCHA Chatham County Museum of history in the historic Chatham County Court House will be open from 1:00PM to 4:00PM the first Sunday of the month, April through November.

CCHA History Lecture Series

Lectures on Chatham County history are scheduled throughout the year.

NEW EXHIBIT IN HISTORICAL MUSEUM: CHATHAM PEOPLE

A new exhibit at the Chatham Historical Museum highlights the faces and stories of a handful of Chatham residents, some famous, some not. All are interesting. We will not give away the entire list, but included are Col. John Randolph Lane in his Confederate uniform; Mary Myrtle Siler first woman sheriff in North Carolina; Bishop Leach, assistant principal at Horton and Northwood high schools and beloved mentor to many in the county; and someone's "Aunt Duck" about whom we would like to know more. There is a professional baseball pitcher from Siler City, the captain of the last Confederate vessel to surrender in the American Civil War, and the operator of a general store. There are mill workers whose names we do not know. Perhaps you can help identify them.

"The stories of the people whose pictures we have displayed are Chatham's story," said Jane Pyle, curator of the Chatham Historical Museum and creator of the current exhibit. "These are the kinds of stories that must be preserved if future generations are to look back and appreciate the county's past. This exhibit highlights just a few of the many interesting Chatham people whose photographs, and sometimes stories, are part of the Chatham Historical Museum's collection."

The public is invited to visit the museum to learn some of these interesting stories, but also to help add to them. If there is a Chatham person whose photograph or story you would like to add to the museum collection, please contact the Chatham County Historical Association, Post Office Box 93, Pittsboro, NC 27312, or HISTORY@CHATHAMHISTORY.ORG. The Association wants to know about people from all walks of life; teachers, laborers, farmers, merchants, government officials, craftsmen, clerks, fire and police personnel, artists, cashiers, barbers and beauticians, mail carriers, doctors, dentists, volunteers, anyone who has helped make Chatham County what it is today. Do not forget the rogues, black sheep, and scalawags who have added their own spice to the mix.

"Photographs and documents related to the person add much to the story," said Pyle. "The Historical Association would like to make copies of such items, and you don't have to know a lot about a person to contribute useful information. Sometimes a few sentences about a specific event tell the best story. Please contribute what you can."

The exhibit will be on display through March and is free and open to the public.

CHATHAM AGRICULTURE HALL OF FAME AWARDS

On 1 February, the Chatham County Board of Commissioners approved the recipients of the county's first Agriculture Hall of Fame Awards, honoring individuals and groups having made significant contributions to the county's agriculture economy in the past sixty years. "We are thrilled to approve such a worthy, accomplished slate of recipients for the inaugural presentation of the Agriculture Hall of Fame Awards," said Commissioner Chair Sally Kost.

All of those chosen for recognition this year "are great people who are very worthy of the honor," said Tommy Emerson, a member of the Agriculture Advisory Board who helped initiate the awards program.

The Hall of Fame winners will receive an individual plaque, but also will be listed on a plaque that will remain on display in the county's Agriculture Building. The 2010 award winners include:

Carolina Poultry, Inc.

Carolina Stockyard

Chatham County Fair

Horace Mann Dairy Production

Howard C. Moon Beef Cattle Production

Julian Smith, Agriculture Education

CCHA FINANCIAL REPORT 2009-2010 - Beverly Wiggins, Treasurer

The Association's 2009 financial statement and proposed 2010 budget are presented here for the consideration of members. Discussion and approval will be requested at the annual meeting, held on 28 February 2010, at 2:00pm, in the multipurpose room on the Central Carolina Community College campus in Pittsboro.

Notes on income: CCHA received donations of more than \$4,000 in 2009. Of that amount, \$3,500 was a donation to replace the Manly Law Office roof and make repairs to that structure. We have not counted on donation income of that amount for 2010. We expect we may make somewhat less in publication sales in 2010 as sales of Fred Vatter's Tales of Fried Rabbit level off. Interest income in 2010 will be higher than usual because a number of our investments mature in 2010, paying interest accumulated over several years.

Notes on expenses: We have budgeted more than usual for general operating expenses as we expect to actively

pursue a number of projects in 2010. Costs for such things as supplies, copying, and postage are increasing. As we provide more information and resources on our website, costs for website hosting and maintenance go up. We have plans to pursue one new publication and to republish another this year, and have ordered additional copies of the popular Tales of Fried Rabbit, so the publications budget is higher than in years past. We will continue to develop exhibits for the Chatham Historical Museum, hold our quarterly programs, and pursue other special projects, such as the Chatham County cemetery survey.

Notes on obligations against reserves: \$24,400 of the amount of obligations against reserves is the balance of CCHA's pledge to the local history and genealogy area of the new Chatham Community Library. The remainder of obligations consists of residual funds from restricted donations.

CCHA PROFIT & LOSS STATEMENT

	2009 <u>Actual</u>	2010 <u>Budget</u>
INCOME:		
Donations - General	\$587	\$500
Restricted Donations	\$3,500	\$1,500
Membership Dues	\$3,375	\$3,600
Publication Sales	\$5,357	\$3,400
Interest Income	<u>\$1,769</u>	<u>\$3,545</u>
Total Income	\$14,587	\$12,545
EXPENSES:		
General Operating	\$2,157	\$3,465
Publications	\$4,437	\$5,430
Manly Law Office		
Maintenance	\$4,979	\$700
Museum & Archiving	\$630	\$800
Programs	\$728	\$1,200
Special Projects	<u>\$881</u>	<u>\$950</u>
Expenses from		
Checking	\$13,813	\$12,545
ASSETS:	\$110,222	\$110,222
Obligations		
Against Reserves	<u>\$-26,156</u>	<u>\$-26,156</u>
Cash Available	\$84,066	\$84,066

FROM THE PRESIDENT - BARBARA PUGH - THANKS, IT HAS BEEN A VERY GOOD YEAR

CCHA had a very good year because of the hard and thoughtful work of so many members and volunteers from so many different areas. The real Chatham County spirit shined brightly through all of you.

Feedback from participants in our quarterly programs indicate they are appreciated; in February Perry Harrison spoke about the integration of the county's public schools. By May the weather and tone of our program changed to a wonderful Spring day with a walking tour of Pittsboro and so much support from so many who made it possible. Our trip out to Rives Chapel Baptist Church in August where we visited graveyards and were delighted with the presentation by John Hudson Emerson on the War of the Regulation proved to be of interest to lots of folks. John Braxton, Master Gunsmith, added to the program with his firearms of the period. By November it was time for an inside program again and James Van Comer certainly instilled in us the need to do family research, as well as enjoy the family while doing it. Just get out there and do it!

Museum visitor attendance grew with frequent changes in the displays by Curator Jane Pyle. Having the Museum open on Wednesdays and also on the First Sundays during warm weather, meant many were able learn more about Chatham History through the historical displays. The list of museum volunteers continued to grow.

Their work is important to our outreach mission at the Museum.

Publications from CCHA grew this year. A wonderful book authored by Past President Fred Vatter, *Tales Beyond Fried Rabbit*, was released. There is still time to get your very own copy to enjoy.

Cemetery work continued under the direction of Beverly Wiggins. We are still having cemeteries reported to us and we are still visiting and inventorying. Bev's group puts their hiking boots on and takes off to the woods. Some folks enjoy that and are more capable than others!

Communications are important to the group. Please check the website often as you never know when Judith Peterson will do some news item or update that will be important and appreciated by you. Our quarterly newsletter edited by Bob Crowley has its own important place in communicating with our members. We welcome suggestions from you for these.

Increased visibility for CCHA and the county's history was sought through participation in the First Sunday events at Pittsboro, the Street Fair, and the Christmas Parade.

Our members and volunteers are the energy moving us forward. A long list of names would not do justice to the good work and support we get from so many. It surely could not be inclusive of the support you give and we appreciate.

Research of historical people, events, and places is an endeavor that can be enjoyed by many. We welcome your offerings of research as well as important artifacts. Many of you can perform oral history interviews, contribute historical photographs, and share family bible records. Together we can do more.

Saving Chatham's history is not the sole responsibility of CCHA. It is your history and we encourage you to save it, participate in it, and share it. Be sure to read in this issue about the work of the Chatham Agriculture Advisory Board and the first Agriculture Hall of Fame inductees.

Much work needs to be done to support our pledge to the Pittsboro Community Library and its local history area. We are working to add materials of significance.

As President of the Association, it indeed has been a privilege for me to represent you and to work with such a talented group of Board members. Each person brings their own unique flavor and style. Our special thanks to those leaving the Board, Bev Wiggins, Judith Peterson, and Chris Poston. They may be leaving the Board but not their commitment and some very important tasks for the Association. The nominees being brought before the annual meeting are people with special talents, as well. Dan Perry, Kenneth Crabtree, and Robert Britson will add their unique styles.

PITTSBORO MEMORIAL LIBRARY EXHIBIT: SAVING CHATHAM'S HISTORY -JANUARY THRU FEBRUARY

A new exhibit sponsored by the Friends of the Pittsboro Memorial Library entitled "Saving Chatham's History" is on display at the Pittsboro Memorial Library. Prepared by CCHA, the exhibit presents the history of Chatham County in pictures and documents. "We hope the exhibit will whet the appetite for local history and encourage active participation in CCHA projects," said Jane Pyle, CCHA museum curator and creator of the exhibit. "We believe everyone has something to contribute, and hope this display will suggest some ways more county residents can become involved in saving the county's past."

The display begins with a brief history of the CCHA. Posters highlight some of the organizations' contributions to the preservation of Chatham history; its log cabin project, the Manly Law Office, the Chatham Historical Museum, publications,

and efforts to save historic structures.

Also provided is information about the Local History and Genealogy Collection now housed at Wren Memorial Library in Siler City. CCHA is working with library staff to best use its \$25,000 contribution to the local history collection at the new library. The exhibit also highlights:

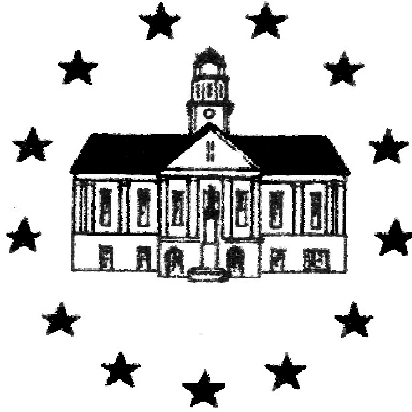
- The Chatham County Cemetery Survey, begun in 1989, this effort has recorded nearly 600 cemeteries, mostly small family plots, helping to preserve these threatened features and providing a wealth of data for Chatham families.
- The history of Chatham County Schools, from private academies of the early 1800s through to the early 1970s.
- Chatham County's Birth in the Regulator Movement, 1765-1771, an exhibit featuring Chatham-area men who participated in the movement and the locations

of their properties, where known. This includes a timeline of events leading up to the founding of the County and the Battle of Alamance.

Do not miss the chance to test your knowledge of local history with CCHA's history quiz. Answers are provided so even if your initial score is not high, you can learn interesting facts about the place you call home and impress others at your next social event!

The exhibit will be displayed through February in the Reeves Gallery at the library, 158 West Street, Pittsboro (919-542-3524), during library hours (Mon 10-6, Tue 10-8, Wed 10-6, Thu 10-6, Fri 10-6, Sat 9-5). Browse it when you visit the library to learn more about Chatham's unique and interesting past. Perhaps you will be inspired to join CCHA's efforts to save Chatham's history.

**CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION, INC.**



CCHA Newsletter

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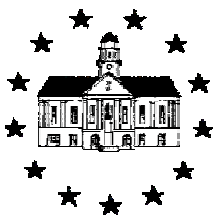
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