

# CCHA Newsletter – First Quarter 2016

## Highlights of 2015

With 2015 being our third year in the Historic Courthouse and the new Chatham Historical Museum open, we are settling in and our activities are taking on a life of their own. Many dedicated folks are making things work well as we serve more people interested in Chatham history. To all who have made this possible, a big “shout out” of thanks.

**General State of the Organization** – Increasing membership, donations and support for our activities from individuals and businesses, increasing contact hours involved with sharing and saving our history all point to an acceptance and appreciation of our goals.

**Museum Activities** – During the past year the Museum was open Wednesday through Friday every week; March through November, in conjunction with First Sunday by the Pittsboro Business Association, the museum door was open and visitors invited in. During the weekdays, we welcomed drop-in visitors as well as special scheduled groups. In August, a group of youngsters enjoyed an archaeological “dig”. October brought the tour of Siler City buildings which was accomplished with enthusiasm despite the weather’s lack of cooperation. Also in October, we supported the Pittsboro Street Fair by having the Museum open for a rare Saturday opening. Early in the year in-house training sessions for volunteers were conducted; two “coffees” were held to show appreciation and recruit volunteers. A really fine display cabinet was built for CCHA by Rouse Wilson. It was made of salvaged mahogany from the Courthouse and has a prominent place in the museum. Between the new case and the hall wall cases, a number of changing displays were curated. Black History Month featured prominent Chatham African-Americans; late May and Memorial Day spotlighted our military history; July featured a photographic history of Siler City’s past Fourth of July celebrations; November brought a display on voting and former candidates; the year ended with historical Christmas decorations and memorabilia.



**Fourth Grade School Program** - All fourth graders from Chatham were invited to come to the courthouse for a program that teaches history downstairs while a mock trial upstairs in the courtroom provides a civics lesson. The program requires the attention of about ten dedicated volunteers and costumed re-enactors. Classes are scheduled two times a month September through May. Chatham County school administrators are quite supportive of this program. Nearly 600 students are served in an academic year. An end of year recognition of volunteers and supporters was held.

**Historical Programs** – February’s annual meeting featured the work of Dr. Mansel McCleave and his involvement with the Greensboro Sit-In; by summertime we were partnering with the Alamance Battleground for the Descendants Gathering event;

October featured the Siler City tour of historic homes and buildings; in November John Hudson Emerson showcased the Dunlap and related family connections around Bonlee, Bennett and points in western Chatham – as they rode the Bonlee and Western railroad.

**Preservation Actions** – The Manly Law office is "tighter" since the chimney was Ram-jacked back up next to the building. This important project was generously funded by our Questor friends. The Marshall log cabin was sold and moved. It will now be a part of the commercial property of Hobbs Architects in conjunction with the renovation of the Lewis Freeman/Jane Pyle house. This is a wonderful case of preserving two historic properties that will complement each other. The Smokehouse from the Ag Center property remains in "storage" awaiting its final home site. CCHA continued working with the Planning Department to identify historic properties on land destined for development. Cemetery data is still being researched, saved, photographed, and shared.

**Newsletters, website, and Facebook** – We continue to modernize our communications – sometimes more successfully than other times. Please add the Chatham County Historical Association to your address book so that you can receive digital info from us. Our email address is: [history@chathamhistory.org](mailto:history@chathamhistory.org). Currently, we are working to deliver the newsletter to you via email; some may still receive a hard paper copy.

**Library Connections** – CCHA members volunteer at the Chatham Community Library to assist with genealogical research in the Local History Section and to save and document materials stored there.

**Historical Collection** – Through generosity of many, added materials include memorabilia and historical newspapers from the family of Candace Simmons, three original paintings of Pittsboro places by Mrs. Annie Bynum donated by her granddaughter, published genealogy of the Dunlap family by John Hudson Emerson (and some oxen shoes), photograph of John Randolph Lane and Charles McConnell at Gettysburg by Lane Brown, and by Harvey Gunter a family heirloom 1850 clock as well as an antique chair in memory of Jane Pyle. Many more too numerous to mention here but still genuinely appreciated.