



**A Special Edition of the CCHA Newsletter about the State of  
the Historic Chatham County Courthouse and  
the Chatham Historical Museum.**

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By now you have probably already heard about the fire. Here are some pictures and an update on the state of the museum collection. Late Thursday afternoon, March 25, fire broke out in the courthouse in the circle in Pittsboro. Most of the roof and much of the building's interior were destroyed before the fire was contained. Built in 1881, the building has undergone several additions and renovations, and at the time of the fire the building was again under repair, covered with scaffolding so that the windows could be replaced and other parts renovated and repainted. Fire losses include the courtroom, judges' and other offices, belongings of employees and some court materials. Our Chatham Historical Museum was in the SW corner on the first floor where the least of the fire was. We did incur water and smoke damage, but nothing actually burned. The full extent of the damage to the museum collection is not completely known, although most items have now been recovered from the building and we're increasingly optimistic that many materials can be restored. Here's a short time line.

*Sunday, March 7, 2010*

The courthouse is covered in scaffolding for window replacement and the clock tower is wrapped in Tyvek while paint is scrapped and the wooden tower is repaired.



*Thursday, March 25, about 5:00 p.m.*

Flames have not yet broken through. Note that the circle is not yet cordoned off and people are standing very close to the building.

*Friday, March 26, 2010*

Hot spots continue to break out for the next couple of days and no one from CCHA is given access to the courthouse.



*Sunday, March 28, 2010*

The Pittsboro police and a salvage crew aided by CCHA volunteers, remove museum materials from the courthouse.

Here the Masonic Apron, undamaged, is carried out.



*Monday morning, March 29, 2010.*



Items are placed in a building for cleaning and sorting. Here a dirty, wet storage cabinet is moved into temporary storage for cleaning and safe-keeping.



*Monday, March 29, 2010.*  
Soggy and smoky CCHA Journals that had been for sale.

With professional advice, wet books were wrapped in freezer paper, packed tightly in boxes and placed in a deep freeze.



*Tuesday, March 30, 2010*  
Staff from the Cultural Resources Disaster Recovery Team come from Raleigh to assist and advise us about drying and repairing. Fans were brought in to aid air circulation in the work area. Inventory is being taken and some papers are ready to be reassembled.

Thursday, April 1, 2010

Good news! The Chatham County Board of Commissioners votes to put the wettest of our materials with theirs for record recovery. This is the approximately 75 books now on hold in a freezer. During the past week CCHA has helped the county as it gathers information for insurance companies by providing interior photographs as the courtroom was, drawings from previous renovations, wood and carpet samples and paint color chips.

**For continuing information about the courthouse and the museum check the following:**

Chatham County web site: <http://www.chathamnc.org/>

The Chatham Record in print and on the web: <http://www.thechathamnews.com/>

CCHA web site: <http://www.chathamhistory.org>

Videos at WRAL: <http://www.wral.com> Enter keywords: chatham courthouse fire

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

\* Continue to support CCHA with your membership, attendance at programs, and purchase of our publications.

\* When we know which documents can be saved and which are in too poor condition to be kept, we will be asking for donations of photos, booklets and records to replace the lost ones. It will be time to look in your attics for items to donate to the museum collection.

\* The association is accepting pledges and donations either unspecified or for special projects such as

- 1) recovery and restoration of the museum collection,
- 2) items for a new, enlarged historical museum in the rebuilt courthouse, or
- 3) a new museum.

Pledges may be sent to [history@chathamhistory.org](mailto:history@chathamhistory.org). Both pledges and checks will be received at CCHA, PO Box 93, Pittsboro, NC 27312-0093.

\* Please join the CCHA board members in expressing your thanks to the Chatham County Board of Commissioners and staff, the Town of Pittsboro, elected officials, and staff, the many individuals who have called to pledge support and assistance, and especially the emergency crews who spent long and dangerous hours fighting the fire and saving our courthouse.



*Photographs courtesy of Kenneth Crabtree, Barbara Pugh, Bev Wiggins and an unidentified friend who handed a CD of photos to Barbara.*

*Editor for this edition: Judith Peterson*

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*May 2008 Court room in Chatham County Historic Courthouse*

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