



CCHA Newsletter



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Second Quarter 2008

DAMAGED CEMETERIES CONCERN CCHA

The importance of CCHA's Cemetery Survey project was highlighted over the last few weeks when two incidents of cemetery damage were reported to CCHA. On Monday, 4 February, survey coordinator Beverly Wiggins received a call from the county Planning Department indicating Ed Wheeler had visited their office to report a damaged cemetery on O'Kelly



DAMAGE TO CEMETERY ON O'KELLY CHAPEL ROAD

Chapel Road. Mr. Wheeler's wife Shirley and her sister Joyce Tilley Nash had noticed an advertisement in the Chatham paper indicating a cemetery was to be moved in the section of Chatham previously annexed by Cary, and decided to check to see if any of their relatives might be buried there. What they saw when they visited the cemetery was it had been nearly destroyed by heavy equipment. In response to their report to the county, Jim and Beverly Wiggins visited the site and contacted the developer and the Cary Planning Department. Action was taken quickly to stabilize the site. The Wiggins have continued to monitor plans to move the cemetery to another Chatham location.

On 11 March, the Wiggins received another call, this time about a gravesite near the right-of-way off US15-501 and Herndon Road, where a single grave, that

of Lizzie Cheek, has been visible since the highway was widened. According to Wiggins, "Quite a few people became aware of Lizzie Cheek's grave when the roadwork was being done because the lovely granite gravestone was marked by red tape while the roadwork was underway. Several members of CCHA have tried to find out more about Lizzie and her family. It is unusual that her grave is the only one there and nobody we have talked to knows how she fits into the Cheek family. We call her 'Lonesome Lizzie.'"

When the Wiggins checked out the site on 12 March, they found that Lizzie's grave also had been run over by heavy equipment at some point and the site was not marked properly. The problem was reported to the county planning department and to the Briar Chapel development management, and they have arranged for a large area around the grave to be fenced off to avoid additional damage.

According to Wiggins, "Some developers and utility workers are just not taking proper precautions to avoid damage to the cemetery sites. Neither of the damaged sites appeared to be well marked off, although some tape was put up to mark the sites. A much larger area should have been marked and strictly restricted in both cases to avoid damage to the graves."

In both of these cases, the damage came to the attention of CCHA through concerned Chatham citizens. "We applaud their concern and willingness to get involved to save historic gravesites. Apparently, the county offices receive calls about possible threats to Lizzie Cheek's grave almost anytime work is done in that area. It's good to know there are a number of folks 'looking out for Lizzie,'" said Wiggins. "Most other old burial sites are not so

visible, so damage often goes undetected."

Some good did ultimately come from these two cases. The Cary case got the attention of the Cary planning department, and they have taken steps to make developers more aware of cemetery concerns. In Lizzie Cheek's case, Briar Chapel manager Ed Timoney has agreed to work with CCHA on a plan to provide better long-term security for Lizzie's grave. "Lizzie's grave is in a really precarious situation," said Wiggins. "We think that a permanent barrier that both protects the grave and makes it more obvious would be the best solution."



LIZZIE W. CHEEK
DEC. 23, 1892 TO JAN. 23 1919

We hope more will be learned about Lizzie Cheek. Her stone indicates she was born 23 December 1892 and died 23 January 1919. We would like to share her history with others in the county. If you know anything about her or her family (parents Robert D. and Fannie B. Cheek, found in Chatham Censuses in 1900, 1910, and 1930). Please let us know by contacting Fred Vatter at 542-0270, or fvcv586@aol.com.

CCHA Lecture Series

The Southern Folk Cemetery and Some Chatham Examples

John W. Clouser

Consultant in Cemetery Recording and Preservation

Sunday, 18 May 2008

2:30PM

Admission is FREE

Light refreshments will be served following the presentation.

Historic Chatham County Courthouse

12 East Street, Pittsboro, NC 27312



Mark your calendars for what promises to be an engaging presentation about Chatham County's most prevalent cemetery type, the Southern Folk Cemetery. Hundreds of such small family cemeteries are scattered about the country. Some can be seen from roadways while others are found in the midst of cultivated fields or hidden deep in woodlands.

John W. Clouser, archaeologist and principal of the consulting firm Of Grave Concerns, specializing in cemetery recording and preservation, will describe the Southern Folk Cemetery and its expression in the piedmont of North Carolina. The Chatham County Historical Association will provide Chatham County examples of cemeteries and grave markers. Join us to learn why Southern cemeteries are located where they are, what governed choices of grave markers and cemetery plantings, local burial traditions and common epitaphs, and threats to this traditional cemetery form. We will take questions at the end of the presentation, so come ready to satisfy your curiosity.

For more information, please call 919-542-3606 or 919-542-4478.

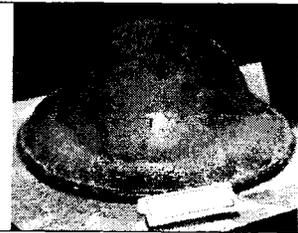
MUSEUM WELCOMES INTERN

Robert Barnes began his internship in the Chatham Historical Museum in March. He is preparing an exhibit tentatively called "Chatham County...North Carolina... United States" putting Chatham in the context of selected state and national events. He will also prepare a presentation for the CCHA Lecture Series in November.

Rob is a graduate of UNC-Wilmington, with a master's degree in Liberal Arts, with a specialization in history. He begins a full-time position with Central Carolina Community College next fall as a history instructor in the Department of Social Science and Wellness.

The museum internship is funded through a generous grant from the Chatham Seekers, Fearington branch of the Questers.

The Chatham Historical Museum, in the historic county courthouse in Pittsboro, is open on Wednesday between 12:00PM (noon) and 3:00PM and on the monthly "First Sunday" from 1:00PM to 4:00PM.



D'PIG

By: George "Jake" Horwitz

Editor's Note: In October 2007 a lively exchange of views took place on the appearance of a newly-opened grocery store in Pittsboro. One letter was more reminiscence than polemic and is appropriately printed here, with permission of the author.

Gentle readers unnerved by the appearance of a Pittsboro Piggly-Wiggly store with concomitant signage reveal an endearing ignorance of our county seat's recent history. The last time we had a Pig, the store was right in the middle of town on Salisbury Street, not a block removed from the traffic light.

Twenty years ago, more or less. The best and worst people shopped and gossiped there, picked over the moldy peppers, looked askance at the dark bananas, joked with employees about the grubby floors, and set down their children to ride on the three-horse merry-go-round by the entrance door. We're talking about the glamorous Pat Mitchell, who never missed a beat on the cash register, never denied a grin to a familiar face. Who could forget Eddie Cotton, bagman extraordinaire, the Cezanne of Salisbury Street? Betty the

Fairie Queen of Bell's Jungle outraged some but lit up the days of many others. Each passing day, I miss the late John London, Senior Warden of fond remembrance of St Bartholomew's Church, grumpy Godfather to the fabled Horwitz twins. Right there in front of the ears, snouts, and pork chops, John explained to me the perfection of comparing the Governor's mouth to a mule's rear end. I can't dismiss the encounters with those folk, and their friends and neighbors. My friends. My neighbors.

Many shopped at D'Pig because it was close to their homes and they could walk there. Besides, you met a better class of people. And right around the corner, we had a shawnuuff hardware store on Hillsboro Street, where you could buy cotton plowline sold by the pound, china cups, fish hooks and roofing nails, canning jars, ash ax handles, no reasonable offer taken

lightly. I still use the Ashley woodstove, which Mr Cary Jones was kind enough to deliver and install in my house in Bynum, no extra charge, naturally.

I imagine the kind of people rendered speechlessly nervous by a Piggly-Wiggly sign would not even have noticed Mr. Jones's hardware store, which was a dark and mysterious masterpiece, perhaps even threatening, like a portrait by Goya. Mr. Jones was terse and Mrs. Jones was shy. They kept their Coke machine so cold the bottles had ice crystals mixed with the drinks. I hold the Joneses in my heart to this day.

And don't even get me started about the two drug stores we had. Meeting places. Take off your coat, George, sit down, have a cup of this crappy coffee we got. I feel better just thinking about it.

(Continued on page 3)

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

By: Jane Pyle

From the Robeson Creek Watershed Council newsletter

Not much, if you're looking for agreement over spelling of names. The creek that rises northwest of Pittsboro, flows toward the east on the south side of town, and empties into the Haw River near Jordan Lake has been called Robeson, Robenson, Roberson, Robinson, and Robertson, sometimes in the possessive form. Which is right? Best answer: all of the above.

The index to Chatham County deeds in the Register of Deeds office puts all variations in the same section: ten Robersons, eight Robinsons, seven Robertsons, four Robesons, and one Robenson. But the creek had already been named by the time Chatham County was formed in 1771 and people started buying land in the new county. Records of state land grants from 1778 (after unrecorded colonial lands were ceded to the new state) to 1928 list one on Robersons Creek, two on Robesons, ten on Robersons, eleven on Robertsons, and twenty-one on Robinsons – sometimes in the singular but never with an apostrophe. None of these grants was to a person named Rob—.

Maps are no better guide. The 1808 Price-Strother map shows Robinsons; the 1865 Coastal Survey shows Robinson's; and the 1870 Ramsey map has Robenson. The 1933 Soil Survey and the 1990 County Highway map identify the stream as Robeson Creek, while the 1970 USGS topographic map calls it Roberson Creek. Local people were outraged when the NC Department of Transportation (DOT) put up a sign south of Pittsboro naming Robertsons Creek.

Why the confusion? Even after the invention of the printing press, increased literacy, and the appearance of dictionaries, regularization (some called it "normalization") of spelling was slow in taking hold. And the rule for spelling and pronunciation of names is still: do it the way the owner says to.

But DOT doesn't own Robeson Creek.

PITTSBORO THEN AND NOW

"Pittsboro Then and Now" is a mock-up of downtown Pittsboro constructed by Tommy and Carla Crews with assistance from Phyllis Burns, for the Pittsboro High School reunion in June 2007. CCHA helped in researching old newspapers and other materials for the display, which features storefront models with old photos, news articles, and other reminders of the stores that lined Hillsboro Street during the period 1920-1969.



MARY STROWD RIGGSBEE EXAMINES THE BANK AT THE CORNER OF HILLSBORO AND SALISBURY STREETS.

Visitors to the exhibit "strolled" along the main street from north of Salisbury Street, around the courthouse circle and south on the Sanford Road, learning about stores and offices, including the jail and movie theaters, and the people who used them. Making the circuit again on the outside, numerous newspaper articles from the 1962 commemorative edition of the Chatham Record related outstanding events in the history of Pittsboro and Chatham.

Following the one-night stand in June, the PHS Alumni Association set up the display again in December, attracting newcomers to the county as well as longtime residents, before generously donating the exhibit to the Chatham County Historical Association. We continue to seek a permanent location for the exhibit while storing the panels and welcome suggestions and offers of space to mount the exhibit.

(Continued from page 2)

My point being that Pittsboro was a more convenient place back yonder, maybe a little more funky, but I doubt it. Accommodating. Frequently we met each other with curiosity tempered by affection, even when we couldn't stand each other. With all those people walking places, bumping into a few was unavoidable.

On the other hand, there are towns like Cary. In Cary, it's just fine to spend days filling behemoth swimming pools with millions of gallons of water in the middle of the worst drought in recollection. In Cary, obnoxious signs are criminal. Maybe some of our newer residents should have bought their homes in Cary, and would have if they'd had the money. The same could be said about some of our older residents. But I'm glad to have them all, and some day they'll be glad to fit in, too, some of them.

Obviously, Pittsboro is a learning experience, and some of us are quicker than others. The slow ones can't help it, so be kind to them, as you were kind to me.

WHERE ARE YOU?

Please ensure we have your correct address, telephone number, and **EMAIL** address, at all times. Send a note by regular mail or to the email address on the first page of this publication, and we do the rest.

CCHA 2007 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 each month during 2007.

CCHA Historic Lecture Series

Lectures and presentations on various facets and subjects of Chatham County history are scheduled for:

Sunday, 18 May 2008

Sunday, 17 August 2008

Sunday, 16 November 2008

All will begin at 2:30PM on these dates, and light refreshments will be served following the presentations.

Subjects and locations will be announced soon

CCHA HISTORIC LECTURE SERIES GOES QUARTERLY

The CCHA Historic Lecture Series has moved to a quarterly schedule, and the lineup for the rest of the year looks great! As shown elsewhere in this Newsletter, we will present the next installment on Sunday, 18 May in the historic Chatham Courthouse. Other presentations are now set for Sunday, 17 August, and Sunday, 16 November, so watch for announcements on the subjects and locations here soon. You can also expect the venues used to spread across the county rather than all being centered in Pittsboro. This program is sure to prove interesting for all of us.

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