



CCHA Newsletter



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Editor: R.T.Crowley - CROWLEY3@MINDSPRING.COM

Third Quarter 2008

Chatham Cemeteries Lecture

The Southern Folk Cemetery and Some Chatham Examples, was the topic of the second program in the Chatham County Historical Association Lecture Series for 2008. Held on 18 May in the historic Chatham County Courthouse, the presentation focused on cemeteries as important features of the county's history.



Mr. Clauser noted the cemetery developed out of the unique circumstances of the rural south: relative isolation and limited means of transportation, along with the need to bury the dead quickly in a warm climate, led to small family plots. Graves were often marked with wood or fieldstones without any information about the person buried there. Family cleanup days at the cemetery served to remind family members about who was buried where and to pass that information along to new generations.

More recently, as families in the South have become more mobile and younger generations do not stay on the family land, these family cemetery traditions have broken down. Without regular family care, the sites quickly revert to a natural state, making them very difficult to recognize. Because many of the markers are not inscribed, the breakdown of the oral tradition means the information needed to identify the deceased is lost.

Following Mr. Clauser's presentation, Beverly Wiggins, CCHA Cemetery Survey Coordinator, spoke to the group about the importance of locating and preserving the county's cemeteries and showed slides of a number of Chatham County sites. The slides illustrated how difficult finding old family cemeteries can be once they are no longer kept up.

Also shown were various marker types, including rare wooden grave markers and a wooden gravehouse, the very commonly used fieldstone marker-both inscribed and not, local sandstone and soapstone markers used until about 1850, marble markers, veterans markers, "tricks of the trade" quartz used to read grave markers and remarkers, search cemeteries, symbols used on and the older grave markers, and some curiosities found in Chatham cemeteries; famous persons and interesting features such as portraits on grave-



trated threats to the county's traditional cemeteries and stones. Being forgotten, she noted, makes these sites vulnerable to destruction, and even if found, all memory of who was buried there may be lost. Age and weather take their toll on all



marker types. Slides showed how development, timbering, and livestock also contribute to the loss of our old family cemeteries.

A museum display on cemeteries, which will be available through the summer months, also illustrates Chatham's rich heritage, including cemetery sites, marker types, veterans markers, "tricks of the trade" used to read grave markers and remarkers, search cemeteries, symbols used on and the older grave markers, and some curiosities found in Chatham cemeteries; famous persons and interesting features such as portraits on grave-

Wiggins also discussed and illus-

CCHA Lecture Series

Apples - Chatham County and Beyond

Creighton Lee Calhoun, Jr.
Apple Historian - Pomologist - Orcharist

Sunday - 17 August 2008
2:30PM

Admission is FREE

Light refreshments will be served following the presentation.

The Music Barn

G. T. Petty Memorial Grounds

Home of the Silk Hope Farm Heritage Center

Silk Hope, NC

(Silk Hope is located four miles north of NC Route 64 between Pittsboro and Siler City)
 (follow the signs for the fairgrounds at the Silk Hope-Lindly Mill and Silk Hope-Liberty crossroads)

For three hundred years, from the early 1600s to the early 1900s, apples were widely grown on southern farms to feed farm families. Southerners developed their own apple varieties, adapted to southern growing conditions. These apples filled the need for apples to eat fresh, cook, dry, press for cider and vinegar, store through the winter, and sell from the back of a wagon in nearby towns. At least four unique apple varieties originated in Chatham county and two still exist today. Our speaker has degrees from NC State University and the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He has searched for and collected old southern apples for thirty years and is the author of the book *Old Southern Apples* (Blacksburg, VA: McDonald & Woodward, 1995, 326 pp.).

Apple Recipe Competition

We know no better way to celebrate the apples of the lecture than with a cooking contest! If you have a special recipe for virtually anything with apples as the main ingredient, then whip up a batch, bring it along, and enter the contest. First prize is:

A one-night stay at the Fearington House

Other prizes will include gift baskets from Southern Supreme and many other valuable items.

Our panel of judges will be led by none other than:

Chef Graham Fox

Five Star Executive Chef at Fearington House

Rules

All dishes must contain apples as a major ingredient.

No cooking allowed on the premises. Dishes must be complete upon arrival.

No dish may contain meat or uncooked dairy products.

Apple Art Contest

Open to Children 12 and Under

As long as we are cooking, we should have something for the young ones, so how about an Apple Art Contest? Make pictures of apples, sculpt apples into whatever, decorate apples, make an apple doll, so whatever you like, and let us see your talents. Prizes will be awarded by a judging panel of local artists.

NEW AT THE CHATHAM HISTORICAL MUSEUM

By Jane Pyle - Curator

Visitors to the Chatham Historical Museum frequently ask, "When was the courthouse built?" A new exhibit in the conference room next to the museum answers that question and adds other information about the historic 1882 building and its predecessors. Also in the conference room, which is open to the general public even when the museum is closed, are displays describing the settlement of the area that is now Chatham County and the formation of its boundaries.

The museum, in the historic Chatham Courthouse in Pittsboro, is the place to come this summer to see a Victorian-era funeral notice, part of an exhibit about cemeteries of Chatham County noted elsewhere in this newsletter, and a display of Siler City memorabilia donated by Charles Simmons and others. On display for the first time are a Civil War coding machine, a 1924 Chatham Record, and the register of the Chatham County Home, which closed soon after World War II.

The Chatham Historical Museum is open between noon and three p. m. on Wednesdays, on Pittsboro's "First Sundays" from 1:00PM to 4:00PM, and by appointment (919-542-3603), where interested persons are encouraged to call to volunteer to help design displays, answer questions during open hours, or help care for the collection).

On exhibit in the Wren Memorial Library, Siler City, are several old maps from the museum's collection. These may be viewed during regular library hours.



CCHA WEBSITE

WWW.CHATHAMHISTORY.ORG

Have you visited the CCHA website lately? You might be in for a surprise when you do. We have changed the look and feel of the sight significantly, and are adding new ideas and features all the time. Take a look at a few of the things you will now find there.

For one thing, we are building an online virtual tour of historic Chatham County. During the next months, we will be developing this into a real showpiece for the county. The tour will include photographs and descriptions of as many historically significant sites as possible from across the county, and as we add them, each will become a permanent feature of the site, offering anyone, anywhere the chance to see what we have all around us. The first installment features two Veterans' Memorial Sites, with photography by Barbara Pugh. Have a look.

The other new features are our two history calendars. One is a This Day in History, showing events from all over the world, but tied to the day you visit the site. This means something different each day throughout the year.

The second calendar is This Month in Chatham History, and will change each month to show what has happened in our county through the years. For example, did you know during July of 1881 the county commissioners accepted the plans of the then new courthouse?

Other items will be appearing on the website as we think of them and can get them implemented. We welcome suggestions, ideas, and thoughts on the website, and want to hear from you about it.



Have you seen the anti-bellum Masonic apron on display at the Chatham Historical Museum?

NEW BOOK FROM CCHA

A new book, Chatham's Historical Heritage - Stories Beyond Fried Rabbit by Fred Vatter will be released by CCHA later this year. Fred, a former CCHA president and curator of our museum, shares his love of history by writing a column for Chatham County Line, formerly Chatham Crossroads. Now 38 of his columns have been collected into a single volume illustrated with photographs new and old.

Stories range from the vanishing country stores in Chatham to Dr. Mathiesen's clinic and hospital in Pittsboro to hunt clubs in the early 1900s. You can read about Charles Manly and John Randolph Lane and also about Clarence Poe and Charlie Baldwin. Read tales about fishing and, yes, a story about a lucrative Siler City business selling rabbits to New York restaurants. This is a great book for new-comers and long-time residents as well.

The book will be about 230 pages and soft-bound. The price is \$18.95. This CCHA publication will be available at the CCHA Museum and several stores in the county. When released it can also be ordered through our website.



ENDOR IRON FURNACE

Not long ago, some CCHA members paid a visit to the Endor Iron Furnace ruins. When built, the structure was in Chatham County.

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 the month, April through November.

CCHA Historic Lecture Series

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

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

CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION, INC.



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