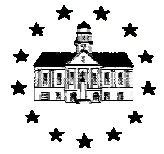




CCHA Newsletter



Volume 22 — Issue 4

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Fourth Quarter 2010

COURTHOUSE STORIES SHOWCASED

Stories of human events in the life of the Historic Courthouse were shared on Sunday, November 14th as invited speakers and the audience shared memories. The wide range of stories covered a diversity of people and times. Likewise the stories created a wide range of emotions from compassion to laughter.

As the host and moderator to our invited speakers, Tommy Emerson was certainly gracious but also had his own tales to tell. Anytime that stories of the Courthouse are put forth, undoubtedly the story of the man who rode his horse through the Courthouse shouting “I’m Hoot Gibson, by God” will be included. Of course, Tommy did that story with flair. Certainly, this was not Tommy’s only story.

Setting the tone of the program was Ms. Celeste Bryan who had a lifetime career in county government, in the Courthouse, in several capacities. Her broad recollections ranged from remembering how the spaces were used and who used them to telling us with authority when the Courthouse circle was built and about the prior traffic flow. Ms. Bryan’s description of the evidence room, with its dual purpose of storing evidence and acting as a moonshine testing laboratory, brought smiles to all faces.

Former Sheriff Don Whit’s early law enforcement career included telling of “back when” the deputies used their own vehicles for patrol cars, small law enforcement staff housed in the Courthouse, and the warm story of the elderly gentleman who was called to appear in Court but had difficulty hearing and shared with the seeming whole Court his need to go to the men’s room.

Growing up in town with the Courthouse and his father being a lawyer, Wade Barber shared some of his lifetime of experiences with us. Those experiences ranged from going to the Courthouse with his father as a child to events that happened to him during his professional career as a lawyer and judge. One of Wade’s stories reported activities of the Tick Creek Commune during the 1970s while another

told of Chatham County Democratic Party meetings in the Courthouse through the years as well as the transition of the unlocked Courthouse and access to the offices to our modern-day security.

On March 25, 2010, Judge Allen Badour was in his office taking care of routine judicial activities when the smoke alarm sounded. He quickly told us that his association with the Courthouse was of a more current nature than the other speakers, but he did have a story to tell. Because of his and his employees being accustomed to strange noises and smells coming from the restoration efforts in progress, when the fire alarm was sounded, the urgency of leaving the building was diminished. Smoke was smelled in the building but it was only when he and others working in the Courthouse were outside that the reality of the fire became evident.

Attorney Jack Moody also enjoyed a long relationship with the Courthouse in that he had a professional career as an attorney, but he was also the son of Judge Lee Moody. Mr. Moody’s stories were often humorous, but also showed that justice had always been tempered with compassion and caring. One memorable case for Mr. Moody was during his father’s career in which a man was sentenced to death for murder, an error found in the trial caused there to be a retrial. The man was sentenced to life, but 35 years later was released from prison and became custodian at the Courthouse. No group of Courthouse stories would have been complete without reference to the famous attorney “Chub Seawell” and we were not deprived.

Not all stories are verbal. To complement the program, stories were told through the works of three photographers. Duane Hall prepared a slideshow of historic and current images, Jeff Davis provided photographs taken during his thirty years with the Chatham News/Record, and Gerald Dukes offered his own style of visual storytelling.

These stories were recorded as an important part of the oral history of Chatham.

RISING FROM THE ASHES

With widespread public support, the Chatham County Commissioners announced their determination to rebuild the county courthouse from insurance received from the March 25 fire. Upon recommendations from the Courthouse Task Force, the commissioners announced a replication of the building, a modernized courtroom and ancillary facilities on the second floor, and on the first floor, museum space and supporting reception and exhibit preparation areas. CCHA is involved with the planning of museum-related space and has formed an advisory/museum development committee to get input from interested individuals and groups with a wide geographic representation as it formulates its actions. All comments and suggestions about a museum will be considered; please send a written version to history@chathamhistory.org or CCHA, Post Office Box 93, Pittsboro NC 27312 (no phone calls, please).

Rebuilding will start as early as fall 2011 following six months of phased design planning. Because of insurance requirements, completion is expected by early 2013. (For further details, check the county website, www.chathamnc.org.)

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

As 2010 winds down, we prepare for the 2011 CCHA annual meeting whereby officers and board members of the association are confirmed. If you have a desire to serve the Association on the board, please let a member of the Nominations Committee know. The Nominations committee members are Raeford Bland, Kay Judge, Jane Hinnant, and Walter Harris. You may contact them through our website email at history@chathamhistory.org.

CCHA DUES

As we move into next year, please do not forget your dues will be due soon. Your dues are the most significant part of the revenue CCHA needs to keep going. We need you!

NEW CHATHAM COMMUNITY LIBRARY BUILDS LOCAL HISTORY AND GENEALOGY RESOURCES

A \$25,000 pledge from CCHA and a large donation from the James Milton Johnson and Laura Muse Blair Johnson Trust are being used to expand the local history and genealogy resources available to Chatham County researchers at the recently opened Chatham Community Library. A CCHA library committee is working with library staff to identify the needs of the local history and genealogy collection and several joint CCHA-library projects are being planned for the near future. You will hear more about these in future newsletters.

The library's North Carolina collection has already seen the addition of more than 300 books, maps, historical documents, and census CDs due to the generous donation of the Johnson Trust. Former CCHA president and local historian Gene Brooks directed the title selection for these volumes, and we think you will agree that the collection represents a really outstanding research resource. Topics range from agriculture to the constitution, politics to literature, architecture to music. All things North Carolina are represented.

The Johnson Trust has also funded the purchase of a state-of-the-art microfilm reader-printer-scanner, now on order, that will allow library patrons to view or print microfilm from the collection, or microfilm they may have obtained from another library or archive through interlibrary loan. As soon as the two dedicated computers in the local history area are configured, Ancestry.com, the on-line genealogy database will be available to library patrons for in-library use, thanks to the Johnson funding. The Trust also funded custom furniture for the reference section of the library, including the lovely display cabinets in that area. Currently these cabinets house a display created by CCHA volunteers highlighting various aspects of Chatham County history, from Native American artifacts, to the formation of the county, to modern-day school yearbooks and agriculture.

Also on display in the local history area is a slice from the trunk of the historic holly tree, until recently, standing across from what is now the General Store Café, formerly Justice Motors, in Pittsboro. The tree is believed to be about 155 years old, the oldest American Holly on record! The group Grand Trees of Chatham presented

the slab to CCHA at the opening celebration of the library in September.

The local history and genealogy section of the new library houses many of the research resources formerly housed at the Pittsboro Memorial Library and, more recently, at Wren Memorial Library in Siler City, including the large clipping collection and family history files created and maintained by CCHA. Our organization will be collaborating with library staff to make these materials easier to search and use. Publications about the county, as well as some surrounding counties, and published family histories are also part of the collection.

Speaking of family histories, if yours is not part of the collection, please consider donating a copy to the library so it will be available to as many researchers as possible. Published histories will be bound and made part of the permanent, non-circulating collection. They will be available for in-library use.

Many people deserve thanks for their efforts to make the local history and genealogy resources of the new library something we can all be proud of, including the Trustees of the Johnson Trust (John W. Blair, Gene T. Brooks, Clinton E. Bryan, Jr., and Richard K. Torbert), the many other donors to the new library fund who designated their pledge for the local history and genealogy area, the library staff who continue to work very hard to obtain new materials for these collections and to make the collections accessible, and the many CCHA volunteers contributing time and talents to this endeavor.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BARBARA CLARK PUGH

It's official! At their meeting on November 1st, the Chatham County Board of Commissioners made public their desire to have a historical museum on the first floor of the Courthouse. This is absolutely an exciting time as we look to the future and plan and work towards a space for history of the people of Chatham County. This will be a place to teach our shared history to everyone from school children to residents to visitors.

Chatham folks have always been known to rise to the occasion when some work needs to be done. Let us all put our collective shoulders to the tasks ahead, and be proud of what we will accomplish.

Currently the physical appearance of the Courthouse has changed. Supporting steel beams were placed inside the building to add support to the exterior walls and a temporary roof has been put in place. Damaged windows have been covered with plywood. Some vents have been put in to continuously provide air movement to dry out the building. Lastly, but by no means least, the scaffolding has been removed. The Courthouse still stands there in the place of honor, but now with her new working clothes on.

You can see how the Courthouse appears today in the photo below.

As CCHA works towards the opening of the rebuilt Courthouse and historical spaces, we will continue to provide the community historical programs of interest, public visibility, website presence, service to those with historical inquiries, and continue to preserve and communicate the history of Chatham County.

CHATHAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE - NOVEMBER 2010



CCHA Partial Calendar for 2010 - 2011

December 1	Wednesday's Open Museum Day 12:00PM to 3:00PM
December 4	Pittsboro Christmas Parade 3:00PM to ~5:00PM
December 8	Wednesday's Open Museum Day 12:00PM to 3:00PM
December 15	Wednesday's Open Museum Day 12:00PM to 3:00PM
December 22	Wednesday's Open Museum Day 12:00PM to 3:00PM
December 29	Wednesday's Open Museum Day 12:00PM to 3:00PM
January 5	Wednesday's Open Museum Day 12:00PM to 3:00PM

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

CCHA MUSEUM NEWS - BY: JANE PYLE - MUSEUM CURATOR

Acquisitions since August

The museum collection continues to grow with donations from members and friends. Cleaton and Rossie Lindsey transferred twenty articles, including Pittsboro High School items (a 1949 yearbook, 1922 diploma for Bettie Pearl Foushee, athletic letter); the treasurer's record book from the Pittsboro Woman's Club, founded in 1919; bi-centennial souvenirs; and newspapers or clippings. Digitized images were received from Duane Hall, WRAL, Barbara Pugh, and Earl James. Robert Britson donated back issues of programs from the Silk Hope Farmers' Day, which many articles of historical interest. Received from the county tax office were sample registers of tax records and aerial photographs from 1966. Northwood High School donated many surplus copies of the school's annuals. Jack Zollinger donated a 1985 pen-and-ink drawing of the courthouse by Gerald Conken. A photographic memoir of the construction of the Chatham Community Library is a gift of the Friends of the Library. Mary Margaret Griffin donated newspapers, clippings, and family items. Charles Thomas donated a 1904 County Court Docket book and a 1940 store ledger with many family names from the Seaforth area. "Ancestors of John Watson Emerson" is a gift from the author, John Hudson Emerson.

CCHA is grateful for these tangible reminders of Chatham County's heritage and encourages others to share for the benefit of future generations.

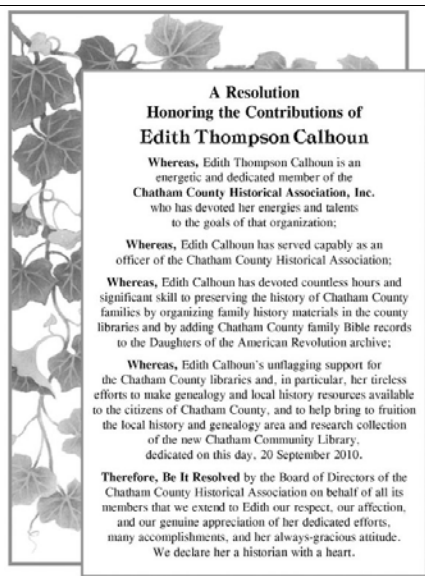
Furniture and Shelving from Pittsboro Library

With the opening of the Chatham Community Library in a new building on the Central Carolina Community College (CCCC) campus in Pittsboro in early September, furniture and equipment from the former Pittsboro Memorial Library was offered to non-profit organizations. CCHA

acquired a study table, atlas cabinet, computer stand, slide projector and screen, newspaper rack with storage, and a number of shelving units. Part of the shelving is now in the rented, climate-controlled storage unit where most of the museum collection is and will be housed until a new museum is built (see related article).

Museum Exhibits and Hours

Currently on exhibit at the interim museum, 184 East Street, Pittsboro, is a display of selected newspaper articles about the courthouse, prepared to accompany the recent CCHA panel of speakers recalling personal experiences in the courthouse (see related article). Continuing on display are exhibits relating the formation of Chatham County, early settlement, and people and places. CCHA publications are for sale, including Fred Vatter's "Beyond Fried Rabbit." The museum is open on Wednesdays from 12:00pm (noon) until 3:00pm and by appointment. Research questions should be received early enough to allow museum staff to collect relevant materials that may be in storage (919-542-3603 or Post Office Box 93, Pittsboro NC 27312).



RESOLUTION HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF EDITH THOMPSON CALHOUN

Our good friend and colleague, Edith Calhoun has given of herself to CCHA and other organizations, and therefore the Board of Directors determined to honor her with a special resolution for her long years of untiring service to the Chatham County Library in Pittsboro, issued on the day of the opening of the new library. A copy of the certificate is shown below, and it reads:

Whereas, Edith Thompson Calhoun is an energetic and dedicated member of the Chatham County Historical Association, Inc. who has devoted her energies and talents to the goals of that organization;

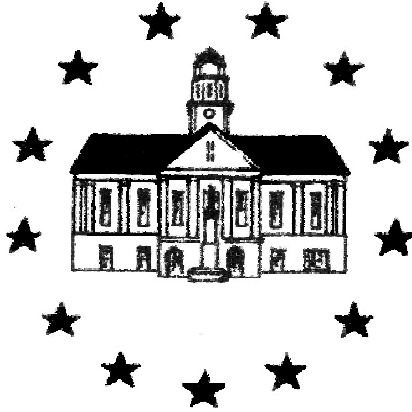
Whereas, Edith Calhoun has served capably as an officer of the Chatham County Historical Association;

Whereas, Edith Calhoun has devoted countless hours and significant skill to preserving the history of Chatham County families by organizing family history materials in the county libraries and by adding Chatham County family Bible records to the Daughters of the American Revolution archive;

Whereas, Edith Calhoun's unflagging support for the Chatham County libraries and, in particular, her tireless efforts to make genealogy and local history resources available to the citizens of Chatham County, and to help bring to fruition the local history and genealogy area and research collection of the new Chatham Community Library, dedicated on this day, 20 September 2010.

Therefore, be it resolved by the Board of Directors of the Chatham County Historical Association on behalf of all its members that we extend to Edith our respect, our affection, and our genuine appreciation of her dedicated efforts, many accomplishments, and her always-gracious attitude. We declare her a historian with a heart.

**CHATHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION, INC.**



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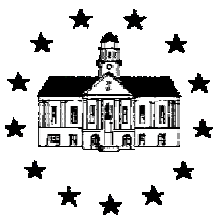
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