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Spring & Summer 2022
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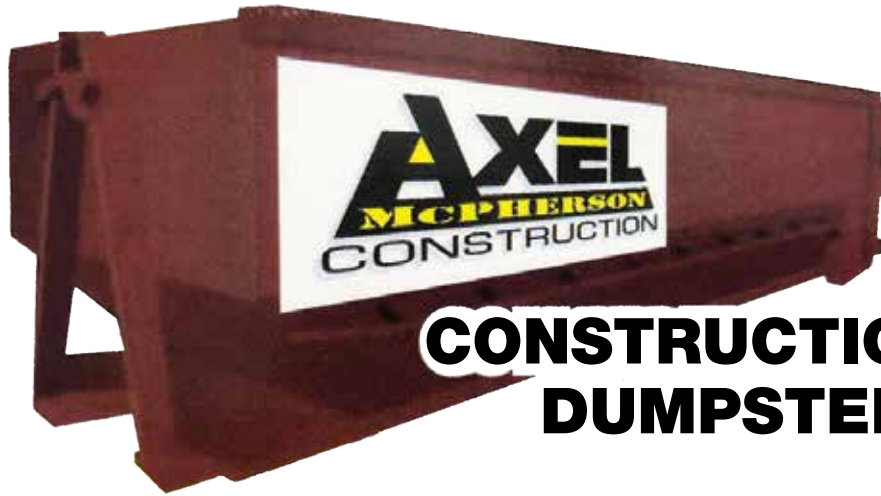
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954 EDITOR

STUART HIGH ROGERS

LAYOUT & GRAPHIC DESIGN

JANIS CREECH

ADVERTISING

AMELIA SASSER • DEAN LEWIS

TJ ENZOR • JANIS CREECH

CONTRIBUTING EDITORIAL

MARI B. THOMPSON • DIANA MATTHEWS

GRANT MERRITT

THOMAS SHERRILL • BILL THOMPSON

JOSEPH WILLIAMS • PATRICIA L. WOODARD

COPY EDITING

DIANA MATTHEWS

954 PHOTOGRAPHERS

SALLY MANN • GRANT MERRITT

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EVERY SQUARE MILE OF COLUMBUS COUNTY

WAR DOES THINGS TO PEOPLE

War Hero Robert F. Lewis, World War I and trauma

STORY JOSEPH WILLIAMS

PHOTOS JOSEPH WILLIAMS & LEWIS FAMILY PHOTOS

Papa was waiting to get a haircut, I think it was, and this man comes in” to Sig Smith’s barbershop in Bolton, began Janice (Lewis) Parker, age 80.

“He sits down beside Papa,” her younger sister, Nancy (Lewis) Simmons, age 77, continued, and the stranger began asking Robert F. Lewis Sr., decorated Columbus County veteran, about the Great War — “and that is all the man wanted to know,” said Simmons, stressing the man’s insistent, prying questions.

Simmons said that the man “just kept on talking to Papa and talking to Papa, and...,” Parker finished, “Papa just didn’t talk about it.”

She added: “He got up and said, ‘Sig, I’ll come back another time,’” and he walked out of the door.

“War, they tell me, does things to people,” Parker mused.

How’d they get here?

The story of how these women, originally from New Jersey, wound up in the care of their grandparents in faraway Columbus County is a convoluted but important one.

While traveling throughout the Atlantic Seaboard as a part of his

service in the U.S. Merchant Marine, the elder Lewis’ firstborn son, Robert F. Lewis Jr., known as “Bob,” met and later married Kathleen Rose (“Kitty”) Higgins in 1940. In a matter of six years, they had three children: Janice, Robert, who went by “Bobby,” and Nancy.

In a matter of six more years, however, Kitty died from tuberculosis.

While tending to the needs of his ever-sicker wife, Bob Lewis lost his job. This loss disrupted his ability to adequately provide for his children.

“He told me,” said Parker, “I had a funeral to pay for, I had a stone to buy, I had furniture in our apartment that wasn’t paid for.” But, in spite of all of his grief and expenses, Parker said that the lessors bluntly told him, ““We don’t care, you still have to pay for it” — which he couldn’t.

“He lost everything,” she said.

Grieving the loss of his wife and out of house and home, Bob Lewis sent a telegram to his mother in Columbus County, asking her to take 5-year-old Janice, 3-year-old Bobby and 2-year-old Nancy down to Columbus County to stay with her, Arrie Agnew (Prevatte) Lewis, and her husband — Robert F. Lewis Sr.

And so began the blossoming of these women’s relationship with their grandfather, who, they would come to discover, was recognized by not one, not two, but three countries for his unsurpassed bravery in the heat of battle during World War I.

“Everything that happens is in God’s plan,” said Parker.

Before the war

The elder Lewis was born in Wilmington on June 26, 1891, to Simon Adolphus Lewis Jr. and Catherine Ann Lenora Creech.

By 1910, the 19-year-old “Robbie” Lewis was working for a sawmill around Lake Waccamaw for the Waccamaw Lumber Company.

As a young man, he enjoyed some of the luxuries that rural living in a place like Columbus County had to offer — namely squirrel hunting, which honed his skills as a marksman.

However, that quiet bucolic peace that only a boyhood spent in the countryside can offer was rudely interrupted when then-President Woodrow Wilson, before a joint session of Congress on April 2, 1917, encouraged the United States to go to war against Germany “to make the world safe for democracy.”

A little over a month later, Lewis, knowing that he was likely to go off to war, married his sweetheart, Arrie Agnew Prevatte, on May 10, 1917.

They had two children together, both sons — one who bore his father’s name and William Colon Lewis, who was “Uncle Billy” to Parker and Simmons.

Maybe having two sons and no daughters is ultimately why his youngest granddaughter eventually became “his spoiled little girl,” according to none other than the self-described spoiled little girl herself.

“Mainly, wherever Papa went, I went,” Simmons said.



This old photograph shows a young Robert F. Lewis Sr. as a boy, standing to the right. His older sister, Danice, is also standing. Seated, to the left, is their father, Simon Adolphus Lewis Jr. and their mother, Catherine Ann Lenora Creech.



Robert F. Lewis Sr.



Simmons and Parker flank the photograph of Robert F. Lewis Sr. that hangs in Clerk of Court Jess Hill's office. There is a typewritten message included in the frame that describes the heroic act that Lewis performed during World War I.

"Over there"

Even if she had been born then, however, Simmons would not have been able to go with her grandfather to fight in World War I.

Lewis enlisted as a private in Company G of the 199th Regiment, 30th Infantry Division of the U.S. Army National Guard. The division consisted of units from North and South Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee — and, drawing on its Southern roots, the division was dubbed "Old Hickory," the nickname of President and fellow Southerner, Andrew Jackson, who was believed by his antebellum contemporaries to be as tough as the branches of a hickory tree.

In time, Lewis would live up to his division's name himself.

After Lewis completed his training, he left for Europe aboard the Haverford on May 11, 1918, from the port in Philadelphia to fight "over there," as a popular wartime anthem sang.

Once in Europe, the tall, slender, blue-eyed man must have felt out of place and bewildered. This war wasn't like squirrel hunting in the Green Swamp back at home.

Probably at no other time did this revelation seem any more real to him than when a machine gun bullet ripped through his stomach.

After he recovered, Lewis was promoted to the rank of corporal.

Despite what his early injury may imply, Lewis' division did not experience much fighting.

Which is what makes Lewis' later act of extraordinary heroism all the more remarkable.

By midsummer 1918, Allied and Axis powers bloodied each other into a pulp as they expended unthinkable quantities of munitions and



According to the inscription on the back, Robert F. Lewis Sr. took this photograph of him and his wife, Arrie Agnew Prevatte Lewis, to war.

*"I wish there were more men like him,"
said Simmons. Although, in her
estimation, "There'll never be another
one" like him.*

sacrificed a heretofore unimaginable number of human lives in the process, all to exchange a few mere inches of territory. The Germans wouldn't budge, as they had entrenched themselves along the seemingly impregnable 90-mile-long defensive position known as the Hindenburg Line.

As a part of the Allied powers' Hundred Days Offensive against the Hindenburg Line, on Sept. 28, 1918, in the lead-up to the Battle of St. Quentin Canal, Lewis and his fellow comrades-in-arms were suddenly pinned down by a barrage of fire from a concealed machine gun nest.

That's when Lewis did the unthinkable.

"On his own initiative," notes a government-issued compilation of medals recipients, Lewis "crawled forward alone over ground swept by machine-gun fire" toward the German outpost.

"His own men tried to call him back," recalled his son Billy Lewis, according to a 1994 article in *The News Reporter*, "but he kept going."

"Attacking the nest with bombs and firing at it with his rifle," the report continued, Lewis "killed the entire crew, numbering seven, and thereby cleared the way for the further advance of his section."

Strategic footholds such as these that Lewis carved out for the Allies were what ultimately laid the groundwork for the future Meuse-Argonne offensive that, in turn, led to the end of the war.

For his bravery, Lewis was awarded a slew of medals: the American Distinguished Service Cross, the country's second-highest military award; the French Croix de Guerre, that country's highest military honor; the British Medal, which typically would not have been given to anyone other than a British soldier; the United Daughters of the Confederacy's Cross of Military Service, which was designed for veterans of World War I who had ancestors who had fought for the Confederacy during the American Civil War; the Purple Heart, which is granted to soldiers who were either wounded or killed while serving; and the United States Victory Medal, which commemorated the end of World War I.

Lewis was also personally decorated by Edward VIII, the Prince of Wales, with the Distinguished Conduct Medal, which was the oldest and second-highest military award offered by the United Kingdom.

Less than two months after Lewis' act of bravery, the warring pow-



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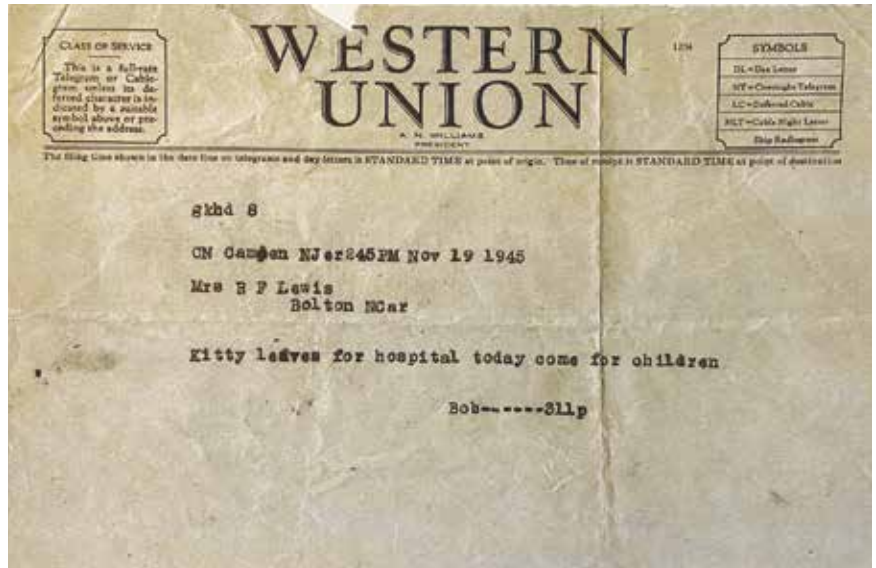
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According to Simmons and Parker, Lewis Sr. was afflicted with some sort of respiratory disease — either asthma or emphysema — that they suspect may have been caused by his service in World War I. Whenever Lewis would have trouble breathing, he would sit down in a chair and his little chihuahua, named BB, would hop into his lap to calm him down.



This telegram sent by Lewis Jr. to his mother implores her to travel to New Jersey and pick up her grandchildren — Janice, Bobby and Nancy. Within the year, Lewis Jr.'s wife would die from tuberculosis. These three children would come to call Columbus County home.



Parker admitted that “my dad was a good-looking man;” she then paused, adding with emphasis, “but Papa was a good-looking man, too.”

ers agreed to an armistice on Nov. 11, 1918. The war was over.

Lewis was injured again shortly after his heroic feat, but after he recuperated from his injuries, the newly promoted Sergeant Lewis, along with his men, set sail from St. Nazaire, France, for the States aboard the Huron on March 8, 1919. His regiment demobilized at Camp Jackson outside of Columbia, South Carolina, on April 17, 1919. Then he headed home.

However, the war still raged on his mind for many years afterwards.

After the war

Post-traumatic stress disorder was not well understood at the time, but a language was beginning to evolve to describe the catastrophic effects that the unprecedented Great War had on soldiers’ psyches. They called it “shell shock.”

“I wonder,” Parker speculated, “if before the war if Papa had the same personality” as his bubbly, free-hearted sister, Danice.

However, the trauma of war doesn’t seem to have made Lewis an angry man. “I’ve never seen him mad,” said Parker. The man that they knew was calm, reserved and caring. And for that, they loved him until the day he died.

Parker remembers sitting in a pew of Bolton Baptist Church one Sunday morning when someone leaned over the seat and whispered in her ear that her granddaddy was dead.

From what she heard, he was standing in the doorway of his home when he had a heart attack.

“He went straight down,” she simply said.

Lewis died on Oct. 30, 1966. He is buried in the Hillcrest Cemetery at Lake Waccamaw.

“I wish there were more men like him,” said Simmons. Although, in her estimation, “There’ll never be another one” like him.

The tributaries of the mind

“I’ve been told that Grandpapa made boats,” reflected Simmons. “And when he got ready to go fishing, he would put me in the front of the boat — he had it fit for me — and I would sleep, and then wake up, and then I would fish with him,” she remembered.

These occasions were usually lighthearted, but Parker and Simmons also think that these outings were prime opportunities for Lewis to reflect on his wartime service.

“Papa never talked about the war,” said Parker — “we were so young, we couldn’t have understood” — but she did wonder “how many times he sat there in that little fishing boat, thinking.”

Placidly floating along a slow-flowing river, “He could sit there and think his thoughts,” said Parker; but the seemingly calm water beneath his boat belied what might be happening underneath — not unlike his memories of the war, drifting just below the surface of the tributaries of his mind.



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In this High family portrait Oscar P. High and his wife Annie High are seated in the center and are surrounded by their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

THE OSCAR HIGH SUMMER COTTAGES

STORY PATRICIA L. WOODARD

PHOTOS LAKE WACCAMAW DEPOT MUSEUM & OSCAR HIGH FAMILY

Oscar High cottage No. 4, located at 206 Lake Shore Dr. in Lake Waccamaw, was rocking and rolling that summer evening back in the 1950s. My younger sister's boyfriend and a friend of his had stopped by our vacation rental in the late afternoon to visit. Neither one was old enough to drive, but they found a way to get to Lake Waccamaw, and William hoped he could see Rachel for a while. They brought along their favorite Elvis Presley record, "You Ain't Nothin' but a Hound Dog," because they knew that my older sister Sara had a portable record player for 45s and they knew she was the biggest Elvis Presley fan ever. They had been practicing their dance moves ever since seeing him perform on Ed Sullivan's TV show and could dance almost better than Elvis himself.

When I walked into the house, the windows and doors were open, and the late afternoon shadows were dancing across the walls. Elvis reigned! The house was throbbing with the beat of the music, and everybody was up dancing. The one who really stands out in my memory is William, with his skinny legs and loose joints. Picture, if you can, the movie "Jailhouse Rock" and Elvis' famous solo in his cool black prison outfit, and that was William that afternoon. He later became a top-notch shagger but before that, in cottage No. 4, he was the master of gyrations unique to young boys in the late 50s. Even among other accomplished dancers, William stood out.

It was a far cry from Mr. Oscar High's original plans for the cottages, but he probably would have loved to see them enjoyed so much. I remember two or three summers that my family vacationed there and always think of family and friends, the moss hanging from the trees, swimming in Lake

Waccamaw the first time, and being more than a little hesitant to step on the marshy bottom, which was scary.

There were probably many families with similar memories because, originally, the first 11 cottages were built as rental properties in the summers for families who were not fortunate enough to own property there. Always the astute businessman, Mr. High also planned to make them available to those who enjoyed hunting and fishing during the fall and spring. Simple, basic craftsman-style construction was used for all of the houses, and they were all built by 1921.

Mr. High, a Columbus County merchant and farmer, had bought 11 lots facing the exquisite view of the water from Lake Waccamaw resident Dallas Cameron Sr. in 1920. At the same time, Mr. High ordered kits for 11 houses from Sears and by the end of 1921 the houses were completed. They were numbered 2, 4, 6, etc. The basic floor plan included two bedrooms, a small kitchen which opened to a living area, and a primitive bathroom. An integrated porch with a roof was a part of each house. People say that, in an effort to make the houses more attractive, Mr. High planted a gardenia bush in the yard of each house, but that has not been verified. If he did, there are only a few bushes remaining. In the manner of the craftsman style, there were exposed joists or rafters projecting out beyond the walls to support the eaves or porch roof. Gables also projected out over the porch. There were wide, simple wood moldings, and built-in cabinets and benches. Mr. High included German siding and added wooden flooring even though there was no sub-flooring.



This a postcard showing some of the Oscar High cottages for rent. High became involved with major lake land holdings after coming to an auction given by George Sutton in 1921. He bought most of the lots offered and built cottages on the properties.



The first High cottage and current High family home was built and occupied by a Mr. Sykes of Red Springs, purchased by Oscar High and sold to son Robert O. High for a dollar. The family would load up every Memorial Day and “move” to the lake until Labor Day.



A school field trip to the lake by school bus to one of two two-story High cottages.

The styles varied slightly with Nos. 2, 4 and 6 being one style; 8, 10 and 12 another style; 14, 16 and 18 yet another. The last two, Nos. 20 and 22, were two-story structures. It’s been said that, in an effort to conserve, Mr. High mixed together left over paints to use for the exterior of the houses, and that’s what accounted for the colors which no one could define.

The houses were all furnished with Jenny Lind beds, a dresser, locally made tables and sturdy oak chairs. A local seamstress, Mrs. Pauline Toon, made muslin curtains for all the windows in each house. Little is known about the bathrooms, but reportedly, in the beginning, there was no hot water and people bathed in the lake.

People who rented these cottages came from all over the state and some from out of state. Mr. High kept meticulous records, and what remains of them shows that many renters came more than once. Letters with requests for reservations usually included a check. Even the fact that the roofs on some of the cottages leaked when it rained didn’t deter people from returning to the lake to enjoy the water and locale. Guests often left their comments written in pencil on the walls, even recommending that people might need to wear their bathing suits on a rainy night if they didn’t want to get their pajamas wet.

Perhaps the most notorious guests to stay in one of the cottages showed up in May 1937, without reservations, before the cottages had been prepared for the summer season. Dressed in neat brown suits and spotless shirt collars and wearing rakish hats, the two men looked respectable. At the time, Mr. High’s daughter, Margaret, was at the family home, where a sign out front advertised the rental houses. The two men came to the door and asked politely, “May we see one of the cottages? We are looking for a place to stay for a couple of days.”

Margaret responded that the cottages were not ready yet, and they replied that they would like to see one anyway. Margaret agreed and noticed that there were two women in the car. She walked with all of them to a nearby rental and, after seeing it, they said it would be fine. “Can we borrow linens?” they asked. Not only did Margaret supply linens for them but she also agreed to take them to a nearby grocery store to pick up supplies. The story would have ended there but for a slick robbery which the perpetrators had carried out the previous day. The Waccamaw Bank in Clarkton had been robbed of \$2,000 and the FBI was called in for help. They gathered information about the purported criminals and traced their travels to Lake Waccamaw and the office of the Oscar High Cottages. By that time, the guests were long gone with no sign of their next destination. The robbers, by the way, paid for their cottage with cash.

“You were lucky they didn’t shoot you!” the

OSCAR HIGH SUMMER COTTAGES



Oscar High summer cottages Nos. 2, 4 and 6, located on Lake Shore Drive, have recently been purchased and updated. (L to R) Cottage No. 2 is owned by Tammy Dodson and Sean Skutnick, cottage No. 4 is owned by William and Susan Wood and cottage No. 6 is owned by Chuck and Amanda Meyer.

agents said. The men were Bill Payne and Wash Turner, well known robbers. Payne had robbed his first bank in 1921 and had spent time in the state penitentiary, where he met Turner. Together they had continued robbing banks for many years. Both men died in the gas chamber at Central Prison in July 1938.

Fortunately no one was hurt in Lake Waccamaw and life on the lake continued.

After the initial purchase, Mr. High bought other houses and lots at the lake, but the first 11 are considered



An early image of Oscar High cottage No. 4 that was purchased by the Wood family in 2019.

the “Oscar High Summer Rentals.” Through the years some of the houses were moved or sold, and what remains of the original 11 structures are now nearly unrecognizable. In the early 1960s, Mr. Joe Schulken, a grandson of Mr. High, purchased some of the houses and began a major renovation. He installed heating and air conditioning, added insulation, put in new linoleum floors and, according to Mr. Schulken’s wife, Miriam, all the houses were painted in new paint from Sherwin Williams. New roofs were probably added. The remains of an old pier were removed and a new pier was

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OSCAR HIGH SUMMER COTTAGES

added in front of cottages Nos. 2, 4 and 6. All of this was done to make them usable year-round and also to increase their resale value.

Ownership changed frequently in the following years. While some people changed styles to blend in with what was trendy at the time, a few others sought out the authentic details that made the houses “Craftsman”. A few added screens to their porches or updated kitchens and bathrooms.



Tammy Dodson and Sean Skutnick designed a modern kitchen, an open family room, two bedrooms and a spacious bath when they updated cottage No. 2.



An early image of Oscar High cottage No. 2.



Local craftsman Paul Benton did much of the woodwork on the renovation of cottages Nos. 2 and 4.



Skutnick carefully reclaimed lumber during the renovation and used it throughout their project.



Dodson and Skutnick enjoy the lake view from their front porch. Their cottage is designated as a Columbus County historic landmark.



A custom wooden screen provides shade and privacy on the front porch.



Dodson adopted her cat already named “Oscar” during the renovation.

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Susan and Bill Wood, Whiteville residents who bought their house in December 2019, even went so far as to add a small stained-glass window, which was very typical of the style but not often employed in many areas. Tammy Dodson, the current owner of No. 2, applied for an historic landmark plaque from the Reuben Brown Preservation Society and is now the first owner of a cottage with that distinction. Other owners are pursuing that recognition, and the Oscar High Cottages appear destined for a long life.

Reuben Brown House Preservation Society Historic Plaque Program for Columbus County

Columbus County has a rich collection of historic homes and buildings. The Reuben Brown House Preservation Society (RBHPS) celebrates the county's unique heritage through the Historic Landmark Plaque Program. RBHPS invites property owners in Columbus County to share the history of their historic site (home, business, church, cemetery, tobacco barn, etc.) by purchasing a custom-made historical plaque for display at the site.

The purpose of the plaque program is to raise public awareness of Columbus County's history and its unique silvicultural and agricultural heritage, and to encourage its preservation.

Historic sites need not be officially designated landmarks or be within a historic landmark district to participate in the RBHPS Plaque Program. The program is entirely voluntary, and participation in no way impacts or restricts property rights or potential modifications to a site.

The program is focused primarily on building exteriors, so properties are not inspected to verify eligibility. At some point in the future, the program hopes to offer public tours of Columbus County's historic areas and properties.

To be eligible for a Columbus County Historic Plaque, a site must meet the following criteria: - be at least 75 years old - be located in the County of Columbus - retain its original character - be in a good state of preservation - contribute to the historical or architectural nature of the county At the discretion of the RBHPS Plaque Review Committee, limited exceptions may be made for sites of extraordinary architectural or historical significance.

Visit reubenbrownhouse.org for more information about Reuben Brown House Preservation Society Historic Plaque Program and view a video featuring historic homes and sites in Columbus County that are a part of the historic plaque program.



The RBHPS historical plaque for the Dodson/Skutnick home designating their cottage as an historic landmark.

Two Oscar High summer cottages located just east of cottages Nos. 2, 4 and 6.

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Sally Mann, director of the Columbus County Arts Council, oversees the operations of the Arts Center and is a major contact for artists and community organizations.

COLUMBUS COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL

STORY BILL THOMPSON

PHOTOS GRANT MERRITT

The arts in Columbus county are thriving. There are many talented painters, musical performers, sculptors and writers creating beautiful work. A primary force in encouraging, developing and promoting these artists is the Columbus County Arts Council.

A recent exhibit brought together a community of artists from Lake Waccamaw. Some of the artists are native to the Lake Waccamaw area while others have moved here. All of them have found inspiration for their paintings “here at home” and have found a venue to present their work at the arts center.

The council will take a look back the first weekend in September, when it will present its Lifetime Achievement Award posthumously to Fredrica “Freddie” Stell. Stell was the longtime director of the Columbus County Theater Association. The event will feature performances and reminiscences by former cast members.

A recent exhibit of a Native American model village titled STEM Wigwam Project, created by members of the Waccamaw Siouan Tribe, was another example of the council providing a venue to

display the work of local artisans.

The Columbus County Arts Council was founded in 1976 as a link between artists, arts and cultural organizations and the community. The Arts Council administers programs in partnership with a variety of local agencies to stimulate creativity and provide a forum for recognition and sale of artwork.

Those individuals involved in the founding of the arts council saw tremendous potential in the county. Whiteville High School Principal Carlton Prince, Julia Bowers, Martha Burns and several other interested individuals began meeting to find ways to form a council. Using funding from a grant written by Prince, members of the group traveled to Minnesota to study the arts in that area and the structure and involvement of the local arts council. They formed the Columbus County Arts Council based on information gathered from that trip as well as funding and consultation from The North Carolina Arts Council. The first board of directors included President Don Viets, Vice President Carolyn High, Secretary Eugenia Blake and Treasurer Allen Price.

From that original group has sprung an enthusiastic board drawn from a broad membership that includes every area and population in the county. Membership in the organization totals over 330.

The Arts Center is located in the former UCB support services building at the corner of S. Madison and Pecan streets in downtown Whiteville. The building serves not only as the office for the council but also as an exhibit and performance venue for local artists.

The state legislature passed a bill in 1979 to support arts councils in all 100 counties of the state, and Columbus County began receiving funding from the North Carolina Arts Council. The local council also receives support from membership dues, corporate donations and local fund-raising efforts. It disburses funds to organizations that promote the arts as part of their missions such as the Columbus County DREAM Center, N.C. Strawberry Festival, N.C. Pecan Harvest Festival, Columbus County Theater Association, Dr. Sharyn Edwards Piano Competition and many others.

Edwards said, "I appreciate the Columbus County Arts Council grant for the Dr. Sharyn Edwards Piano Festival and Competition, which enables piano students and teachers to receive valuable comments and to participate in masterclasses led by artists and clinicians.

"It also affords students and Columbus County audiences an opportunity to hear concerts of marvelous pianists, which enrich their lives in the area of fine and performing arts."

Sally Mann is the current director of the arts council. She was preceded by Marvella Dorman, Melissa Formyduval, Dan Mason, David Stardella and Leigh Fowler. Sally regularly talks with artists about their work and offers encouragement. She helps them place their work in other public venues. There are frequent workshops for all levels of literary, visual and performing artists. The Arts Council is also the host for several book signings each year for local writers.



In 2018 U.S. Poet laureate Tracy K. Smith visited Columbus County and led a masterclass for advanced high school students at the Columbus County Arts Council.

The Columbus County Arts Council was founded in 1976 as a link between artists, arts and cultural organizations and the community.



The January 2022 Waccanaw Siouan STEM Studio initiative was the "Build a Wigwam" competition, supported by the Corning Foundation and shown in an exhibit at Columbus County Arts Council.



The 2019 Brady-Kendall Juried Art Show Best in Show award winner was Elizabeth Spaulding for "Peace Amongst Chaos."

Recent Arts Council exhibit: *The Art of Community...Lake Waccamaw*



Columbus County tie in silk
by Pam Winsky



Fourth of July Full Moon by Tim Carson



Chanticleer by Marian Duncan



Black Cap by Sharon Winters



Who brought supper home? by Susan McLean Macintosh



Stormy Patience by Valerie Riege

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Waiting my turn by Laura McNeill



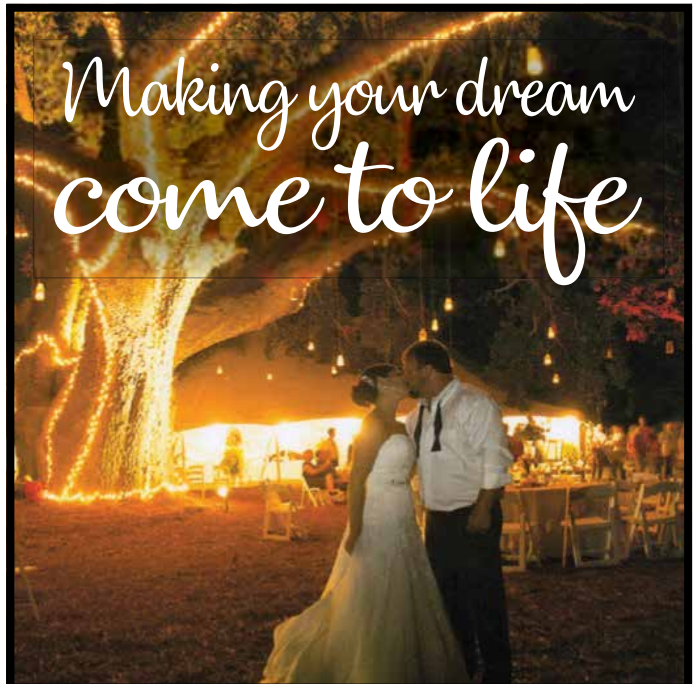
Lake Waccamaw shoreline by Pam Winsky

Mark Bannerman has been teaching visual arts at Whiteville High School for many years and has been involved in many ways with the Arts Council. He said, "Throughout my 30 years of teaching visual arts at WHS, I was always so grateful for the support of CCAC. Its many workshops, visiting artists programs and exhibit opportunities contributed not only to my students as developing artists, but also to my own development as an art teacher and professional artist."

"CCAC's participation in so many community activities positively affects our community as a whole, helping to make our county a desirable home for families and businesses in ways that many people might not realize. We are fortunate that, even in uncertain financial times, the Arts Council continues to offer such culturally enriching services."

Kelly Jones, arts education coordinator for Columbus County schools, has similar comments. "Sally Mann and the CCAC have served as an anchor for our arts education programs, providing resources and support that make everything we do more impactful," he said. "Sally serves as a sounding board for me personally, and I often rely on her counsel when making decisions."

Current officers are Chair Elizabeth Spaulding, Vice-Chair Marian Duncan, Secretary Betty Gore and Treasurer Larry Beltz. Other board members are Rachel Todd, Hattie Campbell, Amy Strick-



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land, Bill Thompson and Nancy Sigmon. Almost all of the board members are artists themselves, but they have taken on the challenge of making all areas of art a part of their community.

For so many artists, the creation of their art is often a singular effort, if not a lonely exercise. To find a market and exhibit for their work involves a partnership with other folks, folks like those at the Columbus County Arts Council. But the council is not only a source of encouragement and support for artists: it brings the art to the community. No matter how internal the creative aspect of art, the effect that it has on the people who see and hear the work is also important. Columbus County is fortunate to have an organization that encourages and facilitates both.



Mann’s job duties include grant writing for local projects from the North Carolina Arts Council and other organizations.



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WTAB station owner Eric Sellers hosts Swap Shop live Monday–Friday 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. Several Swap Shop advertisers have supported the program for 40 years.

SWAPPING FOR DECADES

WTAB CLOSES IN ON 70 YEARS IN TABOR CITY

STORY THOMAS SHERRILL

PHOTOS STUART ROGERS

Every weekday morning starting at 8 a.m., Eric Sellers steps behind the microphone and begins one of the more unique radio programs in America.

The 115 minutes of live radio — with commercials sprinkled in — is a rarity in modern radio. However, it remains one of Sellers’ highlights since becoming station owner in late 2012.

“You got people calling in and they can buy, sell, trade personal items; no guns, none of that stuff,” Sellers said. “We just take their information and put two people together; we don’t have anything to do with the product itself.”

Swap Shop is one of the cornerstones of 1370 AM WTAB, a Ta-
28 | 954 | Spring & Summer 2022

bor City-based radio station which has been on the air since 1954. Sellers himself has hosted the Swap Shop since 2013, which was just months after he bought the station from his stepfather Jack Miller.

Miller, who started at WTAB in 1975 and was the owner from 1995 to late 2012, died on Feb. 26, 2021, at the age of 84.

“It was like a celebrity passing away; he was known for his voice for 40 years,” Sellers said of Miller. “He had a following over the years; he was like an icon to a number of people.”

Sellers made note that Miller, whose nickname was “The Colonel,” was an actual Kentucky Colonel, “just like Colonel Sanders.”



WTAB was founded in 1954 by Troy McPherson, Izzie Kramer, Willie Ward and John Soles, with J.G. (Jay) Worrell as an additional stockholder. McPherson (right) is interviewed by WENC General Manager Ward Coleman in the early 1950s.



Photo of Jack Miller taken in 2015 by Teddy Bullard Sr. at the Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation annual meeting and auction



Vintage radio memorabilia fills the WTAB lobby.



The FCC monitors WTAB, which offers 24-hour programming and reaches a 60 mile radius.



WTAB on behalf of Eric Sellers received the Governor's Award for volunteer service in 2016.



Jack Miller served as chairman of the Yam Festival and served many years on the Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation Board of Directors and was a dedicated member of the Tabor City Jaycees.



Celebrities visiting Tabor City to support the Yam Festival often stop by WTAB for an interview.



The late Jackie Wayne "Jack" Miller with wife Bonnie Miller. Jack Miller was born in Harlan County, Kentucky, and was known as the voice of Tabor City for many years.



Long-time WTAB owner Jack Miller's office is unchanged since his death on Feb. 26, 2021. Miller served as president of the Greater Tabor City Chamber of Commerce in 1989, 1994, 1998 and 2006. Cynthia Nelson, Tabor City Chamber executive vice-president, says that Miller had a heart for the chamber and generously supported it with his time as a volunteer and as an advocate for its many projects and initiatives in the community.

A loyal audience

The station itself is also an icon of the area, a fixture that keeps on despite the changes in the media landscape.

With its 425-foot, 5,000-kW tower, WTAB is able to reach 60 miles in any direction.

"We have listeners as far as Wilmington, Florence, Myrtle Beach, Georgetown, Lumberton...we got a real strong AM signal," Sellers said. "It's just a loyal following, and not just Columbus County, but Horry, Brunswick and Bladen County," Sellers said.

WTAB broadcasts a wide variety of content, from news to sports, country music, gospel and talk.

"We play a little bit of everything," Sellers explained.

The gospel programs are a staple every week. Starting at 1 p.m. every Sunday, 11 preachers go live for half an hour each. The preachers often sit around waiting for their turns, Sellers noted.

Sellers said, along with his loyal older audience who have listened for generations, the gospel programs are popular with the inmates at Tabor Correctional Institute, which is a few miles down the road.

"They can't have internet, they can't have computers, but they can have a radio," Sellers said.

Changing of the guard

Sellers said he was "in between" jobs as the former owner of Radio Shack in Tabor City when the opportunity came up to buy WTAB.

"[Miller] wanted to sell the station, but he wanted to keep it local in Columbus County," Sellers explained.

Shortly after the sale, longtime radio mainstay Bobby Pate died in a January 2013 house fire. Then a few months later, Miller, who volunteered his time to continue doing the Swap Shop, called it a career.



Sellers adjusts the microphone in the soundproof broadcast room used by ministers to produce gospel programs. WTAB (1370 AM) hosts Randall Hight's Beach Party and 17 gospel programs. Each Sunday 11 preachers are on the air for half an hour each starting at 1 pm. Rodney Inman hosts a Sunday morning gospel program each Sunday from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. that includes gospel music, talk and a children's message.

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That left Sellers, an avid golfer and professed family man, with the almighty task of taking over the Swap Shop.

“I trained for four days on it,” Sellers. “You learn real quick on the job...never done radio before in my life.”

A senior-citizens radio station

Walking into the WTAB office is akin to walking into a time machine. Pictures adorn the walls showing the history of WTAB, the celebrities who have visited there and the awards the station has collected over the years.

WTAB was founded in 1954 by Troy McPherson, Izzie Kramer, Willie Ward and John Soles, with J.G. (Jay) Worrell as an additional stockholder.

In 1995, Miller bought WTAB from Donald W. Curtis of Curtis Media Group while continuing to broadcast the Swap Shop.

Sellers said more than 100 people have worked for WTAB over the years. Pleasant “Ray” Hegwood was the Swap Shop’s first host, followed by Miller. Other notable names who lent their voices to WTAB over the years include Country Jim and Lloyd Gore.

“It’s been a mainstay...there was no social media [all those] years ago; people turned their radio on back in those days. They didn’t watch TV hardly; they didn’t have TVs back in the 50s and 60s like they do now. Local radio was it,” Sellers said.

Sellers said McPherson was like the godfather of the area, noting that his mother would listen to Troy religiously in the 1950s.

“It’s been a staple in this community since 1954, and with today’s world and social media like it is, we’ve been able to maintain it,” Sellers said.

Nowadays, with digital media changing the landscape, the business model has changed as have FCC regulations, but the audience remains mostly the same.

“We cater to, I’d say a middle to upper age audience,” Sellers said. “One guy came in and said we’re a senior citizens’ radio station.”

Howard Stern

While the tales Miller told before his death and others could fill these pages, one stands out to Sellers. And it was the biggest brush with fame WTAB ever got.

In 2009, infamous New York City-based shock jock Howard Stern came into contact with Jack Miller and WTAB.

Somehow coming across the online radio feed of the Swap Shop, Stern staffers Sal Governale and Richard Christy made a series of prank calls from The Howard Stern Show to Tabor City.

As recounted by Deuce Niven of the *Tabor-Loris Tribune*, the prank calls tested Miller’s patience, but he never broke.

“Jack at the time was in his late 60s,” Sellers said, explaining how Miller couldn’t pick up on the nefarious nature of the call quickly. Sellers also noted that since Stern was on Sirius XM radio, Stern wasn’t bound by FCC censorship rules the same as Miller was, being on AM radio, not that Miller needed the censors himself.

The clips went viral with over 10 million hits on the radio show.

As recounted in Niven’s column when Miller died in 2021, Stern offered a tribute to the Tabor City icon.

“We want to honor Jack and just say thank you for putting up with Richard and Sal and we always celebrate the life of a fellow broadcaster,” Stern said, as recounted by Niven. “Jack was right, they are idiots.”



Eric Sellers at the station studio located on Avon Street in Tabor City.



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SHINING THE LIGHT ON ST. JAMES CHURCH

STORY BILL THOMPSON

PHOTOS DONNA SCOTT, JUSTIN SMITH & SUBMITTED

The art of stained glass had its origin in medieval Europe, traveled to America in the 16th century and became extremely popular in church architecture in the 19th century. In the mid-1950s an excellent example of stained glass artwork was installed in the windows of St. James AME Church in Whiteville.

Members of the congregation thought the beautiful windows would be a proper memorial for members who had passed on. So the congregation provided funds for the designation of the windows. Over the years, 10 beautiful windows were installed with 24 inscriptions. Their beauty was a reminder of the devotion of previous members and enhanced the surroundings of the worship events that took place in the church.

Then the town of Whiteville grew and the traffic increased until it became necessary for the church on W. Walter Street to give way to the expansion of Powell Boulevard (N.C. 701 Bypass). As the congregation made arrangements last year to move to a new location, settling on W. Williamson Street, one of the major considerations was what to do with the historic windows.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation allotted some funds for the replacement of the church, but it was not enough to cover the cost of relocating the fragile old windows to the new building. So, once again, the congregation took on the challenge of moving a part of their history, maintaining a heritage of devotion and the memory of those who had gone before.

Relocating a church is not an easy task. The congregation had to consider site location, availability of the needed type of building, the possibility of building a new building and more issues. But there was never a question about moving the windows.

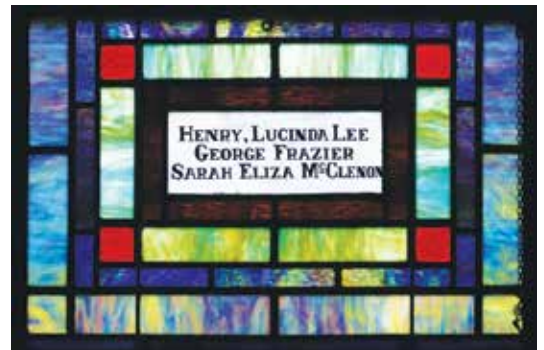
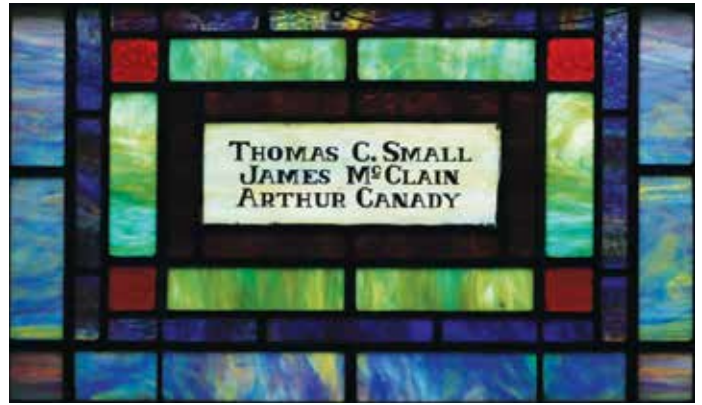
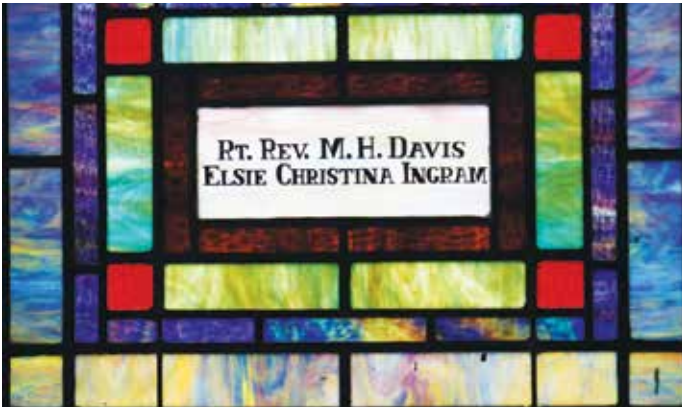
For nearly 70 years, God had pushed the sunlight through the beautiful windows, casting his blessings on the congregation, reminding them of his ability to shine a light on their lives even in the midst of eco-



Employees of Strickland Stained Glass Associates prepare the frames to hold the windows removed from the church.



The sturdy frames were individually made for each window prior to their removal to storage pending installation in the new church building.



Each of the windows retains the memorial designation made by the congregation so many years ago.

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The congregation of St. James A.M.E. Church gathered faithfully at the old church on Walter Street for almost 70 years.

conomic depression, civil unrest and a decreasing number of faithful worshippers.

Dr. Dauna Bartram is the minister for the church. She said, “The stained glass windows represent our Ebenezer (stone of help). We are standing on the backs of the saints and how they labored in the old church. It also commemorates how they persevered through storms, floods, tears, sweat, pain, racism, social injustice, prejudices, inequality, and unbelief. We will always remember, not just for a few days or years or decades, but for generations how God came to the rescue when His people prayed and humbled themselves before Him.”

The Lord didn’t rest and neither did the church members. They started a campaign to raise the necessary funds to move the windows to the new site on Williamson Street. Many people from the community joined the members in providing the funds, but at this time there is still a need.

When the demolition crew arrived at the old sanctuary, there was still one relic that church members wanted to save – the cornerstone placed there when the building was constructed in July 1944.

Ella Scarborough has been the treasurer of the church since she was a teenager. She is a member of the committee set up to seek the funds for the transfer of the windows. “This church, including windows, has been a major part of the lives of so many people,” she said. “It is important to us to be able to continue to memorialize those who have passed and to provide a beautiful environment for worship.”

In addition to the beauty of the windows, Donna Scott, chair of the Historic Landmarks



Dr. Dauna Bartram is the minister at St. James A.M.E. Church



From a recent article in The News Reporter, this photo shows Darryl McNeill of Morgan Trucking carrying the cornerstone away from St. James A.M.E. Church in Whiteville before a crew demolished the sanctuary. After buying the church property, DOT allowed the congregation to remove the stained glass windows and cornerstone. The church plans to display them at its new sanctuary on Williamson Street.

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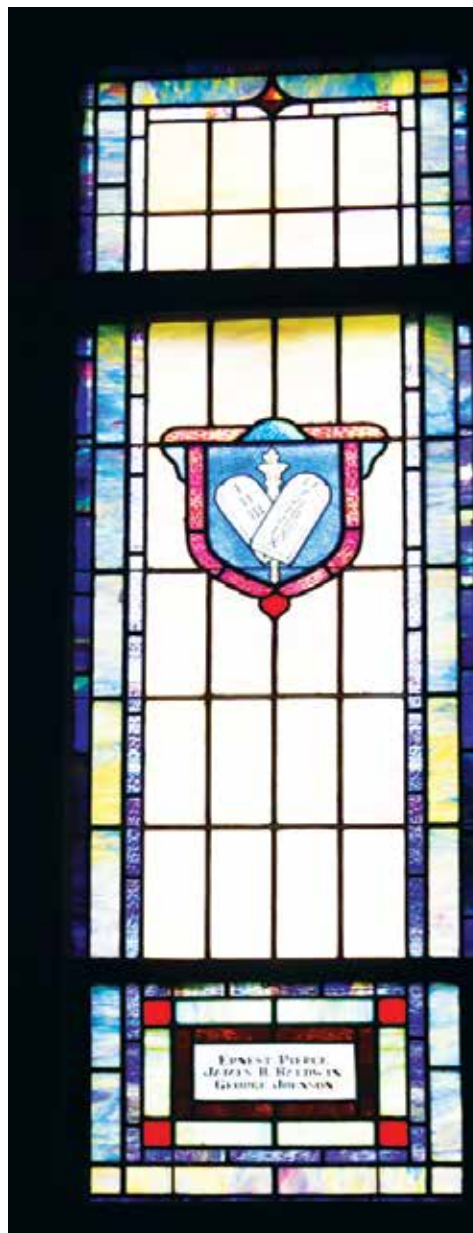


Safely stored in their custom-made frames, the beautiful stained glass windows await installation at the new church on Williamson Street.

Program of the Reuben Brown House Preservation Society, sees a special historical significance. She noted that, “The Black community not only raised funds for the original windows but helped construct the building itself. This took a lot of sacrifice and commitment, and I believe the preservation of these windows will stand as documentation of the congregation’s effort as well as the beauty of the windows themselves. Just down the street, St. Mark AME Zion also stands as a memorial to the efforts of the community to provide a place of worship.”

Scott is also a member of the board of Preservation North Carolina, which has initiated a new program called “We Built This” to bring recognition to contributions of the Black community to the architecture and crafts of the state. She noted that a traveling exhibition of this project, now in Charlotte, will be in Wilmington beginning June 20. While neither St. Mark nor St. James is part of the exhibition, the two churches are excellent examples of what the exhibit is promoting.

For those who would like to make a contribution to the St. James windows project fund, see donation information in the box to the right.



SAVE THE WINDOWS PROJECT

Since our last edition of *954 Magazine*, the St. James Church created a committee to steer the project to save the stained glass windows that is led by longtime church member Ella Scarborough.

According to consultant Michael Strickland of Stained Glass Associates of Knightdale, N.C., the 10 memorial “vents” that honor members and church groups plus other windows safe to move have been removed and stored in wooden frames in the new sanctuary. The estimated total project cost is \$8,000.

Generous donations made to the church at this time have made removing and storing the stained glass windows and cornerstone possible. Pastor Bartram and the congregation appreciate the community’s support to save the windows.

If you would like to make a contribution to help fund the restoration of the windows at the new sanctuary, please write a check to St. James AME Church with subject line “Stained Glass Window Removal Project,” and mail to St. James A.M.E. Church, P.O. Box 663, Whiteville, N.C. 28472.



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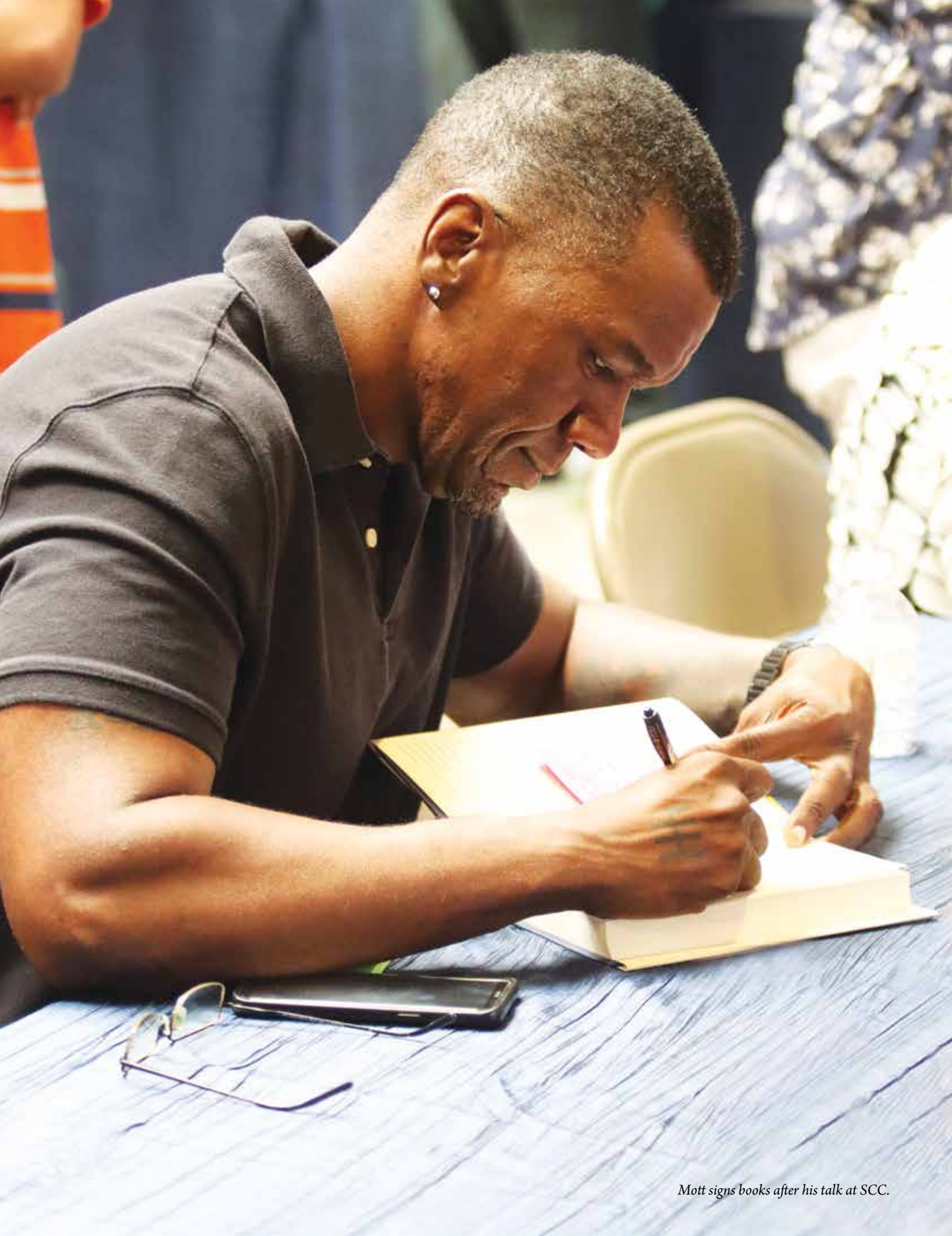


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Mott signs books after his talk at SCC.

BLACK, BROKEN, BEAUTIFUL

Thoughts from Bolton's Jason Mott

STORY DIANA MATTHEWS

PHOTOS GRANT MERRITT

In 2013, author and Bolton native Jason Mott spent six weeks flying from city to city pitching his first published novel, “The Returned.” He worked himself to the point of physical collapse rushing to whatever appearances his agent and publisher scheduled for him.

“Anything anybody told me to do, if it was going to help sell books, I would do it,” he said. “If they said, ‘Get in this cage and fight this monkey,’ I would do it.”

Even after what he called the “wild and wacky” ordeal of his first book tour, Mott was determined to keep writing full-time. He published his fourth novel, “Hell of a Book,” last year. In November, he won the 2021 National Book Award for Fiction for the novel.

Judges described “Hell of a Book” this way: “In a structurally and conceptually daring examination of art, fame, family and being Black in America, Mott somehow manages the impossible trick of being playful, insightful, and deeply moving, all at the same time.”

Mott says he’s lost track of how many cities he’s visited since receiving the award in November. His website lists upcoming appearances in Greensboro, Raleigh, Philadelphia and Paris, France.

“I was on the road for 21 days during the month of March alone,” Mott told *954 Magazine*. “And it’s all about to reset in the coming months when the paperback version of ‘Hell Of A Book’ launches at the end of June.”

Origin of a book

Mott’s pathway to bestseller status and one of the country’s most prestigious writing awards started in Bolton.

He graduated from East Columbus High School before earning a bachelor of fine arts degree in creative writing and a master of fine arts degree in poetry from UNC-Wilmington.

During his university work and before publishing “The Returned,” Mott held manufacturing, retail and call-center jobs. He now writes full-time and is a part-time faculty member of UNCW’s Creative Writing Department.

He credits much of who he is today to his parents’ encouragement and the Columbus County teachers who gave him a love of reading.

Between speaking engagements in 2013, Mott watched the news of a Black man who had been shot by police in Minnesota and decided that, for the first time, he “wanted to write about the Black experience in America.”

“Hell of a Book” draws partly on Mott’s memories of growing up Black in Bolton.

The book’s narrator is a middle-aged author whose name is never stated in the story. While enduring a grueling book tour, he repeatedly sees and talks to a boy he calls The Kid, whom no one else can see. The narrator has been prone to what he calls a “daydreaming

problem” since his teens, and he can’t remember much of his childhood.

“Reality as a whole — past or present — just isn’t a good place to hang out,” he says. “Reality is full of bad news.” He lives in a world of anonymous one-night stands and binge drinking.

The ever-present Kid pleads with the narrator to “See me...” but the jaded author says, “It always makes me want to drink when my daydreams try to convince me that they’re real.”

Another juvenile character, “Soot,” wishes he could become invisible so he won’t be bullied for his astonishingly black skin. The author has a hard time remembering that he himself is Black, and he wonders what that means and how he is supposed to deal with the fact.

Both The Kid and Soot have experienced traumatic effects of racism, and the narrator begins to recover painful buried memories of his own, leading to a crisis that shatters the wall he has built to protect himself from reality.

Watershed

“Hell of a Book” gives readers a lot of themes to take away, Mott said. “I think the largest one would be to simply acknowledge that America is a country with room for improvement, and that the American experience is not the same for everyone and that’s something we should all be trying to fix.”

The narrator of “Hell of a Book” says he’s “always loved the South,” in spite of considering it “America’s longest-running crime scene” because of the history of racism. He calls his hometown of Bolton “a hick town in the middle of a hick county in the lower leg of a hick state.” Another passage calls Whiteville “a sleepy, small southern town in a sleepy, small southern county with a long history of strawberry production and lynchings.”

In spite of those characterizations, Mott says he’s heard largely appreciative reactions from area readers, who are pleased to see small-town life represented in a novel.

Mott was about 10 years old when the shooting death of Bolton’s former mayor, Sidney Bowen, occurred, and he found himself marching with the NAACP in protest. “It was a watershed moment for my life,” Mott said, “a time when everything that came after it was irrevocably changed.” The novel includes a fictionalized version of the tragedy. “I hope that I have done that moment justice in at least some small way,” Mott said.

Mott uses the word “beautiful” more than 30 times in “Hell of a Book.” Near the end his narrator comments to a character who’s been murdered that, “I don’t know what to do with what happened to you ... To all the kids like you who got shot and maybe even lived through it and grew up to be people like me: Black and broken and trying to remember that they are beautiful.”

The author

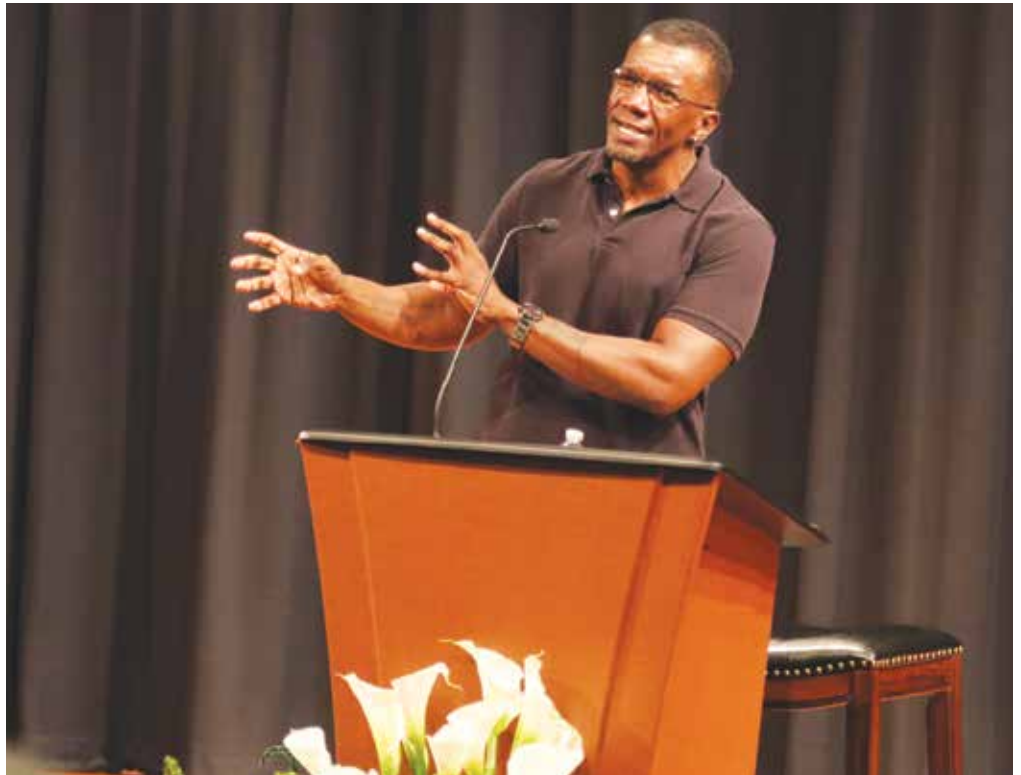
In April Mott read a passage from “Hell of a Book” and answered questions about his work at Southeastern Community College’s auditorium.

Responding to a question about the meaning of “home,” Mott said that, “Home is wherever you decide it is.” He said that, contrary to what Thomas Wolfe said, “I very much can go home again,” but it’s dangerous to think home can stay the same in a changing world.

Mott said he wrote five bad novels before succeeding with “The Returned,” but the practice was “a learning experience.” He said his characters remain on his mind long after he’s completed a book.

He advised a prospective writer to revise diligently, seek an agent, and “start your next book” as soon as the first one is complete.

Mott’s website, jasonmottauthor.com, lists his previous awards for his published novels and books of poetry, which can be purchased online.



Bestselling author Jason Mott spoke to an audience of about 90 in the auditorium of Southeastern Community College on April 24. In November Mott received the National Book Award for Fiction, one of the most prestigious writing honors in the U.S.



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Q&A: Jason Mott on fiction and real life

If you could speak to the protagonist of “Hell of a Book,” what would you tell him?

I think so much of the book is this journey through the uncertainty of “Will things be okay?” There are so many things happening that are so terrible and so confusing, you always wonder, “Is it going to be okay?” [The three main characters] are all in a similar state of distress and worry about the future. I would say to all of them, “It will be okay. Just hold on.” When you’re going through sustained adversity, you have to find the moments that make you happy. You have to find out what “happy” is for you. Happy has to coexist with the terrible things.

Tell us about your family.

I was born in Columbus County. Both of my parents have passed away and I have two older sisters. I have a lot of extended family in Bolton, East Arcadia, Riegelwood and other communities in Columbus and Bladen counties.

What schools did you attend before East Columbus?

I went to elementary and middle school at Acme-Delco Elementary and middle school in Riegelwood. So many of my teachers were very big on reading. I was in all the reading clubs. I have a lot of memories of them keeping me from misbehaving too much and making me read stuff, which was great. There were so many of them and they had such major parts in getting me where I am right now.

Where did you work locally before becoming a writer?

I worked at Victaulic in Leland for a few years before college. Then, during college, I worked at various retail jobs in Wilmington and, finally, before my first novel was published, I worked at the Verizon Wireless call center in Wilmington.

What are some things you do outside of work?

I run a lot and do Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu — choking people, I’m a big fan of that. Running and Jiu-Jitsu both force you to quiet the noise of the world and focus. By clearing out my head, about a half hour to an hour after I’m done, the best ideas will just bubble up. My creativity spikes when I’m consistently exercising.

What attitudes do you emphasize to your students?

I strongly emphasize patience and consistent work. Writing is a skill that can be cultivated, but it takes time and consistency. I went through phases where I wasn’t as good a writer as I thought I was. But with good habits of persistence — kind of the workhorse mentality — I got better at it. No matter where you are, if you just are persistent, you will improve. You will pass the people who had natural talent but didn’t encourage it.

How closely does your protagonist’s description of a shooting in “Hell of a Book” match your boyhood memories from when Sidney Bowen was killed?

Fairly closely, as I remember them. I was young at the time and a lot of years have passed, but that event has stuck with me in ways I’m still trying to process. [My purpose in writing the fictional scene based on Bowen’s death] was to say that, “These things do happen in small towns” — to send multiple messages but also to tell my story in a kind of veiled way.

What’s your work schedule like?

I have my writing time in the morning that no one is allowed to interrupt. Not friends, not family, not my [teaching] job. Writing is always the number one priority.

How much do you outline your novels in advance?

Before I start a novel, I have a rough outline. That’s something I learned the hard way. I used to start without an outline, and I would always burn out or stall around page 150. Because by 150 pages you’ve got 45,000 to 50,000 words. It’s too much for the human brain to hold.

An outline makes it bite-sized. I’m not writing a whole novel. I’m just writing this one scene, and this one scene, and so on and so forth.

Usually if I can’t finish an outline for something, it’s not a novel. It might be a short story. It might be a poem, but it’s not enough to make a novel.

Who are your favorite authors (novelists, poets, nonfiction...)?

Three of my favorite authors are John Gardner, William Golding, and Toni Morrison.



“Home is where you decide it is,” Mott said. The author still lives in his hometown of Bolton but fits in speaking engagements across the U.S. and beyond. A good work ethic is more important than talent, Mott told the audience at SCC. He said he emphasizes consistent practice to his students.

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BLENDING THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

STORY BILL THOMPSON

PHOTOS GRANT MERRITT & LAKE WACCAMAW DEPOT MUSEUM

Did you know that folks used to make “excursions” to Lake Waccamaw on a train? People wanted to spend some time near the beautiful body of water: some wanted to fish a little, some wanted to swim in the safety of the shallow lake, some wanted to spend time on the water in canoes or speed boats or Captain Potts’ excursion boat, and some wanted to dance at the pavilion. And, since they had come by train, there had to be a train depot, a place to disembark and then gather to go back home.

Although the railroad had been stopping at the lake since the 1850s, it was not until 1904 when such excursions were so popular that the Atlantic Coast Line built a depot and promoted the lake as a day trip destination.

When the railroad closed the depot in the mid-1970s, the Lake Waccamaw Woman’s Club began a project to raise funds to move it and make it a museum of not only the rail-

road but the Lake Waccamaw area. In 1977 the museum opened. The old building had been moved about 400 yards south of the railroad toward the lake, and it became a destination on its own, a place to learn and a place of enjoyment.

With the woman’s club leading the way, a board of directors was formed to organize the development and maintenance of the historic building and to create programs that would preserve the history of the area. The club has continued to be a major part of the organization.

The first chairperson of the museum board was Hester McCray. Other leaders have included Chris Allen, Mary Mintz, Sally Council, Eloise McLean, Eugenia Blake, Nancy Sigmon, Veronica Marsh and Phyllis Russ.

Pam Winsky is the current chairperson. Pam and her family relocated to the



Karen Gore, depot museum curator, shows a museum visitor artifacts from the timber industry as well as tools made by Council Tool Company on display in the museum.

lake in 2013. She said she loves the quiet of the lake and the real sense of community that exists. "It's such a unique and precious place," she said. The depot and its activities are one of the big draws when our visitors come to the Lake. I love meeting visitors and new residents when they come to the depot and introducing them to different aspects of our community."

The most frequent way for visitors to become involved with the museum is to take one of the tours provided by knowledgeable docents. Large groups might want to make reservations, but visitors are always welcome to drop by.

The museum has been fortunate to have had the services of some very good directors over the years. Julie Madison, Lyn Billington, Michelle Gore, Ginger Littrell (two terms), Becky Lane, Blanche Garrell and Mazie Smith have held the position at different times.

Karen Gore is now serving in that role. In reflecting on her involvement, she said, "I've been curator for the depot museum for several years now, and it's so fun to meet the residents and visitors. The depot is the perfect place for a day trip, so we have many visitors from out of town. School age kids have a wonderful time at the depot. We give educational tours to groups, kids and anyone who would like a quick run-through of the highlights of the museum.

"Working with this board of directors is a delight for me. I'm fortunate to be in a group of people who care about the depot and the community and work so well together".

Karen Hall is a current board member and a native with a unique view of



The Lake Waccamaw train depot was constructed by local labor in 1904.



In 1995 The News Reporter ran an article announcing that the Department of Cultural Resources agreed to grant \$55,000 in discretionary funds to help restore the train depot.



In 1977 the train depot was moved to its present location about 400 yards south of the old railroad.



Many families make a trip to the depot an educational and entertaining part of their vacation.

the need for the museum. She noted that, "Lake Waccamaw is an idyllic place. Whether your thing is water sports, birdwatching, alligator watching (yes, that is a thing), hiking, biking, antiquing, or just watching spectacular sunrises and sunsets... Lake Waccamaw has it. The lake is brimming with nature and is rich in history and culture.

"The Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum was created to preserve the lake's history and the local culture. One visit to the museum provides residents and visitors alike with a deeper understanding of this natural lake and explains why it was instrumental in the development of our community.

"As a former public school teacher and a resident of Lake Waccamaw, I can truly appreciate the importance of the Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum," said Karen Hall. It is impossible

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Karen Gore and volunteer docents are available to give tours to groups who visit the depot museum.



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Saturday morning "jam sessions" are always fun for the audience and performers.



Lots of souvenir items are available in the gift shop.

to visit the museum and not learn something! The tours and exhibits bring yesterday's stories to life for current and future generations. I am excited to be able to work with others that love and respect our community."

In addition to tours, the depot sponsors several activities for the public, including the popular Lunch at the Lake held every May. On the third Saturday of each month, the Acoustic Music Jam brings together local musicians and singers for a fun time. At other times various individuals will present programs related to the history of the area. Thelma Green recently talked about Betsyburg, the old isolated settlement on the south side of the lake that was the site of harvesting cypress to be made into shingles in the early part of the 20th century. The depot also hosted a program about the history and current restoration of the Historic Columbus County Courthouse.

Even during the pandemic, the museum has continued to provide information to the public. Curator Gore stated that, "During our five-month shutdown due to the COVID-19 concerns, I posted hundreds of archive photos on our Facebook page and called it 'Bringing the Museum to You.'"

Apart from the important history of the railroad and the Lake Waccamaw area, Gore pointed out that, "We love the families to visit because there really is something for everyone. Kids just love the caboose and others the building and grounds. Guests are free to take photographs and share them with us. I love posting them on our Facebook page

What's Happening at Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum

Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum is open Wednesday through Saturday from 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

Depot Activities

Rummikub Mondays at 1 p.m.

RailRoad Bridge Tuesdays at 1 p.m.

Lake Waccamaw Woman's Club

Third Monday at 7 p.m.

Acoustic Jam Sessions

Third Saturday 9:30 a.m.–noon

Bird Club Fourth Tuesday at 11 a.m.

Follow Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum on Facebook for upcoming events and programs.

Friday Fest Covered Dish Dinners

Friday Fest covered dish dinners start in May, every first and third Friday at 6:30 p.m. at the museum. Donations are appreciated to benefit the Depot Museum and Rube McCray Library.

Annual New York City Trip

The annual Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum trip to New York City is Nov. 17–20, 2022. Rooms are reserved at the Millennium Broadway Hotel, which is two blocks from Times Square and within walking distance of many sites you will want to visit. The trip is the weekend before Thanksgiving, which gives everyone the chance to experience the splendor of New York City at Christmastime. Contact the Depot Museum for more information at 910-646-1992 or info@lakewaccamawdepotmuseum.com.

Visit the museum gift store

"Best Little Gift Shop in the Area"

The Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum gift store is stocked with new summer merchandise including local art and a huge selection of puzzles, hats, visors, original design T-shirts and sweatshirts, jewelry, local honey, specialty soaps, note cards and ornaments. It has a complete youth section with new kids' toys. Proceeds from sales help fund restoration of the depot museum.

Lake Waccamaw Depot Museum is located at 201 Flemington Dr., Lake Waccamaw, N.C. 28450. For more information about the museum and activities, call 910-646-1992 or email info@lakewaccamawdepotmuseum.com. Look for event and program information on Facebook at www.facebook.com/LKWDepotMuseum.



because everyone’s experience is unique to them. We try to get to know our guests and give them the best museum experience possible.”

Perhaps one of the most important functions of the museum is the opportunity for children and adults to view their past through the tactile experience, touching objects used many years ago, standing in the building and the caboose, hearing the voices of people who personally created much of our history. Time may cloud those experiences and dim the images, but now, in the present, we can see the past and better understand the present and the future.



Old photos and artifacts create an interesting corner of the museum.



A model of “The Bohemian Girl” is a fascinating exhibit.

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Mildred C. Thompson and the author, Mari B. Thompson, at age 3

MAGIC CAKE

STORY MARI B. THOMPSON

PHOTOS THOMPSON FAMILY PHOTOS

I just ate the best cake I've ever had in my 53 trips around the sun. It was a yellow layer cake with chocolate icing. My daughter, Mia, used my grandmother's recipe to make it for my birthday and presented it on the cake plate that was Grandma's, too. The plate still has masking tape on the bottom with my grandmother's name, Mildred T., written in her handwriting. I'm sure she placed it there before a treat was set on top and someone walked it across her backyard to a homecoming at Hallsboro Baptist Church on an October Sunday afternoon.

The cut glass plate is covered by a plain tin dome that has the dents and scratches of a well-loved kitchen staple that has seen six or seven decades of birthdays, Christmases, and Sunday dinners. This was not an original pairing, but I never remember one without the other. They lived on the speckled Formica countertop in Grandma's kitchen and were as much a fixture as the little jar of bacon grease beside the stove or the Lake Waccamaw Lions Club calendar on the wall. The dome always concealed some sugary surprise on the dish underneath that felt as if it had been made just for you. My family calls it the magic cake plate. All the cakes served on it are magically the best ones, each better than the last.

Grandma's cakes were delicious, of course, but my memories aren't of chocolate or coconut. They are of her. There was no better therapy than balancing on a three legged stool in her kitchen, the small green pleather seat sticking to my legs, for a long talk with Grandma over a plate of sugar and love.

Some conversations began after a time of moody adolescent silence, or later, a patently false bright report about the state of my personal life. She let me come to her in my own time. Grandma always knew when to listen but would ask questions measured out perfectly like the flour and vanilla and uncovered the truth I hadn't told.



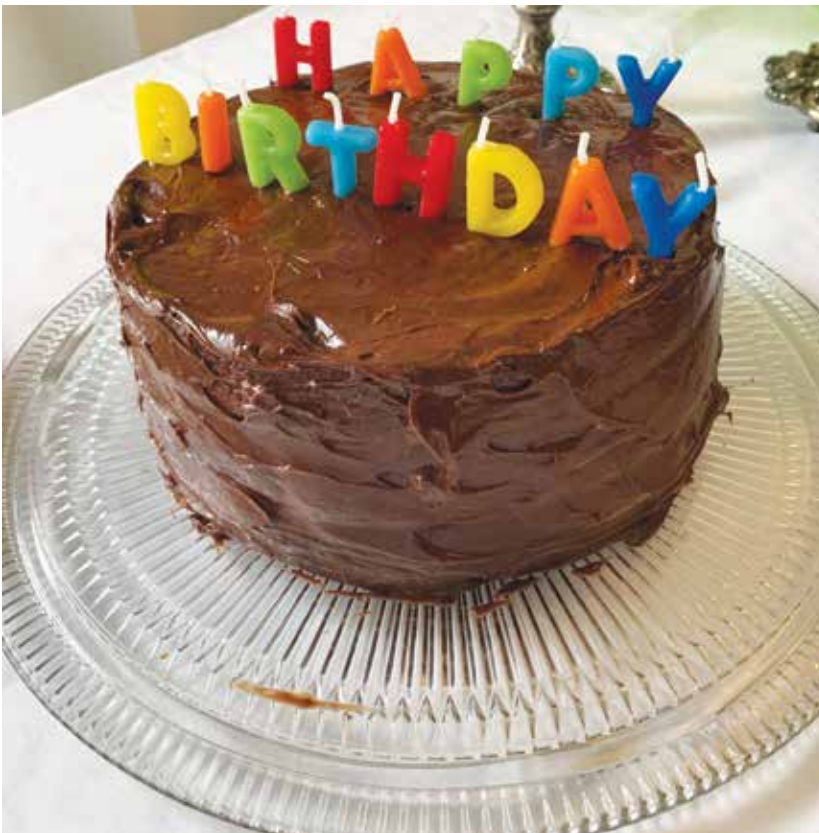
Mari B. Thompson at her second birthday celebration



Mari B. Thompson's grandfather, William "Bill" Thompson Sr., and her grandmother holding Mari B. at Easter Sunday services in 1971 at Hallsboro Baptist Church.



Mildred Thompson with her great-grandson, Drew Jones, who is serving her cake



The family cake baking tradition is carried on by Mildred's great-granddaughter, Mia Jones, who has started baking and recently made a birthday cake for her mother using her great-grandmother's recipe.

I was not the only beneficiary of this wizardry. My children were fortunate to spend time with their great-grandmother and remember Grandma Mildred and her cakes. My son, Drew, is the only great-grandson and was the apple of her eye. His last visit with her was at the beginning of his own turbulent adolescence. Grandma was in the rehabilitation center in Whiteville that she would never leave. I have a picture of him patiently feeding Grandma a slice of cake just as she had once done for him. He had the typical scowl of a 14-year-old. Drew was careful not to cut too large a bite and dabbed gently at the corners of her mouth with a paper napkin between forkfuls. It was a moment of such sweetness and love in a sad time.

Reverend Ed Vogt related his experiences in Miss Mildred's kitchen when he spoke at her funeral service. My grandparents' home was beside the church, so he had to walk past their side door every day on his way home for lunch or at the end of his day. He told of the many times that my grandmother had invited him in for a bite of her cake. Somehow, she had known to make his favorite that day. He would leave after second helpings and a heart-to-heart that he hadn't been aware he'd needed but did. That was her talent, he said. My grandmother never went back to school after she married or fulfilled her girlhood dream of becoming a nurse but mended broken hearts and comforted the wounded in her own way. She knew when others needed to be helped or healed.

The recipe Mia used is one that Grandma shared with me only a few years before she passed. I would ask her for it and her blue eyes would twinkle, but she would only give me a sly smile and tell me, "One day." I guessed many times over the years and was always wrong. Granddaddy winked at me once and told me the secret to her sweet cakes was that she stuck her finger in them. My 60-something grandmother blushed. I still think it's the most romantic thing I've ever heard and the more so because it was from a decidedly unromantic source. I shared this story with Mia when I taught her the recipe. Now it's her yardstick as well as mine for sweet talk from would-be Romeos.

When Grandma finally shared the recipe with me, we both laughed. It's simple, really. When she died just weeks after my mother, I decided to share the secret recipe with my teenage daughter. The loss of them both at once gave me a sense of urgency. Few things make you aware of your own mortality like the death of a parent. Grandma Mildred, my father's mother, lived into her 90s, but my mother was only 74 when she lost her second battle with cancer.

My daughter Mia is 16 and shy but loves to bake cakes and share them. She inherited blue-gray eyes, dark hair and sharp wit from

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MAGIC CAKE

my grandmother. When I shared Grandma's recipe with her, she began to make cakes regularly. She puts them on our cake plate, and when I walk in the door and see the silver dome on the counter it feels familiar. We have wonderful conversations over slices of cake. Some are deep and important. Some are light and silly. Stories are shared. Hopes and fears confided. For a mother to a teenage girl, this is such a gift. It's magic.

It's been a long time since I sat in Grandma's kitchen. We sold the little white house beside the church and went through the decades of household goods she had collected. Some of it was just stuff like the faded potholders with a burn mark here or there. The detritus of a house that had seen a lifetime of use.

But there was also the bone china with the little blue flowers I'd eaten Sunday dinners on all my life. The gold-colored glass goblets that had held oceans of sweet tea. Her mother's cast iron skillet.

And the cut glass cake plate with the worn tin dome.

This isn't just a thing to me. It's a tangible connection to her. A relic of my past when unconditional love and understanding were served to me on a plate with a glass of cold milk. She made a part of me as surely as she made the cakes that magically soothed and nurtured. I want to pass this feeling to my daughter. That's the recipe she left me.

Sometimes sweet. Sometimes measured. Made with love and a little magic.



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DIVE DEEP INTO COLUMBUS COUNTY'S PAST

*Digital records of
The News Reporter available online*

STORY JOSEPH WILLIAMS

PHOTOS ASHLEY KNOX, JUSTIN SMITH, IMAGES FROM *THE NEWS REPORTER* COLLECTION BY THE WILLIAM MADISON RANDALL LIBRARY AT UNC-WILMINGTON



This advertisement offers “nice, young, fat” Tennessee mules for sale in Tabor City in 1924.



“Almost everyone reads *The News Reporter*” — this in-house advertisement from 1939 notes that “the CHILDREN of TODAY are the BUYERS of TOMORROW,” and therefore are “worth cultivating as present and future customers.”

Few residents of Columbus County may remember the now nonexistent German immigrant community known as New Berlin. Their Concord grapes were “as successfully produced here as in California,” according to one writer in *The News Reporter* in 1912.

Many may not know this, but in Jan. 1963, the Whiteville Police Department discovered a four-man theft ring, which led to the solving of a total of 39 cases.

People may have forgotten about 5-year-old chainsmoker Jerome McAdoo Buffkin, who lived near Chadbourn in the 1930s. “All entreaties of his parents can’t seem to break him of smoking,” the article noted.

In 1924, there were advertisements for Tennessee mules. In 1982, there were advertisements to have a second landline phone installed.

And on Tuesday, May 17, 1977, Whiteville High School drama students performed an original 15-minute play for their younger colleagues at Whiteville Primary School and Waccamaw Academy about why littering is a bad thing.

Unique stories such as these might have been lost forever if not for the digitization of *The News Reporter’s* archives.

Along with *The News Reporter*, archivists at UNC-Wilmington are executing a larger project to digitize newspapers throughout southeastern North Carolina.

“We live in such a rapidly growing and changing part of the state,” said project leader Nathan Saunders, “that I think it’s often easy to forget the roots of southeastern North Carolina and to forget its past.”

“This is one way in which we can preserve that.”

‘Our pleasure’ and ‘a public service’

That’s how Saunders, also the director of the Center for Southeast North Carolina Archives and History at UNC-Wilmington, described the digitization project.

“Our purpose is to connect the people, the communities of southeastern North Carolina to the sources of their history and culture. So much of that history and culture,” Saunders explained, “is bound up in these local newspapers.”

Such as when the Whiteville City Council legalized the viewing of movies on Sundays in 1946.

John and Ashley Knox — Saunders’ assistants, who happen to be married to each other — are also helping to preserve these timeless historic moments documented by *The News Reporter*.

“Minus a hiccup here and there,” — including the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic — said John Knox, “this project has been a very fun project.”

The old papers contain a wealth of diverse and interesting stories, but Ashley Knox joked that, while working on such a large project as this, it’s important “not to get too distracted by new, shiny things.”

And this team’s dedication to this project has allowed for thousands of historical editions of *The News Reporter* to become freely

COLUMBUS COUNTY DEVELOPMENT EDITION—WHITEVILLE SECTION
THE NEWS REPORTER

Twenty-Fourth Year

FOR THE COUNTY OF COLUMBUS AND HER PEOPLE

Two Dollars Per Year

Whiteville, Metropolis of Columbus County Famed all Over Dixie as "The Tobacco Market"

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This issue from 1923 boasts that Whiteville was "famed all over Dixie" as a prime tobacco market. Note the subscription cost, located just below and to the right of the title of the paper, is only "two dollars per year."

accessible online.

"There are many personal stories in this newspaper, which makes it an intriguing resource," said Saunders, "but it's also, over the long-term, a real testimony to some large-scale historical forces that, if you're paying attention with the right mind-set and the right eye, can be really illuminating."

When it began

How this project began is a story in and of itself.

In March 2018, the Special Collections Department at the Randall Library at UNC-W contacted *The News Reporter* about signing up for a subscription to the paper and *954 Magazine*.

Stuart High Rogers and Becky High had been discussing how to preserve the hardbound compilations of *The News Reporter* for some time, so the topic naturally came up when High and Saunders spoke.

Meeting with High "piqued my interest," said Saunders.

Several months later, Rogers took one of the thick hardbound archival compilations of *The News Reporter* to the center. Saunders and his team examined the record and discussed the logistics of digitizing physical papers as opposed to microfilm, compared the costs involved and ultimately decided to take on the project.

The rest, as they say, is history.

How it's done

Ashley Knox said there are 133 reels of microfilm of *The News Reporter*, spanning thousands of issues from the years 1905 to 2000. Microfilm is similar to the reels used for vintage movie projectors, with each frame consisting of one page of the paper.

Invented in 1939, microfilm was an important innovation for the preservation of historical documents, for its time, as it consisted of "micropictures" of larger documents, like newspapers,

He's Only Five, But Likes His Cigars, Cigarettes, and Chews

Jerome McAdoo Buffkin, Who Lives Near Chadbourn, at 5 Is a Seasoned Smoker, And Likes Occasional Chew.

HANDLES HIS SMOKES JUST LIKE VETERANS

Doesn't Mind Having His Picture Taken; All Entreaties of His Parents Can't Seem to Break Him of Smoking

An unusual little person is Jerome McAdoo Buffkin, 5-years-old three feet tall, who lives with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. D. Buffkin, two miles directly south of Chadbourn on the Tabor road. For, at that age, he has been smoking and chewing tobacco for the past two years, and all the entreaties of his parents can't seem to stop him.

Jerome began the tobacco habit at 3. When most other youngsters are having difficulty holding a bottle between their tiny, chubby hands, this sturdy youngster was reaching for a smoke, or snatching a chew of his daddy's prize chewing tobacco.

When his parents discovered that he was using tobacco in almost every conceivable form, they immediately took steps to terminate such business. The old



fashioned hair brush found its mark, but plainly had little effect. Jerome continued to smoke, and he continued to chew.

At first he stuck to cigarettes, (Continued on Page Six)

Five-year-old Jerome McAdoo Buffkin "handles his smokes just like veterans," according to this article from 1935.

thereby effectively shrinking the size of documents several-fold. Archivists could then store more of them in tighter and more secure locations.

As useful as microfilm has been in the past, the center has decided that, in the interests of more secure preservation and increased user accessibility, it is important to transfer these documents from a physical medium to a digital one.

However, as Ashley Knox testified, the conversion process can be quite tedious: from mailing the reels to Maryland-based microfilm processing company Crowley, which creates a digital

copy of each page; to converting the subsequent image into three separate file types; embedding 17 lines of metadata into each file, including information such as the date such-and-such edition was published; and quality-checking student assistants' work, the process can take a long time.

John Knox explained further: "The physical microfilm was put in a box, mailed to a vendor, it was scanned, and then those files were sent to us on external hard drives."

Then, "We use a special software that is sold to us by the vendor" to process the files they receive, he said. That software al-



(L) Digital Initiatives Librarian Ashley Knox and (R) Digital Projects Specialist John Knox — who happen to be married to each other — are essential to completing the digitization of The News Reporter.



Nathan Saunders, director of the Center for Southeast North Carolina Archives and History at UNC-Wilmington, goes through the hardback archives of The News Reporter.



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This advertisement from a 1939 issue cautions potential car buyers against being "blind-folded" by other dealers.

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lows their assistants to process those proprietary files into a .tiff file, a very high resolution file which preserves as much data as it can but which is often “too large to attach” to typical websites.

Once this masterfile is created, copies are then made in more common file types, like a .jpg or a scannable .pdf, that has a lower resolution but is more accessible to typical computer users.

With so many steps to follow, “It seems like we’ve been working on this project forever,” said Ashley Knox.

But, she added, “You’ve got to have the patience to keep chugging along” and remain “loyal to the projects you’re working on” in order to complete them.

And that loyalty is paying off. So far, the center has uploaded 75 of the 133 reels, up to the year 1984.

Accessing the archives

“People love newspapers,” observed Saunders. And people seem to especially love *The News Reporter*.

According to Saunders, the database of *The News Reporter* is the most widely trafficked of those papers that have begun to be digitized. And that’s probably because it’s so easy to access.

Historical editions of *The News Reporter* are freely accessible for public viewing online. Just go to NRcolumbus.com, scroll down, and the portal to the digital archive will be near the bottom right corner of the screen.

Looking back, looking forward

“Part of the job of a good community newspaper,” said Les High, former owner of the paper, “is to not only be a trusted source for news but to publish the events and to profile residents, young and old alike, who aren’t typical newsmakers.”

The current owner, Justin Smith, echoed these sentiments.



According to this article, in 1977 students from Whiteville High School performed an original play for younger students about cleaning up litter in the *Land of Make Believe*.



One UNC-W student assistant checks to make sure a historical document is properly secured in the scanner before digitizing it.

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Front: Amber Robinson COTA/Rehab Director, Tara Birchall PTA



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Tracey G. Jones, Administrator
Deihlia Moore, Admissions Director

At *The News Reporter*, Smith said, “we are trying to improve the individual lives of our readers but also trying to make Columbus County a better place to live and to work.” And an integral part to that mission is “celebrating Columbus County.”

Celebrating Columbus County involves advertising its achievements, like when Whiteville became a Main Street Community last year; spotlighting its successes, like Ryleigh Madison’s performances on American Idol and MacKenzie Gore’s debut in Major League Baseball; and — just as indispensable — remembering its past.

Now, remembering that past is easier than ever with the digitization of these archives.

High said that, “*The News Reporter* is more than a newspaper that reliably brings Columbus County residents the news every week. It is the county’s definitive historical document.”

Lake Waccamaw is now said to have a mighty good policeman and on top of that the town commissioners have adopted some very commendable restrictions that are bidding fair to greatly improve the morals and decorum of visitors at this popular resort. Persons who go up town in bathing suits now are apt to find themselves invited to appear before the mayor.

A Lake Waccamaw news brief from the 1920’s reporting “commendable restrictions” adopted by the town commissioners concerning bathing suits worn “uptown.”

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To avoid “telephone tie-up,” this advertisement from Carolina Telephone in 1982 encourages residents of Columbus County to install a second landline in their homes.

Council Permits Sunday Movies

Vote Of 4-1 Favors Sunday Pictures During Hours Of 1-6 And 9-12

WINS PRAISE OF TREASURY DEPT.

DECISION FOLLOWS PUBLIC HEARING

Ministers And Federated Church Women Voice Opposition; Vote Favored Sunday Shows

By vote of four to one, Whiteville commissioners Tuesday night agreed to permit local movie houses to operate on Sunday between the hours of 1-6 and 9-12. The decision came after lengthy discussion during which Dr. S. A. Smith introduced two motions prohibiting the showing of Sunday movies, neither of which received a second.

The motion which finally passed was made by D. L. Love and seconded by Jackson. Voting for the motion were Love, Jackson, Fletcher and Jackson. Dr. Smith voted against it and refused a request to make it unanimous after the other four had carried it. There was no doubt as to what the outcome would be from the beginning of discussion. Jackson called for an election which would permit the people to decide the issue for themselves, but un-

Praise of the Waccamaw Bank and Trust company for its part in the Seven War Loan drives and the Victory Loan drive has been given in the presentation of an

By a 4-1 vote, Whiteville City Council legalized the viewing of movies on Sunday in 1946. “You asked for it, and now you’ve got to take it,” said disgruntled Council Member Dr. S.A. Smith, who cast the only “no” vote.

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Columbus Regional HEALTHCARE SYSTEM



CRHS Auxiliary volunteer Betsy McKee, volunteer coordinator Shauna Treadaway and volunteers Dixie Batten and Hank Williamson Jr.

AUXILIARY VOLUNTEER PROGRAM ENHANCES PATIENT CARE QUALITY AT COLUMBUS REGIONAL HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

STORY & PHOTOS GRANT MERRITT

For 28 years, the Auxiliary Volunteer Program at Columbus Regional Healthcare System has seen 183 volunteers serve 139,228 hours (not including 2022) and donate more than \$400,000 back to CRHS. Shauna Treadaway is a paid employee of the hospital and oversees the volunteers as coordinator. She is the education associate in addition to overseeing patient experience feedback.

Volunteers have raised money for new equipment for the physical therapy and cardiac rehab department, wireless scanners for each floor of the hospital, a van for laundry and food services, golf carts, teddy bears for patients, a gift for every first born baby of the new year, cancer care bags and a yearly \$1,000 HOSA scholarship for a high school senior.

Members of the Auxiliary Volunteer Program serve by running the Sunshine Gift Shop, assisting visitors as front desk receptionists, staffing the ambulatory surgery and registration area and restocking

supplies in the cancer care center. The money raised in the gift shop in addition to jewelry, shoe and uniform sale fundraisers supports all volunteer efforts.

The Sunshine Gift Shop is open four hours per day Monday through Friday. Treadaway wants to extend those hours back to eight hours per day and four hours on Saturday and Sunday with the help of five new volunteers. The gift shop is open from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. She is hoping to bring back the junior volunteers program so that high school students can receive healthcare experience, and she wants to start a new college volunteers program for college students “who may need volunteer hours or give back to the community.”

“I currently have room for 35 volunteers, but some of them have not returned because of COVID-19 or have other health issues,” Treadaway said. “We ask that you serve at least one four-hour shift per month, but we’d love for you to be able to serve four hours per week. It

lets us know that you'll be here consistently."

Treadaway explained that the decrease in volunteer numbers recently was due to people "aging out" or not being physically able to perform volunteer tasks. As coordinator of the volunteer program, Treadaway said the hardest part is seeing volunteers pass away. One of the best parts for Treadaway is seeing teachers who are retired being able to reconnect with former students who work at the hospital or are visitors at the hospital.

"At some point, all of these amazing, fantastic volunteers are either going to retire or pass away, and that just breaks your heart," Treadaway said. "Because you realize you're dealing with that going into it, I get joy from seeing volunteers interact with the staff and speaking with



Williamson restocks the blanket warmer in the Donayre Cancer Care Center at Columbus Regional Healthcare System.



Dixie Batten assists a customer in the Sunshine Gift Shop. The gift shop is open from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Monday through Friday. Proceeds support all volunteer efforts.

the community as they walk through the doors.”

Treadaway has realized a new trend with the kind of people who volunteer. She said that most volunteers used to be retired individuals and were recruited by friends who were already volunteers. Now, she is seeing younger volunteers who are not able to work a regular 9 to 5 job and “who want to get out, serve and feel like they’re doing something or feel like they have an important role to play.

“A lot of what we do here does impact patient care,” Treadaway said. “Whether it is donating funds, whether it’s walking a family member up to a patient’s room or directing patients from imaging to the lab if they’re lost. It all directly goes back to these individuals who choose to volunteer and want to do something positive. I see them coming in because they want to be around people, and they want to make a difference.”

To be a part of the auxiliary volunteer program at CRHS, there is an application and background check process. Treadaway encourages anyone to volunteer. With volunteers ranging from 40 to 95, she said that no one is too young or too old to volunteer. For more information on becoming an Auxiliary Volunteer, email Treadaway at streadaway@crhealthcare.org.



Betsy McKee assists visitors as the front desk receptionist.

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Auxiliary volunteers Betsy McKee, Dixie Batten and Hank Williamson Jr. in the CRHS Healing Garden.

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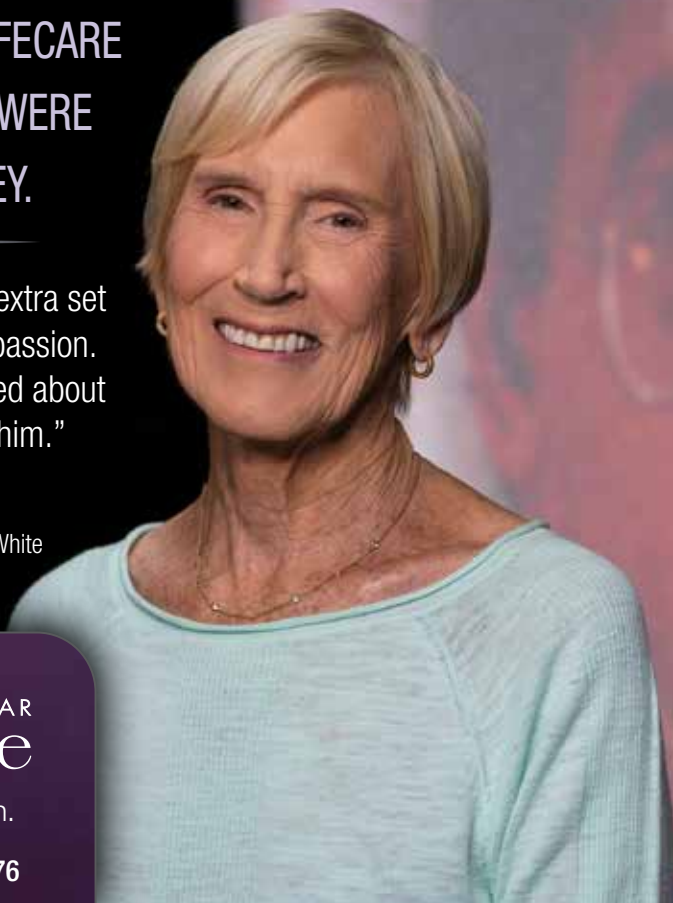
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954 EVENTS



35TH ANNUAL COLUMBUS COUNTY FIREWORKS CELEBRATION FRIDAY, JULY 1 SOUTH COLUMBUS HIGH SCHOOL

The Greater Tabor City Chamber of Commerce will present its annual Columbus County fireworks celebration Friday, July 1, at South Columbus High School's athletic field. Gates open at 6 p.m. and entertainment begins at 7 p.m.

Thanks to generous community sponsors, there is no admission charge. It is a fun-filled evening with vendors providing food and beverages for sale. No coolers, alcoholic beverages or pets are allowed.

A variety of stage entertainment will be provided and military veterans will be recognized and honored with fireworks flying at 9:30 p.m.



CHRISTMAS IN JULY FRIDAY, JULY 15 DOWNTOWN WHITEVILLE

Celebrate Christmas in July in Downtown Whiteville at Vineland Station Depot on Friday July 15, from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Entertainment includes live bands and wine sampling compliments of Cape Fear Winery & Vineyard. Craft beer sampling is compliments of Pharmacy on Main and Sundrop Slushies are compliments of Sarah Gore - Catering & Events.

Admission is \$30. Proceeds will support the purchase of new holiday decorations in downtown Whiteville.



FAIR BLUFF WATERMELON FESTIVAL SATURDAY, JULY 30 FAIR BLUFF

The Fair Bluff Watermelon Festival is July 30 and will be held on Riverside Drive in Fair Bluff. Visit the festival for a day full of melon fun including a parade, watermelon contests, vendors, great food and activities for the whole family.

Visit fairbluffwatermelonfestival.org or [facebook.com/fairbluffwatermelonfestival](https://www.facebook.com/fairbluffwatermelonfestival) for more information.



BOYS & GIRLS HOMES OF N.C. RODEO AUG. 19, 20 AND 21 BOYS & GIRLS HOMES BLACK'S TIRE EXHIBITION CENTER LAKE WACCAMAW

The Boys & Girls Homes Rodeo is on Aug. 19, 20 and 21. The event will begin at 8 p.m. on Aug. 19 and 20 with gates opening at 6 p.m. Tickets are available for purchase at the gate. The event time on Aug. 21 is still being finalized. Visit boysandgirlshomes.org/news for up-to-date event information and times.

General Admission - \$15

Military & First Responders - \$12 with ID

Kids 6-10 - \$10

5 & Under - Free



**50TH ANNUAL WACCAMAW SIOUAN POW WOW
FRIDAY & SATURDAY - OCT. 21-22
BUCKHEAD COMMUNITY**

The Waccamaw Siouan Indians, one of eight state-recognized Native American tribes in North Carolina, will hold their 50th annual Waccamaw Siouan Pow Wow on Oct. 21 and 22 at 7275 Old Lake Road, Bolton. Visit waccamaw-siouan.org for more information.



**THE 51ST N.C. YAM FESTIVAL
SATURDAY, OCT. 22
TABOR CITY**

The Yam Festival includes a week of events, including a Sweet Potato Cook-off, Pageant, Sweet Potato Auction, a Yam Gathering and Taste of Tabor. For up-to-date information, visit facebook.com/ncyamfestival and ncyamfestival.com.



**2022 KEVIN CONNOR MEMORIAL RUN
SATURDAY, OCT. 15
DOWNTOWN WHITEVILLE**

The 2022 Kevin Connor Memorial Run is on Oct. 15 in downtown Whiteville. Money that is raised funds the Trooper Kevin Conner Spirit of Community and Leadership Award. The racecourse begins at First Citizens Bank at 422 S. Madison Street and travels through downtown Whiteville and is stroller and wheelchair friendly. For more information and to register to run, visit runsignup.com/Race/NC/Whiteville/TrooperKevinConnerMemorialRun.



**NC PECAN HARVEST FESTIVAL
NOV. 3-5
DOWNTOWN WHITEVILLE**

Festival Events Include...

Nov. 3

N.C. Pecan Harvest Festival Queen's Reception is 7–8:30 p.m. at Columbus County Arts Council

Nov. 4

N.C. Pecan Harvest Festival Luncheon at 11:30 a.m. and Tour of Homes 1–4 p.m. and 5–7 p.m. Ticketed event.

Flood Water Connection and second annual First Responders' Burger Brawl 5:30–8:30 p.m. at Vineland Station

Nov. 5

Pecan Festival Parade starts at Whiteville High School at 10 a.m.

The Pink Slips perform noon to 4 p.m. at the festival stage located at Main and Madison streets.

Vintage Car Show in downtown Whiteville.

For more festival information, visit ncpecanfestival.com.

EDGEWOOD ELEMENTARY 65TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Nov. 18



WHITEVILLE JUNIOR WOMAN'S CLUB

March 5

Arctic Alligator Plunge



CELEBRATE THE ARTS

March 19



CAPE FEAR FARM HERITAGE ASSOCIATION
Southern Farm Days

March 18-20



SOUTHEASTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE
President's Ball

April 9



GREATER TABOR CITY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Spring Has Sprung

April 23



FARMERS UNION
Springfest

April 23



89TH N.C. STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

May 7



CLOTHING DOES NOT EQUAL CONSENT

A graphic with a teal and white striped background. It features various line-art icons of clothing items like shirts, dresses, pants, and bras. In the center is a white box with a black border containing the text "CLOTHING DOES NOT EQUAL CONSENT". Two hanger icons are positioned on either side of the text.

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Letters From Home

by Mari B. Thompson & Bill Thompson

You may move away, but you can never leave home

Dear Daddy,

Mia's birthday plans are coming along. Seventeen. My little girl is not so little. She's two inches taller than me! We're going to Charleston for a few days. She still loves a carriage ride and is more interested in the history than she used to be, but now her favorite thing is shopping on King Street and haggling in the market.

Do you remember when you came down with us for her first carriage ride through the city? It was on her third birthday. Mia, Drew, you and I stood in line in the hot Charleston sun near the carriage house where the rides begin. The children waited impatiently in the hot afternoon sun, so we bought fresh squeezed lemonade from a vendor in the old market. It ran down their little chins and fingers. We weren't any cooler, but they thought it was funny to watch Mama try to wipe their hands faster than they could get it all over themselves and each other so were entertained until our turn came to climb up into the horse-drawn carriage. The breeze was cool as the horses clopped through the streets and the children settled down a bit, Drew sitting quietly on one side of you and Mia squirming in my lap. I'm glad that we got to do that, Daddy. Three generations of our Southern family moving through an old Southern city together.

We're not Charlestonians, of course. Our history is not as cosmopolitan. Charleston is famous for its cuisine. Our Columbus County roots taste like a strawberry you eat in the garden while standing over the bush where it grew or a pot of boiled peanuts, salted exactly right not by any recipe but by experience.

My favorite epicurean experience in the Holy City was a Historic Charleston Supper Club dinner I attended in the dining room of the Governor's House Inn this spring. What a feast! Mike Webb, a culinary historian, served just enough Madeira to loosen the tongues of a table of strangers from all over the world before he served an interesting history lesson to accompany the food that represented three eras of Charleston history: Colonial, Antebellum and Reconstruction and beyond.

Mike knew his subject and presented all three courses while he explained the history of each. The colonial and antebellum recipes were adaptations of European dishes, but it was the third dish that was most interesting to me. The duck and sausage pilau (pronounced purlo), a dish Mike explained was African, European, and Southern influenced, was a dressed-up version of the many plates of chicken bog I grew up eating. It was the same basic recipe that was stirred together in the parking lot of the Hallsboro Volunteer Fire Department fundraisers and many church gatherings before being eaten out of Styrofoam containers with plastic forks. The Charleston duck and sausage was cooked with locally grown rice and served on fine china laid on an elegant white tablecloth, but still greeted my tastebuds like a favorite cousin at a family reunion. I had seconds. Maybe more.

I sat in the room where I was told four American presidents have dined and considered how our family and our part of the world are like this dish. We took our African and European beginnings and mixed them with what we grew here in the heat of this place to make something new. You can find us at many kinds of tables, humble or grand, but we're made from the same recipe wherever we are. And it tastes like home.

Love,
Nubbin



April 14th 1864

My Dear Wife,

Dear Nubbin,

I'm glad to see from your letter that you and Mia are going back to Charleston. I do remember that previous trip and I do love Charleston. I like all the history and the food. I think that trip with y'all was probably the only time I've been there purely as a vacation. All my other visits were for business or speaking engagements—which is business. But I always tried to find some time to look around while I was there.

Of course, the city is more than just Old Charleston. There's all the business and industry there, too. But it's the Old Charleston that draws folks like us back. And I'm glad that Drew and Mia have had the experience of seeing a place that is a reflection of a history of which we are a part. Certainly, Hallsboro and Charleston don't seem to have anything in common but if we look beyond the silverware and fine china and the imposing houses on Broad Street, you'll find people just like us. They have the same hopes and dreams; they want to provide the best they can for their families and keep them safe. Just because they may provide more of everything than some others, that doesn't make the hopes and dreams of others any less important. That includes the folks who came up with chicken bog in the first place.

Your comparison of pilau and chicken bog is excellent. The taste of food has little to do with what it is served on. As you know, Grandma Mildred used to have your Aunt Linda and me set a formal table every once in a while when we were growing up. She said we needed to know how to behave in formal situations. After all these years, I have eaten in several places that were as formal as you can get, but I never have used all the china, silverware and glasses Mama had us set out.

The environment of food does have an effect on how much we enjoy the food. Eating haute cuisine in a fine restaurant can be a great experience, but eating a hot dog cooked on a wire coat hanger over an open wood fire can be just as enjoyable. It really all depends on the company you're with.

I get almost as much pleasure out of a dining trip to Wilmington as I do from one to Charleston. You've got the ocean and the river, old houses, great restaurants and carriage rides. But in Charleston, I unconsciously keep looking for some cavalier gentleman to come in the door with Miz Scarlett's cousin on his arm or maybe pass their carriage on the street.

I'd love to get all y'all down here to Columbus County again. I would really like to take you and Drew and Mia on a mule and wagon tour of Hallsboro. There is really a lot to see if you know what to look for. Come by here on the way back and we'll see.

Love,
Daddy



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