

# MAY MUSEUM & PARK HISTORICAL NEWSLETTER

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**FALL 2024**



The May Museum and Park is dedicated to preserving and interpreting Farmville area history. Ms. Tabitha M. DeVisconti, bequeathed her 19th century home with its contents, the first house in Farmville, NC, to the Town of Farmville in 1983. The Town opened the facility in 1991 as the May Museum and Park. The museum's mission is preserving, interpreting, and sharing the history of the Farmville region to foster better understanding and appreciation of the people that built and contributed to Pitt County's rural heritage.

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The fall light leaves a beautiful tracery of tree shadows on the Museum grounds.

**B**oy, where did the summer go? And the pervasive heat and humidity...Shesh! I'm glad Fall is almost upon us. We hope you had a great summer and a safe one. We hope that all who read these newsletters enjoy the fascinating local history of the May Museum and the town of Farmville. Each issue of the newsletter will continue to have recent Museum events, history, old and new photos, biographies, and memorabilia all dealing with the appreciation of the May Museum and the Town of Farmville. You are always invited to become a member of The Friends of the May Museum which sponsors enjoyable social events in the Museum gardens throughout the year. Many thanks to those of you who have sponsored our Museum events! The following is a list of the upcoming events to put on your calendar.....

## **2024 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

- ❖ **Aug. 11, Sun. 3-5..(and by appt.) Winterville Museum open...2543 Church St., Winterville, NC (252) 321-2660**
- ❖ **Aug. 15-17, Thurs/Fri/Sat. Ayden Museum open [open every Thurs./Fri/Sat. 10:30-2:30] 554 Second Street, Ayden, NC...for appt. Andrea Norris (252) 746-4209**
- ❖ **Aug. 19, Tues....Pitt County Family Researchers...6:30--8:30 Farmville Library**
- ❖ **Sept. 8, Sun., History Speaks, with Roger Kammerer..2:30 Eastern Carolina Village and Farm Museum**
- ❖ **Sept. 19, Thurs....Music In the Park...5:30 -8:30 May Museum**
- ❖ **Sept. 21, Sat.,,, End of Summer Vendor Market..9-1...Eastern Carolina Village & Farm Museum**
- ❖ **Oct. 13, Sun. 3-5..(and by appt.) Winterville Museum open...2543 Church St., Winterville, NC (252) 321-2660**
- ❖ **Oct. 18-19. Fri. & Sat. ..John Lawson Days, Grifton Historical Museum & Indian Village.. 437A Creekshore Drive, Grifton, NC (252) 524-0190  
[www.johnlawsonlegacydays.org](http://www.johnlawsonlegacydays.org)**
- ❖ **Oct. 20, Sun....Membership Meeting & Oyster Roast...4:30-until...May Museum (special pricing) RSVP by Oct. 10 to [rkammerer@farmvillenc.gov](mailto:rkammerer@farmvillenc.gov) or (252) 758-6882**
- ❖ **Nov. 2, Sat.,,, Fall Vendor Market 9-1 & Farm Activities for Kids 10-1..... Eastern Carolina Village and Farm Museum**
- ❖ **Dec. 14, Sat. Christmas Vendor Market..9-1..Eastern Carolina Village and Farm Museum**
- ❖ **Dec. 15 Sun....Christmas Candlelight Tea..3:00-5:30.... May Museum**







## **Crazy Quilts to New York Beauties**



**The May Museum Quilt Collection is made up of over 50 quilts of exquisite local craftsmanship dating back to the 1840's. The quilts, representing mostly the May and Tyson families of Pitt County, showcase the variety and talent of local women providing something beautiful for their homes. This unique family collection is due to Tabitha Bynum May, and her daughter, Addie G. May Dupree DeVisconti, makers of the early quilts; and her daughter, Tabitha M. DeVisconti, who preserved them. There are also donated quilts from church auctions and from other families whose history is sewn into the quilts one patch at a time, leaving a legacy of the quilting arts from past generations.**

**May Museum & Park  
3802 S Main St. Farmville, NC 27828**

**For hours and to schedule tours  
Contact Roger Kammerer, Director 252-758-6882**

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**The May Museum & Park has a New Website!!  
Visit us at  
<http://maymuseumandpark.com>**

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## Random Scenes from the Music in the Park



**“Trainwreck,” the band from Greenville, NC, put on another fantastic show**







**Ernest Gorham returned with his pig-pickin' set up . It was finger lickin' good!**



**Museum Friends, Darlene Gaynor and Kay Crossan enjoying the food and music**





**A happy group enjoying the music [L-R] Claire Edwards, Alex Rust, Erika Rust, Alex Joyner, Janice Goddard and Andrew Mangone.**



**Julie Adams, Donna Tyson and Joy Thomas enjoying the Music in the Park**



**THE MAY MUSEUM PRESENTS:  
A Book Talk and Signing by  
Joanne Eagles Honeycutt**



On June 27, 2024, the May Museum hosted Joanne Eagles Honeycutt, of Greenville, NC, who gave a talk and book signing on her much anticipated second novel, “*Caroline; The Captain’s Daughter*.” Her first novel in the series, “*Frozen Angels*,” was highly received in Farmville. After a brief reading, Joanne spoke on some historical facts about Raleigh and Chapel Hill that influenced the storyline of Book 2 of her Edgecombe Trilogy.

## THE MAY MUSEUM HOSTS: The Pitt County Family Researchers



The Pitt County Family Researchers, Inc. (PCFR, Inc.) is a non-profit organization founded by William B. (Bill) Kittrell in November 1994. In 2024 they are celebrating their 30<sup>th</sup> year of research and fellowship and meeting again after a hiatus because of covid. Since its inception, PCFR had published an award-winning magazine known as the *Pitt County Genealogical Quarterly*. Since covid, the group now only puts out one large magazine every two years called the *Pitt County Genealogical Yearbook*. PCFR also has a website [GOOGLE-- Pitt County Family Researchers, Inc.] where you'll find record collections, history, photographs, and genealogy resources to help you trace your Pitt County ancestors. Pitt County can present some challenges for genealogy researchers since it suffered destruction of its records by fire when the Pitt County Court House burned in 1858. We have members from all over eastern North Carolina who know how to find information in a "burned county." We may even have a few clues to break through your "brick Walls." Everyone interested in genealogy is welcome to attend the roundtable meetings held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month. [Place to be announced]

For more information call Roger Kammerer (252) 758-6882.

[kammererroger1956@gmail.com]



## LOCAL BUSINESS---Gorham's Restaurant



**Ernest Gorham on the restaurant's front porch**

a barbecue provider for years before him. The new Gorham's is housed in the historic Colonial Inn on West Wilson Street and Ernest has big plans for it. They continue to serve their southern classics throughout the week. They also offer items like steak, seafood, and the beloved sweet potato biscuits. Since moving to the new location, they've implemented buffet days and Sunday brunch. The environment invites customers to sit and stay for a while. Ernest hopes to eventually host live jazz bands and catered events in the historic building.

Gorham's has recently taken its third form. It started as a food truck in 2015 when Ernest Gorham served soul food from it to the local community and surrounding areas. It's still active but, following its success, Ernest opened a brick-and-mortar restaurant on South Fields Street in Farmville in 2021. He chose a former service station to house it and continued to run the business with his wife Crystal. Ernest sees his endeavors as a way to carry on his family legacy while also serving the Farmville community. His late uncle, was

*by Savannah Little*



**Contact Gorham's at (252) 814-4366---3776 W Wilson Street, Farmville, NC.**



## MUSEUM ARTIFACT---Seth Thomas Clock



Currently on display in the entryway of the May Museum is an extraordinary piece of Americana, an antique Seth Thomas grandfather clock. The name Seth Thomas was symbolic of value and excellence of craft. This beautiful clock was given to the Museum by Clark Nolen, of Farmville, NC, a former accountant

with Farrior & Sons, and his sister, Jackie Kirkman, of Charlotte, NC.

This style of clock likely would have been produced by Thomas in the 1840s or earlier. Other styles (of more compact build) were already taking over in popularity by that time. The clock is made of pine and has a dark mahogany finish that has grayed with time. The dial face features an ornate rose design. The clock measures 81" tall, 8.5" deep, and is 15" at its widest. The primary dial measure 12" and features the text "S. THOMAS PLYMOUTH." It also features a 31-day time-only two mainspring clock. The clock's movement was a pendulum and weights system, and it is in unknown running condition. Seth Thomas was born in 1785 in Connecticut, a center for clockmaking. He left school early and, under the apprenticeship of a Daniel Tuttle, entered into the carpentry industry. He began making his own clocks in his hometown of Wolcott and eventually relocated to Plymouth, CT in 1807, where he went into business with Eli Terry and Silas Hoadley. Thomas and Hoadley bought Terry out in 1810 and Thomas stepped out on his own in 1813. He would prove so successful that the town of Plymouth, CT was renamed 'Thomaston' for him after his death in 1859.

*by Savannah Little*



## BIOGRAPHY--- James Edward Benjamin May

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James Edward Benjamin May, b. Mar. 10, 1853 (in what is now the Museum), d. Oct. 4, 1884, son of James Williams May and Tabitha Bynum; md. on Dec. 32, 1874 in Farmville twsp., Pitt Co. to Cornelia Joyner, b. 1855 in Lenoir Co., NC, d. Sept. 6, 1881, dau. of John Joyner and Sarah Ann Wooten.

J. E. B. May was a modest farmer, owning land in both Pitt and Lenoir Counties. In Nov. 1869, J. E. B. May was one of the six managers putting on a Tournament and Ball in Marlboro, NC. In Dec. 1875, Mrs. Cornelia May was named as an officer of the female Friends of Temperance Council in Farmville, NC.

We know that J. E. B. May was a member of Hope Lodge, Sons of Temperance in Farmville, NC in 1876 and the Farmville Grange, P. of H. in 1877. He was involved in local democratic politics and was a delegate to the State and County Conventions.

J. E. B. May was mistakenly called John E. May in 1870 Pitt County Census. On Aug. 29, 1877, his parents, James Williams May and Tabitha (Tabby) Bynum May gave him 195 acres on Little Contentnea Creek on the condition he pay them \$100 annually during their natural lives. In 1878, J. E. B. May received 8 acres along Belcher and Church Streets from L. P. Beardsley, who owed him money. He sold these eight acres in 1881 to Richard A. Bynum.

In 1880 Pitt County Census, J. E. B. May and wife Cornelia are listed alone with no children. We know they had a daughter Ione Bynum May, born Nov. 2, 1876 and it is unclear why she was not listed with her parents in the 1880 Census.

In 1883, J. E. B. May, guardian to James May, sold to H. M. Thompson, land received in land set apart to the heirs of John Joyner in the division of James Joyner.

At his death in 1884, J. E. B. May owned 1 horse, 1 Bay mare, 1 cow & calf, and 15 head of geese. At his death, his brother in law, Thomas F. Hill was named his administrator of his estate. Hill had to sue L. P. Beardsley, Jr., for several debts to the estate. Thomas F. Hill died in 1888 and J. E. B. May's sister, Susan F. (May) Hill continued as administrator of the estate.

J. E. B. May's mother, Mrs. Tabitha Bynum May became guardian of her granddaughter, Ione Bynum May, and Tabitha left her legacies in her Will in 1886.

J. E. B. and Cornelia had one known daughter, Ione Bynum May, b. Nov. 2, 1876 in Pitt Co., d. Mar. 18, 1967 in Greenville, NC; md. on Dec. 23, 1896 in Greenville, NC to Travis Emanuel Hooker, Jr., b. Sept. 18, 1870 in Greene Co., NC, d. June 5, 1935 in Greenville, NC. They were both buried in Cherry Hill Cemetery, Greenville, NC.



## LOCAL BUSINESS-- Dapper Dan's--Dan Roberson



*Dapper Dan's Entrance*

everywhere is where you have to look. He sees antiques as a window to the past. *"I like history. All kinds."* The presence of something old prompts you to reflect on the time it came from, Dan explains. *"The stories antiques could tell if they could talk..."* The store on Main Street in Farmville carries a vast number of antiques including art, furniture, dishware, lighting, decorative and collectible items. Dapper Dan's is open from 10AM to 5PM Thursday through Friday and until 4PM on Saturdays. Pay him a visit at 3745 S Main Street in Farmville or call (252) 753-7001 with inquiries.

Originally from Washington, NC, Dan Roberson moved to Greenville, NC and opened his first vintage store at age 18. He would go on to operate his business in Greenville for 30 years. After doing the calculations in his head, Dan is surprised to realize that this year is his 40th in the business. *"The last couple years have been different,"* he remarks. Dapper Dan's relocated to Farmville, NC in 2015 after Roberson was propositioned by Farmville's notorious business recruiters. Dan calls it the best decision he ever made. *"I knew I was going to lose my building [in Greenville]...and my store had changed."* He mostly sold clothes and jewelry in the beginning, oriented towards college student customers, but 30 years later it had developed into a more traditional antique store. Roberson says that acquisition is the hardest part of the antique business. The pieces come from everywhere, so

*by Savannah Little*



## FARMVILLE MEMORY--Franc White: Southern Sportsman



Many people still can recall the *Southern Sportsman Restaurant* which opened in Farmville, NC in 1981. It was the result of a partnership between Franc White and Bobby Carraway. The restaurant, serving classic southern dishes like fried chicken and seafood as well as game prepared with a variety of cooking methods, occupied the same space as Carraway's previous restaurant: *The Carraway*. The men became acquainted through White's frequent visits to *The Carraway* on his commutes to work. As for the menu at *The Southern Sportsman Restaurant*, it featured everything from Cathead biscuits, Merry Ole Sole, quail, rabbit, duck, venison to fried frog legs. It also kept Carraway's signature steak and North Carolina seafood. The zebra print pattern on the menu's cover was inspired by the pattern that decorated White's iconic plane.

A second *Southern Sportsman Restaurant* location was opened on 10<sup>th</sup> Street in Greenville, NC in 1985 and another opened in Richmond, VA.

Franc White happened to be a television personality. He was a private

pilot, public relations manager, author, salesman, newspaper columnist, television weather and sports commentator, cook, photographer, and artist.

Franc White's show, "*The Carolina Sportsman*," and later, "*The Southern Sportsman*," aired in association with PBS, produced at WRAL-TV in Raleigh, NC, debuting in March 1972 on WITN-TV, Washington, NC, running until 1996. He made the show an institution throughout the South with his zebra striped plane, going weekly on another fishing or hunting adventure. He also published a magazine under the same name that reached thousands of outdoorsmen. He had also written for national publications such as "*Sports Afield*," "*The American Hunter*," and "*Salt Water Sportsman*." Despite sponsor's pleas for the show to go on, Franc retired "*The Southern Sportsman*" in August 1996 at age 70. For the next several years, he moved back and forth from his homes in Hokitika, New Zealand, and Hookerton, NC.

Widely known as the "*Julia Child of the Wild*," White's cooking segment on the program was one of the foremost live cooking segments on television. His recipe cookbooks especially appealed to his female viewers who were eager to learn how to prepare the day's hunting and fishing catches. He ended each show encouraging everyone to "*Do yourself a favor, take a kid*



*fishing.*” His guests included famous celebrities such as Joan Fontaine and Cale Yarborough as well as local sportsmen including their sons and daughters.

White was also a conservationist and environmental advocate. He was critical of the commercialization of once thriving North Carolina wilderness and of factories releasing pollutants that result in the degradation of diverse ecosystems. He successfully stopped commercialization on many of the coastal Carolina islands, one of which was at the time the last nesting ground for some Atlantic sea turtles. He uncovered and publicly denounced some

chemical plants freely draining millions of gallons of water from NC aquifers and dumping pollutants and sewage into rivers and streams and ruining watersheds. He got after factories dumping pollutants resulting in denuding of mountain tops and forests.



Francis “Franc” Pope White, Jr., was born on July 20, 1926 in Goodwater, AL, where his father instilled in him a love for the outdoors and sport. He served in WWII as a B-25 Mitchell bomber mechanic in the 91<sup>st</sup> Mechanical Cavalry Recon Squadron. He became interested in journalism in the war and was a correspondent for the “*Stars and Stripes*” in Italy. After the war, White graduated from Birmingham Southern College in Birmingham, AL where he was a member of the SAE Fraternity. He became a reporter for *Birmingham Age Herald*. He eventually settled, as much as a man like Franc could, in North Carolina. His involvement in broadcasting about the outdoors began with fishing forecasts he gave on WSOC-TV in Charlotte, NC. In

May 1968, White began a twice-weekly radio program called “*Franc White’s Outdoor News.*”

In 1966, White was named, “*Conservation Educator of the Year*” by the NC Wildlife Federation, an organization he long supported.

Franc White passed away in Hookerton, NC on June 6, 2012 at age 85. His children carried on his legacy and started The Franc White Legacy Fund for Conservation Education in his honor.

Franc had an outstanding command of the English language and a keen sense of humor. At a family reunion he once noted that his sister “*cut ham so thin it had only one side.*”

At his death, he didn’t want a funeral, visitation, or memorial. He wanted his ashes and those of his beloved dog, Fracas, his Irish Setter who appeared in most of his programs, strewn in the Linville River so that trout and his favorite sporting fish, the Smallmouth Bass, “*can get even.*”

*by Savannah Little/Roger Kammerer*



## LAST PHOTOGRAPH

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**The late sun shines high on the Cardinal Creeper [*Ipomoea Horsfallae*] taking over a pine tree in the Museum garden**





**FARMVILLE**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



**A TASTE OF FARMVILLE - OCTOBERFEST CELEBRATION  
FARM TO TABLE FALL EVENT**

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5TH, 2024**

**TIME: 6PM–10PM**

**LOCATION: HISTORIC MAY LEW FARM & EVENT CENTER**

**Music ~ Food ~ Fun ~ 50/50 Raffle**

**TICKETS: \$15 PER PERSON (IN ADVANCE)**

**\$20 AT THE DOOR**

**MENU: BRATWURST & LOADED PRETZELS, SAUR KRAUT,  
BEER, WINE, AND NA BEVERAGES**

**TICKETS MAY BE PURCHASED IN ADVANCE AT THE  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OFFICE**

**PROCEEDS FROM THE EVENT BENEFIT THE FARMVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
FARMVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, 3747 MAIN ST., FARMVILLE, NC 252.753.4671**

