

MAY MUSEUM & PARK HISTORICAL NEWSLETTER

MAY MUSEUM, 3802 SOUTH MAIN ST., FARMVILLE, NC 27828

POST OFFICE BOX 623

ROGER KAMMERER, DIRECTOR 252-758-6882

RKAMMERER@FARMVILLENC.GOV

SPRING 2025



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 museums 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.



The garden of the May Museum comes alive with color in the Spring!

Here it is 2025, where did 2024 go? The May Museum has had another amazing year with events, programs and hundreds of visitors. Many thanks go to the Board of the Friends of the May Museum, the Town of Farmville, and to all the members of the Friends of the May Museum, whose extraordinary support makes the Museum a showcase for the city. We hope that you have enjoyed reading the past newsletters full of the fascinating local history of the May Museum and the Town of Farmville. Each issue of the newsletter will have recent museum events, museum displays, history, old and new photos, biographies, and memorabilia pertaining to 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. The following is a list of the upcoming events sponsored by the Friends of the May Museum to put on your calendar for the upcoming year.....

2025 SCHEDULE OF SPRING EVENTS

- ❖ **April 24 -- April 27th -- Farmville Dogwood Festival**
- ❖ **Sunday--May 4—Annual Garden & Hat Party 3:30-6:30... May Museum Garden**
- ❖ **Grifton Museum---** Open: 1st and 3rd Sunday from 1-5pm.....Groups and individuals also by appointment...Call: 252-524-0190 See online....
- ❖ **Thursday--June 19---Music in the Park 5:30-8:30 pm...May Museum Garden**
- ❖ **Ayden Museum--**Open every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 10:30 am to 2:30 pm; every First Friday of the month from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm; every 4th Sunday of the month from 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm; and by appointment for small groups. See online....
- ❖ **Winterville Museum---**2543 Church Street, Winterville, NC call: 252-321-2660 or contact: whs28590@gmail.com
- ❖ **Eastern Carolina Village and Farm Museum—**See online and Facebook for hours and tours



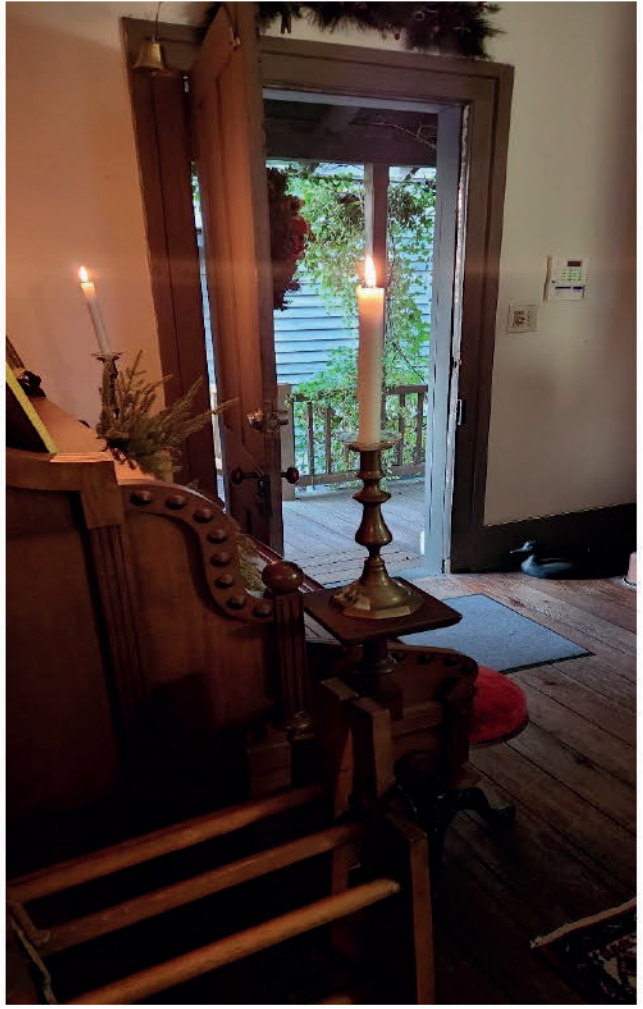
Memories of the Christmas Candlelight Tea

On Sunday, Dec. 15th, 2024, the Friends of the May Museum hosted their annual Christmas Candlelight Tea. The tea was held inside the Museum where nearly 100 guests wandered amidst the lovely antiques and displays. The Museum was beautifully decorated and besides various tea being served, each room had appetizers and goodies lit by the soft glow of candles as it would have been 100 years ago.









FEATURE--- Farmville Christian Church History

The following history of the Farmville Christian Church was written by C. C. Ware for a yearbook issued in 1942 by the late Rev. C. B. Mashburn. This appeared in the Farmville Enterprise, Jan. 2, 1948

In 1854, when only a store and blacksmith shop stood on the site of the present Farmville, N.C., a third building was erected called the Antioch Christian Church. The church site, an acre, was at the crossroads between Marlboro and Joyner's Crossroads. It was almost twenty years before the town of Farmville, builded around Antioch Church, was incorporated.

Old Antioch had its actual origin at Tyson's Meeting House, located a few miles east of Farmville near the present Arthur [Bell-Arthur]. John P. Dunn, of Lenoir County, and outstanding native evangelist of the Disciples, held a revival at Tyson's Meeting House, beginning November 2, 1850. The meeting resulted in 123 baptisms. Alfred Moye, a prominent Disciple and citizen of the community, wrote his son Moses Tyson Moye, then at Bethany College, about this meeting, and said it was a season of great revivals.

The Tyson's Meeting House group of Disciples was represented at the State meeting of Disciples in 1851, at Oak Grove Church, Greene County, which was near the present Lang's Crossroads, by Josiah Barrett, Sherrod Tyson and Samuel Vines, Jr. They were received as given in the following minutes: *"Friday, Oct. 17, 1851: On motion agreed that the Church of Christ at Tyson's M.H., Pitt county be received into this Conference, and that her delegates be invited to take seats and participate in its proceedings."*

Her delegates in 1852 at Elm Grove were G. W. Barrett, T. King and A. Bynum; in 1853, at Wheat Swamp, John H. Hines. By the time of the Wheat Swamp Convention in October 1853, their membership had been reduced to 96.



Old Antioch Church, corner of Church and Main Streets

In the summer of 1853, there was other strife at Tyson's, due to the Temperance movement. Incorporated throughout the country [*unreadable*] an order had arisen called Sons of Temperance to avert the rising tide of alcoholic drink. Less than a dozen Tyson's members took the position at unrestrained use of strong drink was a Christian's inviolable privilege, to be defended by exclusion from the church of the Sons of Temperance who were of contrary opinion. They would make it a test of fellowship. They wished to form an organization under the title of "*Old-side Apostolic Christian Church*," of which one

of the tenets should be: *"No Son of Temperance is to be admitted as a member of this church."* The Disciples never recognized this "*Old-side Apostolic Church*" in any of their State meetings; in fact, their divisive idea never became an issue within the Disciples cooperative circle.

With a reduced fellowship and dissension over temperance in the air at Tyson's, it was desirable that a new [church] site be found. James W. May owned much land at the crossroads which became Farmville. On December 21, 1854, he deeded one-acre to the Antioch "Christian Baptist" Church, "to have and to hold...in fee simple...to occupy, use, and enjoy said Church as a house of Christian worship for the worship of Almighty God." The trustees named in the original deed of 1854 were Peter E. Hines, Richard A. Bynum, Sherrod Belcher and Josiah Barrett. It is apparent from the deed that the frame plant of Antioch Church had already been erected. This stood for 56 years until 1910, when it was sold to a black church and the present brick plant of our Farmville Church was dedicated.

In 1854, at the Disciples State Meeting, James W. May, Sherrod Belcher, and S. Stancill represented Antioch Church and reported an enrolled membership of 95, there having been one death during the year. This accounts in full for the 96 members which the Disciples had left after the dissension at Tyson's, and it was not considered as a new church at the Disciples' State Meeting of 1854, but it was enrolled under the new name of Antioch.

Josephus Latham, a strong advocate of temperance, was the first Antioch pastor, and held her first revival, beginning on Saturday, September 8, 1855. He said the revival continued for several days and resulted in fourteen baptisms..*"a goodly number of whom were lovely young ladies, two of whom were natives of Maine, who had bidden farewell to the loved ones at home and had come to the far 'Sunny South' to teach."* He concluded: *"May Heaven guide these dear young converts through this waste-howling wilderness to the haven of sweet repose."*

In 1904 the church known as Corinth, located a few miles southeast of Farmville, near present Lang's Crossroads, abandoned their old church and united with Antioch. The Carrs, the Moyes, and the Langs were leading families in the Corinth Church, and they brought much strength to the Farmville Church after the merger in 1904.



Corinth Church at Langs Crossroads

Corinth was first known as Oak Grove and the building stood in Greene county about seven miles southeast from Farmville on land now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Preston Murphy. This Oak Grove Church started in 1830 as a member of the Toisnot Association of Regular Baptists. Toisnot soon merged with Nahunta Association and was known as Contentnea. On October 24, 1835,

following the lead of Kehukee, the Contentnea Association adopted an anti-missionary policy. This was against the feelings of Oak Grove Church, and after drifting for eleven years, the church became connected with the Disciples in 1846, under the evangelistic leadership of John P. Dunn. It then had but 16 members.

MUSEUM ARTIFACT---John May Powder Horn

In 2023, a gentleman and his wife brought a number of family items to the Museum to see if we would be interested in having them. The items included photographs, a powder horn and a crazy quilt from 1897. The man was a descendant of Benjamin Tyson May (1832-1898) and his wife, Caroline Sarah Tugwell (1861-1901). The man explained that Benjamin Tyson May served in the Civil War and carried the powder horn with him during the war. Upon examination, the initials “J M” were found carved on the lid portion of the powder horn.



From history we know that Benjamin Tyson May was the son of John May (1799-1861) and his wife, Elizabeth Tyson (1804-1873). They were also the parents of Alfred May and Robert May. All three boys served in in Company F (Trio Guards), 61st

Regiment, NC Troops. Alfred served in the last major battle of the war at Bentonville in March 1865. Benjamin suffered a head wound at Petersburg, VA, in July 1864, while Robert died in October 1864 of unrecorded causes at a hospital in Richmond, VA. Alfred May returned home after the War and stored his belongings in an attic of the family home. His descendants gave all



these artifacts to the NC Museum where they are on display as the largest collection of objects associated with a single North Carolina Confederate enlisted soldier. Included are Alfred May's half of a shelter, his uniform, rifle, cartridge box, pistol, knapsack and haversack— even tiny pieces of lye soap.

So it appears that Benjamin carried his father John May's powder horn during the war. The Museum is proud to display this unique family artifact in its collection.

HOUSE HISTORY---John May House

THIS APPEARED IN THE FARMVILLE ENTERPRISE,
AUGUST 3, 1961



MAY HOME ANTEDATES CIVIL WAR BY TWO SCORE YEARS BY OLIVE DONAT, STAFF WRITER

To visit the home of Mr. and Mrs. Edward May and brother, Adolph May, is to take a trip back in time. Folkways of the last century and a half are apparent at every hand; and the peaceful and reclusive home site, unobserved from the highway, enhances the feeling of being withdrawn from present day.

The mid-section of the house was built by John May back in 1823. John is better remembered as "Captain Jack," having won the honorary rank, it is said, when he formed, a local company of men to fight in the Mexican war. Through no fault of his, the war ended before his contingent arrived at the conflict, getting no farther than Tennessee, the story goes.

Capt. Jack had an estimated 800-1000 acres of land from his father, Benjamin May II, but he needed a house of his own. By hand, timber was cut and planed and nails and bricks fashioned for that early home. It wasn't fancy, but it was square—two rooms up and two down—and sturdy. The strength of the structure is seen in the doors which are extra sized, course gained and beveled in the popular double-cross design. The narrow, enclosed stairway still exists, although there is a similar one in the other part of the house added a few years later.

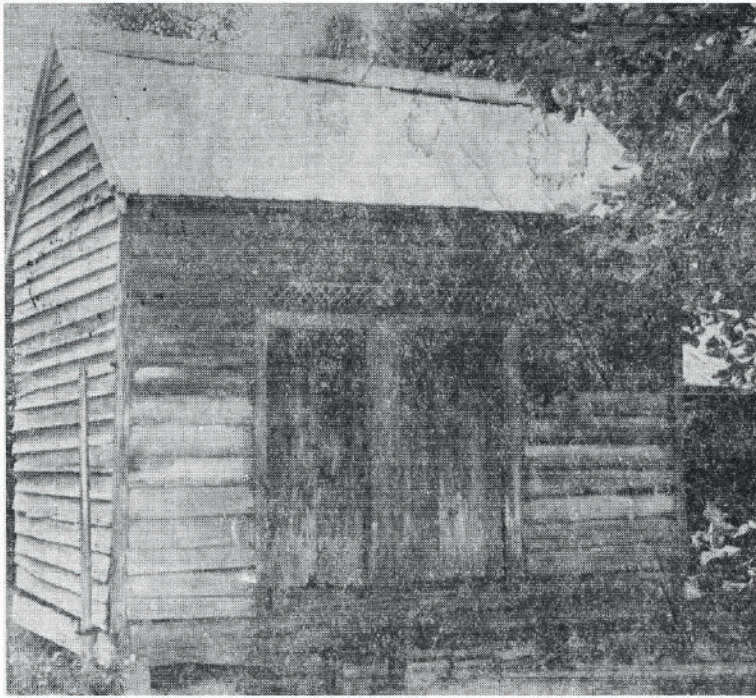
In the second section of the building is a lovely parlor mantel and wainscoting decorated with hand-tooled "beading" or reeding. Large rectangular locks with small knobs and strange looking keys so beloved by antique fanciers are in the older portion of the house.

The place abounds in Americana. Not accessible, but said to be stored in the attic, are memorabilia to make a collector drool. Among the papers are bills of sales for an antique horsehair sofa and a sideboard that belonged to Major Benjamin May, an ancestor of Revolutionary War fame. The pieces of furniture are in daily use by the family today. Alfred May, Capt. Jack's son and father of Edward May, walked home from Appomattox carrying a battle canteen that now hangs on the wall. It is inscribed "*Sgt. Orderly Alfred May, Company F, 61 Regiment, North Carolina.*"

The exterior of the house has an early American look. The boards, being wood sawed, are not uniform in thickness. "Horsehead" pillars support the porch roof and an ornate, cut-work railing denotes a by-gone period. The bricks and nails were customarily made on the premises and have a homemade appearance. The window panes are iridescent and imperfect. The sashes are of different size; that is, the upper sash is three-paned in length and the lower sash is two paned long [*9 over 6 panes*].

In the yard, an old bell, in disuse, called field hands from work. At the back of the house is a very interesting building—the old brandy house where orchard crops were turned into salable

spirits—an important item in domestic economy in that era. Private sale of such beverages was perfectly legal then. However, one had to go to New Bern—a considerable journey by horse back—to buy government stamps to put on barrels sold.



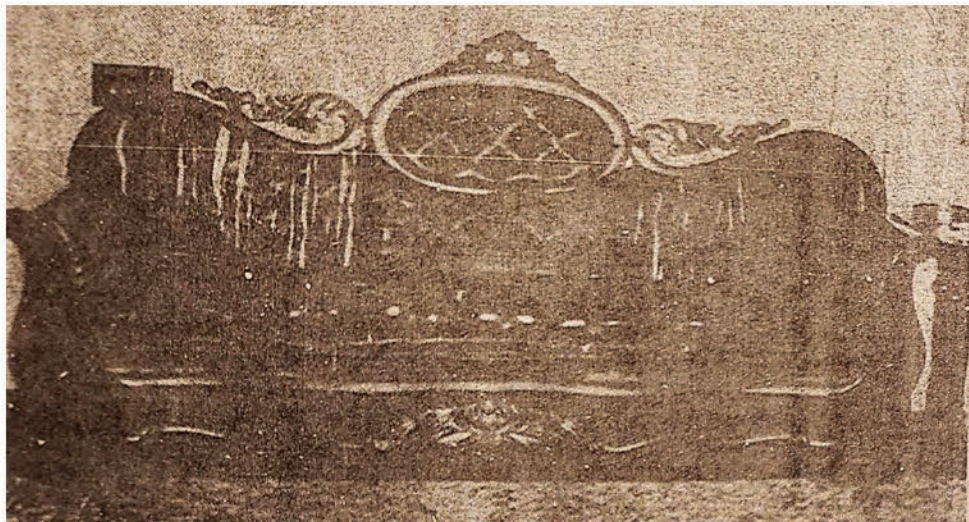
John May Brandy House

Mrs. Edward May has a 1828 dated recipe for Puff Cake handed down from Eliza Tyson May, Capt. Jack's wife. It calls for: *"Three eggs, two cups of sugar (1 1/3 of present day measure will suffice, three cups of flour (again make allowances), 1 cup of sweet milk, 1/2 tsp. pf soda, 1 tsp. cream of tartar, 1 cup of butter (small), according to Eliza, cream butter; add sugar; add eggs one at a time; then milk and flour alternately."*

The long history of the house flavored by the family-told experiences of John May when he first built his four room abode and before he brought his bride there. Indians were still tramping through this

section and many times John would come to find a redman sleeping in his bedroom.

The many-membered May family has figured prominently in local history for a long time and, due to the custom of close intermarriage among the landed gentry, the name is frequently met when dealing with old homes. The property described in this article merits attention not only because of its interesting features but because of family connections. The homestead of Benjamin May II, who was mentioned here will be the subject of study at a later date.



Belonging to a Revolutionary War ancestor of the May family, Major Benjamin May, this antique horsehair sofa is said to have come from England.

MEMORY---Farmville Boy Meets Pres. John F. Kennedy

Maybe some of the older folks of Farmville remember back in July 1962 when then eight year-old Vance Lyndall Daniell of Farmville, son of Rev. Jack M. Daniell, pastor of the First Christian Church, met with President John F. Kennedy. It seems the little boy had a



Meeting at the White House with Herbert C. Bonner, Pres. John F. Kennedy and Vance Daniell

congenital heart condition that kept him away from the rough and tumble activities of other boys his age. He befriended many people around Farmville and the Farmville Police and Fire Department adopted him. He had a fireman's uniform and rode the fire wagon.

Vance liked President Kennedy ever since he saw him on television, his mother said. His parents took Vance to see President Kennedy when he visited UNC-Chapel Hill in 1961, but that wasn't enough for little Vance, he wanted to shake Kennedy's hand. Vance got his chance to meet Kennedy through the efforts of Farmville Mayor Charles Edwards, who wrote the President about how badly the boy wanted to meet him. Amazingly Vance got a reply stating Kennedy hoped Vance would come to the White House to visit him.

Through the efforts of NC Congressman, Herbert C. Bonner, Vance and his parents went to Washington, DC and met with Kennedy at the White House. According to Vance's mother, Vance was *"a grinning happy young man when he did."* Vance shook the President's hand and received a pen, a PT-boat tie clasp and an autographed photo. The President pinned the tie-clasp on him. Vance presented the President a police badge *"This is from the Farmville police,"* he said. *"And this is from me,"* he said with a huge grin. He gave the President a silver tobacco leaf charm to represent tobacco grown in eastern North Carolina.

After the meeting, reporters asked Vance questions. Vance proudly pointed to the tie-clasp and said that it has the President's name on it *"right here."* When asked by the reporters, *"Do you want to be President?"* he replied *"Yeah!"* Even though Vance, born in 1953, had a congenital heart condition, he did grow up. He married in 1981 in Newport News, VA to Rebecca Lee Spain and died in Durham, NC in 1983.

BIOGRAPHY---Milbrey Collie Simpson Laybourne

Roxie Laybourne, known affectionately in scientific circles, as the “feather lady,” was an ornithologist whose careful, precise study of bird feathers pioneered the field of forensic ornithology. She used forensic techniques for identifying species of birds involved in bird strikes which led to aircraft safety improvements. *“As far as I’m concerned, Roxie was a national treasure and deserves to be recognized as such,”* says Ken Goddard, director of the National Fish & Wildlife Forensics Laboratory. Richard Dolbeer, science advisor for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, said that Laybourne’s work *“is the foundation of everything we do”* to manage birds at airports, from mowing lawns to controlling nearby insect populations to improving drainage. *“She was such a great role model,”* he adds. But to most, the name Roxie Laybourne is unknown, her influence largely underappreciated. But very few people knew she grew up in Farmville, NC.



Roxie Laybourne was born on Sept. 15, 1910 in Fayetteville, NC to William C Collie and his wife, Elizabeth Estelle Grimmer. Roxie was the eldest of their 15 children. Collie was an auto mechanic, and moved his family to Farmville, NC about 1914. In June 1914, Collie operated the “The Farmville Motor Car Company,” located at the corner of Belcher and Moore Streets.

Roxie considered herself a “tomboy,” when she was young. She was more interested in playing baseball and watching her father tinker on engines rather than learning to sew and the other “womanly pursuits” of the era. She attended Meredith College, an all-women school in Raleigh, NC, graduating in 1932 with a BA degree in mathematics and general science. Her career began at the North Carolina State Museum of Natural History where she was employed as a taxidermist in its taxidermy and exhibit departments. This experience nurtured her curiosity in the natural sciences.

In 1944, with the encouragement of acting Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, Alexander Wetmore, Roxie accepted a temporary appointment in the Division of Birds at the National Museum of Natural History, and was one of few women on staff engaged in scientific endeavors. Roxie realized her work may be subject to greater scrutiny than that of her male counterparts, and set forth with quiet determination, producing research and results that simply had to be considered based on their merit. This approach paid dividends; in her own words *“the best way to get around discrimination is to do the job you possibly can, and keep your mouth shut – persistence overcomes obstacles.”*

Roxie remained with the Smithsonian Institution for forty-four years, serving as Forensic Ornithologist, as well as the National Fisheries Laboratory, the United States National Museum

from 1944 to 1946, and the Bird and Mammal Laboratories of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service from 1946 to 1974, She received her M.S. in plant ecology from George Washington University in 1951 with a thesis on mosses. During her career, Laybourne developed "*the speciality of identifying dead birds from their feathers to learn what types of birds struck planes.*" This information was instrumental in safety improvements within the manufacturing of aircraft engines, the development of military fighter canopies, and the creation of runway management plans. Laybourne's skills in forensic ornithology helped solve around 1,000 cases of bird-related airplane incidents a year. In addition to her employers, Laybourne's expertise aided the Federal Aviation Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, General Electric, the National Transportation Safety Board, Pratt and Whitney, and Rolls-Royce.

After Roxie officially "retired" in 1988, she was granted Emeritus Status and continued her work as a Research Associate with the Smithsonian until her death at age 92 in 2003.

Roxie was first married on Aug. 16, 1936 to Philip Braxton Simpson (1900-1967) and they divorced. She married second on Nov. 10, 1956 in Fairfax, VA to Edgar G. Laybourne (1888-1966) a lab technician. She had one son, Clarence Grimmer Simpson (1937-2013).

Studying birds was Laybourne's passion, one that she loved teaching her students about even as she held them to high standards. It is recalled that she was witty, and her laughter echoed though the laboratories. She was also a life-long sports car enthusiast, who, at the age of 72 bought a Datsun 280ZX, which she reportedly drove like a "*bat out of hell!*"



**Farmville Service Station, corner of Wilson and Contentnea Streets;
W. C. Collie, proprietor, 1933**

BUSINESS---Vintage Point; Vintage Toys & Memorabilia



Vintage Point, one of the most exciting stores in Pitt County for the lovers of “vintage everything” is found on Main Street, Farmville, NC. Owned by Wayne Dempsey, a native of Jamesville, Martin Co., NC, and Army veteran, he became fascinated by collectibles after a career in banking and insurance. He first opened his shop on Wilson Street and after three years moved his shop to Main Street in 2021. Vintage Point has become a leading collectibles marketplace, selling sports and pop culture memorabilia here in the store and on-line. Dempsey has created a must-visit destination for serious collectors and also a fun stop for the more casual second-hand treasure hunters among us. Whether its militaria (Civil War, WWI & WWII), jewelry, metal toys, dolls, classic monster stuff, model cars, vintage holiday and Christmas, old photographs, postcards, baseball cards, posters, and ephemera, you will be impressed! Find him online and on Facebook.





Farm to Table Spring Soirée Celebrating All Things Farmville

Date: Saturday, May 17th, 2025

Location: May Museum, 3802 S. Main St, Farmville, NC

Time: 6-10 pm

Tickets: \$100 per person / \$750 for a table / Sponsorships available!

Ticket includes a gourmet pairing of locally farmed & prepared foods paired with hand-selected wines by renowned local wine expert. Enjoy an evening of music and fun with friends and a selection of amazing items at this year's silent and live auctions. Attire is southern proper.

All proceeds benefit the Farmville Chamber of Commerce. Call for sponsorship package prices.



FARMVILLE
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Farmville Chamber of Commerce / 252.753.4671 / millissa@farmvillencchamber.org
Purchase tickets at the office & at www.farmvillencchamber.org