

Murfreesboro, NC

King's Landing

August 2024

President's Message

Greetings,



Murfreesboro was in the national spotlight on November 6 when Ami and I welcomed the CBS News Team to the John Wheeler House. Michelle Miller of CBS Saturday Morning was in town to interview Gregg Hecimovich about his new book "The Life and Times of Hannah Crafts." Crafts was the pen name adopted by Hannah Bond, an enslaved black woman, who lived at the home with Dr. Samuel J. Wheeler and his family. During her time with the Wheelers, she started writing "The Bondwoman's Narrative," which is now regarded as the first novel composed by an African American woman. Michelle also interviewed Dr. Ben Speller of Edenton, an authority on local black history. The piece aired on national television December 30. Gregg returned to the area on March 25 to speak about his book at Chowan University.

On December 8 and 9 we celebrated a highly successful Candlelight Christmas Tour. We had one of the highest attendances in years. Also, the sponsors were extremely generous to us. We sold 305 tickets. Between sponsorship and ticket sales we raised \$25,000. This successful fundraiser was essential for us to meet our ongoing operating expenses. We could not have done this event without the support of approximately eighty volunteers from both the association and the surrounding community. My sincere thanks go out to everyone.

On March 20 and 21 we hosted School Tours for the second year since COVID. We welcomed 183 students and chaperones. Once again, Sandra Fowler drew on her years of experience to make this event a resounding success. As always, our site managers and volunteers turned out to open up the Historic District for our young visitors.

April 19 brought the Murfreesboro Historical Association's annual meeting and luncheon. The membership heard updates from Daryl Williams of the Chamber of Commerce, Mayor Hal Thomas and Dr. Rosemary Thomas, the new president of Chowan University. Frank Womble of Suffolk spoke about Lafayette's American tour of 1824-1825 and plans for the bicentennial celebrations set for next year.

We held our fourth annual Garden Party in the garden of the John Wheeler House on May 4. The rain held off for sixty guests to enjoy the food and drink and to compete for prizes in the hat competition. A good time was had by all. Many thanks to Donna Robbins for heading up this endeavor.

Soup 'n' Sandwich

Sponsored by The Murfreesboro Historical Association, Inc.

Monday, October 14, 2024

11:00 am - 2:00 pm

Soup, Sandwich, Beverage & Dessert

EAT IN OR TAKE OUT

Murfree Center, 201 E Broad Street

\$10
per person



No. 051

Recent Chowan graduate Jeanette Ahmes filled in at the office for a month after Ami's departure. I am grateful to her for everything she did to keep things going. We are now delighted to have our new office manager Danny Figler in place. Please stop by the office to meet him.

Back to the national spotlight: there is discussion that "The Bondwoman's Narrative" will be made into a film. "Mr. DeMille, I'm ready for my close-up!"

Jimmy Moore

Board of Directors

Executive Committee

Jimmy Moore, President

Armando Torres, Vice-President

Sara Frances Hill, Secretary

Paige Sumner, Treasurer

<u>Term Ends 2025</u>	<u>Term Ends 2026</u>	<u>Term Ends 2027</u>
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Will Cowan	Charlie Cole	Hunter Brown
Charles Pond	Mary Hellmann	Donna Robbins
Elicia Revelle	Debbie Hill	Mike Saner
Kelsey Rose	Stanley J. Parker, Jr.	Lisa Turner
Michael Zhe	Holt Rose	Ken Wolfskill

Site Managers

by Ami Wilson

Agriculture/Transportation	Milton Vaughan
	Hazel Davis
Evans Tin Shop	Dennis Pauly
Hertford Academy	Mary Etta Flowers
Jefcoat Museum	Colon Ballance
Murfree Smith Law Office	Bruce & Liz Brown
William Rea Museum	Steve Fowler
Dr. Walter Reed House	Dell Aycock
Roberts-Vaughan House	Bardin Torres
Southall Cemetery	Steve Sumner
Village Print Shop	Michelle Surerus
Vincent-Deale Blacksmith	Mitch Henke
	Craig Dennis
John Wheeler House	Deborah Fields
B.B. Winborne Country Store & Law Office	Hal Thomas

Site Manager

by Danny Figler

Dr. Mitchell Henke from Chowan University has joined us as the new site manager of the Vincent-Deale Blacksmith Shop. We are excited for Mitch and wish him well fulfilling the duties of a site manager. Make plans to meet Mitch as you tour this historic shop on December 13th and 14th during our annual Candlelight Christmas tour.



Publications Report

You might find your next great read or perfect gift from this list of publications available for purchase at the MHA office or online at <https://murfreesboronc.org/shop/ols/categories/books>

F. ROY JOHNSON

<i>Legends & Myths of North Carolina's Roanoke-Chowan Area</i>	15.00
<i>The Peanut Story</i>	15.00
<i>The Fabled Doctor Jim Jordan</i>	15.00
<i>Vol. 1 – The Tuscaroras Mythology, Medicine, Culture</i>	15.00
<i>Vol. 2 – The Tuscaroras History, Tradition, Culture</i>	15.00
<i>The Algonquians – Vol. 1 & 2 (Combined in 1 Book)</i>	20.00

THOMAS C. PARRAMORE

<i>The Ancient Maritime Village of Murfreesborough 1787-1825</i>	15.00
<i>Murfreesboro, NC & the Rise of Higher Education for Women</i>	15.00
<i>Murfreesboro & the Founding of the American Republic</i>	15.00
<i>Murfreesboro, NC and the Great Intracoastal Waterway</i>	15.00
<i>Murfreesboro, NC: Cradle of Titans</i>	15.00
<i>Murfreesboro, NC and the Roots of Nat Turner Revolt</i>	15.00
<i>The Gatling Aeroplane of 1873: America's First Airplane</i>	7.00
<i>Trial Separation: Murfreesboro, NC and the Civil War</i>	15.00
<i>The Riddle of the First American Novel</i>	15.00
<i>William Hill Brown: The Power of Sympathy</i>	18.00

ALICE ELEY JONES

<i>A Maritime History</i>	20.00
<i>The Builders & Architecture of Historic Murfreesboro</i>	20.00
<i>Woodworking Tools of Historic Murfreesboro</i>	20.00
<i>Selena Stays Home</i>	10.00
<i>Black America Series – Hertford County, NC</i>	25.00

FRANK H. HARRIS, JR.

<i>A History of the Riddick Plantation of Hertford County, NC</i>	20.00
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WARREN MILTEER, JR.

<i>Hertford County, NC Free People of Color and Their Descendants</i>	22.00
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MURFREESBORO HISTORIC COMMISSION

<i>West of the Chowan – The Historic Architecture of Hertford County, NC</i>	45.00
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MURFREESBORO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

<i>Walking Tour Booklet</i>	8.00
<i>Renaissance in Carolina 1971-1976</i>	5.00
<i>Renaissance in Carolina – Vol. 2</i>	15.00

SONJA MCGIBONEY

<i>Jazzy Explores Murfreesboro, North Carolinav</i>	15.00
<i>Jazzy Coloring Book</i>	FREE

HENRY KING BURGWYN, V

<i>Henry K. Burgwyn and Life on the Roanoke River 1840 - 1860</i>	20.00
<i>Albemarle Memories: A Pictorial History of the mid-1800's - 1939</i>	40.00
<i>Hecimovich, Gregg: The Life and Times of Hannah Crafts</i>	25.00
<i>Crafts, Hannah: A Bondwoman's Narrative</i>	18.00
<i>Lafayette Bicentennial Tour 2024 - 2025 Calendar</i>	20.00
<i>Roberts-Vaughan House Christmas Ornament</i>	5.00



The Murfreesboro Historical Association's Annual Meeting

by Ken Wolfskill

The annual meeting of the Murfreesboro Historical Association convened at the Murfree Center on Friday, April 19. So many friendly folks gathered, and everybody got to know each other. The lively chatter was interrupted only by laughter or Jimmy Moore who was presiding. A great time was had with Mary Etta Flowers' fine food.

There was great news from Jimmy and Al Parker about all of the events coming to this historic town including a Ghost Walk. Plans are being made for the Watermelon Festival, Soup n Sandwich and the 37th Christmas Candlelight Tour. Paige Sumner reported on our great income and assets. Lloyd Hill told how great our maintenance of buildings is going. Great stuff!

Our Mayor Hal Thomas and the Chamber of Commerce Director Daryl Williams needed no introductions as they reported on significant improvements to the town. Rosemary Thomas, the new president of Chowan University, was introduced and told of her vision and of the fine prospects for the school.

This year's keynote speaker was Frank Womble, a member of the board of directors for the American Friends of Lafayette. He told of the important history of LaFayette and his essential and significant support for the American Revolution. Frank then discussed plans for next year's bicentennial of the 1825 Lafayette Tour.

With ballots counted - no abstentions and not one negative vote - our executive officers and board members were unanimously re-elected. This was a significant vote of appreciation for their attentive and hard work.

With adjournment, Dell Aycock awarded her beautiful flower arrangements as door prizes to members with winning tickets. It was a great time!

Historic Properties Available for Special Occasions

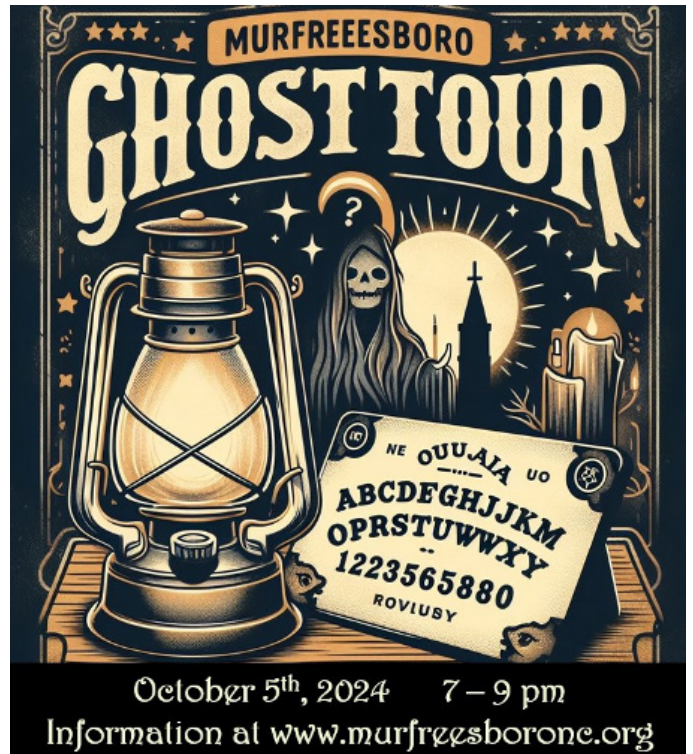
Looking for an event venue? Four of our historic buildings and grounds are available to rent for your next special occasion: weddings, engagement parties, bridal showers, baby showers, class reunions, etc.

- The Hertford Academy building and grounds
 - Roberts-Vaughan House building and grounds (there is a great gazebo in back of the house)
 - John Wheeler House (porch, kitchen, bathroom, and grounds)
- Each of these property rents for \$250 per day plus a \$125 refundable deposit.

- Dr. Walter Reed House Annex rents for \$150 per day plus a \$100 refundable deposit.

Contact the MHA office to reserve a date for your next special occasion, 252-398-5922

GHOST TOUR



A headless ghost that haunts the historic district.

An AWOL Civil War soldier that still roams our town.

The terrible murder of one of our most inventive citizens.

A flirty ghost that blows gently in your ear.

Mysterious fires that ended with one of Murfreesboro's most shocking arrests.

The Conjure Doctor attracted clients from all over the country.

The ghosts that roam Chowan University... Yes, there is more than one!

...and more...

The Murfreesboro Historical Association is going to lift the veil and rattle all of the skeletons of our historic haunt. There will be eight stops throughout the historic district. Bring a flashlight and join in the fun of learning all about the ghosts, legends, and lore of Historic Murfreesboro. You will hear first-hand accounts from our tour guides, some of whom have seen or heard strange, unexplained things with their own eyes and ears. All of our stories and legends come from local historical records and folklore that have been passed down through the generations. In other words, we didn't make any of this stuff up!

The tour will start at Southall cemetery on Saturday, October 5th at 7 pm with staggered groups going on a walk-through time in our historic district. Tickets are \$20 for adults, and \$10 for children under 12...however we do recommend parental guidance as some of the stories have a gruesome edge to them.

The Riddle of the First American Novel

by Jimmy Moore



The MHA publications committee announced a major achievement in December with the publication of its latest title “The Riddle of the First American Novel: William Hill Brown and the Power of Sympathy” by Thomas C. Parramore. The new work arrived in town just in time to go on sale at the Candlelight Christmas Tour. A Boston newspaper in January 1789 announced the publication of “The First American Novel”. Although released anonymously, the work was commonly thought to have been written by the young poet William Hill Brown. Entitled “The Power of Sympathy,” the book rocked respectable Boston. It was a thinly-disguised account of recent tragedies in the Morton family, who lived across the street from the Browns. Dealing with incest and suicide, the novel was scandalous in the extreme. The young writer never acknowledged his authorship publicly.

By 1792 Brown had decided it was prudent to move elsewhere. In 1791, his sister Elizabeth had married John Hichborn, another Bostonian, living in Murfreesboro. Brown followed the Hichborns to Hertford County and began reading law under General William Richardson Davie in Halifax. By all accounts, he was popular in the region.

Tragically William Hill Brown’s life was cut short by yellow fever on September 2, 1793. He lies in an unmarked grave in Murfreesboro. Over time, scholarship has now established that “The Power of Sympathy” was indeed the first novel written by an American.

Tom Parramore was a native of Winton and graduate of Ahoskie High School. He graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and received a doctorate in history from that institution. He would teach history at Meredith College in Raleigh for thirty years, retiring in 1992.

Always keenly interested in the region’s past, Dr. Parramore wrote prolifically on state and local history. In partnership with the publications committee, he authored eight slender volumes on Murfreesboro and the surrounding region. Throughout his career, he promoted the story of William Hill Brown and Murfreesboro’s contribution of American literary history. This work was unpublished at the time of his death in 2004. The manuscript was discovered in Dr. Parramore’s research papers in the Historical Association’s Collections Office in the summer of 2023. Initially there was consternation when it was discovered that the footnotes were missing. Fortunately, a second manuscript was located with the all-important notes. The publications committee voted unanimously to publish this significant contribution to our history.

The forty-page volume with introduction by MHA president James Elliott Moore is available for purchase from the association for \$15.00. Copies of “The Power of Sympathy” may be obtained for \$18.00.

Saying goodbye to Ami Wilson

We are all saddened by the departure of our executive director Ami Wilson. Her husband accepted a new job in Paducah, Kentucky earlier in the year. Ami stayed behind to sell their home. Her last day was March 21. During her time with MHA, Ami did an exceptional job. She evaluated systems and updated the bylaws. Every fundraising effort under her watch exceeded previous totals. Ami applied for grants, which were approved and helped with the maintenance of our buildings. At her urging, we established a presence in the community by participating in the Christmas parade and hosting an after-hours event for the Chamber of Commerce. She became a pro at interviewing on the local radio to promote MHA events. Her dedication and enthusiasm were infectious. We will miss her.

Gregg Hecimovich and His New Book

by Jimmy Moore

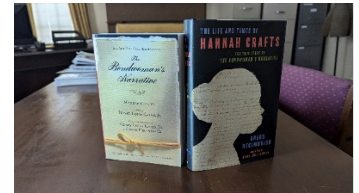
Author Gregg Hecimovich was in Murfreesboro on November 6 to discuss his new book “The Life and Times of Hannah Crafts”. Hecimovich and Dr. Ben Speller of Edenton were interviewed at length by a CBS News crew about this previously unknown figure of American literature from Bertie and Hertford counties. They spoke in the historic John Wheeler House on Broad Street. The piece aired on the CBS Saturday morning show on December 30 and included an interview with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

In 2001, Dr. Gates announced that he had discovered the earliest known novel written by an African American woman. The never before published work claimed to have been written in the 1850s by an enslaved woman Hannah Crafts. The manuscript was a shocking story of violence and sexual abuse that also mocked the enslavers. Published in 2002 as “The Bondwoman’s Narrative”, the title made it to the New York Times best-seller list. With its unique plot twists and heavy borrowings from Victorian novels, many people questioned if this story could really be the work of an enslaved person. Early on, researchers established that the Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler in the novel were John Hill Wheeler, originally of Murfreesboro, and his wife Ellen Sully Wheeler. However, the identity of Hannah Crafts remained a mystery.

From the moment he read “The Bondwoman’s Narrative,” Hecimovich was consumed with the desire to find out the real story behind Hannah Crafts. He describes himself as “a complete research nerd.” In 2013 he announced that author was a woman named Hannah Bond. She had adopted the pen name of “Crafts” in tribute to the people who sheltered her in Upstate New York after her escape from slavery. Born in Bertie County, Hannah came to Murfreesboro as part of the inheritance of Lucinda Pugh Bond, who married Dr. Samuel Jordan Wheeler in 1836. From 1852 to 1856, she worked at the Wheeler House. This coincided with the early years of Chowan Baptist Female Institute (now Chowan University) when the Wheelers had six or eight female students boarding with them. Charles Dickens’ novel “Bleak House” was all the rage at the time. There are many parallels between Dickens’ work and “The Bondwoman’s Narrative.” In addition, Hecimovich has found cross references between the “Narrative” and student essays and assignments preserved at Chowan. Hecimovich believes that Hannah used her daily contacts with the students she served to perfect her literary skills. In 1856 and 1857, she lived with John Hill Wheeler and his wife in Washington, DC. After a confrontation with her enslavers took place on a trip to North Carolina, she decided to flee. With the aid of the Underground Railroad, she made her way to New York state, where she found shelter with the Crafts family. Hannah eventually made her way to rural New Jersey. She spent the rest of her life there, happily married to a Methodist minister, raising her stepson, and teaching young black children. She died around 1905.

“The Life and Times of Hannah Crafts” is the result of twenty years of research by Gregg Hecimovich. The book is equal parts historical narrative and literary investigation. His passion for the subject is palpable. He says he continues to be impressed by the magnitude of her literary achievement when it is compared to the many challenges she faced in her lifetime. Gregg Hecimovich is now a professor of English at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, and a Hutchins Family Fellow at Harvard University. “The Life and Times of Hannah Crafts” is available from Amazon.com or your favorite bookstore or from MHA for \$25.00. “The Bondwoman’s Narrative” is available for \$18.00. Dr. Ben Speller, who was also interviewed about the book, lives in Edenton. He is the former dean of the School of Library and Information Sciences at North Carolina Central University in Durham and founder of the annual Hope Genealogy Fair. Dr. Speller is a recognized authority on African American history in the Roanoke-Chowan region.

Dr. Hecimovich returned to Murfreesboro 25 to speak about his research at Chowan University. We will keep our members apprised as new discoveries are made on this important topic.



Properties Report

by Lamar Van Brackle



Even though winters are usually slow for the MHA Properties Team, ably led by our Properties Tsar, Mr. Lloyd Hill, the spring season has been somewhat active.

So now, here's the latest from the Historic District.

Completed Projects

Roberts-Vaughan House c. prior 1814

- The back porches were repaired and repainted.
- Ornamental shrubs were planted in front of the property. There is a small bit of rotted siding that requires replacement on the front of the house. The upcoming major repair at this property site is the replacement of the wooden cedar shingles on the gazebo. The obstacle we are facing is finding a craftsman who can install wooden cedar shingles. Help here would be greatly appreciated!

Agriculture and Transportation Museum

- Gutters were further repaired to reduce flooding around the building.
- Fluorescent lights in the 'Exhibits Building' (a warehouse attached to the Ag Building) have been repaired/replaced as required.

Dr. Walter Reed House c. 1820

- Exterior parking to the property.
- Power-washing
- Repair/replacement of rotted wood before applying paint
- The planned chimney caps still have to be installed.

John Wheeler House c. 1810

- Front and back porches were pressure-washed.
- Front porch flooring repaired and painted.

Murfree-Smith Law Office c. 1800

- Interior electrical repairs to lighting and wall switches were repaired/replaced.

Roberts Vaughn House

- There is also a small bit of rotted siding that requires replacement on the front of the building.
- The anticipated major repair task at this site is the replacement of the wooden cedar shingles on the gazebo. The main obstacle we are facing is finding a craftsman who can install wooden shingles. Help here would be appreciated!

Dr. Walter Reed House

- The planned chimney caps still have to be installed.

John Wheeler House

- Painting of the back porch
- Reglazing and installation of storm windows in the kitchen.

Murfree-Smith Law Office

- Replacement of the back windowsill and paint.

Lawn care in the district continues along with sidewalk spraying. Tree and shrub trimming will be required as our wet Spring has ensured healthy growth.

Lastly, all of our building fire extinguishers (26) were recently inspected and found to be in good working order. (Hopefully never needed.)

This completes the major tasks completed/planned for this report. Seldom mentioned are the numerous, routine, ongoing 'minor' repairs such as gates, fence slats, door locks, light replacements, door/window adjustments, etc. accomplished primarily by Lloyd Hill and never reported. He is constantly alert to material problems and has a keen sense of attention to detail. We are most fortunate to have Lloyd as of Property Manager!

Events Recap

Candlelight Christmas Tour

The 2023 Candlelight Christmas Tour was an amazing example of teamwork.

The most amazing thing about the annual Candlelight Christmas Tour is the organizational process. The Murfreesboro Historical Association members, volunteers, and supporters work in a synchronization that is phenomenal. They are earnest about their commitment to this event. Throughout the year the calendar is filled with deadline dates, planning meetings, marketing strategies and news releases. For example:

Book horses for carriage rides, reserve services and facilities, schedule radio announcements and newspaper ads, secure musicians, coordinate staffing for all sites, and complete assignment spreadsheet.

When December arrives all boxes for early preparations have been checked and crunch time starts. What remains is the symphony of site managers and volunteer busy bees making each historical site reminiscent of 18th and 19th century Christmas in Murfreesboro.

The tasks included clearing of the yards and streets of fall debris, cleaning, polishing, and freshening all interiors; gathering evergreens to deck the halls and exteriors; lining the streets with candle holders; cleaning globes of last year's smoky smolders.

And so it goes, from the greatest to the smallest item, every detail is done. The Historic District is ready for everyone!

For me it has been a pleasure to share this experience with dedicated volunteers who work happily together, sharing thoughts, ideas, and responsibilities to produce an event for all ages and interests.

The 2023 tour raised \$25,000, this came from the sale of 305 tickets sold and sponsorship donations of \$11,000. The 2024 tour is set for December 13th and 14th.

Take the Tour! Catch the spirit of Christmas! You will be amazed too!



Events Recap

Plaque Dedication

by Jimmy Moore



On Wednesday, April 3 community members gathered at the Dr. Walter Reed House to celebrate a milestone in the history of the Murfreesboro Historical Association. President Jimmy Moore spoke. Then he and Grace Brown unveiled a plaque marking the establishment of the Shirley Graham Brown and Bynum Rhodes Brown Endowment.

This fund was created a little over a year ago by Grace Brown for the ongoing maintenance and preservation of the Dr. Walter Reed House. The North Carolina Community Foundation will administer the funds. The endowment is named for Shirley and Bynum Brown, prominent philanthropists and civic leaders in the community and stalwart supporters of the Murfreesboro Historical Association.

Born January 7, 1926, Bynum Brown was a life-long resident of Murfreesboro. He graduated from Riverside Military Academy in Gainesville, GA. In 1943 he enlisted in the US Army Air Corps Cadet Program and was called to active duty in 1944. Bynum worked with conducting atomic bomb tests in the Pacific. After the war, he attended the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. Upon graduation, he was called to active duty in the Korean Conflict. He returned home to Murfreesboro in 1953 and opened the Bynum R. Brown Insurance Agency, which operated until 1991. He was married to Shirley Graham of Windsor, NC in 1955. Their daughter Grace was born in 1961. In partnership with Jim Johnson, he started the Roanoke Valley Nursing Home in Rich Square in 1961. Over his long life, he pursued a variety of business interests including real estate, health care, farming, and appraising.

Bynum Brown was devoted to Chowan University where he was trustee, vice-chairman and five times chairman of the Board of Trustees. The school honored him with an honorary doctorate and named him a trustee emeritus. Chowan dedicated the Bynum Rhodes Brown Aquatic Center in his honor in 2016. He died September 25, 2020.

Shirley Graham Brown was born in 1932 and grew up in Windsor, NC. She attended Meredith College, where she majored in home economics. Shirley met Bynum at a UNC football game. They were married in Windsor on July 30, 1955. She started married life teaching in the Murfreesboro Public School System and in Franklin, VA. After her daughter Grace was born, Shirley elected to spend her time with her. After Grace left to attend St. Mary's High School in Raleigh, Shirley became more involved in her husband's real estate and insurance businesses. In 1982 she received her insurance broker license and her real estate license. She opened her business in Murfreesboro in an historic structure on Main Street. Realizing she needed a national affiliation with a company specializing in rural and small-town properties, she elected to go with the United Country. Shirley went on to enjoy a highly successful career in real estate. Her customers were always impressed with her hard work and dedication in finding just the property they needed. They were touched by her kindness like bringing them a plate of pastries on moving day. She was renowned in the area for her hospitality, giving legendary parties at Thanksgiving and Christmas for over fifty years. Shirley died on February 9, 2012.

Dr. Walter Reed (1851-1902) lived in Murfreesboro as a young man. The house bearing his name was the parsonage while his father served the local Methodist congregation. After becoming an Army physician, Reed became known for his work combating infectious diseases. He achieved international fame in 1901 when he discovered the cure for Yellow Fever while stationed in Cuba. MHA now administers the structure as a historic house museum. The annex at the rear serves as a meeting venue.

Following the plaque ceremony there was a gala reception prepared by the renowned Mary Etta Flowers. Armando Torres and Lamar Van Brackle tended bar. Special thanks go to Dell Aycocock, the site manager, who decorated for the elegant occasion. Severe thunderstorms were bearing down on the Boro when the event started. Fortunately, the storm went around us. Everyone went home in lovely spring sunshine in a glow of ham biscuits and gin. MHA always knows how to throw a party.

All of us in the Murfreesboro community are supremely grateful for this gift, which will ensure that the Dr. Walter Reed House will be preserved for many years to come.

Events Recap

4th Annual Garden Party

by Donna Robbins

The 2024 MHA Garden Party was a rousing success! With wonderful food, music, prizes, and party favors, guests enjoyed the picture-perfect event from 4:00 – 6:00 pm on Saturday, May 4, 2024, in the gardens of the John Wheeler House. Even the weather was in full cooperation!

The gardens were in full bloom, which enhanced the jubilant atmosphere, as did the beautiful flower arrangements from Craig Dennis. Guests enjoyed the tea sandwiches, cheese straws, grapes, and desserts, as well as the punch and champagne.

Many area businesses contributed to the party's success by donating prizes and making monetary contributions. Special thanks to Benchmark Buildings & Irrigation, Inc. (Josh Stalls) and Brown's Mobile Home Sales, Inc. (Wayne Brown) for sponsoring the champagne bar. Ace Hardware of Murfreesboro and Ahoskie (Jamie and Steed Johnson) provided packets of flower and herb seeds as party favors of every guest to take home.

Prizes for the hat contest and game of charades were donated by:

John's Seafood and Steaks of Murfreesboro

Napoli of Murfreesboro

The Murfreesboro Creamery

Insert Coin Arcade + Bar of Murfreesboro

NAPA of Murfreesboro

Southern Roots Salon of Ahoskie

Elizabeth's Garden of Murfreesboro

Colonial Pharmacy of Murfreesboro

and members, Katherine Zhe, Stanley Parker, and Donna Robbins

During a short intermission by our lovely musicians, Sara Crowder and James Shafer, everyone enjoyed an impromptu game of charades led by beautiful assistants, Paige Terry, Addison Lane, and Harper Taylor.

Guest ranged in ages from one month old to 90 years old! Our 90-year-old guest from England also proudly wore his tartan kilt to represent his homeland. Of the 66 guests in attendance, some came from as far away as California and the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

This wonderful event was the creation of our hardworking committee members, Ami Wilson, Jimmy Moore, Donna Robbins, Stanley Parker, Paige Sumner, Milton Vaughan, Hazel Davis, Dell Aycock, Craig Dennis, Debbie Fields, Sara Hill, Mary Etta Flowers, Armando Torres, Debbie Hill, and Lamar Van Brackle.

Eighty-nine tickets were sold with sales and contributions totaling \$2,223, a 10% increase from last year's event. We can hardly wait for next year!



Events Recap

School Tours

by Sara Frances Hill

On March 20-21, 2024, Murfreesboro Historical Association was host to fourth graders from Bertie County Public and Private Schools, Gates County Public Schools, Halifax Public and Private Schools, Roanoke Rapids City Schools, Weldon City Schools, Hertford County Public and Private Schools, Northampton County Public and Private Schools and Homeschoolers Groups. On March 20 MHA hosted 43 students and on March 21 MHA hosted 140 students for a total of 211 including their chaperones.

The students toured Murfreesboro Town Hall, Agriculture and Transportation Museum, William Rea Museum, Evans Tin Shop, B.B. Winborne Country Store, and John Wheeler House.

Site Managers were docents and volunteers who lead groups around to each site. At the Evans Tin Shop Sue and Dennis Pauly helped students make suncatchers from tin pie plates to take home. All the students enjoyed their day in the historic district. Bottled water and pretzels were given out to students when they finished their tours. Many Students brought their lunch and had a picnic on the grounds of the Hertford Academy after the tours.

Sandra Fowler was the chairperson for this event. Thank you to the site managers and all the volunteers.



Pork Fest 2024

by Danny Figler

On Saturday, June 1, 2024, MHA participated in the annual Pork Fest 24. Our publications booth had several volunteers for the 2 hour shifts and everyone showed up that said they would so that worked out well.

I was in the booth from the beginning to the end of the Pork Fest. It was a wonderful experience as I was able to meet some of our members and volunteers and see some of the community.

We sold 8 publications during the event. 7 of them were cash sales and 1 credit card sale. Total sales were \$98.00

The raffle for the Maker's Mark Private Select Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey was quite popular. We made 280.00 in ticket sales. Hats off to Lamar for this idea. The winner was Mr. Joe Rippone, from Ahoskie. He came back to the tent to pick up his bottle.

Congratulations to Chef Steve Summer and his team Beach Boys BBQ as they took first prize in the BBQ cooking competition.



Behind the Scenes

by Carole Farnham

Murfreesboro Historical Association is a very active organization, with many projects on-going behind the scenes. One such project is the work that is being done, weekly, in the Collections Room in the Murfree-Smith Law Office building.

Connie Christison and Carole Farnham meet there on Tuesday mornings to inventory and store the many clothing items that have been donated over time. They work to identify the item; note its condition; give it an inventory number; and pack it in acid free paper and boxes.

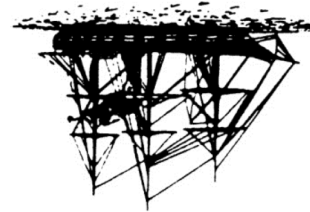
The recent collection contains many beautiful and intricately decorated dresses from the early 1900's. These items are mainly summer frocks, which are very feminine and delicate. As they are all over 100 years old, extreme care must be taken to see that they are carefully stored for future exhibit.

Connie and Carole are learning a great deal about the types of fabric and the construction methods used to produce these wonderful gowns. They have gained a great appreciation for those who made these dresses and for those who took care of them! Many of these dresses were made from fragile material and the tools used during that era were clumsy at best.

Sometimes an item of a different material needs to be assessed. At present, a lady's side saddle is being "conserved." This 1890's saddle is made of leather and a heavy fabric printed with flowers. The fabric has deteriorated in some areas. Black netting is being stitched over these areas to hold the loose material in place and to stabilize any further deterioration. If any conservation work is done in the future, this protective material can be easily removed.

Members of MHA should be pleased to know that donations given to this organization are being given the best conservation care possible and will be available for possible exhibits in the near future.





Office Hours
Monday–Thursday
9:00am–1:00pm

The Murfreesboro Historical Association, Inc.
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Upcoming Events

Hot Fudge Cake Booth

Wednesday, July 31 – Saturday, August 3, 2024

Murfreesboro Ghost Tour

Saturday, October 5, 2024 – starts at 7:00 pm



Soup ‘n’ Sandwich

Tuesday, October 14, 2024

11:00am – 2:00pm

\$10 Per Person

Homemade Soup, Sandwich, Dessert & Beverage

Eat in or take out.

Murfree Center, 201 E Broad Street

37th Annual Candlelight Christmas Tour

Friday, December 13 & Saturday, December 14, 2024

5:00pm – 8:00pm



Tickets are \$25 through December 8th.

Children under 12 do not need a ticket.

Tickets are \$30 beginning Dec. 9th and during the tour.
Enjoy candle-lit walkways, live greenery decorations,
horse-drawn carriage rides, a blacksmith demonstration,
refreshments, and live music.

Lafayette Event

Celebration of the 200th Anniversary of
Lafayette’s visit to Murfreesboro

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

5th Annual Garden Party

Spring Date To Be Determined

