

THE MURFREESBOROUGH

Newsletter Of

THE HISTORIC MURFREESBORO COMMISSION  
and  
THE MURFREESBORO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.  
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The activities of the first annual Historic Murfreesboro Week and the entire summer plus the publicity which it received was unprecedented in the history of the town. Murfreesboro's three main assets, Chawan College, the industrial development, and the adaptive uses restoration program each made great strides toward the attack on education, unemployment, and redevelopment and each shared in the valuable publicity which came forth. In addition, each was featured jointly on television programs on the following stations: Channel 10, Portsmouth, Va., Channel 13, Hampton, Va., Channel 3, Norfolk, Va., and Channel 7, Washington, N.C. Time allocated to Murfreesboro varied in length from 15 to 50 minutes. Additional television programs are being programmed now and will be aired in the late fall and early winter. Newspaper coverage of the restoration activities was very extensive as was local radio coverage.

The Murfreesboro Historical Association, Inc., wishes to thank each organization and each individual who contributed to the success of the Historic Week activities and the first meeting of the Historic Murfreesboro Commission. Our sincere appreciation is extended to Dr. Gordon Gray, Mrs. Dan K. Moore, and the Commission members for taking time out from their busy schedules to be a part of the activities during a hot July week. The time, effort, and funds expended prior to and during the Historic Week is an investment in the future to make the Murfreesboro Restoration reach the heights which it has been acclaimed by state and national restoration officials. We appreciate the support of everyone and look forward with much enthusiasm to the second annual Historic Murfreesboro Week which will be held in 1969.

As early summer speaker was Mr. James A. Gray, President, Old Salem, Inc., Winston-Salem, N.C. Mr. Gray was the featured speaker for the Historical Association's membership kickoff dinner on June 25th.

It is interesting to note that there are six restorations underway in Historic Murfreesboro today. Five of these are located in the municipally zoned Historic District which consists of approximately 12 blocks and contains 14 original structures. The restorations are Melrose (site no. 2) by Mr. and Mrs. R. T. Vann, Dr. Gary Home (site no. 3) by Mr. and Mrs. John Parker, The Hertford Academy Building (site no. 4) by the Murfreesboro Woman's Club, Capt. Lewis Meredith Home (site no. 5) by Mr. and Mrs. E. Frank Stephenson, Jr., and the William Rea Store (site no. 14) by The Murfreesboro Historical



Association, Inc. We are very pleased that Chowan College is returning the 1851 McDowell Columns Building (site no. 52) to its original setting. The College removed the adjoining East Wing in early August and other additions to the Columns Building will be removed as new facilities are added to the historic campus.

Watercolor renderings by artist Geoffry McLean of Raleigh, N.C., of the 1790 William Rea Store on Williams Street and the 18th century Roberts-Vaughan Home (site no. 25) have been received and are on display in The Farmers Bank in Murfreesboro. The beautiful renderings picture each structure as it would appear restored and will be invaluable for promotional purposes. McLean is now preparing a 4'x8' master perspective of the Historic District which will feature the 12 block area once it has been completely restored. On August 18th, Dr. and Mrs. A. A. McLean, Jr., took our photographer Mr. Colbert P. Howell, Raleigh, N.C., and Mr. E. Frank Stephenson, Jr., up in their plane for the purpose of taking aerial photographs of the Historic District. We are indebted to the McLeans for their interest in the program. The photographs were needed in the preparation of the master perspective which is expected to be received in late October. The perspective will at long last provide a visual plan of the restoration. Funds for the renderings and perspective are being provided by the Historical Association.

The Rea Museum restoration contractor is now Cullifer Contracting Company, Murfreesboro, N.C. Cullifer replaced the W. M. Kemp Company after it asked to be relieved of the restoration due to increased work at Hope House and Historic Edenton. Architects for the project is the firm of Edwards, Dove, Knoght and Associates, Rocky Mount, N.C. The historic structure is slated for adaptive use as an area wide museum.

EXPLANATION OF THE ROBERTS-VAUGHAN RESTORATION: One of Murfreesboro's most significant structures and one of the finest of its kind remaining in the United States today is finally slated for restoration under the adaptive use program as a town library, Chamber of Commerce Office, and restoration headquarters. The United States Dept. of Housing and Urban Development will provide on a matching basis, \$40,000 toward the project. HUD funds provide one-half the purchase price and one-half the cost of developing the 1.3 acre grounds as a "Shopper's Park" with specific areas and facilities for all age groups. The location of the Roberts-Vaughan Home in the heart of the Central Business District makes the adaptive restoration of this significant building extremely important in view of the fact that the present public library facilities are totally inadequate and that no park area is presently located in or near the Business District. Hertford County has earmarked on a matching basis, \$10,000 toward the library part of the facility. The Town of Murfreesboro will probably provide the matching funds for the County library appropriation and will be responsible for the upkeep of the total facility once it has been completed. Efforts are underway privately to secure the additional funds needed for the project and considerable commitments have been received privately from corporations, foundations, and individuals. The Roberts-Vaughan adaptive restoration has received significant endorsements from many local, state, and federal organizations.

MUSEUM ACQUISITIONS: Through the efforts of Mrs. John K. Barrow, Jr., a member of the Commission, a portable grist mill was secured from Mrs. Walter



Robinson, Ahoskie, N.C., for the Rea Museum. A rare museum piece, the grist mill is comparable to an early 18th century mill now on display in the Moses Myers house in Norfolk, Va. Competition to purchase the mill was keen after Mrs. Robinson advertised the mill for sale and it was only through the efforts of Mrs. Barrow that we were able to secure and keep it in the Roanoke-Chowan area. Additional museum items have been secured through loan from the descendants of Dr. Gary. These include several books and a pistol belonging to Dr. Gary. Commission and Association members are urged to be on the watch for any early agricultural implements particularly an early peanut picker as the first peanut picker was produced in the Rea Store. Early law books are needed for the one-story addition to the Rea Building as it will be restored to its law office capacity of Judge Thomas Maney in the first quarter of the 19th century.

OLD WINDOW GLASS: for the Rea restoration was secured from the now demolished East Wing at Chowan College. The sashes were removed from the building by Neighborhood Youth Corp workers assigned to the Historical Association. We are indebted to the College for their interest in the program.

OLD TOWN CEMETERY: The old town cemetery (site no. 12) on Cedar Street has been cleared through a co-operative effort by the Town of Murfreesboro, The Historical Association, and The Neighborhood Youth Corp program. The Town provided funds to hire an on-the-job supervisor for the five NYC boys assigned to the Historical Association. In addition, it provided hand tools and trucks when needed. The cemetery is the final resting place for the Wheeler, Rea Camp, and other founding families of the town. 16 headstones, the earliest of which dates from 1796, remain standing today. There are approximately 100 unmarked early graves in the two acre cemetery. It is overlooking the beautiful Meherrin River and adjacent to the King's Landing site (1745 circa). The cemetery is by no standards restored but it is accessible and a tremendous beginning has been made toward its eventual restoration. Archaeological search for the colonial church ruins on the cemetery lot and the Rea Store lot and building are scheduled to begin in the early fall. The work will be conducted by Mr. Stanley South, State Archaeologists.

MURFREESBORO TOUR BROCHURE: The Murphee Genealogical Association, Salt Lake City, Utah, in its last publication, featured the Murfreesboro Tour brochure and termed it a significant contribution to national historical publications. In addition, it named Mr. E. Frank Stephenson, Jr., head of its William Murfree Division. It has also expressed a deep interest in the Murfreesboro Restoration and several agreements which will promote each effort will be announced very shortly.

ADDITIONAL PROPERTY: Negotiations are underway now concerning three additional properties in the Historic District and agreements are expected to be reached shortly. One involves a life-right agreement with the present property owners. Additional property should be secured as soon as it becomes available in the Historic District. This is extremely important for future use and development in the long range plans to restore the District.

SITE SIGNS: The 25 site signs provided by the Murfreesboro Chamber of Commerce and the Carolina Aluminum Company, Winton, N.C., have been reerected in concrete. Ten larger business establishment "Tour Information" signs are



Now being erected in front of participating business concerns. Tour brochures will be available at these places in addition to the Chamber of Commerce Office. Four large approach signs are expected to be erected shortly on the main arteries leading into Murfreesboro. Additional individual site signs are planned as funds become available.

GATLING CEMETERY IN MANEY'S NECK: Permission has been received from the present owners of the old Gatling plantation by Mr. John W. Gatling, a member of the Commission, to provide an access walk leading to and around the restored Gatling family cemetery. Mr. Gatling was instrumental in having the cemetery restored in 1964. It is hoped that our restoration efforts will enable other historic cemeteries to be restored.

FALL COMMISSION MEETING: The 1968 Fall Commission will be held on November 21st. and 22nd with a dutch dinner planned for the evening of the 21st and the Commission business session to be held on the morning of the 22nd. The Murfreesboro Historical Association, Inc., its officers, members and guests will also meet jointly with the Commission on the night of the 21st for the dinner session. Full details of the activities including speakers for the night program on the 21st will be forwarded to Commission and Association members as soon as final arrangements have been made.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE: The Murfreesboro Historical Association will begin very shortly on a concentrated membership drive which is headed by Mr. Walter C. Lackey. Everyone is invited to participate in the drive in their local area. Membership details will be mailed within the next several weeks. Any questions concerning memberships or the membership drive should be forwarded to Mr. Walter C. Lackey, Murfreesboro. Membership fees and any other contributions made to the Historical Association are both state and federal tax deductions.

ORGANIZATIONS OF MUTUAL INTEREST: Commission and Association members who are not members of the North Carolina Society for the Preservation of Antiquities and The North Carolina Literary and Historical Society may wish to be aware of the two organizations and their roles in a common cause in North Carolina. The N.C. Literary and Historical Society publishes the North Carolina Historical Review which from time to time has articles pertaining to the greater Roanoke-Chowan section. Dr. Thomas C. Parremore has had several interesting articles published in the review. The Review is sent to all members of the Literary and Historical Society. The Antiquities Society is a state organization for the preservation of North Carolina antiquities. The Murfreesboro Historical Association is a member of the Antiquities Society which provides support for local restorations through various means. The Historic Murfreesboro Commission is extremely fortunate in having the president of the North Carolina Society for the Preservation of Antiquities, Mr. Harry Gatton, as a member. Mrs. Lillian Robinson, past president of the Antiquities Society, is also a member of the Murfreesboro Commission. The two organizations, along with others, are sponsors of the annual North Carolina Culture Week which will be held in Charlotte during the month of December.

The August issue of the North Carolina Banker's Journal had a cover picture of Miss Emma Jane Lackey, daughter of Commission member, Mr. Walter C. Lackey, on the steps of the Hertford Academy Building during the Activities of Historic Murfreesboro Week, July 17-18. It is our understanding that the State Magazine



will feature an article on the old Murfreesboro covered bridge in the near future. The News & Observer on Sunday July 21 published a most interesting article by Commission member Dr. Thomas C. Parramore concerning the Murfreesboro Gatling gun now on display in The Farmers Bank. The gun will be moved to the Rea Museum upon completion of the restoration.

Several Murfreesboro business establishments have undergone a facelifting in an attempt to contribute to the total restoration efforts. Additional renovations are forthcoming.

The fall of 1968 marks the second anniversary of the efforts to restore Historic Murfreesboro. A tremendous start has been made and only the imagination can provide clues to what the future holds for the Murfreesboro restoration.

PUBLICATIONS: Mr. F. Roy Johnson, Murfreesboro, N.C., has published a most interesting list of books related to the Roanoke-Chowan area and in some cases, to state and national titles. His publications include the following titles:

THE PEANUT STORY by F. Roy Johnson, 1964. This is the story of the lowly peanut which rose from a humble beginning to worldwide importance.

BEFORE THE REBEL FLAG FELL, Five viewpoints of the Civil War by five contemporaries of northeastern North Carolina. Thomas C. Parramore, Ph. D., E. Frank Stephenson, Jr., and F. Roy Johnson, editors.

THE FABLED DOCTOR JIM JORDON, by F. Roy Johnson, 1964. This is the true story of a local Negro conjure doctor who won for himself a nationwide reputation and made a million dollars. Many stories of his treatment of patients are told.

LEGENDS AND MYTHS OF NORTH CAROLINA'S ROANOKE-CHOWAN by F. Roy Johnson, 1964. Indian, Mystery, marvel, spirit, folk and name tales from an early settled area of North Carolina.

TALES FROM OLD CAROLINA by F. Roy Johnson, 1966. Historical sketches and folk gleanings from the old part of Carolina, including the Great Dismal Swamp, the great natural wonder. A view of early Carolina culture.

THE TUSCARORAS, Volume I, by F. Roy Johnson, 1967. Mythology, medicine, and culture of the once powerful Iroquoian Indian group of eastern North Carolina who joined the Five Nations, their northern kinsmen, after warring with the English.

THE TUSCARORAS, Volume II, by F. Roy Johnson, 1968. History, traditions, cultural modifications during historic period.

THE NAT TURNER SLAVE INSURRECTION, AND "THE CONFESSION, TRAIL, AND EXECUTION OF NAT TURNER" by Thomas R. Gray. Main text by F. Roy Johnson.



SOUTHAMPTON INSURRECTION by William Sidney Drewry, 1900, an account of the Nat Turner revolt of 1831 with 33 photographs taken in the 1890's. A reprint by Johnson Publishing Company, 1968.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF NORTH CAROLINA by John Brickell, M.D., Dublin, Ireland, 1737. Reprint with biographical sketch and comprehensive index by Dr. Thomas C. Paramore. Fullest historical and traditional account of colonial North Carolina. Reprint by Johnson Publishing Company, 1968.

CAROLINA CROSSROADS by Rosser H. Taylor, Ph. D. A study of rural life at the end of the horse-and-buggy era, with many mores and customs arising from the colonial and antebellum periods. Johnson Publishing Company, 1967.

SHINING TOWER OF FAITH by Roy Z. Kemp. Seventy-five poems of affirmation and inspiration by a noted religious writer. Johnson Publishing Company, 1967.

HISTORICAL AND TRADITIONAL 'TAR HEEL' STORIES from the colorful central coastal plains by Louise Bocker. Johnson Publishing Company, 1968.

SOUTHERN HOME REMEDIES, Chowan College Writing Class Project with Mrs. Bernice Kelly Harris as editor and many guest contributors of note. New in preparation. Chowan College has provided a most interesting publication in its book entitled, A HISTORY OF CHOWAN COLLEGE, by McKnight and Creech, Murfreesboro, N.C., 1964. The book is still in print and copies may be secured from the Office of College Relations.

HISTORICAL INTEREST ITEM: Belinda, schooner, of Murfreesboro. Built at Murfreesboro in 1794. 96 8/95 tons. 65 1/2' x 21' x 8'. One deck, two masts, square stern. Owned by Thomas Rea, mariner, and William Rea, Murfreesboro. Master: Thomas Rea. (Source: Ship Registers and Enrollments of Boston and Charlestown, Compiled from Original Documents in the Boston Custom House. Boston: The National Archives Project, 1942.)