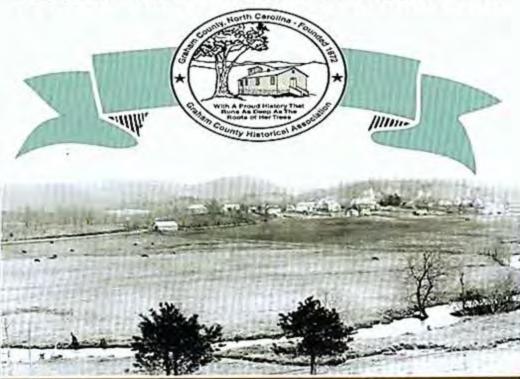
GRAHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION



HONORING THOSE WHO PIONEERED THE RUGGED MOUNTAINS OF GRAHAM COUNTY



828.479.7971 www.HISTORYGC.org Volume 4, No. 3 July 2020 Tere Moore, Editor

NEWSLETTER

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Graham County Historical Association meets the Ist and 3rd Mondays of each month. Due to COVID-19

restrictions, meetings are held via teleconference. Check our Facebook page

neck our facebook or website

www.historygc.org

for updates.

Wish to be notified about meetings? Email request marked "Meeting Update" to:

grahamcountymuseum @gmail.com

Isolated but not Idle!

We have been very busy with some VERY EXCITING endeavors surrounding the future Museum & preserving Graham County history.

JOIN US!

GCHA HIGHLIGHTS



- The RFP for Architectural and Engineering Services for the future Museum & Heritage Center has been awarded to TSW Planners I Architects | Landscape Architects. A store clean-out was held on July 7th to eliminate excess items and clear space for TSW to perform their LiDAR scan.
- Cox & Son Roofing completed a new roof on the right side of the Museum building.
- *** GCHA launched a Photo ID Contest for the** public in cooperation with The Graham Star.
- GCHA launched the COVID-19 Archival Project to memorialize Graham Countians' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Acquisitions & Collections Committee has been busy firming up museum collection documentation and archival procedures. Photo scanning and archiving have begun, and a Scan Day is being planned in the future.
- A Pictorial Committee has been formed to research and create a future pictorial publication for Graham County.

MISSION STATEMENT

To preserve, interpret, and convey Graham County, regional, and Appalachian history through exhibitions and educational programs to showcase our history, making Graham County a desired historical destination.

VISION STATEMENT

To maintain a heritage center located on Main Street, by focusing on education, history, and community activities, to assure that Graham County's place in history will be secured for future generations. Participate in the revitalization of downtown Robbinsville, N.C., and promote cultural tourism and economic development in our area.

GCHA BOARD

Edd Satterfield- Pres. ~ Carolyn Stewart- V.P. Lavina West- Sec. ~ Terri Phillips- Treas.

MUSEUM BUILDING MAKING PROGRESS

After providing the lowest competitive price, Cox & Son Roofing was selected by the GCHA to install a new roof on the building. The roof received 3" of ISO foam insulation and a 75 ML EDPM roofing membrane extending over

the top of all parapet walls, all areas that required flashing received double flashing. The EDPM membrane includes a 30-year warranty from Carlisle/Syntec. Cox Roofing also went the extra mile and replaced some scuppers and gutter drain.

We extend a well-deserved *Thank You* to Cox & Sons Roofing.



capped/ wrapped upright parapet wall



"STREET OF FLAGS"



Graham County Historical Assn joined the "Street of Flags" (E. Main Street) sponsored by the 4-H Club. Donations were made to honor each branch of the Armed Services.

Honor

Thank you for

of All Our

Air Force Veterans

Get Involved - Have Some Fun!

Graham County Historical Association Photo ID Contest



Thanks to some generous donors, GCHA has started its photo archive. These photos will become part of the permanent archive of the Graham County Museum & Heritage Center.

In the future, we will have community photo scan day(s) to collect other photos from Graham County residents. Date(s) to be announced.

CONTEST:

One photo is being run weekly in The Graham Star until 9/10/2020 requesting your knowledge as to the approximate date, place, event, people, and any other pertinent facts you may have relating to the photo.

Your feedback can be sent weekly or all at one time *via email* to **grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com** or by *mail* to **GCHA**, **P.O. Box 1221**, **Robbinsville**, **NC 28771**.

WINNERS:

1st, 2nd and 3rd place Winner(s) in each category decided by:

- 1. How many correct identifications are made of each photo;
- 2. How many new identifications are contributed for each photo;
- The overall winner of combined number of correct and new identifications.

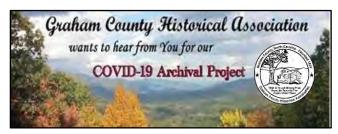
CONTEST AWARDS:

The Winner(s) will be contacted shortly after 9/10/20, after feedback is tallied, and prizes awarded at the Stecoah Harvest Festival on October 17, 2020*. Photos of the winner(s) will be published in The Graham Star along with the info about the photos.

* If for some reason the festival is cancelled, Prizes will be distributed and photos and announcement will be published in The Graham Star only.

Some of you must know something about these photos... why not share it and help GCHA preserve Graham County history!

History is made even Today!



Graham County's COVID-19 pandemic experience is one that *Graham County Historical Association* wants to capture in its **COVID-19 Archival Project**.

Future generations will want to know:

- > How did we cope with closed roads/businesses and curtailed services?
- What were the personal consequences, like canceled graduations, postponed weddings and school closures?
- What did we do during the Stay-at-Home orders?
- > Did we manage to come together to help one another?

We want to hear from You about your experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each person's contribution will become part of the COVID-19 Archival Project housed in the future Graham County Museum & Heritage Center.

Some ideas of what we're looking for:

Digital content:

Screen shots of COVID-19 related web pages, emails, memes on social media.

Written content:

Diaries, journals, letters, anecdotes or observations.

Videos:

Activities, at-home schooling, kids coping, etc.

Photos:

Signs posting closures, notices or other social distancing directives. Homemade face masks or objects made during the Stay-at-Home order.

Audio:

Oral histories or recordings.

Email content to:

grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com or by mail to GCHA, P.O. Box 1221, Robbinsville, NC 28771.

Questions about how to send files, file sizes, or how to make your contribution, please email and we'll gladly assist!

We can't wait to hear from you!

Gone but not forgotten –Thunderbird Mountain Resort

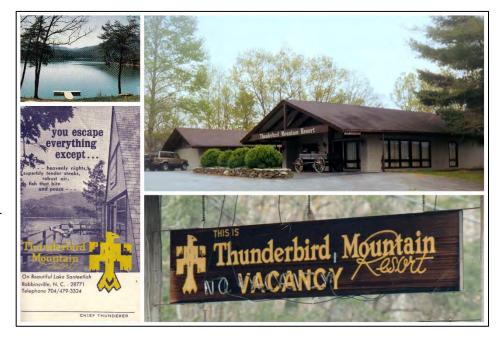
Loss of an iconic landmark in Graham County history, Thunderbird Mountain Resort Lodge

Sincere thanks to Aura Griffith, wife of the late Arthur Griffith

for graciously consenting to give an oral history and interview regarding Thunderbird Lodge to GCHA.

History of the Lodge: The area known as Santeetlah along the Cheoah River was flooded after Santeetlah Dam was completed in 1928. In 1939, the U.S. Forest Service purchased from Carolina Aluminum Company the land now occupied by the town of Lake Santeetlah.

In 1947, Kenneth S. Keyes, Sr., a developer, exchanged some land he held with the Forest Service for the area that is now the town of Lake Santeetlah. He called the property "Thunderbird Estates." Keyes never developed the property, but sold it in 1958 to another developer, who transferred it again in 1961.



In the early 1960s, Smoky Mountain Resorts built a lodge and some cabins. "Thunderbird Mountain Club Resort," as the development was first called, faced many difficulties, and in the 1970s experienced several transfers of ownership, ultimately ending up in the hands of Executive National Life Insurance in 1981.

In 1986, Arthur and Aura Griffith came to Graham County from Miami, Florida and became the new owners of the Thunderbird Mountain Resort.



Aura Griffith Today

Aura Griffith's Story, told in her enchanting Honduran accent, about their discovery, purchase, and ownership experiences at Thunderbird Resort Lodge

"My husband had a neighbor who had a place for sale here in the Thunderbird community. Arthur came up from Miami, Florida to look at it. On the way, he passed the lodge and instantly fell in love with it. He started to investigate it through local realtors, who told him that it was not for sale at the time. He investigated and found out that an insurance company in Illinois was the owner. He got in touch with them and they told him everything was for sale.

"The lodge had been closed for more than six years. We were amazed. Everything was there, the beds, furniture... nobody touched anything in the time it had been closed."

As to how she felt about embarking upon such an endeavor, she said, "I was afraid. We

never owned a restaurant business. It's a hard

business to do. You have to do a lot of work in a place

you don't know if it's a good area or about the type of business. We had a lot of repairs, a lot of painting, a lot of work."

The Lodge had 32 rooms, two cabins, a restaurant, swimming pool, the Griffiths' living quarters, and spectacular lakeside views.

Aura described the interior as having a fireplace and sun porch, and the restaurant area having two rooms, one for private parties.



Arthur and Aura Griffith

Cont'd Pg. 5

Thunderbird Mountain Resort (cont'd)



Describing the picture (left), Aura said, "We called it the Big Room. We decorated with a few little antiques. I always have fresh daisies or roses in

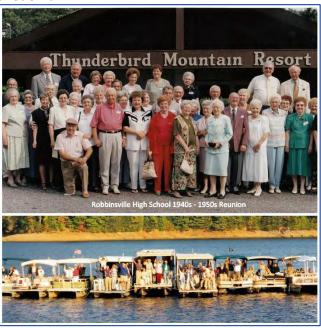
vases on the tables. There was a beautiful handmade copper chandelier made in Georgia. "

The Lodge was the perfect place for special occasions.

Aura fondly remembered, "We had weddings. I baked the cake and decorated with wild roses. Very simple but very nice.

"We had high school proms. We had the Robbinsville High School Class of '40s-'50s Reunion.

"People from the lodge and community had Pontoon Boat parties... everyone bring food, having dinner together, passing the food from boat to boat... a lot of fun.



"Bingo nights we had little prizes – I baked cakes or give a free dinner. This lady really enjoyed bingo... she take the cards home and bring the next time.

"We had meetings for the Thunderbird community. Every year we had the last-of-the-year party... dancing, music, good food and desserts, and sit around the chimney."

During the clean-up/reconstruction of the "Big Room," the Griffiths discovered some very interesting things. There were private lockers with names on them for clientele to keep their secret stash of liquor in, accessed only with their personal keys.

"We discover what we used to call the Secret Room. We were cleaning the attic, and I put my elbow on the wall and this door opened. We didn't know it was there. There was a glass where you can see from inside, but you never see from outside. I don't know what it was used for... we never knew."

Aura recounted a difficult memory. "We had a meditation group who come from all over US, 155 people, in November. It was a cool night; they lit the fireplace. Somebody took the ashes outside along the fence when was still coals... was windy and the fence start to catch fire. We were already in bed. Our dog was sleeping outside and started to bark... we saw the fire was already getting big. My husband took buckets of water. Took a long time to put out. Scary night. Whole fence was burned."

When asked if she had any odd feelings about the lodge's past, Aura commented, "Yes, one of the girls saw what used to be a man who walk around the property – because somebody bury some money. Now, when the lot is done, you don't see any money – not yet. Maybe it's still there."

After the Griffiths sold the business in 2001, the Thunderbird Mountain Resort started its decline. As to her feeling about the demolition of the old property, Aura said, "A lot of good memories. It's sad and it's happy. I'm glad to see something is going to be done with the property... condominiums, three-bedroom, nothing too high, something nice and modern. I'm sure it's going to be very well-designed."



Demolition of Thunderbird Mt. Resort – photo courtesy of The Graham Star

Aura ended her interview saying, "I like to live here. For me the best place to live... peaceful, quiet. I wish everybody enjoy, don't complain too much; just live the life and let the other live. It has so much beauty, water, lake, nice people, so many things to do. *Nature is the best thing in life.*"

Graham County Historical Association

Museum Preview

After many months of hard work, Graham County Historical Association is proud to unveil its *Wall Mural* at the *Travel & Tourism* office, 474 Rodney Orr Bypass, Robbinsville, NC 28771.

Because of their vision, ideas, and charitable donation, GCHA *wholeheartedly* thanks Tom Walker, graphic designer, and Robin Turner for their generous gift to the Graham County Historical Association. We are thrilled to have their continued support. The interpretative panels tell such a great story of this area and is a "wow" addition to the Museum preview. The graphics are superb and portray the historical events in such a meaningful way.

Thanks also to the Layout & Design Committee and the dedicated volunteers who prepared and installed it.



Stop in at *Travel & Tourism* and see this exquisite pictorial display of some important benchmarks in our history that will be exhibited at the Graham County Museum & Heritage Center in the future.

Not to worry... the **T&T** office is large enough to maintain social distancing and its staff are very diligent in taking every precaution necessary for your safety and protection.



This is only the beginning!

TRAVELING BACK IN TIME

FOR THE CHARLOTTE DEMOCRAT.]

The Unknown Portion of North Carolina.

VALLEYTOWN, CHEROKEE Co., N. C., August, 1877.

Editor Democrat :-- With a companion I left Franklin, Macon county, on the 24th of July, heading towards Charleston, Swain county, North Carolina, distance 30 miles. Acting on the principle that distance saved was time made, we left the public highway and betook ourselves to Indian trails and near cuts generally. Across the mountains 15 miles would have set us down at our destination. We ascended slowly, leading now around some yawning chasm and then around some frightful precipice, the path being so small that one could hardly go forward, and impossible to turn back-ward. We scrambled on, tired and dejected hoping to reach the summit; but before that steep ascent was won, high in his pathway hung the sun. After a heat of 7 miles we reached the mountain top, and the scene that there greeted us, cheered our tired bodies. To the North, mountain upon mountain stretched their huge arms out toward the States of Tennessee and Virginia; to the South, they extended to South Carolina and Georgia. Intervening valleys, with their rippling streams reflecting rainbow hues, lent enchantment to the view, and the whole presented a picture of glorious grandeur. Farms, with herds of cattle grazing lazily could be seen 20 miles distant. Franklin, 17 miles away, was distinctly visible, and before us, in the valley 10 miles, on the Tuckasegee River, sat the little town of Charleston, so plain in view that men could be seen walking through the streets. While gazing in admination on this beautiful panorama, we saw a man go to the River bank, get in his canoc and dash across. We descended, and after taking a hearty supper, retired to fall from some dizzy height in our dreams.

The county of Swain is 5 years old, and its population is 800. The village of Charleston is small and presents a new, neat appearance. The people are clever and intelligent.

On the 26th we had a repetition of the 24th, and after crossing several mountains, the Tennessee River and several tributaries, we found ourselves safely quartered at the "Junaluska House," Robbinsville, Graham county. The county is new, the town newer. The county was formed from the North-east corner of Cherokee in 1873, and called in honor of Ex-Goy, Graham, The town is named for W. M. Robbins, member of Congress. The county has a population of 200 voters, 60 of whom are Republicans and 240 Democrats. Two families of negroes despense odors from "Araby the blest." The town has a population of 25 souls, all numbered, and they are high and dry, several hundred feet above the water level. A second deluge would probably reach them. Two merchants compose the board of trade; a Sheriff and a jailor furnish free board to the weary, and the Judge extends the time; religious truths are expounded in the Court House, and a Sabbath School, in the same building, delights the children, and an occasional Indian makes things hideous, but he deserves a passing tribute.

In a few hundred yards of Robbinsville, Fort Montgomery was situated when the Indians were removed West by U. S. Regulars in 1835. The last vestige of it, like all things mutable, has passed away and tradition only preserves the spot. In a few hundred yards of where I now write, Junaluska, the proud chief of the Cherokee nation, lived, danced and died. A few feet from the spot where he lived is the dancing ring where they celebrated their observed days and worshipped the Great Spirit and danced their war dance. Though it is 125 years old it has successfully stood the storms of that many winters and is still entirely preserved. How many times have these Red men, dressed in the paraphanalia of war, danced around this ring crying to their Deity to guide their winged arrows to the Pale Faces hearts. How many scalps, of golden locks, attended their crying too, but for vengeance.

But the Indians were not always our enemies. Junaluska, a musical name for a valiant warrior, was a friend to the whites. When Jackson's war with the Creeks begun, he with Chesquin and several others joined him in Alabama, and were with Jackson in many dreadful engagements, notably the battle of "Horse Shoe." Junaluska's bravery on this occasion elicited such appreciation from our State that she gave him, as a token of her esteem, a valuable tract of land near Robbinsville. The troops were encamped on one side of the River, the Creeks on the other. Jackson called for volunteers to cross and cut the enemies canoes loose. It was night; Junaluska stepped forward and offered to go, knowing that it would probably be death to make the attempt. With a few faithful followers he crossed and returned safely, bringing 50 canoes strung together, thus destroying all hopes of the Creeks' escape. He died in 1853. Chesquin is living now four miles from Robbinsville, and though 125 years of age, still possesses a healthy mind and body. Locusts come at intervals of 17 years, and he has heard their musical voices 7 times. No doubt he could give us some interesting history that would be valued by the State Historical Association and I shall avail myself of an opportunity of seeing him. He was with Washington at Yorktown, and speaks of the great commander always with emotion. There are at present about 2,000 Cherokees in North Carolina, and they are now being educated at the expense of the Government. They have a school near this place under the supervision of two young ladies and Dr. Donaldson of Tennessee. A. D. C.



Church Mouse Community Garden

The new community garden is a bright light in the redevelopment efforts for Graham County. An **Open House** is to be held on *July 14th from 4-6 pm*.

Michelle Shiplet, former manager of The Church Mouse Ministries' thrift shop, initiated the Community Garden in 2017 to "bring Graham County folks together in an effort to provide a place for people to come together in a social environment that is safe, healthy and educational." She worked diligently to find grants for this dream.



Church Mouse Ministries' thrift store manager Michelle Shiplet (second from right) and supporters display proof of a \$1,250 grant from Modern Woodsmen of America. Funds will be used for Church Mouse's community garden project. From left: United Methodist Church Ministre Ficr Recec, Church Mouse Ministries Board Chairman Anne Hager, Shiplet, Modern Woodsmen representative Linda May.

(photo courtesy of The Graham Star 3.8.18)

At the garden workday held on March 7, 2020, Erin Emmons, Church Mouse volunteer, managed the first building phase of the project, along with several community volunteers and students from Cranbrook Schools, located in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, who take part in a 10-day wilderness camping trip every year in March in the Nantahala Forest area. This year their group volunteered to work on our community garden.

Cranbrook volunteers had this to say:

Paul Green: "I think the garden project is important for many reasons. Not only does it provide a resource for a bit of food to be grown and donated, it is an excellent educational tool as well as a resource for social engagement."

Alex Toenniges: "Garden projects like this create strong, connected, and resilient communities."

Emily Zonder: "The people in Robbinsville are so kind to our group year after year, and we were happy to be able to contribute to the community in any way we could.

Audrey Armoudlian: "In the last few years we have

reached out to the Church Mouse and been able to donate our extra supplies. Helping in the community garden project seemed like a perfect next step."

All volunteers enjoyed a well-earned lunch prepared and donated by Shea Blalock of Willow Tree Restaurant.

Erin Emmons described the metal bed boxes as being made with an internal frame cornered by 4 x 4 posts,

cross-supported in the middle, and then lined with a metal mesh and weed barrier, allowing for 18" of soil mixture on top and a crawl space underneath to help with air flow.



(photo courtesy of Tere Moore 3.7.20)

This is a garden that can be used by everyone, providing wheelchair-accessible beds and paths, tables, umbrellas, and an educational alcove. Efforts to be environmentally friendly and mostly organic are being made, initially using rain barrels to reclaim water, later incorporating a well pump.

Erin went on to describe Phase 2 as fundraising for umbrellas and picnic tables and Phase 3 as constructing more beds on the other side of the lot.

Many Thanks to Blue Ridge National Heritage Area, Modern Woodsmen of America, Community Foundation of Graham County, Mission Health Systems, Grace Mountainside Episcopal, the Lutheran Church, Garland's Auto, The Evergreen Foundation, Adams Construction, Taylor Greenhouses, Double 00 Farm, Robbinsville Garden Club, just to name a few.

To make donations or get more information, contact Erin Emmons at (828)479-3038.



Community Garden as of June 26, 2020 (photo courtesy of The Graham Star)

MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER JASON MARINO

On April 15, 2020, Jason Marino, son of Alan Marino and Lynda Ghormley McCredie, grandson of Elmo and Blanche Ghormley, was selected to receive the rank of *Master Chief Petty Officer*, an E-9 classification based on the length of service – for Jason 24+ years – unsurpassed technical knowledge, and substantial managerial and leadership skills.

To receive this rank, the Selection Board took into consideration Jason's meeting the prerequisites put out each year, his service awards, leadership capabilities, evaluations from commanders, past evaluations, work records, diversity of different commands, and jobs performed, just to name a few of the criteria.



Frocking/Pinning ceremony conducted at Navy Operational Support Center (NOSC) Greenville, SC.

To put this into perspective, a little over 3% of enlisted personnel receive an E-7 ranking (Chief Petty Officer), 2% receive an E-8 ranking (Senior Chief Petty Officer), and only 1% receive an E-9 ranking (Master Chief Petty Officer).

When asked how he made the decision to enlist in the Navy, Jason stated, "In 1996, I was a self-employed contractor. An Acquaintance told me that the Navy had a division called U.S. Navy Seabees..."

The Navy Seabees form the U.S. Naval Construction Force (NCF). The Seabee nickname is a heterograph of the first letters "C B" from the words "Construction Battalion."

He continued, "I was visiting family in Asheville and there was a Navy Reserve office there. So I looked into the Seabees and just loved the history of it... helping the Marine Corps in the Western Pacific in WWII. I always wanted to serve in some capacity, so I enlisted in the Navy Seabees and the rest is history."

Describing some of his activities as a Seabee, "It would entail combat and construction contingencies such as roads, bridges, Forward Operating Bases, along with other construction projects, not only during wartime, but also humanitarian efforts aiding citizens during crises."

Some of the places Jason served were: Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella, where he was stationed when

the 9/11 tragedy occurred, which had a profound impact on him; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the detention facility; one tour in Afghanistan training, advising and assisting the Afghan National Army; Germany; Hawaii; and also several locations in the US. He is now still an active reservist stationed out of Gulfport, Mississippi.

Jason's Top 5 Service Awards



- Defense Meritorious Service Medal awarded by the Secretary
 of Defense to members of the Armed Forces who, while serving
 in a joint activity, distinguish themselves by non-combat
 outstanding achievement or meritorious service.
- Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal awarded by the Navy and Marine Corps to their own or members of other Armed Forces serving with the Navy or Marine Corps, who distinguish themselves by heroic action, outstanding achievement, or meritorious service.
- Army Commendation Medal awarded to any member of the Armed Forces of the US other than General Officers who, while serving in any capacity with the U.S. Army distinguished themselves by heroism, meritorious achievement or meritorious service.
- Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal awarded by the US Navy to service members of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps who have performed commendably in routine duties or exceptional achievements, that have not been recognized by a higher award.
- Joint Service Achievement Medal awarded by the U.S. Secretary of Defense to officers below the grade of O-6 and enlisted members below the grade of E-7 who, while serving in a joint military command or activity, have performed either an exceptional achievement or commendable service that has not been recognized by a Commendation Medal.

Additionally, Jason has an Afghanistan Service Medal, along with 15 other various medals and unit citations.

Jason recounted," A most memorable service was being a humanitarian volunteer in Roan Mountain, TN in the late '90s flooding, giving out water, making sure people were taken care of, repairing. Of course, being on active duty when 9/11 happened is a memory that's hard to describe. Also, my tour in Afghanistan was eye-opening."

Master Chief Petty Officer Jason Marino finished his interview stating, "I am extremely proud to serve with many extremely qualified men and women without whom I could not have reached this milestone. It will be hard to take the uniform off at some point."



GCHA is proud to be a member of these Historical Preservation Associations



Museums in Partnership (MIP): http://www.wncmuseums.org/



North Carolina Museums Council (NCMC): https://www.ncmuseums.org/



Federation of N.C. Historical Societies (FNCHS): https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/fnchs

JOIN US TODAY Membership - \$25 per year Benefits: Newsletter - 4 per year Project Updates Meetings & Committees Museum & Heritage Center Interaction with other History Enthusiasts For a \$1000 donation, you receive a Lifetime Membership

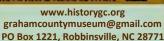
THE GOAL IS TO

- Create a museum of Graham County located at the Snider Building.
- An education center for our schools
 A place to learn how our community
 becam how industry changed the
- began, how industry changed the mountains, how families survived and made a living.
- A wealth of knowledge with stories of our founding families and artifacts from eatler generations.

WE VALUE YOUR INPUT AND HELP

- GCHA meets the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month at 5:00 p.m., United Community Bank, 132 Rodney Orr Bypass, Robbinsville, NC 28771
- This is a community effort to transform Snider's Building into a museum and share our history.

GRAHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION



MEMBERSHIP & DONATION FORM

GRAHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The work of Graham County Historical Association is greatly assisted by your generous support.

METHOD OF PAYMENT

Company	
Address	
State	Zip Code
Phone	

Thank you for your donation!

Please mail to: PO Box 1221 Robbinsville, NC 28771 Phone: 828.479.7971

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☑ I authorize GCHA to auto-draft my donation from my bank account.

Monthly Pledge S

GCHA is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions are tax deductible.

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