

GRAHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION



HONORING THOSE WHO PIONEERED
THE RUGGED MOUNTAINS
OF GRAHAM COUNTY



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Tere Moore, Editor

NEWSLETTER

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*Graham County
Historical Association
meets the 1st and 3rd
Mondays of each month.
Due to COVID-19
restrictions, meetings are
held via teleconference.
Check for updates on our
Facebook page or website
www.historygc.org.*

*Wish to be notified about
meetings? Email request
marked "Meeting
Update" to:
[grahamcountymuseum
@gmail.com](mailto:grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com)*

**KNOW
SOMEONE WHO
LOVES HISTORY
OR HAS
HISTORY TO
SHARE?**

Contact GCHA
about a Gift
Membership and/or
complimentary
Newsletter.

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 of Directors

Edd Satterfield - President
Carolyn Stewart - Vice President
Lavina West - Secretary
Terri Phillips - Treasurer
Doyle Brock **Max Buchanan**
James Calhoun **Teresa Garland**
Jack B. Wiggins

“Build It And They Will Come”

It takes imagination to see an old structure like Snider's Store and envision...



The Future Graham County Museum & Heritage Center

It also takes planning and hard work.

Here's our Progress!

- ▲ Structural Evaluation – July 2017
- ▲ Purchase of Building by financing over a period of 5 years at 0 % interest, paid for by pledges – 11-09-2017
- ▲ Code Assessment conducted by Matthews Architecture – April 2018
- ▲ Street Drainage and new sidewalk up front and repair of façade wood – Summer of 2019
- ▲ Museum Preview Mural installed at GC Travel & Tourism – Late Spring of 2020
- ▲ Roof insulation and New Roof – Summer of 2020
- ▲ Architectural Plan – Fall of 2020

Robbinsville High School Graduation 2020

Robbinsville High School's 2020 seniors have had to endure a very trying time in what should have been their crowning year. Dressing for and attending prom, field day, normal banquets, and a normal graduation close to their cherished peers, some having been in school together since the age of 5 or 6, were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March of 2020, everything was cancelled and their graduation ceremony was delayed.

On July 18, 2020, families and friends socially distanced from others, temperatures were taken at the entrance gates, and masks were required to sit in the bleachers at Modeal Walsh Memorial Stadium for the ceremony.



Of the 96 graduates, 63 seniors will be attending college, one entering the military, and the rest entering the workplace.

While their futures may be uncertain, 2020's RHS graduates chose to look forward with hope and optimism. Only history will tell how experiencing this unique time will shape the outlooks of our grads in ways that hopefully will prepare them to build a better future for us all.



Congratulations, Class of 2020

Graham County Historical Association

Photo ID Contest WINNERS



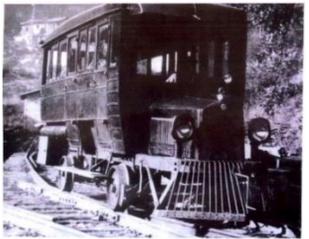
~ Lavina West



~ Marshall McClung - Marlene & William Holder



~ Joy Stewart - John S. Yeend - Mildred Snider

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
 <p>WIGGINS & AMMONS STORE - 1929 L-R: Gordon Ammons, Oliver L. Ammons Walt Wiggins jointly owned the store with Oliver Ammons. Located where the parking lot at the corner where Lynn's Place Restaurant is now.</p>	 <p>ROBBINSVILLE ODD FELLOWS - 1897-8 L-R: Alfred Colvard, Horace Lovin, Wade Hampton, Bruce Slaughter, Sheriff John A. Ammons, Bob McElrory, Earl Tatham, W.N. Flemming, Pat Rose, John Green Tatham (Pird).</p>	 <p>BEEMIS SAWMILL FIRE - 1967 Fire destroyed the mill with slight damage to machine shop, boiler house and fuel storage vault. Estimated damage - \$300-400 thousand.</p>	 <p>COURT STREET, ROBBINSVILLE - 1940s Scene across from courthouse square. Present Day - Building on left is now a Law Office.</p>
WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8
 <p>JOHN A. AMMONS (1862-1939) Sheriff of Graham County 1910-1920. Ran for office 10 times and won; 11th term did not run, but won when voters wrote him in on the ballot.</p>	 <p>STUDEBAKER RAIL BUS (1915-1931) During construction of Cheoah Dam and Power House, food, supplies and people were hauled in from Calderwood by train and "rail bus."</p>	 <p>TAPOCO VILLAGE 1917 Housing for construction workers for Cheoah and later Santeetlah Dam, later converted to a boarding house and retirement homes. The Lodge was added in 1930. "Tapoco" name for the first 2 letters of Tallassee Power Company.</p>	 <p>CHIEF JUNALUSKA MONUMENT - 1910 Chief Junaluska, known for saving the life of Maj. Gen. Andrew Jackson, joined his people in the removal to Oklahoma and later walked back to Graham County. The monument was erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution.</p>
WEEK 9	WEEK 10	WEEK 11	WEEK 12
 <p>SAMUEL BLAKEY LOVIN FAMILY - 1894 L-R back: Osco Sneed (Sam's nephew), Samuel Blakey Lovin, Lavina Johnson Lovin holding Ripp McKinley, Dallas Monroe (Jake). L-R front: Ollie, Bessie, Henry Grady, Jack.</p>	 <p>JOYCE KILMER INN & COTTAGES - 1930s-1950s Located on the hillside behind the current location of Lynn's Place Restaurant.</p>	 <p>1925 SHAY ENGINE Operated on logging railroads and GC Railroad from Robbinsville to Topton. In late 1968, Shay #1925 lost its air brakes and turned onto her engineer's side at Nantahala Gorge. The engine is now in the Railroad Museum in Spencer, NC.</p>	 <p>WAGON TRAIN DAYS - 1962 David Birchfield (on horse), Tony in front of Snider's, Cotton Burrell in wagon, Jerry Burrell aside. Dicky Webster (horse riding away). The 1962 Wagon Train Days were to promote a 40-mile road through Cherokee Nat'l Forest in TN to Nantahala Nat'l Forest near Robbinsville.</p>

GCHA PHOTO ID CONTEST
(CONT'D)

WEEK 13



SWINFIELD HOWELL (1906)

Kanawha Lumber Co.'s doctor riding a draisine, one of the railroad's light, four-wheeled speedsters, going from Little Snowbird HQ to job at Stagger Weed Dove to attend to Wiley Underwood.

WEEK 14



NARROW GAGE TRACK

above junction on Big Snowbird

WEEK 15



DOLLIE & OLLIE STEWART

twin daughters of Edward and Anita Stewart



CLAUDE & CLYDE COLLINS

twin sons of Ed and Bessie Collins

Amanda Blankenship's 4th Grade Class
of 1948, Robbinsville School

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
PARTICIPATION!**



During this holiday season, be sure to reach out to family, friends and neighbors.

This year may have been a difficult one for those who have difficulty getting around.

Remember to do it in a safe and caring way, even if it's just a letter, call or card.

**Happy Holidays to
You and Yours
from GCHA!**

Raffle
Fundraiser



Take a Chance and Win a New YETI Cooler

The Graham County Historical Association is holding its 2020 Raffle on the YETI package pictured above to raise money for the future Graham County Museum and Heritage Center.

Chances are \$5.00 each or 5 for \$20.00. To purchase chances, please see a member of the Graham County Historical Association, Terri Phillips at Hometown Tax, 62 Tapoco Rd., Carolyn Stewart at the Register of Deeds office, 12 North Main St., or contact us at: grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com

Email feedback from a Graham Star Reader

Dear friends,

I'm sitting here on the back porch with one of the twins in your photo.

Girls: Ollie Ree Stewart Adams is the girl with the curl on her forehead. She is my mother. Her identical twin is Dollie Lee Stewart Hicks who resides at Graham Health Care and Rehab facility in Robbinsville. This picture was made circa 1948 in the fourth grade at Robbinsville Elementary School in Mrs. Blankenship's class. Their mother, Onita Hedrick Stewart, had given the girls an at-home Toni permanent curl in their hair which took very well.

The boys are Claude and Clyde Collins. Clyde is a mortician who lives in Murphy. Claude was in China for a while. Facing the picture, Claude is on the left and Clyde on right.

They all graduated together from Robbinsville High.

Thanks, Brian Edward Adams

HISTORY OF GRAHAM COUNTY - PART I

A compilation by Tere Moore

Graham County was one of the last sections of western North Carolina to be settled due to the rugged, mountainous terrain and lack of roads. As a result, it was often referred to by some as the "last frontier. Early settlers coming into what is now Graham County wrote of seeing the great green walls in the distance before us." Early maps of this area gave very little detail and often had "Indian Country" or "Unexplored" or "Unchartable" written in large letters across the entire western end of North Carolina.¹

¹ "Graham County was one of the last areas to be settled in western North Carolina" – M. McClung – The Graham Star, March 26, 2015

The Cherokee were here and well-established before the first white man ever ventured this far. The original lands contained in present-day Graham County were part of Cherokee County and located near the Cheoah River.



Western North Carolina Map – circ. 1841

In 1838, there were no roads in Graham County except the old Indian trading paths. There is no record of travel by white man across the mountains of western North Carolina prior to the famous pilgrimage of Daniel Boone in 1769. However, it is believed that Hernando DeSoto, in 1540, was the first white man to look upon the Great Smoky Mountains. It is possible that Boone and later pioneers followed these old Indian paths and other trails made first by deer, bear, and other game as they sought the easiest way to travel from one feeding area to another.

William Bartram, the first great botanist born in America, was one of the first white men to see the land which was destined to be Graham County. Bartram roved the hills and woodlands collecting and setting down notes of the plant and animal life of this Appalachian area, all of which is recounted in detail in his classic work, "The Travels of William Bartram." He

established a rapport with the Indians probably unmatched except for Daniel Boone. His lovely descriptions have a poetic favor which only a master naturalist with his intense love of nature could have fathomed. According to Hiram C. Wilburn of Waynesville who traced William Bartram's 1776 trip through the mountains of western North Carolina, Bartram came "about six or seven miles down the Talulah towards Robbinsville," where he spent the night of May 27, 1776. He decided at this point to postpone his search until another time. The reason for his discontinuing of his research in this area is unknown, but he apparently did not return again to this region.

It is probable that John and Robert Stratton followed one such trail when they crossed over from Monroe County, Tennessee, during the 1830s and settled on Stratton Bald in the Unicoi Mountains between Sassafras Ridge and Santeetlah Creek. John Stratton lived there for ten years and reportedly caught nineteen panthers on old Laurel Top, making "panther bacon" of their shoulders and hams, thus earning the nickname "Bacon John." He arrived on Stratton Bald with nothing but his rifle, blanket, cooking utensils, and ammunition but earned enough herding cattle, selling deer, bear hams, and hides to buy a fine farm in Tennessee.



Cherokee County Map – circ. 1850

Early history records only three families living in Graham County, known as Cheoah Valley at that time, prior to the arrival of the Wiggins family from Swain County. The three families were: Billy Crisp, who came from Haywood County, and settled near where Mountain Creek flows into Cheoah River and later moved to the Stecoah Community. Billy Crisp was an ancestor of Joel L. Crisp who served four terms as state Senator around the turn of the century. John Hyde settled near the old Ernest Cooper place on Highway 129 and put up the first gristmill in Cheoah Valley on a small stream named Hyde's Mill Creek. Isaac Rowen settled opposite the residence of John Hyde on the other side of the Tallulah River where was located more

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HISTORY OF GRAHAM COUNTY – Part I (cont'd)

recently the farm of Rube Rogers who married the daughter of the pioneer settler. A little later of the same year Thomas Cooper came from Haywood and settled on Frank's Creek.

Andrew Colvard reportedly lived on Long Hungry Branch during this early period. The branch got its name from the fact that a party of hunters once was detained there by high waters until their rations gave out and they were hungry for a long time. The Stewarts of Santeetlah came from Georgia and the Lovins from Ducktown, Tennessee.

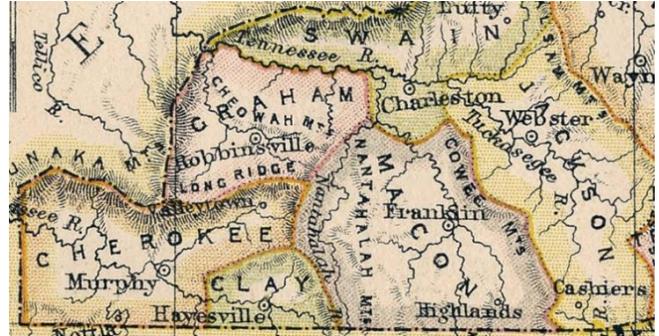
Other early settlers were: James Colvard who came from Tennessee and set up on Tallulah; the Sherills from Haywood settled in eastern portions of the county; Baxter Campbell settled near the West shore on Tallulah; James Carver from Tennessee near the mouth of West Buffalo; John Ammons below Robbinsville; Doctor Enos Hooper for whom Hooper's Bald was named went to West Buffalo; William Colvin came from Buncombe in 1850 and lived on Cochran Creek; Harwoods and Dentons settled on Sweetwater. Other early families were: Carpenter, Rhea, Rose, Phillips, and Rice.

In the Yellow Creek section, the early families were: Birchfields, Williams, Sharps, Colvins, and Johnsons from Tennessee. There were also the Shulers from Jackson County, Garrisons from Kansas, Ditmores from McMinn County, Tennessee, and Isaac Carringer from the eastern part of the state.

In the Stecoah Section were the Crisps, Taylors, Sawyers, Gunter, Deans, Cables, and Welchs. It was also about 1840 that a land grant was taken by Edward Delozier on what is now called Sawyer's Creek. In 1843, the Medlins moved from Macon County to Wolf Creek, a tributary of Panther Creek in the Stecoah section. Descendants of this family still own this original state land grant.

Sometime between 1840-1843, Thomas Cooper and Colonel William H. Thomas established a trading post on Rhea Hill on the present Robbinsville school site. This store later remodeled and expanded by George Walker was operated by Thomas Cooper and is believed to be the first store in this section. A little later, Wiley King moved to this area and replaced Thomas in the enterprise, and the store became King-Cooper Store. The first post office was established in 1843 housed in the King-Cooper Store with Wiley King as the first postmaster. The post office was originally listed as Cheoah Valley, changed to Fort Montgomery in 1849,

and still later in 1874 the name was changed to Robbinsville.



Western counties of NC – circ. 1878

Graham County was formed in 1872 from Cherokee County. It is in the western section of the state and is bounded by the state of Tennessee and Cherokee and Swain counties in North Carolina. The present land area is 292.07 square miles.

It was named in honor of **William Alexander Graham**, a N.C. governor, U.S. Senator, cabinet member, and a vice-presidential Whig nominee foresaw progress and political change in antebellum North Carolina. Entering politics in 1830, Graham soon became a vital part of the state's Whig leadership.

Born on September 5, 1804, Graham was from a wealthy slaveholding family in Lincoln, North Carolina. He attended Hillsborough Academy before college, and Graham would later study law at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. After graduating in 1824, Graham started to practice law in Hillsborough in 1828.



William A. Graham (1804-1875)

In 1833, Graham started his political career by winning a seat in the N.C. House of Representatives. In 1838, Graham became Speaker of the House for the NC House of Commons, and two years later was elected to the U.S. Senate.

After his brief tenure as a senator, Graham was elected governor of North Carolina in 1845. William's young age, progressive political stance, and party zeal led to many accomplishments as governor. Most prominent of William's political goals included the preservation of North Carolina's history during the Revolutionary War and the institution of a school for the deaf and mute. Graham's agenda also took import to rescue the deteriorating Raleigh and Gaston Railroad as well as organizing militia companies during the Mexican War. Graham served for four years as governor and left

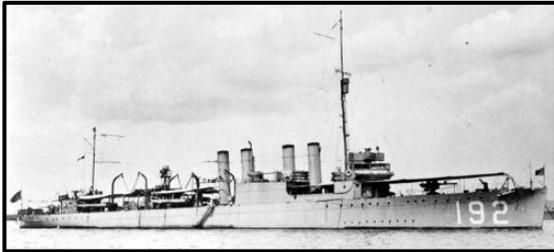
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HISTORY OF GRAHAM COUNTY – Part I (cont'd)

the post in 1849.

Immediately following his departure from the governor's office, Graham was appointed by President Millard Fillmore to occupy the Secretary of Navy's seat in the cabinet. Graham served in that post until 1852, when he left to pursue an ultimately unsuccessful nomination for Vice President through the Whig Party. Returning to North Carolina, Graham served as a member of the state congress from 1854-1866, and as a notable senator in the Confederate Congress from 1864-1865.

Graham's name remains a fixture in North Carolina history, as the USS Graham (US Navy Ship), SS Liberty Graham (World War II Liberty Ship), and the county of Graham are all named in his honor.



Don't miss "History of Graham County – Part II" in the next issue of the GCHA newsletter. It will present facts about Fort Montgomery, the Town of Robbinsville, and William McKendree Robbins.

YOUR MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Annual Dues Renewal is January 1, 2021

We thank each and every one of you for being a valued member of Graham County Historical Association. Our dreams may be big, but our hearts are even bigger!

We could not have come as far as we have without you, and we need your continued support to attain our goals in the future.

You can submit your payment by:

- Mail to GCHA, PO Box 1221 Robbinsville, NC 28771
- Sending it through PayPal to grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com
- Dropping it off at Hometown Tax, 62 Tapoco Rd., Robbinsville.

If you know of someone who loves history like you do...



Gift a MEMBERSHIP!



**Sunday, November 1st
2 a.m.**

Veterans Stand Down

Saturday Oct 31, 2020

9:30 am - 2:00 pm



Come and Honor our Graham County Veterans at the Veteran Stand Down on October 31st at Western Carolina Airport, Airport Road, Andrews, NC.

American Legion Posts 192 of Robbinsville, 532 of Hayesville, and 96 of Murphy, along with many other area Veterans organizations, invite the community to this free event.

A Veterans Parade will begin in Andrews at 9:30 am, ending at Western Carolina Regional Airport. Graham County Senior Center is sponsoring one of the floats.

Every veteran who rides in the parade will be a Grand Marshall. Many will ride vintage autos, others "Hot" convertibles and any other vehicle the vet wishes to ride.

Festivities at the airport will commence at 11:00 am. Enjoy a complimentary lunch, family friendly activities, vintage cars, motorcycles, Veteran Stand Down services, and a military fly-over with "paratroopers" and vintage World War II airplanes on the tarmac for inspection by attendees.

This is an event of a lifetime for many veterans who stepped up to serve our nation and to ensure our liberty and freedom. Let's show them how much they mean to us!

SEE YOU THERE!

THE VIRUS – JUNE 2020

An article by Kimberly Hainge - GCHA COVID-19 Archive

The virus, Covid-19, first gained the attention of the American people in February of 2020. Pictures on the evening news showed the streets of a big city in China empty. Other reports showed every person wearing a mask that covered their nose and mouth. What I found frustrating was the inconsistency of vital information on how to protect yourself and the ones you loved from getting the virus. We saw that in other countries everyone was wearing a mask. Initially, our experts stated that the masks that truly provided protection from the virus were called N-95's and that there was a shortage of them. Doctors, nurses and medical staff who were dealing with people who had contracted the virus needed those masks and the average person did not.

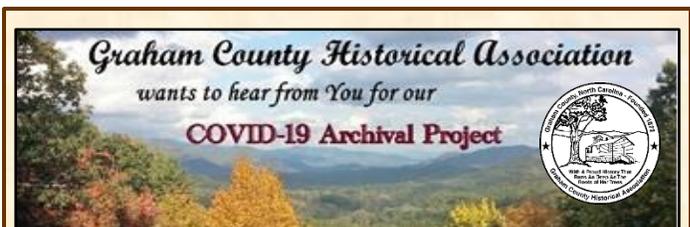
For a while, most people chose not to wear a mask. Then the information coming out from the news and social media changed. We were told that wearing even a simple, cloth mask, would decrease the likelihood of contracting the virus. Then we were told that we should insert some sort of filter inside the mask. Controversy arose as to whether wearing a mask would actually increase your chances of contracting the virus. Bacteria growing in the moisture created by our breath would be a perfect breeding ground for disease. By May the information had changed again. Now everyone was told that a mask should be worn to protect others from contracting the virus just in case you were infected and asymptomatic. Masks became a fashion statement. Companies, some even from China, began to produce themed single-layer cloth masks with specific breeds of cats or dogs on them, or motorcycle brands, or footballs team.

By Mother's Day Graham County lifted the border restrictions which limited who could enter the County. Tourists and people trying to escape from the cities flocked to Graham County in torrents. Robbinsville opened up. The question arose as to what was the greater risk, the disease itself or the harm of a closed economy. People chose sides and mask wearing became controversial. Some adamantly wore them when inside a building or around large groups of people. Others expressed that Covid-19 was invented to influence the election and that it really wasn't happening. People claimed that there was no reason to wear a mask. Besides, "no one can force an American citizen to wear a mask if they didn't want to!"

It became uncomfortable to go into town to the grocery shop or buy animal feed. Since I was one of those who chose to wear a mask, there were days when I entered a store and no one else had a mask on. People would avert their eyes from mine. They would back away from me or glare angrily. The mask itself made it difficult to breathe freely and since I wear glasses, condensation would form on my glasses and I would not be able to see. What was

even more challenging was trying to wear a mask with straps behind your ears on top of the arms of your eyeglasses and your hearing aids! My mask would pop off at the most awkward of moments and when it did, the looks of horror were almost comical. People would enter Ingles with a written shopping list and act as if they were on a Viking raid. They would go straight for the items on their lists, checking to see if they were entering the aisle "correctly" by following the yellow arrows. If they were not, often they would turn their cart around and back up to the spot in the aisle they desired, hoping no one would notice. Social distancing was attempted but often ignored. Although shopping carts were initially wiped with disinfectants, that only lasted a few weeks. By June, the carts returned to being untreated. People would hustle out of the store with their stash of required groceries and glance askance at each other as they loaded their cars and sped home or to their next stop.

As the days progressed into June, less and less people wore masks. It was as though people thought that if they ignored the virus or pretended that it didn't exist at all, everything would return to "normal". An underlying fear existed. Fear of the future, fear that the virus really did exist. You see, Graham County was never really hit with the first wave of the virus. Residents never really saw anyone they knew or loved get sick. Some said that if it wasn't for the news and social media, they would never know that anything was wrong. I felt like I was living in a pressure cooker, waiting for things to blow.



GCHA is *still* seeking contributions for 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 cancelled 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?

Send in your experiences of and thoughts about the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

“The Mountain County That Went into Coronavirus Lockdown

by Melba Newsome



“Graham County was closing itself off... With the coronavirus beginning to spread nearby, all accommodation businesses in the county – hotels, motels, guesthouses, campgrounds – had to close by March 23 at noon; exceptions would be made only for people who could prove the need for a “legitimate work-related stay.” What’s more, starting on March 27, anyone traveling on Highways 129 and NC-28 – the two roads into Graham County – would have to show a county address or, for nonresidents, proof of property ownership in order to enter. Anyone seeking to enter for business purposes would have to apply for a permit. Checkpoints with orange cones and barricades soon went up, and sheriff’s deputies camped out under tents around the clock. It was an early and stark decision to fight coronavirus by almost entirely shutting down contact with the outside world...

“Graham, with fewer than 9,000 residents, decided to seal itself off a week before Democratic Governor Roy Cooper’s statewide stay-at-home order went into effect. Dare County, on North Carolina’s Atlantic coast, also closed its borders, but only after several cases of Covid-19 had been identified there; few other counties across the country have gone so far. Meanwhile, other western North Carolina counties implemented early testing, tracing and public safety campaigns.”

WHAT CHANGED IN MID TO LATE JULY CAUSING AN UPSURGE IN GRAHAM COUNTY COVID-19 CASES?

As reflected in the chart below, Graham County experienced an upsurge and continuous increase in COVID-19 positive test results, hospitalizations, and ultimately deaths beginning in mid to late July, 2020.

Around that time period, even though tourists and part-time residents were allowed to come back into the county, something else was happening that had an even greater effect on our previously low and controlled number of cases.

“Coronavirus: Why are Americans so angry about masks?” BBC News, July 20, 2020 - Tara McKelvey

“In the midst of the pandemic, a small piece of cloth has incited a nationwide feud about public health, civil liberties and personal freedom. Some Americans refuse to wear a facial covering out of principle. Others in this country are enraged by the way that people flout the mask mandates.

“The argument reflects a deep divide over requirements to wear masks in this country. People in Kansas, along with those who live in more than half of the country, are now required to wear masks in public as part of an ongoing effort to slow down the spread of the virus. But some people have been fighting against the mandate.

The controversy over wearing masks reflects a classic American struggle between those who defend public safety and those who believe just as deeply in personal liberty.”

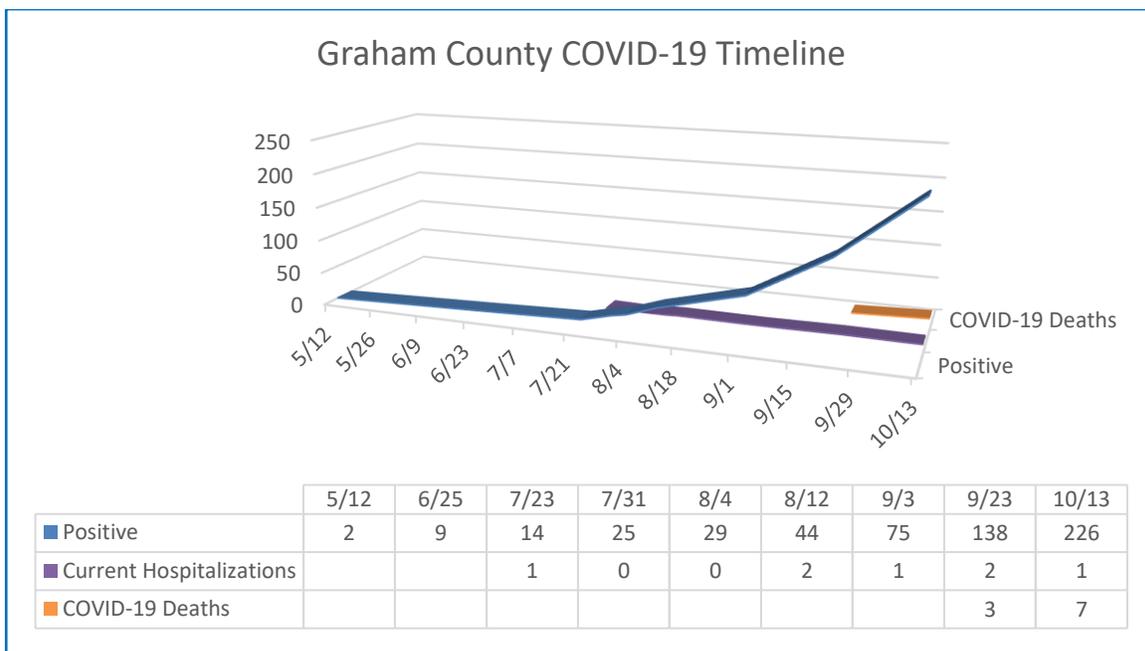


Chart and research compiled by Tere Moore

