

GRAHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION



HONORING THOSE WHO PIONEERED THE RUGGED MOUNTAINS OF GRAHAM COUNTY



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Tere Moore, Editor



Winston Churchill

NEWSLETTER

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Rocket's Red Glare Fireworks
GC Heritage Fest 2024

GCHA meets the 1st & 3rd
Mondays of each month
(except holidays) at 5 pm
at United Community
Bank, 132 Rodney Orr
Bypass, Robbinsville.

We also have a
teleconference option.

Contact us for
call-in information



GCHA 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, NC, and promote cultural tourism and economic development in our area.

GCHA MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to preserve, interpret, communicate, and celebrate the unique culture and rich history of the Southern Appalachian Region and Graham County, North Carolina through exhibition, demonstration, and education. Vital to this mission is our establishing and maintaining a Cultural Heritage Center located on Main Street in Robbinsville, North Carolina, that would further economic development by contributing to the revitalization of the historic downtown area, promoting cultural tourism, and showcasing area artisans and their work.



GCHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EDD SATTERFIELD – PRES
CAROLYN STEWART – V. PRES
LAVINA WEST – SEC'Y
TERRI PHILLIPS – TREAS'R
DOYLE BROCK
MAX BUCHANAN
JAMES CALHOUN
TERESA GARLAND
JACK B. WIGGINS

We're
Searching for Volunteers

Beyond that myth of being labeled "small town America," few people really know what it's like to live in Graham County or understand the struggles folks in our rural community have faced. That's why Graham County Historical Association (GCHA) believes it so important to preserve the artifacts and information documenting our local history and culture so that we can learn about, honor and remember those people, places and events a hundred years from now, preserving the truth of the historical story for generations to come.

GCHA's archives play an important role in preserving the documentary heritage of Graham County. The archive has been organized by a group of volunteers and is aimed at documenting history that is more than just part of the official record maintained in other institutional archives. The collections include not only physical items, but also photographs, movies, documents, books, oral histories, and genealogies that document the history of our county and the life stories of its community members.

It is challenging, though, to continue these efforts to sustain archival projects beyond the lifespans of our few very dedicated and hard-working volunteers who love history. That's why we need Your Help!

Please consider volunteering by contacting us by email at grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com.

Raffle

WINCHESTER
REPEATING ARMS

WINCHESTER 30-30 LEVER ACTION

PURCHASE TICKETS AT:
GCHA Booth at Graham County
Hometown Tax & Accounting /
Lovin Equipment & Sales /
Stecoah Harvest Festival

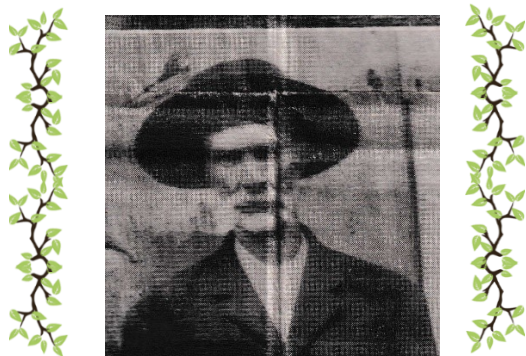
Chances \$5.00 Each or 5 for \$20.00

**DRAWING TO BE HELD ON
DECEMBER 14TH, 2024**

Winner is required to legally own/
obtain a buyer's permit and pass all
background checks. If not be eligible to
own and/or acquire a firearm permit,
the winner will be disqualified and
another ticket will be drawn.

All Proceeds benefit the
**GRAHAM COUNTY
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

Genealogy Corner



Alexander Hamilton "Buck" Campbell was born on July 24, 1846, in Cades Cove, Tennessee to Baxter Barton Campbell (1817-1898) and Agnes Eveline Sherrill (1819-1892).

Children of Baxter B. and Agness Sherrill Campbell:

Hester "Hetty" (1844-1921)
Alexander Hamilton "Buck" (1846-1930)
Sherrell Crawford "Pin" (1848-1919)
Nancy E. (1849-1915)
Joseph (1853-?)
William (1855-?)
Tennessee (1858-1939)
Samuel P. (1860-1927)

Alexander settled on upper Tallulah at Campbell Creek around 1850. The family moved in a covered wagon with their children and all their belongings across the rugged Smoky Mountains, cutting out a wagon trail as they traveled.

Agnes' father, Joseph Simpson Sherrill (1782-1854) moved with them. Agnes' mother, Sara Sherrill (1791-1850), had died in Blount County Tenn. before they moved.

The family built a log cabin, knothched and put together with wooden pegs. Sherrill had purchased hundreds of acres through land grants between 1838-1850.

The two-room cabin had a loft bedroom. Cooking was done in iron pots and skillets in the huge fireplace. A kitchen was built after the Civil War.

Buck served in the Confederate Army (1863-1865) in Capt. James Welch's company in the Will Thomas Legion. He served on guard duty during cold winter months, almost freezing to death. After the war ended, many soldiers starved to death walking hundreds of miles trying to get home.

Buck married Mary Ann Colvard (1848-1891), daughter of James C. Colvard (1810-1887) and Mahala Kathrine Sherrill (1814-1880), on May 23, 1869.

Buck and Mary Ann lived in the Nantahala Gorge area, where Buck worked digging talc out of Talc

Mountain with a pick and shovel for Hewitt Talc Mining Company.

In 1886, Buck wanted to buy a 202-acre farm for \$1,050 located in Graham County near Ledbetter Mountain. Being a workaholic, he dug talc at night and hid it in a cave near his home. When he had a good amount, he notified a businessman in Andrews, who had promised to buy all he could dig to bring his horse and wagon plus helpers to haul the talc to market. When Buck rolled the rock away from the front of the cave and the buyer saw a cave full of talc, he paced back and forth scratching his head. He very nervously told Buck he could not buy that much talc. Buck became angry, telling the businessman he should keep his promise and threatened him with his pistol. The buyer agreed and paid Buck ten \$100 dollar bills and one \$50 bill.

Buck walked up a mountain trail to the farm and paid Jefferson and Mary George \$1,050 for the 202-acre farm. The log cabin, log smokehouse and log barn was built about 1866 by Jefferson George and, his father, Charles Hoden George.

Children of Buck and Mary Colvard Campbell:

Robert (1875-1952)
John M. (1880-1938)
Baxter (1880-1918)
Dixie Mae (1885-?)
Charlie (1886-1915)
Julia Ann (1887-1964)
Jesse (1888)
Frankie (?)

After Mary Ann's death, Alexander married Mary Head (1876-1964) on September 24, 1897. He died on August 16, 1930 in Graham, North Carolina, at the age of 84, and was buried in Robbinsville, North Carolina.

Children of Buck and Mary

Olive "Ollie" (1898-1989)
Chesquire "Cheaster" (1899-1935)
Junaluska "Luster" (1901-1983)
Ernest Cheeklee (1903-1980)
Crista Bell (1906-1964)
Calona (1908-1929)
Stella (1911-?)
Yank Buck (1911-1974)
Alexander H. Jr. (1912-?)
German (1915-1990)
C. C. (1917-1987)

***Editor's Note:** See page 9 for more information on the Hewitt Talc Mine located between Marble Gap (Topton), NC and the Nantahala Gorge area.



Current News will become History

SNIDER BUILDING RENOVATION

Snider's Department Store is a circa 1927 one-story commercial building clad in uncut stone with a grapevine mortar. It operated for more than 80 years before it closed in 2009. It was the largest store in town for many years, as well as the main retailer in Robbinsville and Graham County, selling a wide variety of merchandise from groceries to shoes to live poultry to coffins.

The building was purchased and fully paid for by the Graham County Historical Association (GCHA), with the mission to restore and renovate the building for use as a museum/heritage center, featuring spaces for crafters/craft demonstrations and a giftshop offering locally made crafts and wares.

A strong membership/donor base and several grants already received have allowed us to begin the preparatory renovations:

Previous renovations included installing a new roof on the right side of the complex, covering the main storeroom and both back rooms, and asbestos abatement on the boiler and associated piping.

This year, GCHA solicited bids from qualified firms by advertising in newspapers and on social media for new windows and doors and necessary repairs to frames and jambs. The bid was awarded to the lowest responsible bidder, Robbinsville Custom Moulding, Inc.

The specifications of the bid were as follows:

- The windows are insulated, Low-E energy efficient windows made in the same style as the originals.
- The windows are wood frame with a clad exterior to protect against the elements.
- The large storefront window glass is to be replaced with insulated, Low-E glass using original framing where possible.
- The original wood entrance doors are to be refurbished and reused to keep the historic appeal intact.

The building is located in and contributes to the Robbinsville Historic District and is eligible for listing. To retain the historic character of the

building, bring it up to code and renovate takes an enormous amount of funds. Getting grants may sound easy, but there are many other organizations in line for the same money. We are valiantly pushing forward with the help of several organizations who believe in our project and, of course, the support of our Donors, Members & Volunteers!

HERITAGE FESTIVAL 2024



Citizens flocked to the 2024 Graham County Heritage Festival on July 4th and 5th at the Elementary School Gym and parking lot to celebrate Independence Day with Crafts, Games, Food, Music, Fireworks, a Veteran's Celebration, a Magician Show, the Lil' Miss and Mr. Firecracker contest, a Watermelon Eating contest, and so much more.

Graham County Historical Association manned its booth inside the gym where attendees could find shelter from the searing 90+ temperatures outside.



Nick Nichols and Terri Phillips man the GCHA Booth



HISTORY OF GRAHAM COUNTY - PART XI

A compilation by Tere Moore

TOURISM

Recreation and tourism became fixtures of the local economy following the creation of national forests and parks, road improvements, and soaring automobile ownership. By the early twentieth century, the region's leaders were campaigning for modern highways to promote tourism as well as industrial growth.

In 1921, North Carolina established a public-supported highway system, and despite many engineering challenges, new paved roads were eventually constructed through the rugged mountainsides of western North Carolina. Towns and cities were connected like never before, and the motoring public now had unprecedented access to vacation getaways.

Tourists come from near and far to view the county's mountainous countryside. A popular natural attraction is **Fontana Lake**. A part of Nantahala National Forest is in the county. Man-made projects also attract travelers: the Cherohala Skyway, a scenic byway that passes through mountain vistas, and the Appalachian Trail, a long, winding trail that runs throughout the range. Fontana Dam, the highest dam in the eastern United States, was constructed between 1942 and 1944.¹



Fontana Lake Postcard

FIRST MUST COME THE ROADS

Without succession from the logging railroads of bridges and crossings, the current connecting road system in Graham County could not have existed. Travel before that was by native trails, wagon roads, river boats and trains.

The four major highways providing access to Graham County are US 129, NC 28 and NC 143.

US 129 zigzags across Cherokee, Graham and portions of Swain Counties along a 63.57 mile long course in western North Carolina. The route can be divided in two portions, with the stretch between Georgia and Tipton running concurrent with portions of US 19, US 64 and US 74. Northwest from Tipton, US 129 navigates along a series of switchbacks and hairpin curves, known as The Tail of the

Dragon, to Santeetlah Lake and Tapoco at the Tennessee state line. Boats were used as transportation between Calderwood and Tapoco until the highway US 129 was completed in 1931.

NC 288 (now NC 28) first appears on maps in 1929, and provided access from Tennessee to Bryson City through the communities of Proctor, Bushnell, Forney, Dorsey, and the original Fontana which were all eventually flooded by Fontana Lake in 1941. After the construction of Fontana Dam in the mid-1940s, NC 288 was submerged under the newly formed Fontana Lake. A new highway was constructed on the southern edge of the lake and designated as a continuance of NC 28 all the way to US 129 near the Tennessee border. The land to the north of Fontana Lake became the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.



Graham County Road Map - grahamcounty.net

In 1929 the railroad bridge across the Little Tennessee below Cheoah Dam and the old railroad grade from Tapoco to Santeetlah were transferred to the NC Highway Commission to become part of NC 108 (now US 129). The railroad bridge was abandoned and replaced with a highway bridge and in 1931 connected to the existing NC 288 (now NC 28) providing highway access to the existing TN 72 (now US 129) from Maryville and Knoxville, Tennessee to Graham County, North Carolina. The construction of these roads opened up western North Carolina to automobile tourism and commerce.²

North Carolina Highway 143 (Sweetwater Rd) is a primary state highway in North Carolina. It runs from the Tennessee state line to NC 28, near the community of Stecoah. It is best known for its 18-mile section of the Cherohala Skyway, shared with Tennessee State Route 165, a 43-mile National Scenic Byway and National Forest Scenic Byway that connects Tellico Plains, TN to Robbinsville, NC. The skyway provides easy vehicular access to various protected and recreational areas of the Unicoi Mountains, including the Citico Creek Wilderness, the Bald River Gorge Wilderness, and the remote interior of the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest. Cont'd Pg. 6

¹ Historic Architecture Survey Report, April 2020, NCDOT
GCHA NEWSLETTER

² <https://grahamchamber.com/history/>

EARLY TOURISM

Hunting lodges were one of the earliest tourist attractions in the form of outdoor adventures.



Hooper Bald Lodge

In 1908, Whiting Manufacturing Company purchased **Hooper Bald** among its vast holdings of hardwoods in the western part of the county and leased 1,600 acres to Canadian businessman, George Moore, who envisioned a hunting preserve with the goal of attracting wealthy sportsmen. To build his compound, George Moore had to build a 20-mile road from Andrews, the nearest railroad depot, to the bald so that wagons could bring in materials.

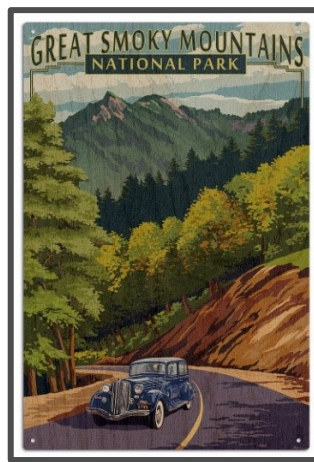
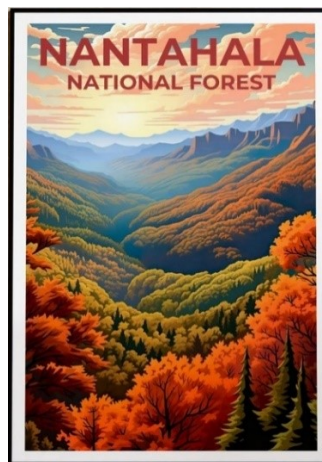


Lounge - Blue Bear Sportman's Lodge Postcard

Fred Bruckmann followed Moore's lead and built **Blue Boar Inn** in the Snowbird Mountains and began to organize and promote boar hunts.

Graham County is the ultimate destination for hunting, hiking, fishing, road touring, rafting, kayaking and pleasure boating in a natural paradise.

For Graham County, the formation of both **Nantahala National Forest** in 1920 and nearby **Great Smoky Mountains National Park** in 1926 was a catalyst for tourism. Encompassing most of the county, Nantahala National Forest has been particularly instrumental in attracting visitors – creating forestry conservation and management programs to preserve the spectacular mountain vistas, publishing promotional and informative literature, and providing accurate mapping for vacationing hikers and campers.



Early Nantahala National Forest and Great Smoky Mountains National Park Posters



Tapoco Lodge Postcard

Tapoco erected the spacious, red-brick **Tapoco Lodge** (1928) as the centerpiece of the company village. Originally only reached by railroad, the scenic village became a tourist destination after the completion of NC 108 around 1930.³



Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest Postcard

The dedication of **Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest** in 1936 created a well-publicized destination for tourists within the larger national forest, and just a short distance away the **Joyce Kilmer Inn and Cottages** soon opened for business.

Cont'd Pg. 7

HISTORY OF GRAHAM COUNTY - PART XI cont'd



Joyce Kilmer Inn & Cottages Postcard



Snowbird Mountain Lodge Postcard

In 1941, the **Snowbird Mountain Lodge** was also completed near Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest. Designed by Asheville architect, Ronald Greene, the consciously rustic hotel, executed in stone, frame, and log, was built for Chicago entrepreneurs, Arthur W. and Edwin M. Wolfe. The brothers operated the lodge seasonally for wealthier patrons in combination with guided tours of the Great Smoky Mountains.

After the building of the hydroelectric dams, construction camps were converted to lodges. **Fontana Village** was opened as a resort in May of 1946. After Fontana dam was completed in 1944, TVA conveyed the village to Government Services, Inc., taken over by the McGouns five years later.



Motor Lodge, Fontana Village Postcard



Thunderbird Mountain Club Postcard

In the early 1960s, Smoky Mountain Resorts built a lodge and some cabins, and the first landowners began to build on the north shore of the peninsula. The lodge, with its two faux totem poles, became "the heartbeat of Thunderbird Mountain Resort. Although roads were graded and paved and a water system installed, **Thunderbird Mountain Club Resort**, was short of capital, and in 1971, Smoky Mountain Resorts sold its interest to W. Bennett Collette. On April 13, 1989, Thunderbird Mountain became the **Town of Santeetlah**.⁴



Beautiful Reflection Lake Santeetlah Postcard



Cherochala Skyway Patch

Completed in 1996, the scenic **Cherochala Skyway** has become the latest major destination for Graham County sightseers. Named for the Cherokee and Nantahala National Forests, this designated National Scenic Byway stretches for 41 miles along the mountaintops between Tellico Plains, Tennessee, and Santeetlah Gap near Robbinsville.

⁴ <http://www.townoflakesanteetlah.org/history.html>

GRAHAM COUNTY TRAVEL & TOURISM AUTHORITY

Email: info@grahamcountytravel.com

Website: <https://grahamcountytravel.com/>



Your Natural Destination

Discover Graham County, one of the best kept secrets in the Great Smoky Mountains

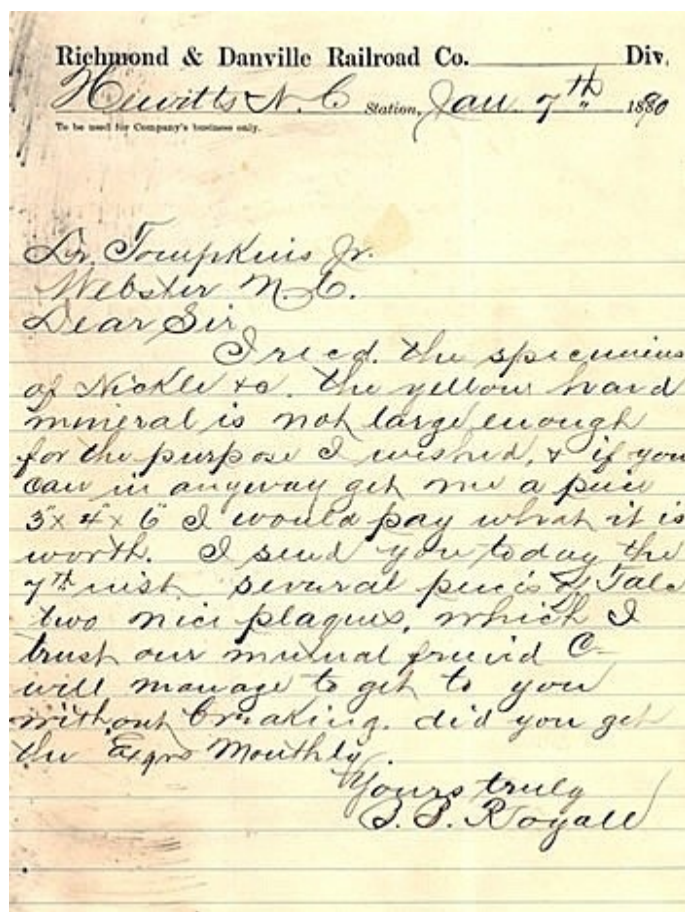
Our quiet, unspoiled area offers an array of outdoor adventures, unique accommodations, shops and dining. Enjoy scenic road tours, wilderness hiking and biking trails, trout streams, lakes, mountain views and waterfalls.

- Discover **Robbinsville**, voted one of the Top Outdoor Adventure Towns by *Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine*
 - Enjoy touring the scenic **Cherochala Skyway** or experience the challenging **Dragon**
- Learn the **Appalachian way of life** from our artisans, farmers, bee keepers, cheese makers, potters
 - Admire giant poplars in **Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest**
 - Explore **Fontana Dam**, the tallest dam in the eastern US

YourNaturalDestination.com 387 Rodney Orr Bypass, Robbinsville, NC 800-470-3790



HEWITT TALC MINE – NANTAHALA

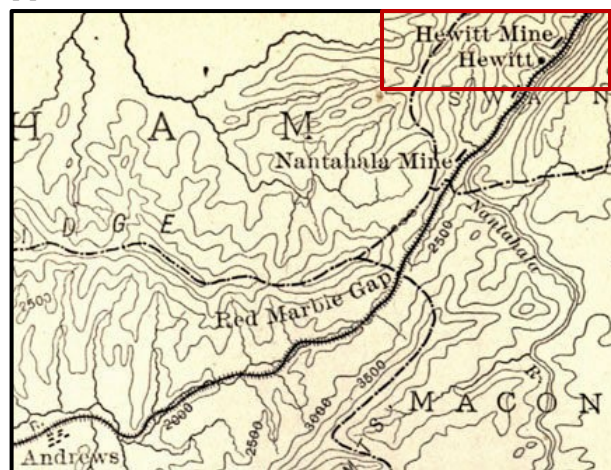


On January 7, 1890, B.B. Royall wrote from Hewitts, N.C., to Dr. William F. Tompkins, concerning his interest in the commercial potential in western North Carolina's natural resources. Hewitts had been named for the owner of a talc mine at that location, Frank R. Hewitt. This letter is indicative of the interest in industrial development after the arrival of the railroad, such as the exploration for prospective mineral and timber resources. Tompkins, to whom the letter was addressed, was a physician and businessman in Jackson County, N.C. The text of the letter reads,

"I recd. the specimens of nickel &c. The yellow hard mineral is not large enough for the purpose I wished, & if you can in any way get me a piece 3" x 4" x 6" I would pay what it is worth. I send you today the 7th with several pieces of talc two nice plaques, which I trust our mutual friend C – will manage to get to you without breaking. Did you get the Exams monthly."

The 1900 report by Joseph Hyde Pratt, *Talc and Pyrophyllite Deposits in North Carolina*, described the talc mining operations at Hewitt:

"North Carolina Talc and Mining Company – The most important work done east of Red Marble gap is at Hewitt station, by the North Carolina Talc and Mining Company, of which Frank A. [sic] Hewitt is manager. The talc deposits here are on the south face of a hill rising almost directly from the Nantahala river. . . The deposit has been worked for about 500 feet in length by the North Carolina Company, and they have cut into the bed of talc to a depth of nearly 40 feet. . . During the past year (1899) over 900 tons of talc were mined and shipped. . ." ⁵



Nantahala Hewitt Mine Topo Map

The Fry family was one of the wealthiest to settle in the area. Frank Fry was the superintendent of the North Carolina Talc and Mining Company (also known as Hewitt's after F.R. Hewitt, one of the owners of the quarry) along the Nantahala river which still operates today, albeit under a different but similar name. Frank also had a hand in the lumber business.

In an interesting side note, Mr. Percy Ferebee, a later owner of the Nantahala Talc and Limestone Company and a forester along the Nantahala River, was instrumental in setting aside public use of the river before commercial rafting made an appearance. Ferebee was an engineer for the U.S. Forest Service and settled in Andrews, North Carolina in 1913. In 1971 he donated six thousand acres to the forest service, which ensured that the public would have access to the river and the surrounding wilderness. ⁶

⁵

<https://www.wcu.edu/library/digitalcollections/travelwnc/1890s/1890hewitt.html>

⁶ <https://southernappalachiaandigitalcollections.org>

Join Us Today

HELP PRESERVE GRAHAM COUNTY'S HISTORY

Become A
Member

JOIN US TODAY



MEMBERSHIP LEVELS		Membership Benefits
1-year	\$25.00	Quarterly Newsletter Meetings and Committees GCHA Decal 10% discount on GCHA merchandise
5-year	\$100.00 (1 year free)	
10-year	\$200.00 (2 years free)	
Lifetime	\$1000 or more	All 1-year benefits plus memorial at Museum

Become a Member Today
and proudly display your
GCHA Window Decal!



Send your payment:

- Through **PayPal** to grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com
- Drop off at **Hometown Tax**, 62 Tapoco Road, Robbinsville
- Mail to **GCHA**, PO Box 1221 Robbinsville, NC 28771

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



Gift a
MEMBERSHIP!

GRAHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP / DONATION FORM

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

Membership Includes: GCHA Decal /Meetings & Committees / Quarterly Newsletter

Please Check Membership/Donation Option Below

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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 year \$25.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 years \$100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10 years \$200.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime \$1000 or more |
| <input type="checkbox"/> One-time Donation \$ _____ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly Donation \$ _____ | |

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* First \$25 of donation goes to 1-year Membership
METHOD OF PAYMENT

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Credit Card: (All major credit cards)

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☐ I authorize GCHA to auto-draft my donation from my account

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www.historygc.org / GCHANC

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