

# GRAHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION



HONORING THOSE WHO PIONEERED  
THE RUGGED MOUNTAINS  
OF GRAHAM COUNTY



[www.HISTORYGC.org](http://www.HISTORYGC.org)

828.479.5008

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October 2024

Tere Moore, Editor



Grist Mill Cottage Bridge  
Stecoah, North Carolina

## NEWSLETTER

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*Happy Holidays*



Here they come, Mom...  
Norman Rockwell

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

Contact us for telephone  
← 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

### HOLIDAY DISPLAY

The GCHA Museum building will be under construction this holiday season, so our annual holiday decorations will be incorporated into our Museum Preview Exhibit at the Graham County Travel & Tourism Office, 474 Rodney Orr Bypass throughout the month of December.

Hours: 9am to 5pm Monday through Friday and 9am to 2pm on Saturday. Closed December 25-27.



### WINCHESTER 30-30 LEVER ACTION

### PURCHASE TICKETS AT:

GCHA Booth at Stecoah Harvest Festival, Hometown Tax & Accounting / Lovin Equipment & Sales /or a GCHA Member

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**



## In Memoriam



**Mary Wallace Griffin**  
(September 2, 1956 - August 22, 2024)

**Mary Wallace Griffin**, daughter of Floyd Sampson Griffin Jr. and Mary Ella “Polly” Crawford, was born on September 2, 1956. She married Phillip Martin Eddings, son of Hammond L. Eddings of Dalton, GA and had two children, Phillip and Michael Eddings. Mary passed away on August 22, 2024, in Robbinsville, NC.

Mary’s father, Floyd Sampson Griffin Jr. was born in in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the son of Floyd Sampson Griffin Sr. (a lawyer) and Cassia Wallace (a teacher). They moved to Graham County in about 1942. Floyd Jr. married Mary Ella “Polly” Crawford, daughter of Allen Poe Crawford and Pauline Mae Sullivan, whose family was displaced due to the building of Hiawassee Dam in Clay County, NC.

### A LIFE WELL SPENT

excerpted from a Graham Star article

Mary’s life inspired many with her love of learning; her beautiful smile; and the perfect list of books for each person she came to know and love when they walked through the doors of the Graham County Public Library.

Mary passed away at work – sitting at her desk, doing what she loved. Those who had the opportunity to know her grew to love her and many considered her a part of their family. She had a way of making others feel special and significant. She was admired as an educator and worked many years as a teacher before becoming Graham County’s librarian.

After taking on the new role, Mary became involved with many projects in the county. She was always willing to help others in any way she could. Friends have described her as a “very outgoing, friendly, compassionate, helpful, intelligent and caring person.” Amid the various tributes posted on her Facebook page

was this descriptor: “There aren’t enough words to describe how much she loved and brought to the community.”

The Graham County Farmers Market was one of the projects Mary spearheaded. Her hours of preparation and attendance have given many in the community a place to offer their produce and products to others. She was passionate about having a place where the county could share what it had with others. She saw it as a win-win for everyone involved – and it was.<sup>1</sup>

### IN HER OWN WORDS...

#### Sharing Knowledge through Family Traditions

by Mary Griffin, 11/1/23, modified 5/3/24, [www.pbsnc.org](http://www.pbsnc.org)

#### Support Young Learners Through Hands-On Activities

My parents instinctively realized that I, as an undiagnosed dyslexic child in the 1960s, learned better through projects and hands-on activities. I believe this experience made me a better teacher and library employee because I understand we each learn in different ways.

Our library, the Graham County Public Library in Robbinsville, concentrates on classes such as sewing, basket weaving and music. We offer all learners a comfortable place to prosper, and our hands-on classes complement the other media and ways of learning offered.

Growing up, I was raised to respect everyone and our Earth. Going to reunions and visiting grandparents and other relatives was very important. We loved playing with our cousins and listening to stories about our parents’ past. Oh, the mischief our older relatives found when they were young!

We also heard stories of hard work, survival by living off the land and finding solutions to the difficulties of living in these beautiful mountains we call home. Our mother taught us how to sew and how to break, string and can beans from our garden, which overflowed each year.

We fished, which was fun for us, but in reality it was food for our table. We also learned by sitting under the stars and listening to our mother tell stories of the constellations. She played her guitar and sang us to sleep with songs from her mountain homeland. We learned to recycle before it was the “in thing” and to care for the Earth.

Our father, a forester, taught us respect for our Earth. The stories he told of surveying deep in the forests mesmerized us for hours. He would bring home forest animals for us to see and admire. When he felt sorry for the animal, he had us release it back into nature.

**Editor’s Note:** GCHA was honored to have Mary as a valued member of the Association.

<sup>1</sup> “A life well spent” Latresa Phillips, 8/29/24, Graham Star  
GCHA NEWSLETTER



### GRAHAM COUNTY LIBRARY

The first public library in Graham County opened in Robbinsville in 1939.



**Original Library Building**

It joined the Nantahala Regional Library system in 1940. The facility was torn down in 1952 and replaced with a newer building which opened on April 6, 1953.<sup>2</sup>



**Second Library Building**

Graham County Women's Club, founded in 1928, played an important role in getting a library started in Robbinsville. All along they talked of the possibility of getting it done, but it seemed hopeless as they had no place to house a library and no money. They kept on talking and hoping, and finally a way was opened up for them. They were notified in a letter from John B. Veach, an official of Bemis Lumber Company, that they could have a small building for use as a library; however, it would have to be moved to another location. It was about fifty years old and had been used as a store, a lawyer's office, a doctor's office and various other things. In 1938, the boys who worked in the N.Y.A. youth program, under the supervision of W.C. Siler, moved the

building to the site of the present library (1972). It has stood on the opposite corner of the same lot.

The GC Women's Club was responsible for the upkeep of the library, giving it their financial and moral support. Sometimes they didn't know where the money would come from to mend windows and doors, but somehow managed to pay the bills. Once a windstorm tore off the tar paper roof and something had to be done. With a lot of good help from friends of the library, the books were in the dry again.

Most of the books were gifts from citizens of the town and county. Also a large donation of good books was made by Mrs. Lawrence Bemis of Oil City, PA. She was a former member of the club. Helen Siler Huskey was the first librarian. Thus the first library in Graham County was opened in 1939. Soon afterwards the Educational T.V.A. began circulating material for their employees at Hiawassee and Fontana Dams.

A bookmobile was operated in Cherokee, Swain, and Graham counties and our library became a lending library to help in the circulation of books left by the bookmobile. It served the people of the county until 1952, when it was torn down to be replaced by a new library built as a memorial to the H.C. Bemis family. It was dedicated April 6, 1953.



**Graham County Book Mobile** (NC Archive)

The club continued to support this library with cash payment each year for fuel until a few years ago when it was no longer needed due to an increase in appropriations by the N.C. Legislature. We still donate time and money when the need arises and work to keep the grounds attractive. The boxwood plants were donated by Mrs. F.S. Griffin.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>3</sup> Graham County Centennial Book 1872-1972



## VISIT THE GRAHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION BOOTH AT THE STECOAH HARVEST FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 19TH, 2024 ~ STECOAH VALLEY CENTER ~ 10 AM TO 5 PM

Phone: [\(828\) 479-3364](tel:8284793364) Email: [info@stecoahvalleycenter.com](mailto:info@stecoahvalleycenter.com)

## VINTAGE WINCHESTER RAFFLE



WINCHESTER 30-30 LEVER ACTION



Chances \$5.00 Each or 5 for \$20.00 Drawing December 14, 2024

**Give the Gift of History this Year**



Graham County 150<sup>th</sup> \$50  
Commemorative Blanket



GC Early Families  
Tee Shirts \$25



GC Photo  
Tumblers \$25



GC Centennial  
Book \$35

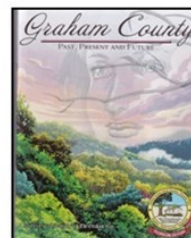


Gift a  
MEMBERSHIP!

Order Early

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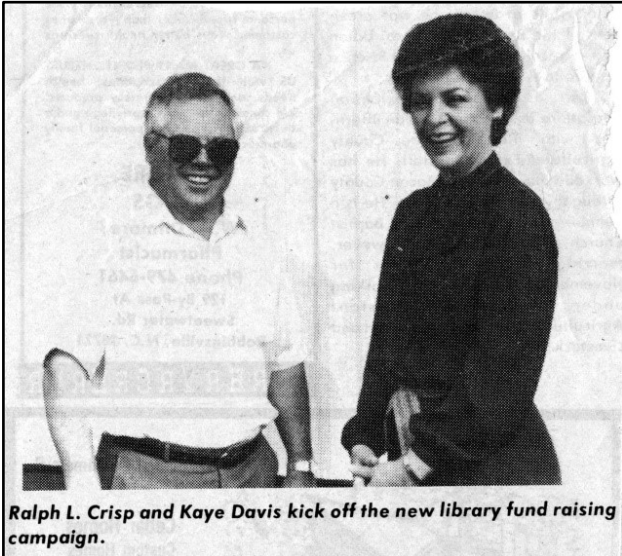
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GC 150th  
Anniversary  
Magazine  
\$5



## NEW GRAHAM COUNTY LIBRARY BUILDING LIBRARY FUND-RAISING KICK-OFF



Ralph L. Crisp and Kaye Davis kick off the new library fund raising campaign.

September 1984 – that is the proposed date for the opening of Graham County's new library.

Ralph Crisp and Kaye Davis are co-chairmen for the fund-raising drive that begins today. Under the Library Service Construction Act – title II-Public Library Construction Fund. Graham County has received \$200,000 toward the \$425,000 estimated cost of the new library. \$100,000 has already been raised through grants and foundations. Graham County Citizens, businesses and industries are being asked to raise the remaining \$125,000. The Emergency Jobs Bill (P.L. 98-9) from which this \$200,000 allocation has been made will result in increased employment throughout the county.

The present Bemis memorial Library has 700 square feet in which to operate. The proposed new library will have 6500 square feet. A few of the services the new library will offer are circulation of adult, young adult and juvenile advisory service, story hours and movies for children.

From today until October 31, each and every citizen, business and industry will be asked to contribute to the new library building fund. Please help us to reach our goal of \$125,000.<sup>4</sup>

### LIBRARY GROUNDBREAKING

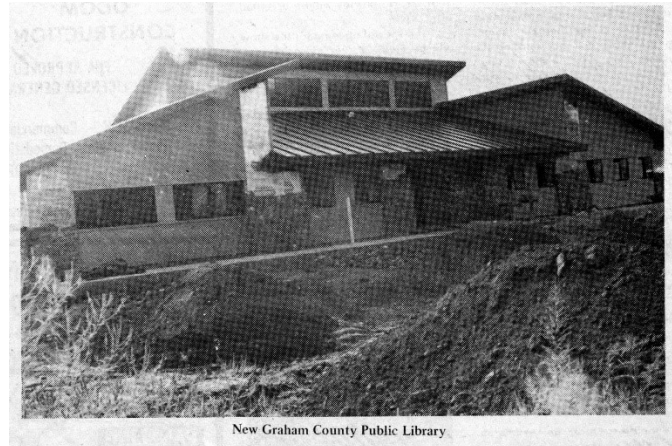
In May 1984, under cloudy skies, in between the rain, local officials and state dignitaries officially broke ground for the new Graham County Public Library.<sup>5</sup>



Tony Ayers, Graham County Commission Chairman, Harry Owens, Commissioner, Lee Erickson and Jo Larson, Nantahala Regional Library trustee, Kay Davis, co-chairman of the building fund drive, and Roy Broom, commissioner, turn over the dirt (left to right)

### NEW LIBRARY ALMOST READY

Graham Star Article, Aug. 30, 1984



New Graham County Public Library

Driving down Knight Street, one can see the long-time dream of a new Graham County Library fast becoming a reality. And for those who worked so hard planning and raising the money, it looks like the building will be finished and enjoyed soon.

Tony Odom, general contractor says he hopes to be finished by the end of September. The inside of the 6500 square foot building is almost ready for painting and trimming.

"Everything has fit just like a glove," Odom said. "All we'll lack is a few small items which we've ordered, but may take a few weeks longer to arrive."

The building contract called for a completion date in late February.

The outside of the building, a soft grey wood, is being enhanced by native rock work which Odell Lovin is doing.

Odom said he was happy everything was going so

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<sup>4</sup> The Graham Star, 1983  
GCHA NEWSLETTER

<sup>5</sup> The Graham Star, May 3, 1984

## HISTORY OF GRAHAM CO. - PART XVII Cont'd

A compilation by Tere Moore

well. "I appreciate all the fine work everyone who had a part in the building did and job superintendent Clyde Phillips was great."

Rick Lee, of Foy-Lee Architects in Waynesville, said he was well pleased with the building. "I had never worked with Odom Construction before," Lee said, "and really didn't know his work. I feel we have gotten a good job."

Lee said his firm checked the project at least every other week. Everything met the specifications according to the plans. "We had four changes which had to be made once we got started, but I was pleased they only added about \$3,800 to the project."

Revised plans changed underground drain lines from four-inch lines to six-inch ones, and the after-hours book depository.

Some sewer work had to be done as the lines were not in the place shown on the survey.

When the town built sidewalks on Knight Street a driveway had to be changed.

The next thing we have to do is get the furnishings contract," Lee said. "We are going to use top of the line furnishings. If we can't afford everything, we will delete some of the least necessary ones.

"Hopefully we'll be able to buy them in the near future," Lee added.

The furnishings contract should be awarded September 11.

It looks like residents of Graham County soon will have a beautiful new library to use and enjoy, one everyone can be proud of.<sup>6</sup>



**Graham County Public Library, as it stands today, is part of the Nantahala Regional Library System**

80 Knight Street, Robbinsville, NC 28771

Phone: 828-479-8796

Hours: Mon, Tues, Weds: 10 am - 6pm

Thurs: 10am - 7pm

Fri: 10 am - 5pm

Sat and Sun: Closed



### *Preserve our History through a Video or Audio Oral History Interview*

Oral Histories are what history is built on. Understanding the history and lives of Graham County citizens is one of the most important parts of our heritage. Collecting, preserving and sharing oral histories not only transmits knowledge from one generation to the next, it enhances our understanding of the past by illuminating personal experience. The real record of history is found in the lives of the ordinary people who lived it.

When we listen to our parents tell stories about our families, our grandparents and their lives, we are listening to oral histories. When we interview a person and record their stories, we are recording oral history. These stories have incredible historical value and become resource materials for generations to come.

By encouraging our citizens to share their stories we are opening up to a much more complete understanding of our community's origins, experiences, culture and people. Even the little stories people share are important simply because the 'ordinary' people are the voice of our past, present and future.

Graham County Historical Association began taking Oral Histories in 2019 and have collected 26 histories to date. Currently we are seeking individuals who are interested in sharing their memories of Graham County, their ancestry and experiences.

If you or someone you know might be a good candidate for this project, please contact us at [grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com](mailto:grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com) or call 828-479-1499.

<sup>6</sup> New library almost ready, The Graham Star, August 30, 1984  
GCHA NEWSLETTER



# 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<br>Meetings and Committees<br>GCHA Decal<br>10% discount on GCHA merchandise |
| 5-year            | \$100.00<br>(1 year free)  |   |
| 10-year           | \$200.00<br>(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](mailto: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

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <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 \$ _____  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Merchandise Amt \$ _____   |  |

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Email \_\_\_\_\_

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

Check | Money Order (Payable to GCHA)

**PayPal** [grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com](mailto:grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com)

Credit Card: (All major credit cards)

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