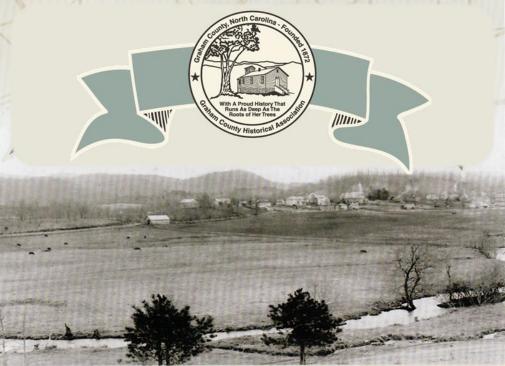
GRAHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION



HONORING THOSE WHO PIONEERED THE RUGGED MOUNTAINS OF GRAHAM COUNTY



www.HISTORYGC.org

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Volume 5, No. 1
Tere Moore, Editor



Historic Tapoco Lodge

NEWSLETTER

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Graham County
Historical Association
meets the F^t 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

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

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.





Max Buchanan

Terri Phillips

Guy Roberts

Graham County Historical Association

is proud to announce the Winner of the GCHA 2020 YETI Cooler Raffle!

GUY ROBERTS

President's message

Here we are embracing a New Year. Graham County Historical Association wishes you and yours a year filled with Hope, Peace and Love.

2020 was a year not soon to be forgotten. We have lost several pillars of our community and our normal way of life has been turned upside down. As bad as things have been, it might pale in comparison to some of the early years of our Graham County ancestors and pioneers. Only through their struggles and achievements could we live in an area so rich in heritage and natural beauty. GCHA believes it is important to collect and preserve Graham County's stories and experiences for future generations, and that is why we continue to take oral histories from our older residents, collect old photographs and other artifacts, and chronicle our community's current experiences.

GCHA has continued its diligent work preserving and preparing the old Snider Store for its future as the Graham County Museum & Heritage Center. Although the circumstances of the Year 2020 may have slowed things down a bit, our progress is moving along steadily and our members are devoted to our goals.

We appreciate each and every one of you who have stepped up to contribute and promote GCHA's endeavors and look forward to a time - not too far in the future - when we can resume interacting with each other and getting to know new people.

Edd Satterfield, President, GCHA

"History is important! We cannot get to where we are going without knowing where we have been."

SNIDER'S STORE - HISTORIC LANDMARK



Excerpted from "Snider's store established in 1915, a historic landmark" by Louise Huscusson Stewart

Snider's Store was founded by J.J. "Jutt" Snider in 1915, at which time Woodrow Wilson was president and our military men were overseas fighting battles in World

J.J. Snider, born December 26, 1887, was an ambitious, hardworking professional businessman always dressed in his suit. He worked at the Wiggins and Ammons Store before founding Snider's Store, earning \$25 per month.

The first building he bought for his store was the old Presbyterian school building built in 1897, which the Masons used for their meetings.

He kept expanding his store until it covered a city block. The outside is native granite stone and the floor area is tongue-and-groove wide-planked wood.



Inside the front door, on the right, was an antique century old "roll top desk" filled with old papers, receipts, notes and you name

Pull chain lights hung from the ceiling with white mushroom-like globes. The store was heated with steam

iron radiators. The crank phone on the wall rang one long and two short rings, and the store phone number was "16".

J.J. Snider built his store to stand 100-plus years like the early pioneers built their log cabins to serve several generations, and all the counters and shelves were made from sturdy wood.

Radio Flyer red wagons decorated the display windows, along with farm tools. The store sold everything from horse collars and harnesses, plows and picks, hoes, rakes, tillers, lawn mowers, wash tubs, buckets and scrub boards, etc. The store's countless wooden bins held pipes, nuts and bolts, also plumbing parts. Metal bins held every size screw, washer and nail.

Wooden barrels stood filled with wooden axe handles. Also available were different sizes of cast iron pans and skillets.

The walk-in meat freezer once held hams, steaks and fresh choice meat prepared by a full-time butcher.

Many brands and styles of shoes were stacked on shelves from floor to ceiling. Original 1880 Fox River Rockford Red Seal Socks were stocked, which became famous for making monkey and elephant dolls.

Men's work shoes, pants and shirts carried the name "Big Ben."

Snider's prices in the late 1920s - early 1930s:

Coffee - 10 pounds for \$1

Eggs - 5¢ per dozen

Palm Olive soap - 5¢ a bar

Coca-Cola - 5¢ a bottle

Moon Pies - 5¢ each

Stick Chewing Gum - 5¢ a pack

Bubble Gum - 1¢ apiece

Ice Cream - 5¢ per cone

Cookies - three for 5¢

Steak - 50¢ per pound

Cigarettes - 20¢ per pack

Prince Albert tobacco - 15¢ per tin

Bull Durham tobacco - small cloth bag with yellow string - 10¢

Gas - 15¢ per gallon and the gas pump

had to be hand-cranked to fill a bubble before the gas flowed

The store also provided fresh fruits, vegetables, eggs and live chickens. The chickens were kept in a pen with a dirt floor in the basement. When a customer wanted to buy one, they would go to the chicken pen, chase down a chick, tie its legs together, pay for it and take it home. Made shopping a little exciting, wouldn't you say?

During World War II, people were issued "Ration Stamps" to buy household staples. You could only buy three gallons of gas with one ration stamp. The store also sold war bonds during World War II, which cost \$18.75 for a \$25 war bond.

In 1994, a portion of the movie "Nell" starring Jodie Foster and Liam Neeson was filmed in the store, after which ball caps were sold that proclaimed "Snider's Store where Nell shops."

The legacy of Snider's Store was carried down through the generations of Sniders to follow. The building, itself, has been a hallmark of the Robbinsville community since its construction.

The Graham County Historical Association is passionate about and dedicated to saving the historic building and letting it stand for generations to come as the future Graham County Museum & Heritage Center.



FUNDRAISING



We extend a heartfelt **Thank You** to all who have participated in GCHA's fundraising projects! We raised \$1,450.00 in our YETI Raffle and \$6,339.35 in our Yard Sale!



We received our first six-month **AmazonSmile** charity donation of \$25.56 earning cash back from of our members' purchases!

Confused about how to use AmazonSmile?

In order to get credit for your purchases on our AmazonSmile Charity Account, you must go to smile.amazon.com and register first, not simply Amazon.com. When you first register with AmazonSmile, you can use all the same login information as your normal Amazon account.

Once registered, bookmark and use this link https://smile.amazon.com/ch/81-3270538 and it will take you directly to your AmazonSmile login.

REMEMBER: You <u>must</u> go to <u>smile.amazon.com</u> when ordering in order for your purchase contributions to be allocated to GCHA.

How to Select GCHA as Your Charity of choice:

- 1. Visit smile.amazon.com and sign into your Amazon account just like you normally would.
- 3. Under "Accounts & Lists" in the main menu bar, select "Your Account".
- 4. Under "Shopping programs and rentals" select "Change your charity".

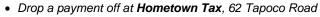


Become a Member or Renew Your Dues Today

and proudly display your new GCHA Window Decal!

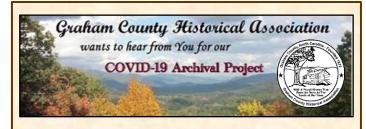
How?

- Mail a payment to GCHA, PO Box 1221 Robbinsville, NC 28771
- Send a payment through PayPal to grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com
- granamcountymaseam egman.com



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





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?
- What did you do to keep yourself occupied?

Please share your experiences of and thoughts about the COVID-19 pandemic with GCHA!

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

HISTORY OF GRAHAM COUNTY - PART II

A compilation by Tere Moore

Editor's Note: While the following account of our history is unpopular to be talked about, it is nonetheless a definitive part of Graham County's history.

Excerpts from "Cheoah Valley was part of Cherokee holdings" by Marshall McClung

No history of Graham County would be complete without a thorough study of the Cherokee Indians. They were in what is now Graham County and well established when the first white man arrived. The dense forests of Graham County abounding with wild game and the many streams filled with fish made it prime land for the Cherokee to hunt and fish in. They lived this way for many years prior to the coming of the white man. Shortly after the treaty between the French and English in 1763, Scotch-Irish pioneers from Virginia, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina began settling in the fertile valleys of western North Carolina, and eventually Graham County. As more whites entered western North Carolina, the Cherokees were pushed west and north of the area between Bryson City and Franklin.

Far from being the savages that some historical accounts would have us believe, the Cherokee, prior to the removal, had their own alphabet, were publishing a newspaper, and even sending representatives to the U.S. Congress, for what good it did.

In 1835, a census indicated that 17,000 Cherokee lived in the East, of which 3,500 were in North Carolina. Information as to their location was obtained in order that they could be rounded up and removed.

A series of forts and stockades were built across western North Carolina and surrounding areas as gathering points to hold the Cherokee. These include: Fort Montgomery in Robbinsville, located near the present day location of the upper plant on Fort Hill near the United Methodist Church; Fort Hembree in Hayesville; Fort Butler in Murphy; and Fort Delaney in Andrews.

Tatham Gap Road that connects Robbinsville and Andrews from Long Creek Road was built for the sole purpose of removing the Cherokee. It was laid out by Lieutenant James Tatham and his son James G. Tatham of Valleytown, now known as Andrews.

Cherokee families were removed from their homes... and marched through rain, mud, and snow, many walking barefooted with little more than the clothes on their backs, to whatever fort or stockade they were going to be held in prior to the march. The Cherokee

called it "The Trail Where They Cried." Today we know it as the "Trail of Tears."

&&

The first wagon road in Graham County was brought about by the removal of the Cherokees. Soldiers under orders from General Winfield Scott moved into the area and erected Fort Montgomery on the Indians' ball ground. Fort Montgomery was constructed under direction of Dr. Dan F. Summey of Asheville for use in corralling the Indians in 1838, prior to removal to Oklahoma. A makeshift highway was built from Old Valley Town (Andrews) to Fort Montgomery near Robbinsville for use of the soldiers in evacuating the Indians.

Over this first wagon road came the first preacher, Reverend Joseph A. Wiggins, a distinguished Methodist Minister. The Rev. Joseph A. Wiggins, father of the late Walt Wiggins, was born on Alarka Creek in 1832, but moved to Graham County with his father Abraham in 1840. He found a few hardy white families. In the valleys, the Cherokees had their villages where they raised corn, barley, pumpkins, and ceremonial tobacco while they hunted wild game on the rugged mountain slopes.

There were no mills except a few grist mills. Wheat was packed on horses by an Indian trail a distance of about thirty miles to a mill five miles from what is now Bryson City. Indian relics were plentiful at that time at the Meadows on the head of Tallulah Creek.

Mr. Wiggins married a daughter of George W. Hayes for whom the town of Hayesville was named. There was not a church in the county and only a few log houses. He began preaching in 1859, and served for four years as chaplain in the Confederate Army. Afterwards he rode circuits in Southwestern Virginia, East Tennessee, and Western North Carolina remaining stationed in Graham County. His great-grandfather Garland Wiggins and his wife's great-grandfather Edward Hayes served in the Revolutionary War.

&

Excerpts from "The Cherokee Trail of Tears in North Carolina by Brett Riggs and Lance Greene

Fort Montgomery

Fort Montgomery (May-July 1838), situated in present-day Robbinsville, North Carolina, was the principal military post for the removal of Cherokee citizens from the Cheoah River Valley and the headquarters for North Carolina militia involved in the removal. The fort was among the last established in the Cherokee Nation prior to removal.

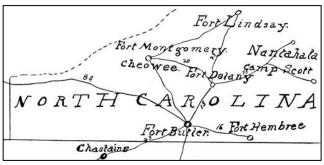
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OF GRAHAM COUNTY - Part II (cont'd)

On March 8, 1838, Quartermaster A.R. Hetzel, received orders to "give Capt. Helsey a plan for a picket work to be erected in the Cheowa Valley."

On May 23, 1838, Captain Enoch Cunningham (Company A, Buncombe County volunteers) noted that North Carolina troops had lately completed a road over the Snowbird Mountains and begun construction of Fort Montgomery. "

...we have at length arrived at our station in the Cheowee Valley and have designated it Fort Montgomery...We were detained on Valley River for the space of 10 days during which time we were engaged in making a road across the mountains to our present station. We have commenced hauling timber and ditching for the picket work, and all the men are in high spirits and show great anxiety to forward the business. Some of the men have been seriously indisposed but are at present convalescent, and I think that we will enjoy good health if an elevated situation and good water will conduce to that effect." (Cunningham 1838)

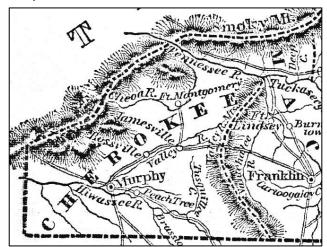


Detail of Lt. E.D. Keyes' 1838 map "View of Posts and Distances in the Cherokee Nation" illustrating the relative position of Fort Montgomery.

When Colonel John Gray Bynum and three companies of North Carolina troops (approximately 230 men) took their post at Fort Montgomery on June 1, 1838, they found the facility unfinished and the recently constructed military road so rough that it hampered procurement of rations and equipment.

"I reached my station last night and assumed command this morning and find the post in quite a precarious situation provided the Indians are disposed to be hostile. In consequence of the extreme badness of the roads, and the difficulty of procuring wagons, the Quartermaster has been unable to accumulate a supply of provisions. There are provisions in the camp now only for three days. A wagon can haul only about 1200 pounds and make a trip in two days. The road through a great part of the distance passes up a branch between two mountains with a laurel thicket on each side, which would enable a very small force to prevent the passage of wagons without a large escort..." (Bynum 1838b)

On June 3, the North Carolina troops were on standby to commence the collection of Cherokee prisoners in the Cheoah Valley on the fourth in keeping with Gen. Scott's Order No. 34 and Eustis' Order No. 3 (Bynum 1838c).



Detail of 1843 Morse and Breese map of North Carolina. Note Fort Montgomery located at the northern terminus of the Pile Ridge road, but indicated on the north side of Sweetwater Creek.

Bynum planned to detail Capt. Cunningham with a company to Buffalo Town; Capt. Killian was to operate with his company in Cheoah Town; Capt. Jones with 20 men were to work "over the mountains" [Stecoah?]; Captain Bryan and 40 men were ordered to operate in Tallula, and Lieut. Miller was to direct 32 men in operations on Sweetwater Creek. Each detachment was directed to "take as many prisoners as they can secure" then "return to the Fort" before nightfall. Later that day, Bynum received orders for a postponement of operations until June 12.

By June 4, Bynum's troops had resumed fort construction. Bynum noted:

"I have this morning [June 4, 1838] set a large number of hands at work upon the picketing, and think I can have it completed by the 12th inst. I have also commenced a hospital for the accommodation of the sick and they are numerous and increasing" (Bynum 1838d).

Bynum's orders for fatigue details to work on the hospital and picketing on the north and south sides of the fort indicate that Fort Montgomery included permanent fixed structures and a ditch-laid palisade. It is likely that the construction of the fort proceeded according to the formal, standardized plan provided by Hetzel, and that Fort Montgomery substantially resembled Forts Hembree, Lindsay, and Delaney.

Bynum's initial fears that "the Indians are disposed to Cont'd Pg. 7

HISTORY OF GRAHAM COUNTY - Part II (cont'd)

be hostile" were quickly dispelled. He wrote Lt. J.H. Simpson (June 5, 1838):

"... A more religious people than inhabits this [Cheoah] valley cannot be found anywhere. No civilized community with which I am acquainted is as observant of religious service and ceremonies. Their religious meetings are characterized by the greatest decorum and propriety of conduct and apparently from religious feelings. Their preachers speak of the prospect of their speedy removal and the subject never fails to throw the congregation into tears..." (Bynum 1838e)

After of week of fatigue duty working at road repair and fort construction, relieved by Cherokee Baptist church meetings, the North Carolina troops stationed at Fort Montgomery proceeded with the arrest and removal of Cherokees in Cheoah, Tallula, Connichiloe, and Buffalo Town on June 12, 1838. Bynum's accounts of the operations are the most detailed surviving record of the military roundup of Cherokee prisoners.

On June 13, Bynum wrote his superior, Gen. Abraham Eustis:

"I collected yesterday about 80 Indians they had all received orders from Welch on Valley River to leave home & take to the mountains. These we caught were from home. I have sent a large number as runners & if in their first alarm they have not run too far I think most of them will come in tomorrow. Big George the chief of this valley has informed me that they shall. I shall remain quiet until I see the effect of my negotiations with them. Those whom I have enrolled seem well contented & those whom I have let out as runners, I have seen since they come & reported themselves according to promise. A great deal of sickness is prevailing among the children of the Indians. I permit the females to remain at home with their sick children & the Indians physicians to attend them." (Bynum 1838a)

A couple of days later, Bynum requested permission to delay the movement of his prisoners.

"A large number have gone for considerable distance in the mountains & cannot be found by those whom I have sent out as runners. I am very desirous that you would allow me until Wednesday or Thursday next to start my prisoners from this post. I think if allowed until that time I can have almost everyone in this valley collected & their property sold & every other preparation for their departure completed. Some two hundred are now at or near the post & their number is constantly increasing. (Bynum 1838f).

"My object in desiring a delay is to secure the women & children & permit the men to go & gather in their property & have it sold on Monday or Tuesday & the money paid over to them & start them next day. They are very desirous of settling their own property & I have promised them that liberty provided some officer of this post witness the

contract. I have to inform you also that almost every child & many grown persons in this valley are sick with the whooping cough & that a large number of deaths having taken place since they run to the mountains amongst those Fort Montgomery families who have returned. There are many now taken who cannot be removed without very great danger - without almost certain death." (Bynum 1838f)

On June 18, Bynum, who was impressed by the Cheoah Cherokees' Christianity, orderliness and pacific attitude, petitioned Preston Starrett (federal enrolling agent in the Valley Towns) to issue permits to exempt a number of the Cheoah residents from removal. Bynum wrote on their behalf:

"If they are permitted to remain until further orders I promise to use my efforts to induce our state to make them citizens. I have no doubt they will grant them the right of citizen-ship.... I do earnestly hope you will permit Board Splitter & the following persons his near relations to remain.

- I. Board Splitter, wife & 2 children
- 2. Kulquataka, wife & 2 Do
- 3. Tusuiskee, wife & 6 children (Board Splitter's brother)
- 4. Jesse wife & I child (do.)
- 5. Choo wah chuckah & wife Kalonuaskee (do. [ditto] sister) and 5 children
- 6. Nancy Board Splitter's mother old and infirm
- 7. Conust sister to Board Splitter's mother very old and infirm

Kahyawhula the wife of Kulquitaka No. 5 is the sister of Board Splitter. All those persons are members of the Church and preachers & exhorters with the exception of Tusuiskee. For his character I am willing to vouch. I am very much interested in favor of this family. The old members of the family are too old to remove..." (Bynum 1838g)

On June 22, Bynum ordered the transfer of Cherokee prisoners from Fort Montgomery to Fort Butler.

"Capt. Cunningham will set out with his company as an escort to Indian prisoners today at 9 o'clock AM. He will escort them to Fort Butler as soon as practicable & report himself to Gen. Eustis and await his further orders." (Bynum 1838h).

The 300 prisoners from Cheoah most likely traveled from Fort Montgomery to Fort Delaney along the Pile Ridge-Long Creek military road (the sole wagon route to Cheoah), then followed the state road south to Fort Butler. The 24-mile journey took two days.

On June 24, 1838, General Eustis observed:

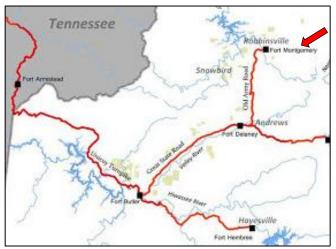
"Capt. Washington, with Companies B & G 4th Regt. Artillery under his command left here [Fort Butler] yesterday afternoon for the Cherokee Agency, having under his charge about 1100 Indians - 300 Indians will arrive here today from Cheowah & in two or three days about the

Cont'd Pg. 8

HISTORY OF GRAHAM COUNTY - Part II (cont'd)

same number from Fort Lindsay & Camp Scott. The whole number of Indians, which have been collected at the several posts in North Carolina is something more than 3000. A few are still hiding in the recesses of the mountains, & a number of families have obtained permission from the Superintendent of Emigration or his agent to remain and become citizens of N.C." (Eustis 1838b)

After a short stay at Fort Butler, the Cheoah prisoners, like thousands of other North Carolina Cherokees, were marched 80 miles over the Unicoi Turnpike to Fort Cass (Charleston, Tennessee) to await their deportation to Oklahoma. Once there, they took up temporary residence in the internment camps on the military reservation, most likely joining 1500 North Carolina Cherokees already camped along the eastern prong of South Mouse Creek. Most of the Cheoah prisoners traveled to the west with fellow Baptist converts in Bushyhead's detachment.



Trail of Tears Route from Fort Montgomery

North Carolina troops abandoned Fort Montgomery soon after the transfer of the Cheoah prisoners to Fort Butler.

On June 24, Bynum wrote Eustis:

"I shall have all the companies at Franklin within the week. My own preference would be to march them to Asheville before they are discharged... I have taken about 20 more Indian prisoners and hope to get a few more before I leave. Those I took had returned and were working out their fields. I will endeavor to ascertain the probable number in this valley not yet taken and inform you of it before I set out... The sick list in camp is increasing very rapidly. I think Dr. Calloway will have to be left behind with them." (Bynum 1838i)

In the aftermath of removal, the Cheoah Valley was largely given over to Cherokee families who had managed to elude Bynum's troops. Relatively few white settlers took up residence in this remote area until 1850,

and the remnant Cherokee enclave of Cheoah/Buffalo Town flourished. William Holland Thomas established a store on Rhea Hill (present site of downtown Robbinsville) and designated it the "Fort Montgomery" store. A nearby post office was addressed "Cheoah Valley" until 1849, when it was redesignated "Fort Montgomery."

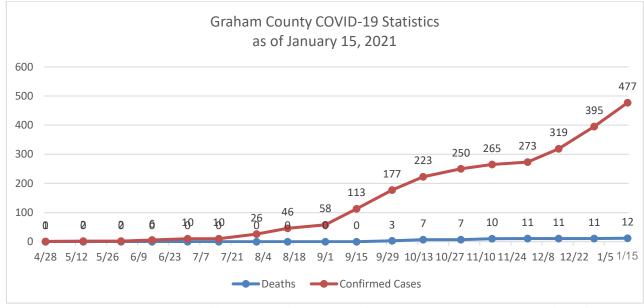
Don't miss "History of Graham County – Part III" in the next issue of the GCHA Newsletter. It will include information about the Civil War, the founding of the Town of Robbinsville and William McKendree Robbins.

HIDDEN TREASURES

DONATED TO THE MUSEUM IN 2020, THE FOLLOWING ITEMS HAVE HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE TO GRAHAM COUNTY



- John Brown Wiggins donated his mother's sewing machine and an old-timey record player
- Max Buchanan donated a large pottery base electric butter churn c.1942 that belonged to his mother, and a woven basket bought at Snider's store by his mother, Hazel Snider Buchanan.
- Conward Snider donated a wooden butter mold belonging to his mother, Edna Snider
- Denise Patterson donated a glass butter dish which belonged to her mother-in-law, Geneva Patterson
- ➤ A 1950's telephone with its actual period phone number and the name "Jordan" on it, along with a 1940's doll collection were donated. It is uncertain if they relate directly to Graham County, as they were donated from an abandoned storage unit.



For daily information visit: https://usafacts.org/visualizations/coronavirus-covid-19-spread-map/state/north-carolina/county/graham-county



THE GOAL IS TO CREATE: MEMBERSHIP & DONATION FORM GRAHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION A museum of Graham County located at the Snider Building; The work of Graham County Historical Association is greatly assisted by your generous support! An education center for our schools: Name Membership S_ A place to learn how our community began, how industry changed the One-time or Monthly Donation \$ mountains, how families survived and Company made a living: METHOD OF PAYMENT A wealth of knowledge with stories of our founding families and artifacts Address . Check | Money Order (Payable to GCHA) from earlier generations. State PayPal grahamcounty muse um@gmail.com Membership Includes: + Membership Card + Meetings & Committees + Quarterly Newsletter · Credit Card: (All major credit cards) Phone 1-Year = \$25 5-Year = \$125 Email 10-Year = \$250 Lifetime = \$1,000 Thank you for your Support! **GRAHAM COUNTY** Cardholder's Name HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION Please mail to: PO Box 1221 Robbinsville, NC 28771 Signature www.historygc.org Phone: 828.479.5008 I authorize GCHA to auto-draft my donation from my account grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com Email: grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com PO Box 1221, Robbinsville, NC 28771 GCHA is a non-profit, tax-exempt 501@(3) organization. Contributions are tax deductible. 828.479.5008