

# GRAHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION



HONORING THOSE WHO PIONEERED  
THE RUGGED MOUNTAINS  
OF GRAHAM COUNTY



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

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Tere Moore, Editor



Santeetlah Marina

## NEWSLETTER

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GCHA meets the 1st  
Monday 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

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## HERITAGE FESTIVAL JULY 4-5, 2025 ~ ROBBINSVILLE, NC



# Taking an Ancestral Journey

By Tere Moore

Recently, I had the honor of meeting two women, Vonda and Lilly, when they came to Graham County to retrace Lilly's ancestral roots. They had already visited Old Mother Cemetery in search of family graves but had difficulty locating a couple of them. They were in search of the Whisenhunts and Worleys.

In preparation for their visit I requested the names they were looking for so I could do some research to confirm the ancestry needed to help them with their journey.

## Ancestry:

### John M Whisenhunt

BIRTH 3 DEC 1820 • Graham, North Carolina  
DEATH 5 JUN 1898 • near Robinsville, Graham, North Carolina








### Barbara Caroline Duggan

BIRTH 25 AUG 1844 • Sevier County, Tennessee  
DEATH 23 SEP 1932 • Norman Park, Colquitt, Georgia


#### Parents

-  **John Nicholas Whisenhunt**  
1771-1845
-  **Kizeiah Hatcher**  
1777-1830

#### Spouse and children

-  **Darcus Emly England Whisenhunt**  
1823-1894
-  **E. A. Whisenhunt**  
1849-
-  **Caroline Dorcas Whisenhunt**  
1851-1946
-  **Margaret Whisenhunt**  
1854-1931
-  **Daniel Webster Whisenhunt**  
1857-1931
-  **Emily Timey Whisenhunt**  
1859-1940
-  **William "Willie" Whisenhunt**  
1863-


#### Spouse and children

-  **Barbara Caroline Duggan**  
1844-1932
-  **Barbara Ann Whisenhunt**  
1869-1933

#### Parents

-  **Archibald McMahan Duggan**  
1823-1907
-  **Anna Caroline Shults**  
1826-1902

#### Spouse and children

-  **Thomas Henry Leatherwood**  
1842-1927
-  **Alexander Leatherwood**  
1862-1930

#### Spouse and children

-  **John M Whisenhunt**  
1820-1898
-  **Barbara Ann Whisenhunt**  
1869-1933









### Barbara Ann Whisenhunt

BIRTH JUN 1869 • Cherokee, North Carolina  
DEATH 1933 • Colquitt, Georgia

#### Parents

-  **John M Whisenhunt**  
1819-1898
-  **Barbara Caroline Duggan**  
1844-1932

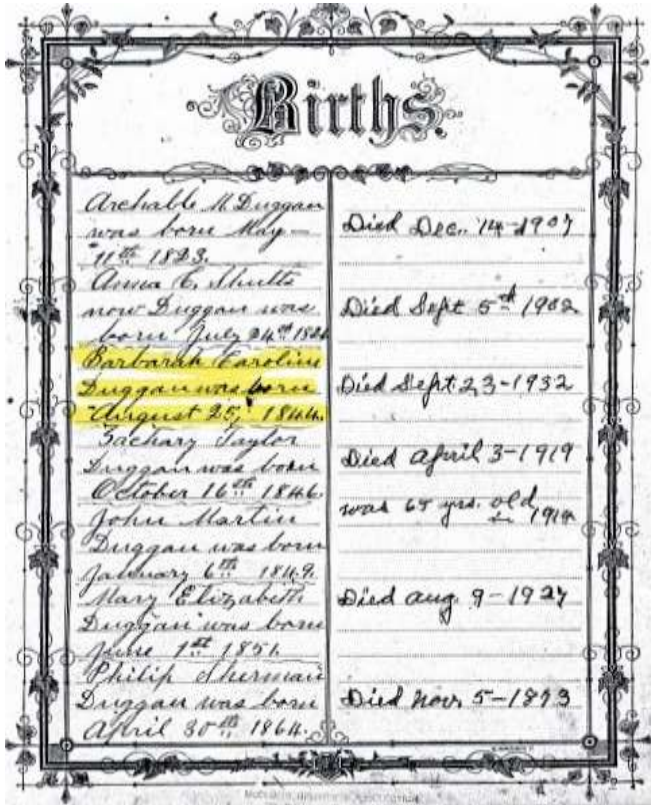
#### Spouse and children

-  **William Charles Worley**  
1875-1956
-  **Callie Worley**  
1902-1977
-  **Nora Venice Worley**  
1905-1999
-  **Rebecca Worley**  
1907-2000
-  **Frank Stanton Worley**  
1910-1985
-  **John B Worley**  
1913-1932
-  **Benjamin Newton Hyde** (Father of Alexander, but no marriage)  
1868-1950
-  **Alexander Clarence Whisenhunt Worley**  
1895-1980

## Ancestral Journey (Cont'd)

No legal record found of marriage, but family Bible states Barbara Caroline Duggan married John Whisenhunt (page not shown).

Among the papers available was a page from the **Archabale Duggan Bible** listing the birth and death for Barbara Caroline Duggan.



Also available online was a land deed for John M. Whisenhunt.

When Vonda and Lilly arrived, we met at Lynn's Restaurant for lunch (to give them a taste of the local flavor) and to get acquainted.

I found a Land Grant for John M. Whisenhunt during my research, a copy of which I sent to Kim Leguire at the Registrar of Deeds office and made an appointment to view the deeds and land grants held by the Whisenhunts and Worleys.

After lunch, we walked over to the courthouse to visit Kim. After chatting for a few minutes, she quickly and meticulously found exactly what they were looking for and *much, much more.*

THIS IMAGE MAY BE ILLEGIBLE DUE TO THE CONDITION OF THE ORIGINAL DOCUMENT.

No. 134

County Graham

Name Whisenhunt

John

Acres 76

Grant No. 136

Issued 21 Ap 1884

Warrant No. 138 Entry No. \_\_\_\_\_

Entered 6 Aug 1877

Book No. 174 Page No. 143

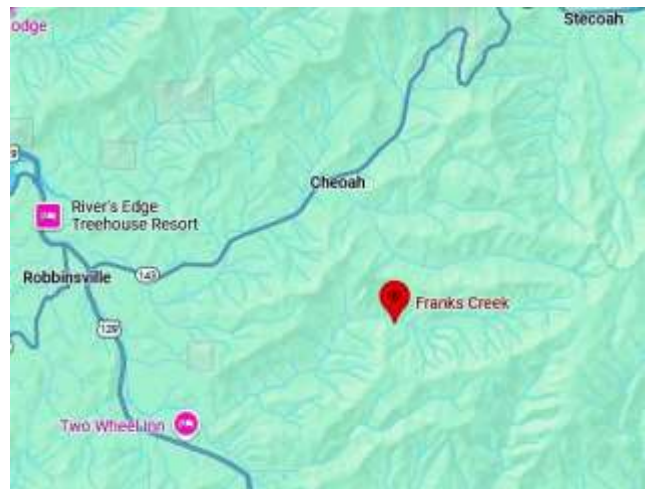
Location Smiths Creek

on a Chestnut

Believed to state: "Smiths Creek. Beg. on a Chestnut"

Remarks: \_\_\_\_\_

I found out that the area then known as Smith's Creek is now known as Frank's Creek and that there was still an old homesite there for the Whisenhunts.



Cont'd Pg. 5

## Ancestral Journey (Cont'd)

Our next stop was a meeting with Jimmy Hyde. Vonda and Lilly were super excited to confirm with him their lineage related to the Hydies of Graham County. Jimmy is a wealth of genealogical and local information and was even able to direct them to additional family gravesites and share little known stories about the Hyde family. He also accompanied them to view several more family gravesites when our meeting ended.

We also found out that Marshall McClung had written a story about the Whisenhunt homesite, which I have included below.

### OLD HOMESITES VISITED

An article by Marshall McClung

“Recently Hoot Gibbs and I visited some old home sites in the Frank’s Creek area. Looking for old home sites in the woods is one of our favorite things to do. Much research of old land papers by Hoot with the assistance of the Graham County Register of Deeds helps greatly. We visited two old home sites on the upper section of Frank’s Creek, the T.A. Rich and John Whisenhunt home sites. Rich is a common name in Graham County, Whisenhunt, not so much.

“T.J. Rich owned 118.25 acres of land that lay between two forks of Frank’s Creek. Not much is left of the Rich place except some piles of stones. John Whisenhunt and his wife Barbara C. Whisenhunt owned 90.6 acres about one half mile or so upstream from the Rich property. They had purchased the land from John L. Ammons and his wife Mary E. Ammons for \$35 on November 18, 1878. John also owned other tracts of property further downstream on Frank’s Creek. Their home was likely built in the late 1800’s at an elevation of 3,400 feet. Other persons owning land in the general area were: Lee Waldroup, Bill Phillips, D.C. Phillips, David Phillips and wife, Nancy Jane Phillips, and Van Marcus. Whiting Lumber and Manufacturing Company also owned large tracts of land in the area. The Waldroup family ranged cattle in the area on up around Bell Collar Gap and Cheoah Bald, elevation 5,062 feet. Gladys Anderson Wiggins recalled that when she was a girl about ten years of age which would have been around 1935, she recalled seeing the Whisenhunt home site which was in ruins by then.

“The 1880 census lists John Whisenhunt, 57, wife Barbara C., age 40, and daughter Barbara A., 10 as living in Graham County. It is unclear what brought the Whisenhunt family to Graham County or when they left. Mrs. Whisenhunt sold the Frank’s Creek property to John H. Rogers for \$300 on November 21, 1919. Mrs. Whisenhunt was living in Colquitt County, Georgia at the time of the sale. Her husband John was not named in the transaction leading one to wonder if he was deceased. Eventually the Rich, Whisenhunt, and Whiting properties were purchased by the U.S. Forest Service, which paid \$288 for the 118.25 Rich property on December 12, 1939.

“The winter sun was low on the horizon, so it was time to leave the woods until another day, maybe searching again for another old home site or a lonely, forgotten grave deep in the woods somewhere.”

**From a simple phone call, a little research and some knowledgeable local residents, Vonda and Lilly spent an exciting day in Graham County on their ancestral journey.**



## CREATE YOUR OWN ANCESTRAL JOURNEY

When you set out on an Ancestral Journey, it becomes a search for not just places, but for people – your people. It’s about standing on the soil where your ancestors once stood, seeing what they saw, and feeling a connection that goes beyond words. Here’s how you begin.

### WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE?

Ask yourself what you’re truly hoping to find. Maybe you’re aiming to grow your family tree through firsthand research, or perhaps you want to walk the streets of your ancestral town, reconnecting with the language, food, and traditions that shaped your family’s past. For others, the journey is deeply personal – visiting a grandparent’s birthplace, seeing a family grave, or finding closure in a long-lost story.

Understanding your *why* will help you decide on the locations you visit, the documents to gather, and even the people to meet.

Cont'd Pg. 6

## Ancestral Journey (Cont'd)

### DO YOUR RESEARCH

An ancestry trip starts with conversations with relatives, deep dives into online archives and referencing a family tree. Collect certificates, letters, diaries, photos, even family legends passed down over generations; request your parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles to share their memories, recall places, names, or unusual family stories.

### CREATE A TRAVEL ITINERARY

Once you've gathered your information, map out the key places your ancestors lived, worked, worshipped, or were buried. This might include towns, rural villages, old family homes, or churches.

Contact the local historical association, courthouse, library or schools in the area. Make appointments and build your itinerary around them.

Set realistic goals within the time of travel, but be patient and flexible because you may stumble upon something that requires more research, discover a completely new family line to follow, or meet some interesting people.

### WHAT TO BRING

Bring a printed or digital version of your family tree, key documents, old photographs, and a research journal to log findings and reflections along the way. Photos of ancestors or former family homes can also be conversation starters with locals or museum staff.

### RECORD YOUR JOURNEY

Nothing is more exciting than going over your discoveries when you return home. Keep a travel journal or recording, not just for documentation, but for reflection. Take plenty of photos and videos. When possible, scan or photograph local records so you have backups.

### REVIEW AND SHARE THE EXPERIENCE



Nothing is more exciting than sharing your discoveries with family and friends upon your return. It may even bring more memories to the surface and prove or disprove family legends. For some, the journey even inspires a return trip with siblings, children, or grandchildren eager to follow in your footsteps.

### AN ANCESTRAL JOURNEY STARTS WITH YOU

To plan your own ancestral journey is to honor your past and invest in your future. It's a journey of discovery, connection, and identity. With the right preparation, an open heart, and the willingness to explore, your ancestral journey can become one of the most powerful experiences of your life.

If you have ancestral roots in Graham County, North Carolina, contact the Graham County Historical Association via email at [grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com](mailto:grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com) or call 828-479-5008. We may be able to assist you with your journey.

## Correction to the Sheriff's Department article in the April 2025 Newsletter

 <p>John A. Ammons 1894-1906 &amp; 1910-1920</p>	 <p>Noah E. Millsaps* appointed to finish Ammons' last term</p>	<p>*When Sheriff Ammons resigned sometime in his last year (1920), Noah E. Millsaps was appointed and served three months.</p>
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# FUNDRAISERS

THE GRAHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION IS LARGELY SUPPORTED BY DONATIONS, MEMBERSHIP, AND FUNDRAISING

See Last Page for Order Form or email [grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com](mailto:grahamcountymuseum@gmail.com)



## RAFFLE



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86.5k  
Miles  
One Owner

Good  
Condition



**Chances \$20.00 Each or 6 for \$100.00**  
Drawing to be held in December 2025

Purchase Tickets at: ★ Azalea Festival ★ Heritage Festival ★ Stecoah Harvest Festival  
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\*Car will be transferred in as-is condition, no guarantees or warranty implied.  
Winner responsible for any required taxes.

100% of all proceeds go to the **GRAHAM COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

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# MYSTERIOUS TRACKS IN ROCK REMAIN A MYSTERY TODAY

During a recent Oral History interview with Marshall McClung, Hoot Gibbs, Joe Bonnette and Jim Buckel, the following topic was brought up – huge footprints of unknown origin embedded in rock. The following article was published by Marshall McClung and several photos were shared during the interview.

## COW TRACK ROCK

An article by Marshall McClung

“High on a ridge between Mountain Creek Gap and what is known today as Wachacha Bald, but known to old timers as Sheep Knob, is an outcropping of rocks with some strange markings on them

“Dale Holder’s father, Theodore Holder, who lived to the age of 103, took Dale and his brother Collell to see Cow Track Rock when Dale was around ten years old. Dale recalled that he was still so small that his father had to lift him over fallen trees. The Holders walked to Cow Track Rock from their home on Upper Sawyer’s Creek, a distance of several miles.

“Theodore insisted that Wachacha Bald, elevation 4,380 feet with its forest fire lookout tower and several other electronic installations, is actually Sheep Knob. He said that Wachacha Bald was a cleared grassy knob located down below where a Cherokee Indian by the name of Charlie Wachacha lived in a log cabin. This is supposedly how Wachacha Bald got its name. Wachacha is said to mean “grasshopper” in the Cherokee language.

their sheep that pastured in the high mountain grass during the summertime. Theodore said Charlie had a garden fenced in with a rail fence head high to keep out livestock which roamed “open range” then. Theodore and Charlie grew some of the largest cabbage there that he had ever seen. It is thought that Charlie lived there in the summertime and watched about people’s livestock that grazed there.



A search revealed more tracks embedded in the rock  
Photo by Hoot Gibbs



Wachacha Bald Topo Map

“Theodore recalled seeing Charlie when he was just a young boy sometime around 1913. He thought Charlie was an old man then, but youngsters tend to think all adults are old. Theodore had gone to the area with his mother and grandmother to see about



Scale of fossilized print

Cont'd Pg 6

## MYSTERIOUS TRACKS (Cont'd)

“The rock with the strange markings was called Cow Track Rock by the old timers probably since that was the only animal at the time that they could think of that could have made the tracks. Dale took Hoot Gibbs, Ronnie Postell and me to see this strange sight. Embedded in solid rock are numerous tracks that appear to have been made by some hooved animal when the rock was soft. The tracks are several inches across and there are smaller tracks that appear to have been made by young animals. Some of the tracks have slide marks where the animal had slipped as traveling in haste. Further investigation may have revealed their haste. Also embedded in the rock is the track of some animal with a large padded foot such as you would find in the large cat family.

“When the Holders visited the area years ago, they also found the track of something that appeared to have three large toes with claws in them and a large pad near the rear of the foot. Another track of this nature has been reported in solid stone near Wayah Bald in Macon County.



“We moved on down the ridge to look at Wildcat Den, a large rock face with an opening extending several feet back into the mountain. As we moved downhill, we found more rocks containing the strange tracks. A clump of trees had uprooted pulling several inches of dirt off a rock face with it. Here, Hoot Gibbs found more of the tracks, some looking like large horse tracks. Another interesting fact was that these tracks appeared to have been made when the rock face would have been almost level. The rock

face is now closer to vertical, meaning that sometime the entire rock face has shifted.

“Lots of questions surround Cow Track Rock. What made these tracks, buffalo, elk, or carvings by Cherokee Indians as some speculate? When was the rock soft enough for these tracks to have been made? What made the track with three large toes and claws?

“One other interesting note along this line, Eddie Grindstaff showed me a photo of what appears to be a human footprint in solid stone. The track was discovered when some rock was blasted during road construction on Yellow Creek. When the blasted rock fell off the embankment into the roadway, there was the track.

“There have definitely been some strange “goings on” in our mountains in time.”

## What does it take to turn a track into a fossilized rock?

### 1. Fossilization of a Track

- **Rapid Initial Preservation:** For an animal track to become a fossil, it needs to be rapidly preserved in suitable conditions, often involving fine sediments like mud or sand, and potentially baked hard by the sun before being buried. This initial preservation can happen relatively quickly, potentially within days to months.
- **Mineralization and Lithification:** Over time, the buried sediment layers are compacted and cemented, turning them into rock (lithification).
- **Fossil Formation:** Mineral-rich water seeping through the rock can gradually replace the original organic material of the track with minerals (mineralization), preserving its shape as a fossil. This process of mineralization and lithification takes a significantly longer time, ranging from thousands to millions of years for most fossils.

### 2. Uplifting of the fossilized rock into a mountain:

- **Mountain Building:** Mountain ranges typically form through the slow collision and deformation of tectonic plates over vast periods. This process involves the uplift of rock layers through folding, faulting, and sometimes volcanic activity.
- **Time Scales:** Mountain building is a very slow process, taking hundreds of thousands to millions of years for large mountain ranges to form.

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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

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Graham County 150th Throw 50.00

All merchandise requiring shipment will include a shipping fee.

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