



Fairfield County Museum News

Winter, 2010

Much Ado

This has probably been one of the busiest years for changes in the Fairfield County Museum. This tardy newsletter incorporates news on an incredible array of museum developments, beginning with my last correspondence announcing the successful April 16-17, 2010 Cornwallis house gala and historic tours. I will attempt to streamline all of the information as a long personal letter to members, as I feel it is important to keep you abreast of all that is going on.

In the last newsletter, I had just announced that our museum is going to be one of 12 S.C. sites to host the Smithsonian traveling exhibit, **New Harmonies**, in April of 2012. Thank goodness we have a year ahead of us to plan this, although time does tend to catch up fast. I am looking to hear from some of you who may want to join us on a planning session sometime in the early weeks of the 2011 New Year. Please go to <http://www.museumonmainstreet.org/newharmonies/index.htm> to familiarize yourselves with how our community could become involved in presenting an array of cultural events revolving around the exhibit. Please let me know (fairfieldmus@truvista or 635-9811) if you are interested in coming on board to help plan for the celebrations.

Love for a Log Cabin

Ed Gates and I had been working on this behind-the-scenes project for some time, and some of you have heard about the donation and relocating of a historically important log

house to the backyard of the museum. During early museum development years, the historical society board had expressed an interest in relocating an early settlement type of structure for the interpretation of our county's earliest historical periods. In 2008, Bobby Brown deeded such a structure to the museum in hopes that we could find a way to preserve it. The Hawthorne-Brown house, last lived in by Mrs. Mildred Brown, was probably constructed in the decade around 1770 - 80 on a 100 acre royal grant to James Adams 1770 which was sold to James Hawthorne in 1771 before the American Revolution. This unique square-log and framed-extension long house is a prime example of how our forefathers began carving out of the backwoods an existence which would set the foundations for the successes of the succeeding generations.



For the first hundred years, members of the Hawthorne family inhabited the two-room-and-loft 18 ft. X 25 ft. log structure. A great grandson of the builder was the celebrated Methodist minister Alston Wilkes, who with his widowed young mother survived the deprivations of the Union foragers pre-



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"To educate citizens and visitors about the heritage of Fairfield County."

-Mission Statement

preceding General William T. Sherman's raid of our county in February of 1865. In the early twentieth century, Mr. Wilkes went on to found Alston Wilkes Society, a nonprofit organization providing rehabilitative services to adults released from corrections facilities, one of the largest of its type in the nation.

In 1852, Wilkes's grandfather had secured the materials from a frame structure used as a dormitory building at nearby Furman College. The college had just ceased its 21 year existence as a theological seminary and classical college, its third location since its inception in Edgefield in 1825, and moved the school, lock, stock, and barrel to Greenville where it continues today operating as Furman University. An 18 ft. X 33 ft. addition was constructed from the materials, extending the living facilities for the family on the west end of the original log structure. Probably about the same time the old detached kitchen building was connected to the rear of the log building by a closed-in porch. In the 1880s Bobby Brown's great grandfather purchased the property which was occupied by his mother Mrs. Mildred Brown until she moved into more comfortable quarters in the 1980s. The empty structure has now begun to show signs of deterioration and Mr. Brown decided to follow our persistent suggestions, deeding the structure to the Museum in 2008.

In late April, a descendant of the Hawthorne ancestor, Mrs. Midge Novotny of Peoria, IL contacted me of her desire to help

save her ancestor's house and has pledged a sum of money to help with the project. In addition, several other Hawthorne descendants from other states have contacted me about wanting to help with the funding. State Senator Creighton Coleman then stepped in to pledge his support and assistance in lining up help to begin the process. This interest did not go unnoticed by the county administrator Phil Hinely and Councilman David Brown, who stepped in to help with the planning process for the move. It was determined that a reconstruction of the structure would not only suffice to extend the interpretive collection of museum properties, but a suitable structural addition could be incorporated into the project to deal with the Museum's archives storage and other needs. County services were set up to assist Mr. Brown's removal of his family's stored belongings with a construction refuse receptacle and by clearing the access to the front of the building. All was set on go, when the following began to happen in rapid succession:

Big Changes

In late April, an announcement was sent out by the Fairfield County Historical Society board that it was considering the possibility of dissolution. Federal recognition for 501 C-3 eleemosynary status stipulated that if such an organization was to cease to exist, its properties and funds would need to be dispersed in a proper manner, following legal guidelines. If a new board could not be recruited, the organization would need to consider the fate of the museum's collections.

Just as in the late 1960s, when the citizens of Fairfield realized the necessity of saving the Cath-

cart building and celebrating our heritage with the institution of the Fairfield County Museum, a large number of concerned citizens attended a meeting in the Winnsboro Women's Club with the remaining officers of the society.

A number of individuals volunteered to offer their services as board members, were elected, and an executive slate was drawn and elected from the group of 17. Currently the president is Ben Hornsby, vice president is Bubba Lyles, the secretary is Brenda Miller, and Ed Gates is the treasurer. Board members are Claudia Cathcart, Trev and Willie Sherrod, Frank Blair, Lisa Cathcart, Charles Montgomery, Betty Harden, and Pam and Donnie Laird.

Resultantly, the board has been meeting monthly and resolved to legally gift the museum collection to the County Museum and deed the lot of city property immediately behind the museum to the County. The final dissolution of the society's real estate ownership will allow for the Museum to move ahead with planning for future projects and expansion, while the official recognition of Museum ownership of the collection will facilitate procedural management concerns such as permanence of

status, insurance, and other legal issues. The gathering of interested individuals who now stepped up to revitalize the society was composed of original historical society participants who had helped to start the Friends of the Museum organization in 2006 to take up support for museum functions. The new board unanimously voted to merge the unincorporated mission and objectives of the Friends with the Fairfield County Historical Society. Members of the Friends will now become the membership of the



combined organization under the historical society's 501 C-3 tax-exempt status and name. The society will now roll all memberships to an annual renewal date of January. Friends who have joined or renewed their membership since the spring of 2010 will automatically roll into paid status for the year starting January, 2011. All other memberships will be due in January and a form is attached for updating information in this newsletter.

In the years from 2005-2008, a federally funded Institute for Museum and Library Services grant had allowed the Fairfield County Museum to develop several award-winning outreach programs such as the oral-history film project, the Fairfield County Midwives project, the relocation and rebuilding of the McCreight eighteenth-century log barn, and the extensive Native American Cultural exhibit. With the added staff positions the funds allowed, the physical setup of the museum evolved to feature changing exhibit displays in large glass cases interspersed with some of the antique furniture that had been collected through the years, while we stored a large number of items into safe light-free storage on the third floor. The Museum quickly assumed a reputation as a state-wide leader in exemplary programming among the ranks of small museums. The focus of our mission became enlarging the local audience and enfranchising previously unrepresented group histories into the museum's purview.

In these economic times, funding

for expanding active museum programming is tight and grants are not as easy to find. When the grant moneys ran out in late 2008, the additional staff positions that the museum needs to be able to continue such activities were terminated. The talented individuals who had been working with these programs have been able to continue volunteering in limited capacities, but have also had to move into other areas to pursue careers. Without the additional personnel on a regular schedule, it was recognized that the museum would have to rethink programming. The Director, advised by the so-



Image from Birthing a Community, award-winning exhibit on midwives in Fairfield County.

ciety's executive council, made an important decision to reset the Museum objectives and present its downstairs rooms as a period house setting, as the Museum had originally been presented. A member has donated the use of two commercial storage units where the now unneeded exhibit cases are being stored.

The reestablishment of an active historical society has virtually transformed the mission of the Fairfield County Museum overnight. The society has resumed its role as a support organization and the museum director has capitalized on their enthusiasm to utilize their talents as an active advisory council.



Grande Dame

The Historical Society then stepped in for the crowning move. Funds were secured from two previous community Downton Development Showcase House projects from a few years ago and an endowment has been set up in honor of our town's Nineteenth Century *grande dame* of arts and education, Catharine Ladd. Catharine and her artist husband George W. Ladd conducted the highly esteemed Fairfield Female Institute in the building which is now our museum. These funds will be used to refurbish and repair the interior of the museum to represent the mid 1800s era in which it saw its heyday. On Oct. 28, 2010, an elegant reception was held in the Museum to commemorate this endowment, the gifting of the back acreage, and the recent acquisition of several important collection items. Margaret Floyd found and donated a previously unknown photographic portrait of Catharine Ladd and the Coleman-Feaster-Mobley Family Reunion Association returned two important oil portraits of Feaster family members that were painted by George Ladd.



The Catharine Ladd Endowment was immediately put to use to refurbish and decorate the downstairs rooms. Interior decorators Marion Coleman and Roberta Ketchin donated their personal services while the painting contractors Chuck and Henry Hines painted all surfaces and restored the old heart pine floor with boiled linseed oil. Roberta is having new upholstery and curtains made and she and her husband Tom have donated a fabulous Persian hall rug to match a similar one purchased by the Endowment.

With such friends, who can have negative thoughts about our community not caring for our valuable historic assets?



Additional Changes

We are very excited to have the Genealogy Rooms back on the second floor of the Museum. Due to health reasons and the scarcity of operating funds, the organization that had been managing the collection as a research library in a separate location had closed it to public use. The Museum was enthusiastic to have the opportunity to reestablish the facility on the second floor of the museum where it had originally been operated by volunteers of the Daughters of the American Revolution organization.

The acquisition of this collection has been the largest factor necessitating a complete re-design of the museum's interior spaces and programming objectives. Two exhibit rooms have been converted to house a burgeoning collection of books, files, microfilm, office machines, and archives collections, in addition to tables and chairs and space for researchers. The space is tight and additional volunteers are very much needed, but in a very short amount of time the museum has been seeing numbers of daily genealogical researchers from places as far away as California and Ballymena, Ireland. This facility has the potential for being a focal point for economic development in Fairfield County. For every meal and hotel room paid for, jobs are created, retail facilities are shopped in, and county and municipal facilities are utilized.

Disaster Strikes

The Museum's air conditioning systems broke down in June, necessitating a re-engineering feat which left the second and third floors without cooling in record heat for two months. Volunteers braved the unhealthy conditions to move furniture and boxes of books from the Vanderhorst street location of the genealogy establishment. Then, in late July, disaster struck when a large, seemingly healthy, pecan tree fell squarely across the roof of the restored McCreight log barn, totally smashing everything, including the 250 year-old log walls that had been so carefully dismantled and rebuilt by volunteer labor over a four-year span. Two Columbia TV news stations covered the tragedy sending out appeals for concern and help. At present the County's property insurance company is working with con-

tractors to provide a plan for rebuilding the historic structure. Departmentalization with Fairfield County has assured the Museum of continued benefits like this.



As for me...

Working for the Museum this year has provided me with a plethora of experiences, almost like trying to ride a wild horse in a wide open space. Some of my most fervent hopes for the establishment have been realized, where others have been nearly dashed. Some projects, such as the moving of the Hawthorne-Brown house, have had to be put to simmer on a back burner for the moment, but with your continued support and interest in the museum as members of the Fairfield County Historical Society, together we will tame the wild horse!

Christmas Open House

By now, members have gotten their mailed announcements about our December 12 Christmas Open House from 4 to 7 PM. This year, we decided to offer a special Sunday-only event, allowing the following week to display the county garden clubs' traditional live decorations for visitors to savor the old fashioned Christmas atmosphere in the newly refurbished rooms. At the end of the week there will be a drawing for a copy of Julian Stevenson Bolick's illustrated **Fairfield Sketchbook**.





Candlelight Christmas Open House

At

The Fairfield County Museum

231 S. Congress Street -- Winnsboro, South Carolina

Sunday, December 12, 2010

4:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Opening Reception

Enjoy live music, refreshments and seasonal decorations by local garden clubs.

December 13-17, 2010

10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Tour the museum beautifully dressed for the
Holiday Season

Free Admission

Drawing for a copy of The Fairfield Sketchbook



Fairfield County
Museum

231 S. Congress St.
POB 6
Winnsboro, SC, 29180
Phone: 803-635-9811

fairfieldmus@truvista.net
<http://fairfieldsc.com/secondary.aspx?pageID=125>



**Refurbishments
in the parlor**

Individual Member (1 yr)	\$15
Family (1 yr) <i>Immediate Family Members Only</i>	\$20
Corporate	\$125

RENEWALS: Please list changes only below

REMEMBER: List your email address to help save

<p><i>Changes:</i></p>
<p>Category and Amount Included:</p>

Yes! I would Like to Become a Member!

Send to
FCHS
POB 6
Winnsboro, SC 29180

Name:
Address:
Telephones:
Email:
Category and Amount Included:
Additional donation: