

**Mecklenburg Historical Association Docents**

*Spreading Knowledge of our History like the Down of a Thistle*

<http://www.meckdec.org/>



September, October 2020  
Volume 26, Number 4

Look Inside This Issue

A History Lesson – The Sugar Creek War

The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment

MHA Docent Programs on ZOOM:

Jim Williams tells of the Davidsons of Rural Hill,

Lynn Mintzer on Finding Your Ancestors – in Virginia

History News on Hart Square, Francis Marion and Archeology

### *The Sugar Creek War*

In 1764, twelve years before the American Revolution, a Gentleman named Henry Eustace McCulloh came into Mecklenburg County. He informed the settlers here that the land they lived on did not belong to them and they would have to buy it from him. He was representing Lord Selwyn who held a grant from the King for 100,000 acres (156 square miles) of land which today makes up a large part of central Charlotte, NC.

Early the next year as McCulloh was surveying the land his party was attacked by some of these settlers with threats and violence. In a letter to a friend, McCulloh referred to this altercations as “The War on Sugar Creek,” and the name stuck.

The leader of these men was Thomas Polk, a founder of Mecklenburg County. McCulloh went to the Royal Governor, the Assembly and the county courts to have these men ejected from their lands and thrown in jail. By the end of 1765 the issues had been resolved and in the end they all paid Henry Eustace McCulloh for their land. Polk and some friends bought 360 acres from McCulloh as a location for the county courthouse and for the city of Charlotte.

Note: Some of the quotes that follow are a little raw. They are all direct transcriptions of the original letters in the UNC Southern Collection.

#### **Settling a New Land**

Beginning in 1750, only fourteen years before our story, new settlers had began moving into the Carolina Piedmont – The Back Country. They found that the land between the Yadkin and Catawba Rivers was a lush savannah, easy to cultivate and very fertile. They purchased land grants from the King, settled and built their farms.

What they did not know was that the King had previously granted a part of this land to others. Because the area was completely unsettled, and had never been explored, much less measured and marked out, no one knew exactly where these old land grants lay.

One of these earlier grants was owned by Lord Selwyn who had never been to America and had no idea where his land lay. The settlers did not know that the land they had bought in the middle of Mecklenburg County was on land previously granted to Selwyn.

### **Henry McCulloh Arrives**

Henry Eustace McCulloh came to North Carolina from England with proof of a number of grants in Orange, Rowan and other counties. He cultivated the powerful men in these areas, set a low price for the land and succeeded in getting the settlers to pay again for the land.

But when he started to survey and sell the land of Lord Selwyn in Mecklenburg he found a very different situation. This area had been settled by the Scots-Irish who were a proud and thrifty people. McCulloh cultivated the numerous Alexander clan that lived in the area but did not know that he especially needed Thomas Polk on his side. This was a major oversight because Polk was a popular leader with lots of relatives. An intelligent and ambitious man who could, and did, cause trouble.

Young McCulloh was in his mid-twenties, well educated and very much of a rake. In a letter to his friend, Edmund Fanning in Hillsboro, he said that he cared about only two things: getting money and getting women. Apparently he had a woman everywhere he went, whether in Wilmington, New Bern, Rowan or Mecklenburg. Another time, writing from eastern NC, he said "Though I lead here a life of absolute Ease and Freedom, I long after the Flesh and the Proc of the Western regions." Proc refers to Proclamation Money, the local currency.

Another time, writing from the back country, he said that he was working hard to sell land to settlers, but "Of nights, I follow Good King David's Example. Solace myself in the flesh way; (I can't make up of the scripture phrase, & say that I have a Virgin to lay to my Bosom) mine is an improved one."

One of the men McCulloh appointed as a land agent was John Frohock. It was a good selection. Frohock was the Rowan County surveyor, commissioner of the village of Salisbury, Justice of the Peace, Colonel of the Militia, deputy receiver of quitrents, clerk of the county court, clerk of the Salisbury District Superior court and member of the Assembly. He was a powerful man. He was also a rich man. Holding all of these offices at the same time, he received many fees from them.

At that time Mecklenburg County included what are now Union and Cabarrus counties plus all of the land on the west side of the Catawba River – to the Blue Ridge Mountains. The total population in all of that was less than a thousand people.

When he came into Mecklenburg in 1764 Henry Eustace McCulloh expected some resistance so he accompanied himself with "a number of his Friends, Armed." He surveyed the land in June, July and August and did not encounter any serious problems, although he was threatened and expected to be attacked. Some of the settlers told him directly that they would not buy land from him. Against these he started civil ejectment procedures to remove them from the land.

When he had finished surveying the land McCulloh met with some of the settlers and asked them to appoint commissioners to meet with him and agree on a price for the individual parcels of land. Four commissioners were appointed, including Thomas Polk. They met and negotiated with him and finally agreed to terms which the commissioners thought would be acceptable to the settlers. This called for a price of £8 to £12 Sterling per 100 acres and, among other terms, allowed them to lay off their own lands to their best advantage and gave them three years to change their mind and get their money back,. McCulloh put these terms in writing and departed, saying that he would return in January to lay off the individual parcels of land.

## The War on Sugar Creek

In February 1765 he returned to Mecklenburg to lay off the parcels. He was in the Rocky River district in the east part of Mecklenburg when, on March 4, he learned that a group had formed to oppose him. Very early the next day, at the house of Capt. Abraham Alexander on Sugar Creek, he found 150 persons assembled. (This is where Charlotte Country Club is today.) He showing them a copy of Mr. Selwyn's Land Grant, and the agreement he had signed with the commissioners the previous year. They adamantly refused his terms and McCulloh lost his temper. He threatened them with dire consequences, saying that they had "joined themselves together in an illegal Bond, under the forfeiture of all they possessed in the World."

The group went away to consider things. One hour later McCulloh went among them. They surrounded him and offered him £10 Proclamation money per hundred acres, which he rejected more for the offensive way it was offered than for the price itself.

Proclamation money was issued by the Colony and was worth about 30% less than pounds sterling. £10 Proclamation was equal to about £7 Sterling, less than what he had agreed to. They showed him a paper signed by 143 persons, saying that they would agree to a price of £10 to £12 proclamation per hundred acres and if McCulloh did not accept it, they would not let him survey the land or let any Sheriff serve process on them in behalf of Mr. Selwyn.

McCulloh argued with them hotly and said that he would be back to survey the next day. They warned him "that if he did, the best usage he should expect to meet with, would be to be tied Neck and heels and be carried over the Yadkin, and that he might think himself happy if he got off so." McCulloh continued to defy them and told them the time and place he intended to survey the next day.

Apparently in the heat of the argument McCulloh called the settlers "a parcel of blockheads" and slandered former N. C. Governor Dobbs in some way. At this point in the argument Thomas Polk, the leader of the mob who had been trying to work out a reasonable solution, changed his mind and said that no one would ever allow McCulloh to survey nor would they purchase land from Selwyn or allow anyone else to do so.

The next day, Wednesday, March 6th, McCulloh woke to find the settlers gathered outside his door. By 9 o'clock there were more than 100 armed men. Nonetheless, he proceeded to the plantation of James Norris to lay out his land, and the mob followed him.

McCulloh harangued the crowd, declared his legal rights to do the surveying, commanded them in the name of the King to disperse and then started to lay out the land. The mob seized his surveying chain and broke it in several pieces. Thomas Polk himself took the compass off the staff; he knew that putting hands on another man's compass was a great insult. Polk then offered £15 Proc per 100 acres. McCulloh agreed to think it over and give them an answer in writing the next day. This most recent offer was equal to £10½ Sterling, near the high end of what McCulloh had originally offered.

The next day, McCulloh issued a written refusal of the terms offered by Thomas Polk and the settlers. Although this price was higher than any they had previously discussed, it seems that McCulloh had made up his mind not to deal with the mob under any condition and to see them all in jail, especially Thomas Polk.

McCulloh continued in Mecklenburg County, staying with friends and surveying the property of those who would buy from him. As for the others, he filed ejectment procedures on the property holders, and district court proceedings against the leaders. Against Thomas Polk in particular he filed a civil suits for ejectment from his lands plus damages of £1,000, and began to work to get him stripped of his position as Justice of the Peace.

One of the settlers in the area, John Polk, brother of Thomas Polk, sent a complaint to the Royal Governor of North Carolina, William Tryon. Governor Tryon immediately sent a letter to McCulloh telling him of the complaint and

ordering him not to eject any more settlers until they could meet and discuss it at the next Assembly meeting, in May. The Governor felt that they could surely come to some arrangement agreeable to both sides.

Henry Eustace McCulloh replied to the complaint, writing out a long answer telling the whole story from his point of view. Unfortunately the original complaint from John Polk has been lost and we have only McCulloh's side of the story.

A second incident occurred on May 7th. In a letter to Fanning McCulloh wrote "Dear Ned, More adventures yet – (Shall not the war of Sugar Creek be handed down to posterity?)" The letter is full of dashes and half sentences, literary illusions and phrases such as *as a pack of Unmannerly Sons of Bitches*, and *Kill me they say & and no man will come after me*.

It tells the story of an attack on a surveying party by 12 men, their faces blacked, armed with guns and clubs. McCulloh was not there, having other business that day. John Frohock was leading the survey party and was struck in the nose and mouth. Abraham Alexander was stripped to the waist and whipped. Jimmy Alexander was hit on the head, cracking his skull, and cousin Billy Alexander was severely beaten.

In the Salisbury District Court of September 1765 McCulloh, Frohock and others brought charges of Riot against 45 men of Mecklenburg in addition to the civil suits against Thomas Polk and others. These were very serious charges which would be the ruin of these backcountry settlers. The charges were continued until the next court in March 1766.

But then a very strange thing happened. The District Court was suspended for an indeterminate period of time and all of these charges were dropped. This had nothing to do with the actions of the settlers or with Henry Eustace McCulloh. Parliament had passed a law that had the colonies in an uproar.

### **The Stamp Act**

In 1765 the British Parliament, in an attempt to raise money to pay for the Seven Years War, called here the French and Indian War, sought to tax the colonies. They passed a new law which became known as the Stamp Act. It requiring that, in the colonies, all official actions were to be written on stamped paper imported from England. In effect this was a tax on all official acts including land grants, deeds, law suits and the importing of any kind of goods. The cost of these papers was minimal but the act had been imposed by Parliament without the consent of the colonies and was considered to be "taxation without representation."

Judge Maurice Moore was the Associate Justice for the Western District Court in Salisbury. He was outspoken in his opposition to the Stamp Act and Governor Tryon suspended him from all official duties. This caused the Salisbury Court to be closed and all charges to be dismissed.

Very soon thereafter McCulloh and the settlers came to an agreement on a price for the land. McCulloh appointed his friends Fanning and Frohock, and his new friend Thomas Polk as agents to survey the parcels of land and collect the payments from the Sugar Creek settlers. This was done very peaceably without further troubles.

McCulloh returned to England in 1767 but his agents continued to sell land in North Carolina right up to the American Revolution. At that point the land became the property of the State of North Carolina, all powers of the King and Parliament were ended, and McCulloh's agents could no longer sell the land.

Henry Eustace McCulloh lost his fortune and spent the rest of his life trying to get it back. He died in England, in an asylum, in 1810.

Jim Williams

## *100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment*

By Janet Dyer

Amendment XIX  
(Ratified August 18, 1920)

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Several years ago in a used bookstore, I discovered a book of poetry by Emma Ingold Bost who lived in Hickory, NC. Her book, *Songs in Many Keys*, was published in 1920. Her poems cover a range of topics including World War I, the 1918 influenza epidemic, religion, and the joy and freedom of automobiles.

At least two of her poems refer to women's suffrage. As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, I thought it would be interesting to share the thoughts of a woman who actually participated in the fight for women's right to vote.

In her 1918 poem, "The Changes of a Century", George Washington travels to the future US and is given a tour of modern America (circa 1918) by his daughter, Columbia. He is amazed by airplanes, telephones, trains and movies and a nation in midst of a world war. He also witnesses a suffragist parade.

If at a Suffragists parade he'd ask "Why to  
such measures driven?"

Her answer: "They but seek today the heritage  
you should have given."

In her 1920 poem, "At Last – The Vote," Bost celebrates the ratification of the 19th Amendment and eagerly anticipates voting for the first time in the 1920 presidential election.

### At Last – The Vote

Come Sarah, Maude, Elizabeth,  
Jane, Mary, Kate and Sue –  
Rose, Margaret, Annie, Amy,  
Belle, Gertrude, Helen, and Lou –  
Come all! In nineteen twenty  
We'll sound a ringing note,  
Though many years in coming,  
This year we go to vote!

For weeks we've been "instructed"  
By some well blessed with sense,  
And some who only lately  
Sat uncertain on the fence,  
And some who had fought suffrage  
Stood up, (and this is true),  
To tell us ignorant women  
Just what we ought to do.

But while we see the humor,  
And understand the play,  
We'll rise to the occasion  
And greet the glorious day.  
So come, my fellow citizens,  
A cheer from every throat -  
The second of November  
We go to cast our vote!

October 24th, 1920.

### *From the Chairman*

It feels like it has been a year since we met in the spring. Members of the Docent Board have communicated with the docent membership to maintain contact with you. This is the first autumn message. You will read elsewhere in The Dandelion about our plans for the remainder of the year.

The Coronavirus quarantine has confined most of us to our homes depriving us of opportunities to be with relatives and friends and from performing our usual activities. Fortunately, we have made the moments pleasant by sending/receiving pictures and texts or through using social media. All types of puzzles have challenged us. Some of us have become collectors of recipes. Gardens have flourished; interiors of houses have been transformed by nascent decorators. One group of which I am a member created a series of quizzes related to sculpture, paintings, and artists. MHA members have been the fortunate recipients of unexpected research on regional topics contributed by Jim Williams. I extend to Jim our gratitude for this addition to the Events Newsletter.

The pandemic continues to influence what we do and how we do it. The Docent Board discussed avenues for holding safe meetings this autumn. We explored ideas, then settled upon the plan of meeting virtually when Valerie Jones offered to be our hostess on ZOOM. Appreciatively, we accepted her offer. We scheduled a ZOOM practice for docent membership for August 18. With a successful practice meeting we might anticipate meeting successfully on Tuesday, September 1 at 10:30 am.

Gradual, limited openings have occurred at our cultural institutions. Your financial support would be welcomed by them.

Please keep in contact with each other and with the Board members. Follow health guidelines. Stay occupied with familiar and new activities. I look forward to seeing you on ZOOM.

Barbara Jackson

### *Newsletter Deadline*

The deadline for the November-December Dandelion will be Tuesday, October 6. Send articles to Jim Williams at [mhadandelion@mindspring.com](mailto:mhadandelion@mindspring.com)

## *MHA Docent Programs*

### *The Davidson Family of Rural Hill, North Carolina Three Generations on a Piedmont Plantation*

Zoom Meeting Tuesday, September 1. Business meeting at 10:30, program at 11 am.

In this presentation Jim Williams will talk about the recent book written by Jim and his late wife Ann and published by McFarland. He will recount their extensive research into the Major John Davidson family and tell a few behind-the-scene stories about the writing of the book, dealing with the publisher and about the first three generations at Rural Hill.

For this Zoom event MHA Docents will receive an email from the coordinator Valerie Jones telling them how to attend. The general public is invited to attend by sending an email, well in advance, to Valerie at [vvjones@carolina.rr.com](mailto:vvjones@carolina.rr.com) and she will send the instruction.

John Davidson came to the North Carolina back country circa 1751 as a young man, with his sister and widowed mother. Typical of Scots-Irish settlers, they arrived with little more than basic farming tools, determined to make it on their own terms. Davidson worked hard, prospered, married well and built a plantation on the Catawba River he called Rural Hill.

The Davidson's were loyal British citizens who paid their taxes and participated in colonial government. When the Crown's overbearing authority interfered, independence became paramount and Davidson and his neighbors became soldiers in the Revolutionary War.

After the war Davidson managed his plantation, created shad fisheries, helped develop the local iron industry with his sons-in-law and was an early planter of cotton. His sons and grandsons, along with their slave families, continuously increased and improved the acreage and became early practitioners of scientific farming.

Drawing on public documents, family papers and slave records, this history describes how a fiercely independent family grew their lands and fortunes into a lasting legacy.

### **Finding Your Ancestors – in Virginia**

Zoom Meeting Tuesday, October 6. Business meeting at 10:30, program at 11 am.

Lynn Mintzer will tell us how her ancestors settled in Stafford VA in the late 1600s. In May she traveled to Virginia to find the Norman Family cemetery. "It was an amazing experience to see their tombstones dating back to the 1700's to early 1800s."

Lynn will share her experiences of researching and locating her ancestor's cemetery and the surprise that she never expected to find.

For this Zoom event MHA Docents will receive an email from the coordinator Valerie Jones telling them how to attend. The general public is invited to attend by sending an email, well in advance, to Valerie at [vvjones@carolina.rr.com](mailto:vvjones@carolina.rr.com) and she will send the instruction.

## *MHA Meeting*

Due to the ongoing crisis the MHA Meeting, scheduled for September 14, has been canceled. News of the final meeting of the year, scheduled for November 16 will be announced in the November-December Dandelion and in the MHA Weekly Notes.





## MHA Dues

It is not too early to pay your Mecklenburg Historical Association Dues for 2021; our fiscal year runs from Jan 1 to Dec 31. This one payment entitles you to be a member of MHA as well as an MHA Docent. If you are not sure whether you have already paid for this year, send an email to [mhadandelion@mindspring.com](mailto:mhadandelion@mindspring.com) and we will check and let you know. Otherwise select a membership level from the list below.

If you are an MHA member, or would like to become one, and NOT an MHA docent, use the form below, make your check payable to Mecklenburg Historical Association, and send it to:

Mecklenburg Historical Association  
P. O. Box 35032  
Charlotte, NC 28235

If you are an MHA Docent member, or would like to become one, make your check payable to the MHA Docents and mail it with the form below to Valerie Jones.

MHA Docents  
4700 Coronado Drive  
Charlotte, NC 28212

### Levels of MHA Membership

	Single	Couple
General	\$30.00	\$50.00
Senior (60+)	\$15.00	\$25.00
Patron	\$60.00	\$100.00
Life (single payment)	\$300.00	\$500.00
Student	free	n/a

### MHA Membership Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please check one or more as appropriate

General \_\_\_\_\_ Senior \_\_\_\_\_  
MHA Docent \_\_\_\_\_ North Branch MHA \_\_\_\_\_  
Patron \_\_\_\_\_ Life \_\_\_\_\_

Please send my MHA Newsletter by:

Email \_\_\_\_\_  
US Mail \_\_\_\_\_

If you have access to email, we would prefer to send the newsletter to you that way.  
This saves considerable time, effort and expense for the MHA.



## *History News*

### **Hart Square. October 24**

The 35th Annual Festival will go on this year despite the COVID 19 and with all of the safety measures. Hart Square founder, Dr. Bob Hart died in March and it was his wish, and that of his wife Becky. that the festival continue. It is now being run by their granddaughter Rebecca Hart.

For more than thirty years, Dr. Robert Hart of Hickory has rescued and restored 19th century life in the Carolinas, recreating an entire village, Hart Square – the largest collection of original historic log buildings in the United States. For one day each year – on the fourth Saturday in October, (October 24th this year) – this restoration project is open to the public. Dating from 1782 to 1873, the seventy log structures—chapels, barns, houses, shops, and more—are all furnished, and hundreds of volunteer artisans demonstrate period techniques such as flax breaking and hackling, spinning, weaving, open-hearth cooking, broom and shoe making, bookbinding, shingle riving, wheel wrighting, tin smithing and moonshining. The proceeds from this event go to the non-profit Hart Square Foundation which is dedicated to the preservation and maintenance of Hart Square Village.

Advanced tickets are required and will sell out early. Go to the Hart Square web site at <https://hartsquare.com/shop/>. The ticket cost is \$45.00 per person. If the festival must be canceled due to N.C. regulations, guests will have the option to refund their tickets, donate to Hart Square Foundation, or credit the ticket to next year's event.

Following State regulations, these safety measures will be followed:

- Tickets will be limited to 50 percent of usual capacity.
- No more than ten persons in any cabin.
- Food vendors will have a "Temporary Food Service" certificate and an inspection.

### **Francis Marion Symposium.**

Friday and Saturday October 23 and 24.

F. E. DuBose Campus, Central Carolina Technical College, I-95, Exit 122, Manning, S, C.  
“Explore the Rev. War Southern Campaign with Marion”  
"Times of Francis Marion, 1732-1795"

Immerse yourself in Francis Marion's world and the significance of the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution with presentations by history professionals & history buffs. \$95.00.

For more details: [www.francismarionsymposium.com](http://www.francismarionsymposium.com) 803-478-2645 or [gcsommers@ftc-i.net](mailto:gcsommers@ftc-i.net)

### **Archaeological Institute of America, Central Carolinas Chapter Speaker Series: Fall 2020, Free and Open to the Public at 7:30 pm**

This fall's programs will be webinars presented via Zoom. More details will be forthcoming as we work out the technology. Check out weekly email messages from the MHA as we get closer to the time.

**Tuesday, September 15: Dr. David Cranford, NC Office of State Archaeology:**

**“Resilience after Epidemic: The Archaeology of Catawba Households in the Late 18th Century.”**

This very appropriate presentation in this time of pandemic focuses on the survival of the Catawba Nation after a major smallpox epidemic in 1759-1760 and the impacts of the American Revolution.

**Tuesday, October 20: Dr. Allison Sterrett-Krause, College of Charleston:  
“Looking at Glass in the Ancient Mediterranean.”**

Dr. Sterrett-Krause will speak about the role and function of glass objects – drinking cups, lamps, gaming pieces, and glass windows – in the Roman world from about the first century B.C.E. through the 6<sup>th</sup> century C.E.

**Tuesday, November 17: Dr. Maxime Lamoureux-St. Hilaire, Davidson College:  
“The Looting and Salvage of a Hieroglyphic Staircase in the Palace of La Corona, Guatemala.”**

Based on his own excavation experience in Guatemala, Dr. Lamoureux-St. Hilaire he will speak about a major looted monument and reflect upon related ethical issues for scholars and museums.

**Andrew Jackson State Park**

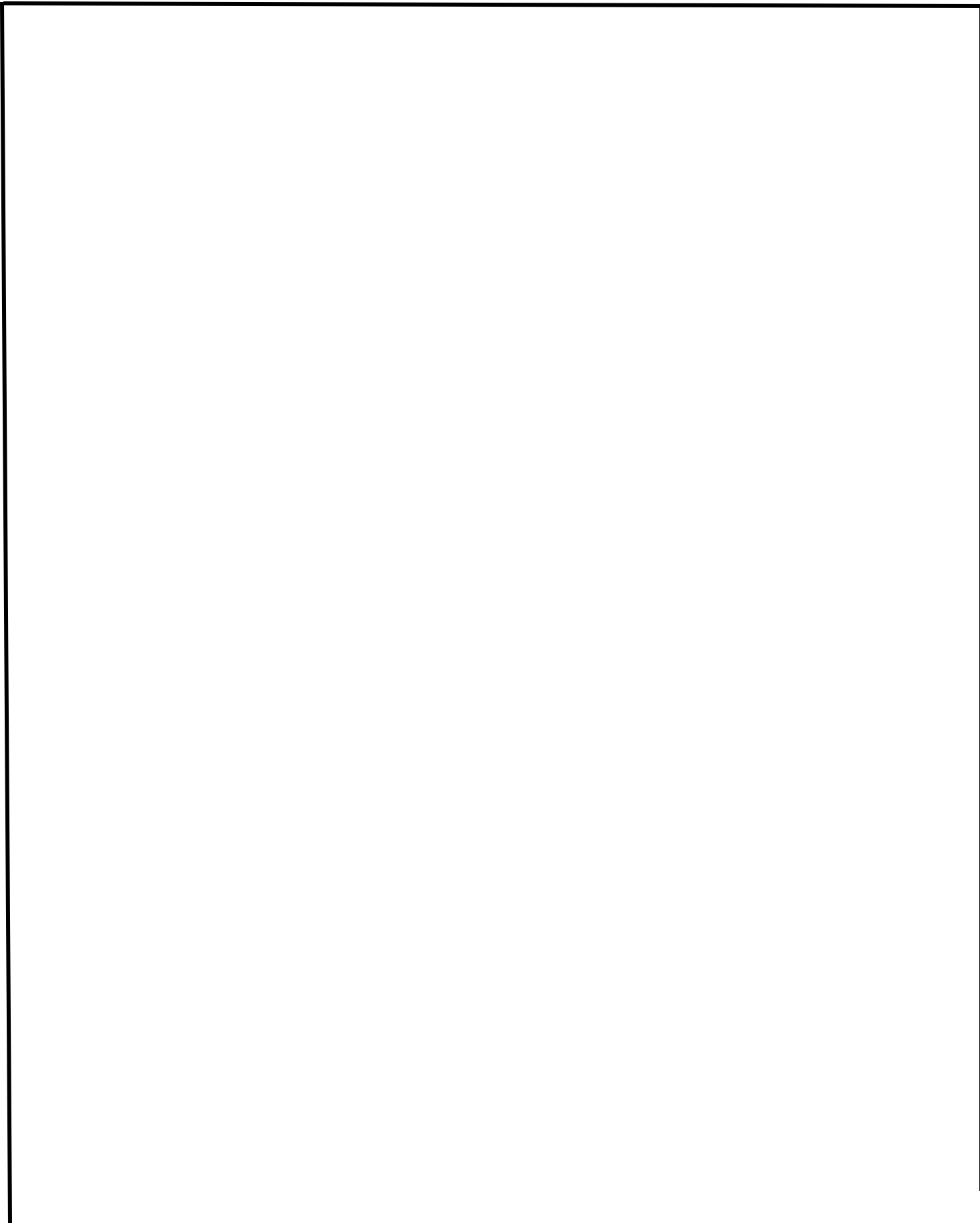
The grounds are open from 9 am to 9 pm daily. The Little Schoolhouse is closed for 2020. The museum is open on Monday through Friday from 11 am to noon and 2 to 3 pm. On Saturday and Sunday from 11 am to noon and 1 to 5 pm. Visitors over the age of two are required to wear masks in the museum and park restrooms. Both visitors and staff are asked to practice social distancing. Unfortunately, all scheduled programming is cancelled for the remainder of 2020.

Live internet events and videos can be found <https://www.facebook.com/SC.State.Parks/>

*The History Calendar*

All historic sites remain closed and all events have been canceled except of remote events on ZOOM and FaceBook.

Site	Status
All Sites	All sites are physically closed except as noted below. Many have a variety of on-line Zoom and/or FaceBook events. Check their web sites for information.
Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County	Open for pick-up of holds only.
President James K, Polk State Historic Site	Grounds only open, Monday through Saturday, 9 am to 5 pm for self-guided tours. Interpretive talks Saturdays at 10 am.
Latta Plantation	Grounds, outbuildings, garden, and animals open for self-guided tours, Wednesdays-Saturdays 10 am to 4:30 pm, Sundays 1 to 4:30 pm.
The Native American Studies Center at USC Lancaster	The site is closed for the rest of the year, but will begin a monthly virtual Lunch and Learn program.
Historic Rosedale Plantation	Haunted History Tours, August 28 and September 25 at 6:30 and 8 pm. For more information and reservations, go to <a href="https://historicrosedale.org">https://historicrosedale.org</a> The Rosedale Gardens and Grounds are open Tuesdays through Fridays from 11 am to 2 pm by phone reservation at 704-335-0325.



MHA Docents  
Jim Williams  
1601 South Wendover Road  
Charlotte, NC 28211