

**Mecklenburg Historical Association Docents**

*Promoting Local History through Education and Research*



January/February, 2013  
Volume 19, Number 1

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*An Evening with Thomas Jefferson*



On the evening of Thursday, February 21<sup>st</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Third President of the United States and author of the Declaration of Independence will visit us here in Charlotte, in the person of Bill Barker. This event is sponsored by the Mecklenburg Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), and is open to the public. The venue will be a private dinner at the Executive Park Hilton on Westpark Drive at 6 pm and will cost \$24.00 per person. If you want to attend mail you check to Tom Phlegar, 7324 Marlbrook Drive, Charlotte, NC 28212-4770. The deadline is February 13<sup>th</sup>, but you should send in your payment soon, as seating is limited and this event is sure to sell out early. Everyone who has authentic 18<sup>th</sup> century clothing is invited to appear in that clothing and to engage Mr. Jefferson in conversation.

If you have visited Colonial Williamsburg you may have seen Mr. Jefferson on the street or in one of Bill Barker's personal appearances. If you are extremely fortunate, you may have engaged him in conversation. Mr. Barker has been interpreting the character of

Mr. Jefferson for over 20 years and does an excellent job. He has researched nearly everything written by or about Mr. Jefferson to grasp every nuance of the man's personality. When dressed as Jefferson, as he is during most waking hours, he is Jefferson and will not come out of character. (It would not be polite to ask him to do so.)

Mr. Barker is the official Thomas Jefferson interpreter for Colonial Williamsburg and we are most fortunate to be able to have him here in Charlotte. This is truly a once-in-a-lifetime occasion. For more information on Mr. Barker, see <http://www.thethomasjefferson.com>

Jim Williams



### *From the Chairman*

As 2012 closes I use this opportunity to thank Audrey Mellichamp and her committee for the outstanding programs and projects of the past two years.

The slate is clean. Not only is a new year beginning, but it is also a new opportunity to work with the MHA docents. The slate is clean and the calendar is waiting to be filled each month with interesting people, places, and events which enlighten us with facts about the past and challenges for the present. The slate is clean and I encourage you to join me in increasing membership in MHA, in developing in Charlotte-Mecklenburg a higher awareness of the history community, and in continuing to foster the love of history and the sharing of our knowledge. Happy New Year!

Barbara McCray Jackson

### *Newsletter Deadline*

The deadline for the March/April issue of the Dandelion is February 13<sup>th</sup>. We appreciate the articles you send about history, and the notices of events at local history sites. Send your news to Ann and Jim Williams at 1601 S Wendover Road, Charlotte, NC 28211, or email [mhadandelion@mindspring.com](mailto:mhadandelion@mindspring.com).

### *MHA Docent Programs*

**Tuesday, January 8, 2013  
Of Quilts and Sabers**

Because our regular meeting time falls on New Year's Day, we will meet on **Tuesday, January 8<sup>th</sup> at Sugaw Creek Presbyterian Church in the large classroom at the junction of the hallways that join the Fellowship Hall and the church office.** Please enter through the courtyard door or the door to the office wing; another group will be using the Fellowship Hall that morning. Our officers will be installed during the business meeting. Refreshments at 9:30, business meeting at 10, program at 11. Visitors are welcome.

Last year we had the opportunity to see Donald Devet's video production of *Thunder in Carolina*. It was produced for WTVI and told the story of the earliest settlers of the piedmont. *Of Quilts and Sabers* was also produced by Devet, and follows these settlers through the Revolutionary War in the Carolinas. Both films were produced about 1980. We enjoyed Devet's first film, but there were many comments about how much more we have learned about our history in the past thirty-odd years, especially about what our ancestors wore – or didn't wear. Come join us to watch *Of Quilts and Sabers*, and afterwards we'll discuss the film; expect a lively conversation.

**Tuesday, February 5, 2013  
It Ain't Necessarily So – Rewriting Site History Using Primary Sources**

The meeting will be held in the Fellowship hall of Sugaw Creek Presbyterian Church. Refreshments at 9:30 am, business meeting at 10, program at 11. Visitors are welcome.

In the last issue of the Dandelion Jim and I wrote about the research we did for Rural Hill on the first three generations of the Davidson family who lived there. The site has photocopies of a vast array of primary family papers, including letters and a twenty-year farm journal thick with wonderful detail. They also have an assortment of family stories – secondary sources that cannot always be documented. We consulted early histories along with wills, estate papers, court records, census records, etc., and used all of these sources to produce a unified narrative to assist the site in interpreting their history and developing educational programs. We discovered much that was new, debunked several very persistent family myths, and were tantalized by some things will probably never be known for sure. It was a fascinating study that fleshed out the Davidson family and revealed much about

antebellum Mecklenburg County. At the February meeting we will share some of our findings – especially the surprises – and tell of our journey through the research process. We’ll illustrate the talk with slides.

We have been invited to present a program on the Davidson research for the regional ALHFAM conference in late February in Virginia and at the national ALHFAM conference in Ohio in June. We hope that you can attend this “premiere” and offer us your comments and suggestions for improvement.

Ann Williams

## *Would You Like to Be an MHA Docent?*

If you are not an MHA Docent, and enjoy learning and sharing history, we would love to have you join us! Through this newsletter you have learned about our outstanding programs on the first Tuesday morning of each month (September through June) and many of our activities. But at our business meetings you will learn much more about activities we participate in, occasional field trips, and regional events. Docents are not required to volunteer at local historic sites or participate in specific events, but are encouraged to do so. As a docent we can help you get “costumed” if you like, expand your knowledge, and truly experience hands-on history. Did we mention food, picnics, field trips and great camaraderie? As a bonus to us, new enthusiastic docents are bound to enhance our group. If this interests you, simply pay your dues to our docent treasurer (see article below) and write “MHA Docent” on your check’s memo line.

## *MHA Docent Dues*

Through our parent organization, the Mecklenburg Historical Association, we have already been encouraged to begin paying our 2013 dues, and some of you (CONGRATULATIONS!) have already done so. But for the rest of you, it is now time to pay your MHA Docent dues. As a committee of the MHA we pay our dues to that parent organization. But, to facilitate *our* record keeping, the docent board asks that you pay your dues *through* the docents. The docent treasurer then will remit one large check, along with a detail sheet listing who has paid dues and at what level, to the MHA treasurer. **So please do not send your dues directly to MHA as this makes it difficult to determine for our records if your dues have been paid.**

Please make your **checks payable to MHA DOCENTS** (we also accept cash!) and give them to Valerie Jones, your docent treasurer. If you cannot be at the monthly meetings, mail your check to Valerie at 4700 Coronado Drive, Charlotte 28212. And if you have any questions, email her at [vyjones@carolina.rr.com](mailto:vyjones@carolina.rr.com) or call at 704-567-0599.

### Levels of MHA Membership

	<u>Single</u>	<u>Couple</u>
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

PLEASE NOTE: If you would like to be a member of MHA only, please make your check payable to *Mecklenburg Historical Association* and send it to the MHA Treasurer at

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

## Weather Cancellation Policy

The MHA Docents follow the Charlotte Mecklenburg School System in canceling meetings due to foul weather. When weather threatens, listen for their announcement; if school is canceled we will not meet. If our meeting place is closed, even though the schools are open, you will be notified by our email and telephone tree.

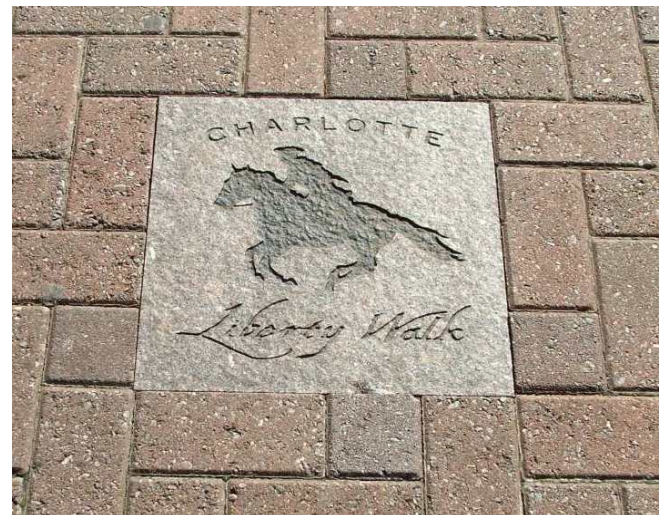
## Announcing the Charlotte Liberty Walk



Most of these historic markers have been there for a long time, many of them placed by Mary Kratt years ago. People have walked right by without seeing them or stopping to read them. These markers and four new ones are now tied together by scores of granite pavers making a path to follow connecting all of the Liberty Walk. This is a grand way to introduce visitors to our history as well as reminding us how very important our history has been.

There is now a new historical attraction in the uptown area. A joint project of the May 20<sup>th</sup> Society and your Mecklenburg Historical Association, the Charlotte Liberty Walk is a collection of 15 historic markers telling the history of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County during the American Revolution. Granite pavers placed every thirty feet in the sidewalk will guide you along the walk.

You can read about the CLW and see the videos at <http://www.charlottelibertywalk.com>, view the app on your iPhone or iPad, or pick up a brochure that tells the whole story at the Charlotte Visitors Info Center on South Tryon at MLK Blvd.





## *David Brearley (1745-1790) U.S. Constitution Signer*

Barbara Prince, president of Charlotte's Governor John Archdale chapter of the Colonial Dames, visited the restored Georgian brick home of her ancestors this past summer. The land, called Spring Grove, was purchased by her 10<sup>th</sup> generation grandfather John Brearley in 1695. John's grandson David Brearley lived in the home located off the Lawrenceville Pike in Lawrenceville, New Jersey. It is through this family that she traced her paternal line to qualify for membership in the Colonial Dames. Barbara submitted the following account of David Brearley and his brother Joseph during the Revolutionary War.

In 1886, W.H. Brearley, wrote a family genealogy, tracing the family back 10 generations to John Brearley. This is how I know the story of my two ancestral cousins, David and his brother Joseph who lived on Spring Grove farm. Both served during the Revolutionary War and were officers of the Continental Army and the First Hunterdon Militia. Spring Grove Farm fed the officers at great peril from their Tory neighbors.

Joseph Brearley was an aid to General George Washington and received no compensation for his service. His daughter Louise supplied the following information about her father Joseph giving every bushel of grain that could be spared to supply the troops. Joseph is known to be overheard saying, "Father, I believe you grudge every piece of meat I take from the casks. Remember how hungry the boys must be in the camp." During David and Joseph's lifetime Spring Grove Farm, near Washington's Crossing on the Delaware, was a general headquarters for the Revolutionary Army Officers. After the War Joseph became Brigadier General of the Militia. The concept of the militia has continued and is known today as the National Guard.

David Brearley as a lawyer avidly believed in the Revolutionary cause. The British arrested him for high treason, but a group of patriots freed him from being hanged by the neck. He took part in the convention in 1776 that drew up the New Jersey State Constitution. At 42 years of age, he participated in the United States Constitutional Convention held in Philadelphia and was a New Jersey Signer of the Constitution in 1788. He also served as a presidential elector for George Washington in 1789. That same year, President George Washington appointed him as a federal district judge. David Brearley served in that capacity until his death. He is buried in the cemetery of Saint Michael's Church, the 1703 founding parish of the Episcopal Diocese, located in Trenton, New Jersey.

Barbara Prince

## *Site New – Historic Latta Plantation*



Meet Oreo, the newest addition to Latta's living history farm. For decades, visitors were greeted by a miniature donkey named Chico. According to Latta's veterinarian, Chico was nearly 50 years old when he died a few years ago. Since Chico passed, Latta's family of farm animals has been missing a valuable member of the crew.

Thanks to the generous gifts of several individual donors, Latta has been able to purchase a new donkey. Oreo is 9 months old and gets her name from her black and white coat. She is adjusting to her new home very well and is already spoiled rotten by the staff. Although Kate the mule is rather jealous of Oreo, Bambi the horse has been much more welcoming. Mr.

Latta would have called this animal a Jennet or a Jenny. A male donkey was a Jackass.

### *In Memoriam*

Virginia Moore, a former MHA Docent, passed away in Florida on December 12<sup>th</sup> at the age of 96. She was an active docent at Historic Rosedale during its early days, and loved giving tours there. Although she lived most of her life in Charlotte, several years ago she moved to Florida and kept up with us through the Dandelion. Virginia and her enthusiasm for Rosedale will be missed.

### *The History Calendar*

Admission charged at all events unless otherwise noted.  
Check the Charlotte Regional History Consortium website for other events.  
<http://www.charlotteregionalhistory.org>

### *Historic Rosedale*

3427 N. Tryon Street, Charlotte, NC, 704 335 0325, <http://www.historicrosedale.org>

#### **Alfred's Voice: The American Dream, Saturday, February 2, at 1:30 and 3 pm.**

Seen as the weakest link in backcountry plantation economy, poor and landless white farmers fought to gain their voice in an economy where they knew that slaves fared the worst, but they also had a "hard row to hoe". Meet Alfred who suffers great hostilities from fellow Southerners in the planter class as he shares with you his version of the American Dream. Understand how he longed to become part of the very system he despised for its political and economic supremacy. A tour of the plantation house is included.

#### **Unheard Voices: Agnes Caldwell, Saturday, February 23, at 1:30 and 3 pm**

Agnes and her three children arrived at Rosedale when they were bought by David Caldwell from James Todd. She was a domestic servant in the house, had other children, and lived to see freedom. Meet Agnes as she drops by to see Baxter Caldwell, son of her former master, in 1869. A tour of the plantation house is included.

#### **Great Backyard Bird Count, Friday, February 15 at 10:15 and 1:15; Saturday, February 16 at 1:15; and Sunday February 17 at 1:15. Each session last 1 ½ hours.**

Historic Rosedale is participating in the annual Audubon Society Big Back Yard Bird Count. Individuals, clubs, and other groups are invited to help tally the birds that frequent the gardens and grounds. Tracking sheets and bird identification sheets will be provided. Space is limited to 25 people per time slot. \$6 per person; reservations requested.

### *Latta Plantation*

5225 Sample Road, Huntersville, NC, 704 875 2312, <http://www.lattaplantation.org>

#### **Civil War Home Front and Winter Quarters, Saturday, January 5 from 10 am to 4 pm, and Sunday, January 6 from 1 to 4 pm.**

Visit the soldiers: See how they survived the harsh winters during the war years, and hear how families fought the war on the home front. Enjoy talks, demonstrations, and open hearth cooking throughout the day.

#### **Cooking with Sukey Workshop, Saturday, January 26 from 10 am to 4 pm**

"Cooking with Sukey" Workshops will be offered once a quarter and are a unique opportunity to learn open hearth techniques from a master. Ages 18 and up. Space is limited; contact Nicole Cheslak for more information.

**Sweetheart Tours, Saturday February 9 from 10 am to 4 pm, and Sunday, February 10 from 1 to 4 pm. Tours are on the hour each day.**

Come to Latta and step into the past with your sweetheart! Enjoy a Valentine's Day tour and hear about the Latta daughters and 19<sup>th</sup> century courting customs.

### *The Charlotte Museum of History*

3500 Shamrock Drive, Charlotte, NC, 704 568 1774, <http://www.charlottemuseum.org>

**Historic House Tours, Saturdays, January 5, and February 2, from 1 to 5 pm**

Costumed docents will give tours of the Hezekiah Alexander House, the springhouse, and the kitchen. There will be living history demonstrations and a hands-on table.

### *President James K. Polk State Historic Site*

12031 Lancaster Hwy., Pineville, NC, 704 889 7145

[www.polk.nchistoricsites.org](http://www.polk.nchistoricsites.org)

**Floor Cloth Workshop, Saturday, January 19 from 10 am to 3 pm**

Olga Simms will teach the history and techniques of floor cloths. Participants will make a placemat embellished with a grape cluster, a fleur de lis, or a tulip. Paint and canvas will be provided. Limited to 12 participants; register by January 17. Light refreshments provided, and you may bring a bag lunch. Fee: \$10; rain date: January 26.

**North Carolina Presidential Spotlight, Saturday, February 16 from 10 to 11 am, Free**

This program will focus on the lives of the presidents from the Carolinas: James K. Polk, Andrew Jackson, and Andrew Johnson. Staff members from the Polk site and Andrew Jackson State park will explore the lives of these influential men.

### *Rural Hill*

4431 Neck Road, Huntersville, NC, 704 875 3113, <http://www.ruralhill.net>

**First Footin' and Hogmanay, Tuesday, January 1 at 11 am, Free.**

First Footin', also known as walking the bounds or "beating" the bounds is the traditional walk in the woods and fields around the boundaries of Rural Hill. Dress appropriate to the weather and wear sturdy shoes or boots. Hogmanay, or Scottish New Year is a celebration of the New Year by sharing stone soup with your neighbors. The event is free but bring some vegetables to add to the soup or bring bread or desert. The new cultural center will be dedicated at 1 pm and will be open until the site closes at 3.

### *Schiele Museum*

1500 E. Garrison Blvd., Gastonia, N.C. 704 866 6900 <https://www.schielemuseum.org>

**Reptile Feeding Demonstrations, Saturdays in January and February, Snakes at noon, Alligators at 1 pm.**

Discover the fascinating ways that snakes and alligators catch and consume their prey. This demonstration of nature in action is not for the squeamish! Please note that space is limited at the animal exhibits so come early to select your spot.

**Flint Knapping, Tuesday, January 1 from 10 am to 12 pm.**

Discover the ancient art of flint knapping – the making of stone tools. Watch live demonstrations to learn how axes, knives, arrows and spear points were created by our ancient ancestors.

***Gaston County Museum***

131 West Main Street Dallas, NC. (704)922-7681, #2 [www.gastoncountymuseum.org](http://www.gastoncountymuseum.org)

**Exhibit: Moonshine, through March 9**

This exhibit explores the history of whiskey making in Gaston County and North Carolina. Learn about the legal and illegal aspects of whiskey production, and see stills from the 1700s to the present day.

**Moonshine Program, Saturday, February 23, from 1 to 2 pm. Free**

CPCC and Belmont Abbey history instructor Mike Baxter will discuss the history of moonshine and whiskey production in Gaston County. RSVP to Jeff Pruett by February 20<sup>th</sup> at 704-922-7681, ext 101, or [jeff.pruett@co.gaston.nc.us](mailto:jeff.pruett@co.gaston.nc.us).

***Historic Brattonsville***

1444 Brattonsville Rd., McConnells, SC, 803 684 2327  
<http://www.chmuseums.org/brattonsville>

**Hog Butchering Day, Saturday, January 12, from 10 am to 4 pm**

Hogs were important to survival in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Carolina backcountry. Come and join costumed interpreters as they butcher and preserve a hog and utilize the byproducts as well.

**By Way of the Back Door: The Enslaved at Brattonsville, Every Saturday in February (2, 9, 16, and 23) from 10 am to 4 pm**

“..in consideration of \$319.20...John S. Bratton is hereby authorized to take said Negro Adam in possession.” What was life like for Adam and the enslaved people who lived and worked at Brattonsville? A guided tour at 11 am and 2 pm will answer that question and more; activities throughout the day will highlight their lives.

***Charlotte Folk Society***

Great Aunt Stella Center, 926 Elizabeth Ave., Charlotte  
[www.folksociety.org](http://www.folksociety.org)

Gatherings and Jams, 7:30 pm (doors open at 7); Free, donations accepted

**Annual Young Talent Showcase, Friday, January 11.** Talents of young musicians are highlighted featuring Scottish dance and singing, classical guitar, bluegrass music and more.

**National Scottish Fiddle Champion, Friday, February 8.** Jamie Laval, renowned for nuance, virtuosity, and musical craftsmanship, will perform with his trio



### *Fort Dobbs State Historic Site*

438 Fort Dobbs Road, Statesville, NC 704 873 5882

<http://www.fortdobbs.org>

**253<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of the Attack on Fort Dobbs, Saturday, February 23 from 10 am to 4 pm, and Sunday February 24 from 10 am to 3 pm**

Reenactors representing the provincial garrison and Cherokee warriors will interpret 18<sup>th</sup> century camp life, and do musket and cannon firing demonstrations.

### *Cowpens National Battlefield*

I-85 South Carolina Exit 83, follow signs, 864-461-2828

[www.nps.gov/cowp](http://www.nps.gov/cowp)

**Battle of Cowpens, 232nd Anniversary Celebration Program, Saturday, January 19 from 10 am to 7:30 pm, Sunday, January 20 from 9:30 am to 5 pm, Free.**

Guided battlefield walks, twilight walks after dark, fife and drum concerts, cavalry and musket firing demonstrations, lectures and book signings.

### *Sons of the American Revolution*

Information contact: Tim Berly, [tberly@carolina.rr.com](mailto:tberly@carolina.rr.com) 704 849 7886.

See lead article on the SAR dinner with Thomas Jefferson in this issue.

MHA Docents  
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