

Mecklenburg Historical Association Docents

Spreading Knowledge of our History like the Down of a Thistle

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May, June, July, August, 2020
Volume 26, Number 3

Look Inside This Issue

- If you mailed a check for the March MHA meeting, see the note on page 11 about dealing with that check.
- Mark Washburn's marvelous piece of historic research and Observer feature article on the 1918 flu epidemic has been edited down to fit the space and is below
- The History List comes to the rescue! See excellent articles below by Janet Dyer and Barbara Taylor
 - Gladys Avery Tillet, a leading suffragist
 - Tank Town, a Good Place to Live
- A short history lesson about a very early Mecklenburg road
- A Zoom program at the Charlotte Museum of History on Rosenwald Schools
- No news about upcoming events because there are no events coming up

From the Editor:

Well, the COVID-19 Quarantine continues apace as we are all now under a blanket quarantine.

Not only are all history sites and resources closed but they have closed all of the Charlotte parks to traffic. If you drive in and park, your car will be towed. This means that the parks are limited to those who live in the neighborhood. Freedom Park is limited to the residents of Myers Park and surrounding area. Hopefully this madness will end soon. In the meantime check the websites of historic sites and resources. Many of them are doing special on-line and/or Zoom events.

Local historian, author and reporter Mark Washburn wrote a wonderful article on the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918 as it was experienced in Charlotte and at Camp Greene, the WW I training camp located here. His in-depth research and investigative reporting reveals a secret of political lying that has been undiscovered until now. A reduced version of that article is below but you will want to read the entire article. It was published on Sunday, April 12. If you no longer have this edition of the paper and are a print edition subscriber to the Observer you can sign in and read it on line for free. If you do not subscribe to the print edition shame on you. You can purchase unlimited access to the Observer web site for \$15.99 per month.

1918 Spanish Flu in Charlotte: Deaths Vastly Under-Reported

By Mark Washburn Special To The Observer

From The Charlotte Observer, April 12, 2020

Edited by Jim Williams to fit the space available. All errors are the responsibility of the editor

In the autumn of 1918, the great influenza epidemic killed 13,000 in North Carolina. In Charlotte the authorities announced that swift action kept infection and death rates mercifully low.

For 102 years, that lie has gone unchallenged.

But now, spurred by curiosity amid a new pandemic, an examination of archived Mecklenburg County death certificates and century-old newspaper

accounts reveal that Charlotte leaders and the press systematically under-reported the death toll – by half.

Epidemics in Charlotte date to colonial times. Smallpox hit in 1770 and returned in 1851 and 1896. Erysipelas killed large numbers in 1845 and Malaria was rampant in 1853. Dysentery struck in 1855, polio in 1948.

But nothing rivaled the influenza epidemic of 1918 which killed one percent of the population.



MORTUARY NOTICE

Eleanor O'Hare Cone, 24, died Oct. 10. "Her husband, Sgt. Martin Harold Cone, was taken ill with influenza last Thursday and taken to the base hospital. Mrs. Cone became ill the following day with influenza and was taken to Mercy Hospital where her child was prematurely born..."

- Charlotte Observer, Oct. 11, 1918.

Two Charlotte men of unquestioned character emerged as the leaders of the battle against influenza and controlled the false narrative fed to the public: Mayor Frank McNinch and health director Dr. C.C. Hudson.

Why the two men misled the public on the death toll can never be known. Hudson was a bacteriologist by training, McNinch was a dedicated mayor. The city was placed under quarantine and soon they pressed for it to be lifted, arguing that the disease had been staunched.

Lifted it was, and influenza roared back into the community, killing hundreds more.

MORTUARY NOTICE

Elizabeth Stowe Hursey, 5, of 400 E. Oak St., died Oct. 13. "She was a bright and attractive child and very popular with her playmates."

- Charlotte Observer, Oct. 14, 1918.

On Tuesday, October 1 the Spanish influenza arrived Charlotte. This was the flu season when ordinarily there were a number of deaths. No one knew that the Spanish Flu would be something different. On Wednesday there were 100 new cases; Thursday 160 more; Friday, 170. Something unusual was going on.

On the edge of the city was a sprawling Army camp training recruits for the world war. Camp Greene had 29,000 soldiers packed into tents. Poor sanitation and overcrowding led to an epidemic that eventually killed 1,200 soldiers.

On October 1 a camp spokesman reported that all was well with only a few mild influenza cases and no deaths - yet.

The flu moved so rapidly that public officials and the press couldn't keep up with it. On Friday, as the number of cases began to mount, The Charlotte Observer said that the outbreak was "no cause for alarm or panic or hysteria...Spanish influenza is not such a terrible disease; its mortality rate is not so

high as that of some other diseases the presence of which causes no serious consideration.”

This was, of course written on Thursday when the number of cases had started to mount. And, there had been no fatalities as yet.

That same day Camp Greene was sealed off with a quarantine that would last five weeks. Charlotte imposed a quarantine on Saturday intended to last ten days. Theaters, restaurants, schools and churches were shuttered.

MORTUARY NOTICE

J.S. Annabelle Simpson, 24, died Oct. 14. “She leaves her parents, husband and three children, all of whom are seriously ill at their home on Parkwood Avenue with influenza. Her father and mother are not expected to live.”

– Charlotte Observer, Oct. 16, 1918.

On Saturday authorities reported the first two deaths. An examination of the death certificates of the time show that five residents had died of the ordinary flu in September.

Records show that on Sunday, October 6, the War Department in Washington recorded that Camp Greene had 733 soldiers with the flu. There had been deaths from the flu since September 13, ten so far.

On Sunday the Charlotte Observer announced that 99 new cases of the flu had been reported the previous day and had fallen by half from the day before. Three days later, The Charlotte News reported that the epidemic was under control.

A week later, under the headline “Flu Situation In City Better,” the Observer reported that 151 new cases had been reported the previous day. “Analysis of the physicians’ reports showed, said Dr. Hudson, that the general spread of the disease has been checked.”

Optimistic headlines continued to appear in Charlotte newspapers as the situation in the city was unraveling. Two physicians and several nurses were down with the disease. Three nurses were already dead. Only essential calls should be made, the telephone company pleaded, because 14 operators were stricken, and the remaining force couldn’t keep up with the volume.

Solemn soldiers from Camp Greene bore caskets down Tryon Street daily to the Southern Railway station, where coffins were already stacked to the ceiling. Only the city jail offered solitude; it was empty.

MORTUARY NOTICE

Rose Stevenson, 26, died Oct. 14 at Presbyterian Hospital where she was a senior in its student nurse program. She volunteered to go to Davidson College where 150 students were ill, and contracted influenza herself. “Had she survived, she would have graduated from the institution yesterday.”

– Charlotte Observer, Oct. 15, 1918.

On October 14, Hudson released the first comprehensive numbers on mortality. Charlotte, he announced, had lost 20 people to the disease.

This was the first in a series of wildly inaccurate accounts of the death rate offered by Hudson and McNinch. A review of death certificates shows that by this date, 103 people had perished from the disease, five times the number Hudson revealed.

On October 19 Raleigh reported 82 deaths from the epidemic in that city; Hudson said Charlotte had only 33. Death certificates, however, show 148 had been recorded locally by this date.

“These figures are low compared to the harvest of death that has been claimed by the disease in many other cities of the country,” said Hudson in a statement that would be oft-repeated, “and the epidemic in Charlotte has touched the city lightly when its results in many other communities are considered.”

On October 25, Hudson announced that 6,000 people had become ill with influenza in the city during October. “This figure is very favorable when it is set down against the total number of cases in many other cities,” he told the News.

There had been 61 deaths, he said. Death certificates show the actual toll by this date to be 181.

Charlotte’s quarantine had been extended, but on October 25 Hudson announced it would be lifted in one week because things looked better.

Deaths plunged as the quarantine entered its fourth week, down to fewer than one a day. New infections fell to about 15 a day.

On the night of October 31, a meeting of the city’s medical society and top civic officials was scheduled to discuss easing restrictions.

“Dr. C.C. Hudson, city health officer, said it seemed likely that the medical society would approve a relaxation of the quarantine because infection rates had dropped,” the News reported beforehand.

MORTUARY NOTICE

Roy Penninger, 8, of N. Lee Street, died Nov. 8. "The little fellow had only been sick a couple of days. ... All the other children of the household are down with influenza."
 – Charlotte Observer, Nov. 9, 1918.

But Charlotte's doctors weren't swayed by the encouraging statistics Hudson and McNinch presented. Unanimously, they voted that the quarantine be extended a week. Reluctantly, Hudson and McNinch ordered it.

McNinch registered his disappointment in a statement to the newspapers the next day, one that hinted at pressure building from several quarters:

"We regret that in the opinion of the medical society, conditions do not warrant lifting the quarantine. We had hoped that a comparison of data and discussion of the situation would show that it would be safe to open up Saturday as we fully realize the financial loss and disorganization resulting to businesses, schools and churches." This extension would be the last, he predicted.

Hudson would later revise the official October death toll to 111 deaths from influenza and complications.

MORTUARY NOTICE

Mrs. Ruth Miller Clark, 25, 514 N. Poplar St., died Nov. 21, 36 hours after the death of her husband, J.R. Clark. They had been married three weeks.
 – Charlotte News, Nov. 21, 1918.

On November 6, authorities lifted the quarantine. Theaters, businesses, public gatherings and church services resumed.

Camp Greene announced its quarantine would end November 11. On that afternoon word came that an unanticipated Armistice agreement had been signed with Germany. The 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. But that was 5 pm in Charlotte and as the news spread, thousands of soldiers joined throngs of civilians celebrating on city streets.

A few days after the celebration, new cases of influenza shot up to 25 a day, then 50.

By December 3, the rate of new cases had increased to 60 per day and then to 80. Schools were closed for a week, then extended to a month. Pressure rose for a new quarantine.

But it got worse

By December 6 there were 200 new cases reported each day.

None the less, Hudson and McNinch announced that no new quarantine was needed saying that 70 percent of the population was naturally immune and 20% had already had it, leaving only 10% yet to get it, with or without a new quarantine. New cases continued at 125 per day.

Dr. Hudson stopped giving out death figures but the Observer determined the toll wasn't bad.

"Reports from undertakers show that the death rate has been considerably lower during this 'flare-up' than during the previous epidemic," it said December 12. "Several deaths have occurred out of the city, the remains brought here for burial, which has tended to appear to make the death rate appear larger than it really was."

On December 20, Hudson had an update. Since the beginning of the epidemic in October, he announced, there had been 197 deaths from influenza and all complications, 53 in December alone.

Death certificates listed 590 influenza deaths to date since the outbreak with 80 in December.

On the following day, the News reported only 12 new cases of flu. "It is now apparent that the second epidemic has worn itself out," the paper added, noting that no deaths had been reported in three days. Death certificates would show eight deaths in those three days.

On February 2, Hudson announced that 37 people had died in January of influenza. Death certificates show 81.

Influenza fizzled in Charlotte as warm spring weather took hold. Occasional flare-ups would occur over the next two years, but it never returned with vigor.

There is no evidence that anyone ever challenged Hudson or McNinch on the misleading information dealt to the public during the epidemic. Nor is there any known historical reference to an audit of death certificates, apparently unexamined until now.

On April 14, 1919, Hudson went to Pinehurst for a gathering of health officers from across the state to report on conditions from their districts. His remarks are preserved in the book "North Carolina Health Officers Association, Ninth Annual Session."

Ever the precise statistician, Hudson reported on key indicators in Charlotte over the last year, including new sewer connections (503), vaccines administered for smallpox (1,814) and approximate treatments for venereal disease (11,000).

Unlike many of his colleagues at the meeting, Hudson never breathed the word “influenza.”

Mark Washburn: mwashburn76@gmail.com

POSTSCRIPT

Charlotte, always looking forward, has forgotten its deadliest struggle in 1918. Only a small, poignant remnant remains.

Gladys Avery Tillet

*No woman is free until all women are free.
If it weren't tragic, the history of women would be the funniest thing in history.*

By Janet Dyer

One of North Carolina's most prominent suffragists was Gladys Avery Tillet. Born in 1892 to Alphonso Calhoun Avery and his second wife, Sallie Love Thomas, she grew up in Morganton, NC in a politically active family. Her father was a judge and a member of the NC Assembly. She and her sister attended college at the North Carolina State Normal and Industrial School in Greensboro, N.C. (The College was later called the Women's College and is today UNC-G.) When their father died in 1913, their mother insisted that her daughters remain in school.

In May of 1914, Gladys was asked by her suffragist friends in Charlotte to join them as they participated in the May 20th Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence Celebration. They had entered a “Votes for Women” float in the parade and they wanted Gladys to march beside it with other suffragists. Gladys was especially eager to be involved because her great grandfather, William Waightstill Avery of Swan Ponds in Avery County had signed the Meck Dec in 1775 and was the first Attorney General of North Carolina. The yellow and white float made quite a statement for women's suffrage as it wound its way along the parade route in the midst of the usual Boy Scouts, marching bands, floats from Ivey's Department Store, the DAR, and Colonial Dames. A picture of the float was on the front page of the Charlotte Observer the following day.

By 1914, many people supported women's suffrage but just as many opposed it. The president of Gladys' college was pro-suffrage as well as many of the teachers and students. According to Gladys, all of the students in her senior class were for women's

It is in an obscure corner of Uptown's Elmwood Cemetery near a tulip poplar tree. There are a dozen military graves, white headstones, six to a row. Here lie in perfect formation for perpetuity the soldiers whose remains never left the Southern Railway station. No kin ever claimed their bodies.

right to vote. However, the president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, was opposed to suffrage for women. The governor of North Carolina, Locke Craig, was also a naysayer.

Gladys' senior year, 1914-1915, was the first year that her college had a student council. She had been instrumental in organizing it and her fellow students elected her to be their first student council president. When Governor Locke Craig was a guest speaker at the college, Gladys, as student body president, was asked to sit on the dais with other school officials. The Governor gave a decidedly anti-suffrage speech. Every time the governor uttered a particularly irritating comment, Gladys would flick her handkerchief (embroidered with “votes for women” in the corner) and the audience of all women students would react. At the end of the speech, the governor looked straight at Gladys and said “I know you, young lady. I don't want you to vote.” Gladys just looked at him and smiled. That night she and the other suffragists marched and burned the governor in effigy.

Gladys graduated from college in 1915; she then attended and earned another bachelors degree from



UNC at Chapel Hill, She met, fell in love, and married Charles W. Tillet, a lawyer. They made their home in Charlotte. Gladys and her husband continued to support the right of women to vote.

After President Wilson finally changed his mind and decided to support votes for women, Congress passed the 19th Amendment in 1919. Thirty-six states had to ratify the amendment before it could become law. Finally, it was down to two states, Tennessee and North Carolina. Tennessee, by one vote, became the thirty-sixth state to ratify it. The 19th Amendment became the law of the land on August 18, 1920. North Carolina did not ratify the 19th Amendment until 1971!

Gladys voted for the first time in the presidential election in 1920. She and the other former suffragists soon realized that they had more work to do. Women needed to be educated as citizens and needed to be encouraged to register to vote. Gladys helped to organize and was active in the Mecklenburg League of Women Voters and the North Carolina League of Women Voters. She encouraged women to follow the advice she learned from the League, "Get in the political party of your choice and work for the things you believe in."

Gladys' party, of course, was the Democratic Party. She began at the local level and was eventually active at the state level, nationally, and internationally. The following are some of her many accomplishments:

- Campaign chair for the first woman elected to the NC General Assembly

- Campaigned for Al Smith for president and fought religious bias
- Supported the New Deal and for Civil Rights for African Americans
- Served as vice chairman for the National Democratic Party for 10 years
- Personal friend of Eleanor Roosevelt
- Keynote speaker for women at the 1944 Democratic National Convention
- Appointed the US delegate to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women by President Kennedy, serving from 1961-1965
- President of ERA United in 1975

This year, 2020, is the 100th anniversary of the ratification of 19th Amendment. It is also an election year. As Gladys would encourage us, register to vote. Find the candidate who best represents you and work to get that person elected. On Election Day, VOTE. Your vote is your power, use it.

Read more about Gladys Tillet and other NC suffragists:

Legacy: The Myers Park Story by Mary Kratt and Tom Hanchett

New South Women: Twentieth-Century Women of Charlotte by Mary Kratt

North Carolina Women: Making History by Margaret Supplee Smith and Emily Herring Wilson

Tank Town, A Good Place to Live

I know most of us pursue information to help us understand a situation. Such was my case two years ago when I began to question some things that were said about Tank Town, an African American neighborhood in Matthews. Some said it was one of the earliest black communities to form in NC after the Civil War. It was often said that the land had been settled by former slaves and freedmen and that the land had been "set aside."

I asked those who should know, who set it aside? While no clear answer was forthcoming, it was implied that the government had done this through the Freedman's Bureau. I searched for towns in NC that had been formed this way. Princeville and a colony on Roanoke Island were formed by former

slaves, but I never saw Tank Town included in any of the information.

Then I stumbled on the deed for the land Mt. Moriah Missionary Baptist Church purchased in 1878 to build their sanctuary in that area. The land was sold to the church by Dr. J.S. Gribble. I researched Gribble and realized he was white. He lived in the Morning Star section of Mecklenburg County, having been reared in the Sugar Creek section.

I questioned, if this area had been "set aside," why did a white person own land there? Something just didn't add up. My research took me to look up Gribble in the Register of Deeds. Had he sold property in the area to others? Interestingly, he had



sold numerous pieces, to both black and white citizens beginning in 1878. In fact, the first piece of property he sold was ten acres to a white woman. Two other parcels sold that year were for Mt. Moriah and Matthews Chapel Presbyterian Church (both black churches), although the land for the Presbyterian Church was first sold to a white man, who sold the property a month later to a committee for the Church.

One other piece of property, sold in 1879, was a 35-acre tract. Gribble sold this property to Robert Weddington. Two days later Robert sold it to Reuben Weddington for a profit of \$15. In the 1880 census a "mulatto," William Wed(d)ington, owned 35 acres in the area, and Reuben isn't listed as owning property. It may be that the land was a gift, possibly from Reuben to his presumed half-brother. Reuben's father owned 16 slaves at the time of the Civil War. Two were of the right age to have been William.

So the question is, did Gribble intend to have this area "set aside" for former slaves and freedmen? Did the community agree that there should be an area where blacks should settle? Probably not. There were two black churches located in the area so it follows that blacks would settle there.

I started to investigate if others owned property in the area and were selling to blacks. I couldn't find anyone else who owned land in this area. The

property was relatively easy to track as the CCRR was referenced in most deeds, which meant they were adjacent to the recently finished rail line of the Carolina Central. I plotted the sales on a map from 1952, where I saw names of people living on the land. Many could be tracked back to Gribble as selling the initial property. When I determined he had sold land on both sides of the tracks, I suspected he owned all the property! I just had to prove it.

I then looked at what land Dr. Gribble had purchased. In 1857 he purchased 143 acres from W. S. Stephenson. There was the proof! Before the Civil War, I believe Gribble purchased the property to farm. After the train came through his property, he apparently decided to begin selling out. The 1880 census confirms he was no longer living on this land but now was in the town of Matthews on Trade Street.

The idea that Matthews was a segregated community in 1880 can be refuted by the census. Of the 41 families living in the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile radius that was Matthews, 11 were black and 30 were white. The South, after the Civil War, didn't immediately become segregated. Former slaves had no money and no place to relocate. Only after the imposition of Jim Crow laws beginning in the 1880s and 1890s does a real segregated community emerge.

In 1880, I could find 4 black families living in what was called "Tank Town", but whites also lived there. It is only in the 1900 census that we see the African American community solidifying in this area. Over the next few decades, the community increased in size.

This research resulted in an exhibit that explored the history as well as the people who lived in Tank Town and the churches, schools and businesses in the community. After the temporary exhibit closed, the museum raised money to purchase a display case to hold this information as a permanent exhibit. A second case in the lobby of the Library and Town Hall will be used to install the rest of the exhibit. The town of Matthews has received a grant to build a Heritage Trail, with signage providing historic information about the community. This information will now become part of the permanent history of Matthews.

Barbara E. Taylor

Potter Road

Running north to south, the Potter Road was Mecklenburg County's early main artery.

By Jim. Williams

Originally Published in the Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society Quarterly of 2016 as "The Potter Road"

When the first European settlers came into Anson County, west of the Yadkin River, ca. 1750, they found a fertile and well-watered land. Coming from western Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland on the Great Wagon Road, they crossed the Yadkin River at the Trading Ford and settled near that ford where the Indians had their main villages. Eventually, this became the village of Salisbury. From there, two paths led to the south. One went to Pine Tree Hill, which later became Camden, South Carolina, and then on to Charleston. The other was marked on the early maps as "The Path to the Cherokee Nation." It led to the southwest, crossing the Catawba River at Tuckaseegee Ford, and on to the South Carolina back country, the Cherokee Nation and to Augusta, Georgia.

In 1763, when this area had become somewhat more settled, Mecklenburg County was formed out of a part of Anson County. The county commissioners bought land and built a courthouse on the top of a hill along the Path to the Cherokee Nation. A few years later, this place became the village of Charlotte Town, and they named the main street Tryon after the Royal Governor of that time. The road going north they called the Salisbury Road.

From the earliest days, there was another road that branched off the Salisbury Road just north of Charlotte and went south to join with the road to Camden ten miles below the South Carolina line. This road ran four miles to the east of Charlotte and is shown on the earliest maps of the area, although it was not named on those maps. An early mention of that road is in the papers of General Joseph Graham, who fought at the Battle of Charlotte in September 1780. Writing in 1830, he said "Persons going from Waxhaw [north] to Salisbury would not pass through Charlotte, but, after passing [McAlpine] Creek, take a right-hand fork, and leaving Charlotte four miles to the left, enter the Charlotte-Salisbury road at 'Cross-Roads' near the Alexander Residence." Eventually, it became known as Potter Road and was one of the main roads in the Charlotte area.

How Potter Road Got Its Name

Over the years there have been various conjectures about the naming of Potter Road. An article in the *Charlotte Observer* in 1916, referring to an article in the *Wilmington Star*, described it as running from Lincoln County, North Carolina, to Charleston, South Carolina, and said it was built so that Lincoln County pottery makers could take their wares to market in Charleston. The name Potter Road, however, long predated any industry in the area, none of the maps show the road going across the Catawba River, and there is no history of a pottery industry in Lincoln County in those early days.

Another old story is that the road was named for General Potter of England, who carved out the road around 1775 as part of a Charleston to Charlotte route. There was no British Army in the area in 1775, and there is no record of any British officer named Potter during the entire southern campaign.

So how did it get its name? The answer is found in the land grants, deeds, and court records of Mecklenburg County.

The earliest mention of Potter Road in the county records is in the minutes of the April 1797 court, when overseers were appointed for "Gordon Potters Road." Three years earlier, in the January 1794 court, however, Gordon Potter was "...requested to Superintend the Overseers & hands Working on the road from the Four Mile Creek to the South Carolina line passing by his own house..." This was a distance of 22 miles.

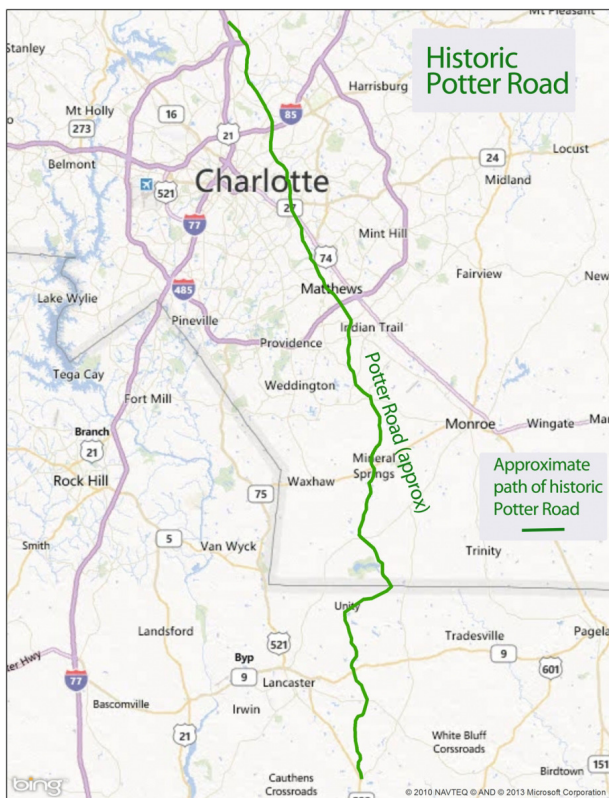
Gordon Potter had settled on Four Mile Creek in 1784 when he purchased a land grant of 146 acres. By 1794, he had accumulated 346 acres, all in the Four Mile Creek area. Over the years, he bought and sold land, brought suit and was sued, and served in court on juries, witnessing deeds, and providing security. From time to time, he served as the supervisor for various sections of the road bearing his name.

Four Mile Creek rises in present-day Matthews and flows to the west, passing north of Providence Presbyterian Church and south of the Pineville-Matthews Road. It joins McAlpine Creek at Johnston Road north of the I-485 Outer Loop. McAlpine

Creek then flows south and west to join Sugar Creek in South Carolina.

In 1804, Gordon Potter sold 71 acres of his land to James Potter, who also bought land grants on McAlpine Creek of 80 and 100 acres. By 1819, James Potter owned a total of 496¼ acres, all in the area of Four Mile and McAlpine Creeks. James may have been a brother or other relative of Gordon Potter.

Over the years, Potter Road remained in active service with overseers appointed to provide maintenance. The Potter Road Bridge over Waxhaw creek was covered some time before 1832, when the county commissioners authorized it to be re-covered.



In 1853, the bridge was rebuilt with stone abutments, and by 1855 Potter Road was being used as a Stage Coach Road.

The earliest entries call the road “Potters Road” or “Gordon Potters Road.” By 1832, “the Potter Road” and “the Potters Road” were added to these names.

Finally, in 1855 there is reference to “the Old Potter Road.” These various names appear interchangeable in the court records and deeds. In handwritten public records of this time, the apostrophe was seldom and randomly used. In referring to this historic road, we can find justification for using any of these variations.

From this evidence, it is clear that Potter Road was named for Gordon Potter and took this name early in the existence of Mecklenburg County. Why that name continued to be applied to that road all the way to Camden is a mystery.

Where Is Potter Road Today?

The road had been in existence for over a hundred years, but the earliest map that shows the name Potter Road is the Orr map of 1888. By the 1920s, Potter Road had disappeared from Charlotte and Mecklenburg maps. What happened to it?

The development of suburban Charlotte started with Dilworth and Elizabeth and soon reached out to the East with Piedmont Park and Central Avenue. Much of Potter Road became part of other roads. Today in Mecklenburg County, there is a short section called “Potter’s Road” in north Charlotte between Sugar Creek Road and W. T. Harris. Another remnant can be traced from the intersection of Central Avenue and Kilborne Drive through Evergreen Cemetery. Other sections of Potter Road are now parts of Sugar Creek Road, Eastway Drive, Kilborne Drive, Pierson Road, Amity Place, Conference Drive, and Monroe Road.

The name Potter Road appears on modern maps and can be traced from Stallings at the Union/Mecklenburg County line south of Matthews through Union County and South Carolina all the way to the crossroads of Pleasant Hill, north of Camden. The distance from Stallings to Pleasant Hill is 33 miles, and 90% of it bears the names Potter Road, Old Potter Road, or South Potter Road. At Pleasant Hill, the road becomes US 521 to Kershaw and then US 601 to Camden.

Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for the September-October Dandelion will be August 10. Send articles to Jim Williams at mhadandelion@mindspring.com

MHA Dues

The time has come to pay your Mecklenburg Historical Association Dues for 2020; 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 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 (or the one from the MHA newsletter), 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, pay your dues directly to the docent treasurer who will remit them to the treasurer of MHA, our parent organization. Do not send your dues to the P.O. Box above, as that makes our record keeping of dues-paying docents difficult to maintain. Make your check payable to the MHA Docents and give your check with the form below to Valerie Jones at one of our meetings, or mail them to her at:

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

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Address _____

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City, State, Zip _____

Email Address _____

Please check one or more as appropriate

General _____ Senior _____
MHA Docent _____ North Branch MHA _____
Patron _____ Life _____

Please send my MHA Newsletter by:

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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 MHA.

From the Chairman

Greetings Docents,

I don't know about you, but I am getting tired of staying at home. At first I thought it wouldn't be so bad. I could get some things done, like thoroughly clean my house. It didn't take long to get over that idea. Maybe I would finally get around to actually reading some of those history books I bought and only used for reference information. Then there are all those musical instruments I own that keep calling to me, "Play me; play me!" And what about watercolor paints and colored pencils?

I really miss seeing my grandkids in person. At least I get to see them through Zoom. I miss seeing all my friends and talking about interesting things like how to skin a bear and what is the origin of the term 'Yankee Doodle' and the song "Yankee Doodle".

I hope you are finding interesting ways to survive the corona virus stay at home orders. Fortunately, we can keep in touch by email, text, FaceBook, Zoom, and telephone calls. Think how difficult it was for our ancestors when far away from their family and friends.

Hope to see you soon. Stay safe.

Janet Dyer, co-chair MHA Docents

MHA Dinner Meeting

The MHA dinner meeting for May has been canceled – the madness continues.

But "hope springs eternal in the human breast" (Alexander Pope, 1734). See below.

If you mailed in a check for the March MHA dinner meeting, see if your name is listed below and take appropriate action.

From Barbara Taylor, MHA Program Chair:

When all this craziness started, we were optimistic that life would return to normal, hopefully by the May MHA meeting. Many of you had sent in checks for the March meeting. When it was cancelled, you asked that they be held for the May meeting. Now that the May meeting has also been cancelled, we need to deal with your checks.

I am listing below the people for whom I have checks. Please let me know if you want me to:

- 1) tear it up, photograph it, and send you a picture of the destroyed check
- 2) send it back to you via regular mail
- 3) donate it to MHA

Please let me know via email what you want me to do, that way I will have your email address.

If you want it sent back, I need to have your mailing address. Please email me at btaylor797@aol.com

I have checks for the following people:

Richard McHenry
Hugh Dussek
Randall Jones
Tom Phlegar

Jane Estep
Margaret Hood Barach
Diane L. Johnston
Marilyn Bissell

Jo Forsberg
Chase Saunders
Bill Anderson

Thanks so much. Hope you all are staying safe and healthy!

Barbara Taylor

And in the much hoped-for future:

MHA Dinner Meetings

Trinity Presbyterian Church. Dinner is at 6:30 followed by the program at 7:15. Those not having dinner may enjoy the program at no charge. To make a reservation for dinner use the order form below or contact Barbara Taylor at 308 Braxton Dr., Indian Trail 28079, btaylor797@aol.com or 336-404-1751.

The Miracle of Hickory Monday, September 14



The response of the community of Hickory, NC to a polio outbreak in 1944 during World War II brought an uncommon result. Within 54 hours, the community converted a health camp to a functioning hospital, ready to treat children and adults throughout the region. Doctors and nurses flooded in bringing the required equipment, including Iron Lungs. This response to the deadly disease of infantile paralysis lasted for nine months while the hometown folks became a model for the rest of the nation, earning the title of "The Miracle of Hickory."

Catawba Valley Community College professor and Historian in Residence, Richard Eller has documented this extraordinary accomplishment in a book and a documentary film called, simply, *Miracle*. He will tell us about the epidemic, the community response and his research in documenting these extraordinary events and accomplishments,

The Southern Woman: Before the Civil War Monday, November 16

Sally McMillen will talk about black and white women in the antebellum and Civil War South. She will also tell how a born-and-bred Californian became so intrigued by them.

Professor Emeritus Dr. Sally McMillen recently retired from a long and distinctive career at Davidson College. At the college she held the Mary Reynolds Babcock professorship and was Chair of the History Department for eight years. She was a founder of the Gender and Sexuality Studies Dept at Davidson and author of five books—two on southern women and two on the women's suffrage movement.





Dinner Meeting Reservation Form

Mail to:

Mecklenburg Historical Association
c/o Barbara Taylor
308 Braxton Dr.
Indian Trail 28079

Make checks payable to Mecklenburg Historical Association or MHA.

Questions? Email Barbara Taylor btaylor797@aol.com or call her at 336-404-1751.

Enclosed:

\$_____ (total) for _____ seats (\$12 for Seniors)

\$_____ (total) for _____ seats (\$14 for all others)

Name Tags: _____, _____

The History Calendar

Rosenwald Schools, Thursday, May 7, Noon to 12:30 pm with Angel Johnston

Zoom – Register at the Museum website for the Link to the Virtual Talk

This is the story of how African Americans built, funded, and staffed more than 800 schools in the depths of Jim Crow era in North Carolina and across the South.

MHA Docent Programs

All meetings canceled until further notice.

History News

Carl. J. McEwen Historic Village

We learn from Margaret Barach that the beginning of the Mint Hill Country Doctor's Office was when Dr. John McCamie DeArmon arrived in Mint Hill on the evening of August 31, 1886. He had come to this village because there was a smallpox outbreak. Late that night the Great Charleston SC Earthquake happened and was felt in this area. He thought the host at the boarding house was "having a fit".

A Marvelous Coincidence

In the MHA weekly email sent out on the evening of Thursday, April 9, there was a short article on The Erysipelas Epidemic of 1845 in Mecklenburg County. Early the next morning I was working on a project on the C&SC RR which involves reading the weekly Charlotte Journal for the years 1840 to 1852, looking for articles on the organization of the Rail Road. I was reading the papers from 1845 and it struck me that I might find something about that epidemic. The next paper I looked at was from July 11, 1845. And this is what I found:

Died in this place, on the 4th instant, of Erysipelas, Mrs. Harriet E. Caldwell, wife of Dr. D, T. Caldwell, and daughter of the Hon. W. Davidson, aged 39 years.

It is painful to record this new instance of death by the prevailing epidemic, which sends its victims in a few hours to the grave. The deceased had been confined but four or five days before her death.

The rest of the obituary was about Harriet's religious faith (Presbyterian, of course) and assurances that she was in a better place meeting again with her three children who had preceded her, all dying of Erysipelas.

The especially interesting thing about this is that it contained information that is not usually found in obituaries of that era: The reason for death; the name of her father as well as of her husband; a description of the disease; the fact that this was the "prevailing epidemic;" and a narrative of her death. Harriet Caldwell, you will recall, lived in the house which is today Historic Rosedale.

This is the wonderful thing about reading history in the original, as it happened. Every once in while you discover proof of something that had previously been only family stories.

In the same issue there was "A Certain Cure for the St. Anthony's Fire, or Erysipelas." This was from the Greensboro paper quoting a visitor from St. Louis. It involved applying Sweet Oil (Olive Oil), covering it with cotton batting and binding it in place.

Jim Williams

MHA Docents
Jim Williams
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