

Newsletter of the

Mecklenburg Historical Association

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

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

Volume 28, No. 5
Winter 2022



From the President

by Linda Dalton

It is so good to have our historic sites and events active again. I hope you have taken the opportunity

to visit a site, a reenactment, or a festival. There are many special opportunities during the holidays. Some are mentioned in an article in this issue but please check our on-line calendar for even more.

Our dinner meeting in November was fun and fascinating. Richard Eller told us of a little known episode in North Carolina history when the town of Hickory played an important role in combatting the polio epidemic of the 1940s. Check out the article in this issue for more details.

You may have noticed that this issue is “Winter 2022.” With this issue, we are moving to a quarterly schedule. We are planning for our MHA dinners in March and May, so with the next issue due out March 1, you will want to follow our on-line calendar for the

announcement of our speaker and the opportunity to RSVP.

We are beginning to focus on the 250th birthday celebrations for our county, state and country. 2025 will be the 250th anniversary of the Mecklenburg Declaration and Resolves and 2026 is the 250th birthday of our country and therefore our state. Lots of ideas are churning around. We welcome any ideas you have to emphasize our deep and rich 250 year history. Just send you thoughts via our Contact tab on our website, [meckdec.org](http://www.meckdec.org/). Please choose the “250th” option.

The year has flown by. It is hard to believe it is already time to wish you Merry Holidays and a Happy New Year.



Linda

History News – *MHA Announcement*

Voices From the Past – April 1, 2023

By Lynn Mintzer

Over the summer, Linda Dalton and I met with Lynn Weis, the President of the Historic Elmwood Pinewood Inc. (HEPI), a foundation recently created to provide funds to aid in the restoration and preservation of our three Uptown historic cemeteries, Elmwood, Pinewood, and Settlers'. He asked if there was any way that Voices From the Past (VFTP) could be a fundraiser to help in their efforts.

I loved the idea and took it one step further. I proposed that VFTP join HEPI. It just felt right that VFTP could become a fundraising event and do more good there. So, in August, VFTP ended its official arrangement with the Mecklenburg Historical Association.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the MHA Docents, those present and no longer with us, that truly made VFTP go from an idea to a successful living history event. Between 2017 -2022 (minus 2020 and 2021) we had over 1,200 visitors!



MHA's mission statement is to preserve and publicize the history of Mecklenburg County. I think we did that. I look forward to our collaboration with MHA and its involvement and support of VFTP.

November MHA Dinner Meeting Was Fun and Fascinating

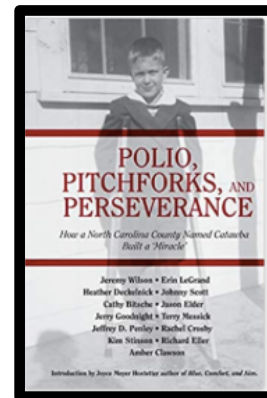
by Sarah Sue Hardinger



On the evening of November 21st, about 30 history fans gathered at Trinity Presbyterian Church on Providence Road to meet new friends, renew long-time acquaintances, share a meal and learn about a little recognized piece of North Carolina History.

Historian Richard Eller gave a well-illustrated presentation on how a small medical team rallied the community in Hickory to rise to the challenge of a polio invasion in 1944. The photos of the emergency hospital that was organized in less than three days were fascinating. This hospital initiated and adopted treatments that drew over 500 patients from all over North Carolina to the small town. Eller calls this remarkable endeavor the “miracle of Hickory.”

You can read all about it in his book “Polio, Pitchforks, and Perseverance.”



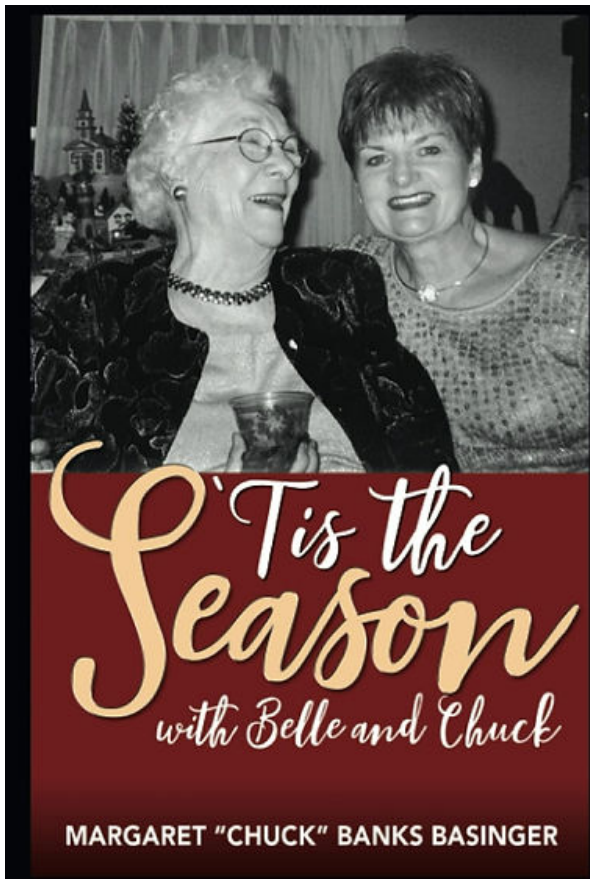
Eller is a man of many talents. His latest work follows the rise, fall and resurrection of the furniture industry in the western foothills. Eller was named 2021 Historian of the Year by the North Carolina Society of Historians. His award-winning documentary work has appeared on PBS North Carolina and the History Channel. He heads up the only publishing initiative by a community college in North Carolina, Redhawk Publications.

MHA Newsletter Dandelion Article Submission Deadlines

The deadline for submitting articles to the Spring issue of the MHA Newsletter Dandelion is Monday, February 20th. Please send articles to Sarah Sue Hardinger at sarahsuenc@gmail.com. Please put the words MHA Article in the subject line.

Announcements & Historic Site News

Winter Wisdom at Cedar Grove

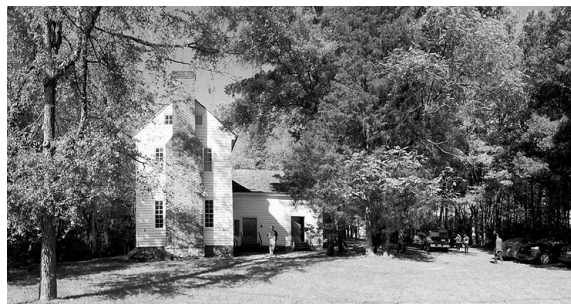


HEARTS is honored to feature Margaret "Chuck" Basinger, daughter of the legendary Belle Banks, at our December HEARTS happening, "Winter Wisdom" at Cedar Grove on Saturday, December 10, 2022, at 2:00 PM. Chuck is the fifth-generation descendant of Hugh Torance, and the fourth-generation to Cedar Grove's first Torrance family, James and Isabella Torrance. She will be sharing her holiday memories through the pages of 'Tis the Season with Belle and Chuck, her recently published book. Copies of the book will be offered for purchase, and Mrs. Basinger will be available for book signings and visiting too. Join us as we hear her stories about Cedar Grove, as well as seasonal traditions through the ages. As with every HEARTS happening, there will be sharing historical community connections, nature, and the arts, so please mark your calendars for this special event.



Following the program, "The Broken Arrows," will perform from 3:30-5:00. Billy Jones, Phil Skipper, and Mike Orlando, the three members of The Broken Arrows, are multi-instrumentalists and songwriters. Together, they merge their years of musical history performing blues, bluegrass, and jazz through mandolins, banjo, acoustic guitar, upright bass, and eclectic drums with classic Americana instrumentation for their original songs.

Next door, the historic Hugh Torrance House and Store will be open from 1:00-5:00 selling snacks, beer, wine, sundries, and more. Pick up unique and local holiday gifts, enjoy the historic grounds, and take a tour of the oldest standing store in NC.



The historic store is one of Mecklenburg County's few surviving 18th-century structures and is adjacent to Cedar Grove, the 1831 Greek Revival home of James Torrance, son of Hugh and Isabella Torrance.

HEARTS happenings are community gatherings featuring music, visual arts, and lectures exploring local history, nature, and our shared sense of place. HEARTS Winter Wisdom is a free community event with RSVPs requested. All guests registering online become eligible for door prizes announced at the event throughout the day.

This event is made possible by dedicated volunteers, HEARTS Circle members, corporate partner Lake Norman Realty, and community donations. All proceeds benefit HTHS's efforts to further the HEARTS mission of historic preservation, ecological conservation, and forging community connections in our region.

The Store and HEARTS events are operated by the Hugh Torrance House and Store (HTHS), a private 501c3 nonprofit. Group tours and volunteer opportunities for stewardship, preservation, and conservation are available.

[Click to RSVP](#)

Native American Studies Center Starts 2023 Programs

The Native American Studies Center begins its 2023 season with two programs on underrepresented groups that are so important to understanding the full history of our area. Programs are once a month over Friday lunch hour.

Friday, Feb. 24. Noon- 1 p.m. Native American Studies Center (119 S. Main St., Lancaster, SC 29720). **Lunch and Learn: “Rice Culture in South Carolina, Past and Present.”** In person and virtual. Free. Amanda McNulty, Producer/Host of SCETV’s “Making It Grow” discusses how rice culture shaped the society and health of freed and enslaved South Carolinians. Today, breeding has brought back the original “Carolina Gold” rice which at one time gave SC the highest per capita income in the world; further crosses have introduced even more choices based on the historic standouts. To attend via Zoom, register at this link: <https://bit.ly/3ETCa6>

Friday, March 24. Noon-1 p.m. Native American Studies Center (119 S. Main St., Lancaster, SC 29720). **Lunch and Learn: “Finding the Grimkes in Charleston: Using Feminist Historiographic and Archival Research Methods to Build Public Memory.”** In person and virtual. Free. Sarah and Angelina Grimke were influential 19th-century abolitionist agents and women's rights activists. Yet in their hometown of Charleston, there is almost no public mention of them. How do you find evidence of people who have been erased from their community? Join us to hear about University of South Carolina Lancaster Assistant Professor of English Dr. Amy Gerald’s journey to help recover the Grimke Sisters in South Carolina. To attend via Zoom, register at this link: <https://bit.ly/3UD5Pn7>

The Native American Studies Center, is located at 119 S Main in Lancaster, SC.

Christmas Events with a History Twist

By Sarah Sue Hardinger

All around the county and beyond, there are Christmas-oriented events at historic sites or with a historic theme. This is merely a list to whet your appetite. Please see our on-line calendar for details of these events. (Thanks to Robert Ryals for collecting these from that calendar.)

December 10th. 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Kings Mountain Historical Museum. In-person. Free. “*Santa & Mrs. Claus Visit the Museum.*”

December 10th. 2-4:00 p.m. Mecklenburg Genealogical Society. “*Holiday Party. Charlotte Museum of History.*”

December 10th. 2– 5:00 p.m. HEARTS/Hugh Torance House and Store. “*Winter Wisdom*” In-person. Free. RSVPs requested.

December 11th. 1-4 pm. Hugh Torance House and Store. In person. Free. Come make 18th century gifts and sign period carols.

December 11th. 5 p.m. Historic Rosedale. “*Candlelight Garden Stroll.*” In person. \$10.

December 11th. 6 p.m. Historic Rosedale. “*Candlelight Christmas House Tour.*” In person. \$15-\$25. Advanced registration required. One Night Only Special Event!

December 18th. 1 - 4 pm. Hugh Torance House and Store. In-person. Free. This day you can watch making holiday food on a campfire and sing period carols.

December 18th. 2 p.m. Old Waxhaw Presbyterian Cemetery, 2814 Old Hickory Road, Lancaster, SC. “*Christmas Wreath Laying Ceremony Honoring Our First Patriots.*” In-person. Free.

December 10 - 24th. Sat 10-5, Sun 1-5. Long Creek Mercantile, 1125 Ballpark Drive, Mooresville, NC 28115 “*Christmas at Long Creek Mercantile.*”

*Enjoy complimentary cider and cocoa

*Warm up by the fire

*Pose for a picture by the wagon

*Visit the sheep

*Make an old-fashioned Christmas craft

Busy Times at Rosedale

by Kathryn Freeman

It’s been a busy few months at Historic Rosedale. Our African American Legacy Project continues to research and develop new exhibits, programming, and interpretative opportunities. Our most recent gathering of descendants was held in August and was a very meaningful and educational event for all those who attended.

Unfortunately, our grounds lost a number of important and historic trees due to disease and Tropical Storm Ian this Fall. Our supporters were instrumental in contributing to assist with the unexpected financial burden of tree removal. Thank you! We continue to offer a number of “Haunted Happenings” including Haunted History tours, a paranormal investigation, and a special Midnight in the House event. In October we held our first Community Open House and we were pleased with the turnout and success of this event. Attendance was high and many folks were first-timers from the community and all over the city. We were fortunate to have a lively group of high schoolers participate as volunteers.

The Rosedale house is decorated for the holiday season and we are hosting a number of holiday themed events. Historic Rosedale will be closed to the public for the month of January while our staff completes important maintenance and planning activities. Best wishes to all for a joyous and safe holiday and New Year from the Historic Rosedale staff.

Matthews Features Baskets and a Special House Tour

December through March, Matthews Heritage Museum is featuring baskets, both old and new made with a variety of materials. From oak wood splits to pine needles to sea grass, this exhibit exposes the visitor to the craftsmanship of hand-made baskets. Several styles from different regions will be on display including a couple made by Leon Berry, a Black traditional basket maker.

As a highlight of this exhibit, on February 9, 2023 at 2 p.m., Former Director of the Matthews Heritage Museum, Barbara Taylor will give a talk on Leon Berry of Mecklenburg County. She met Leon in the late 70s when she started the annual Summer Sampler, and Berry participated in it. He was in his 90s, but sharp as a tack. Leon learned the craft of basket making from his grandfather who was a former slave. Taylor was able to purchase a collection of nine baskets for Rosedale Plantation when she was director there, which are on display.



Also in Matthews, the Reid House, owned by the Matthews Heritage Museum, is rarely open to the public, but beginning in December the Reid House will be open for guided tours to the public for one day on a quarterly basis. The Museum has developed a new tour of the property focusing on the unique architecture of the structure and the Reid family who lived there. Tours will be given on December 17 at 1, 2, and 3 p.m. LIMITED TO TEN PER HOUR. You must register by calling the museum at 704-708-4996 to reserve your spot or emailing info@matthewsheritagemuseum.org. Please specify the number in the group, and the hour you prefer. Please include a phone number if emailing. The house will be decorated for the season. There is a recommended donation of \$5.

The Reid House, located at 134 West John Street in downtown Matthews, was built in 1890 by Edward Solomon Reid. A prominent businessman in Matthews, Mr. Reid sold the house to his sister Ellen in 1893, the year she married Dr. Thomas Neely Reid. The house was named for Miss Nancy Reid, the youngest of Dr. and Mrs. Reid's daughters. She was born in the house on January 9, 1898 and lived there until her death on January 25, 1986. The Reid House is considered unique because it was one of the few Victorian Queen Anne style homes built in Mecklenburg County.

Unique Structure in Cornelius is Saved

by Sarah Sue Hardinger

If you have driven along Westmoreland Road as it approaches Catawba Avenue, you may have noticed the black cows grazing in the field. That land is one of the historic Alexander family farms. The first Alexander bought the land in the 1700s and it was owned by the family until recently when it was sold to a developer for a multi-use project.

Most of the buildings are gone now, though some photographic preservation was done prior to demolition. One structure was saved due to its unique place in Cornelius history, a three-room tenant house from the earliest part of the 20th century.

As part of the agreement with the developer of the land, the house was moved, it will be restored, and made available to become self-sustaining. Various organizations supported this effort. Thank You.



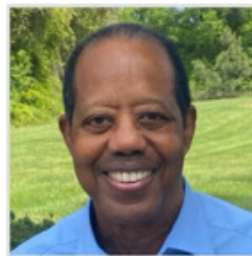
Tenant House in original location. The back, from this angle, faced Catawba Avenue.



Tenant House almost in new location. It is currently up on braces and the chimney will need to be rebuild, but it is pleasantly nestled in the oak grove that remain at the corner of Catawba and Westmoreland.

Connor Corner

By Michael Connor



(This is the first in a series of articles on notable families of Mecklenburg County who you may not have heard about. The Connor family, of John Connor Road, is filled with characters who have achieved prominence in their fields and some who are famous for their personality. Michael Connor, professor, actor, docent, and family historian, has collected a mound of stories about his relatives and has been kind enough to share some.

- ed.)

The following is a part of a brief history of the Connors as I know it. What made me curious was the many stories that were told by relatives and friends. Most of the facts come from living and dead relatives that I have known. They all had a great deal of impact on my life as well as my brothers and sisters. My relatives never really took us on their knees and told us stories of the family. They just let us run wild with our imagination. So, I pieced together what I heard and what I was told until I was able to do research on my own. I was able to come up with a credible story of how most of our history began. I found some amazing stories in the many families that make up this larger family known as the Connors. I can only tell a few. I am sure there are some stories that they would like to keep secret. Therefore, I have tried to edit those out or find a way of telling them without being offensive to relatives that may still be alive. I am sure that one day those stories will be told.

Out of the many children that are still being born from this family the odds are in their favor that someone will be a writer. The odds of someone becoming a law enforcement officer, football player, psychologist, city administrator, banker, store checker, Realtor, flight attendant, city planner, college professor, lawyer, district attorney, criminal attorney, judge, homicide detective, medical doctor, nurse, newscaster, disk jockey, actor, United States Marine, S.W.A.T. officer, Homeland Security officer, naval officer, F.D.A. chief, and a host of other professions already exist. When considering the many talents and traits of this family, it is a wonder that they still have roots that they can trace back to where most of their lives all began. The changing of times only broadens their scope on the face of the universe. It is time to tell their story again before it is forgotten in the chronicles of history. I hope you will enjoy it and see how you have all been touched by a Connor somewhere in your life unbeknownst to you.

The world is not a simple place where we live, especially for the African Americans. My relatives never talked about the slave-owners. However, I found them right where my relatives said they had come from, in Lincoln County, North Carolina. Two slave owners in that area were the Grahams and the Connors. The Grahams owned four plantations and the Connors had the largest plantation near Sherrill Ford, North

Carolina. My great-great grandmother Peggi Graham aka Margaret Connor was born in 1815 and possibly lived on both of those plantations. Her parents were Africans and that was as far as I was able to go back, on my paternal side. My DNA does indicate that her parents may have been Nigerians. She eventually ended up on Henry William Connor's (1793-1866) plantation.

Henry William Connor was a Congressional Representative from North Carolina who served as aide-de-camp to Brigadier General Joseph Graham with rank of major in the expedition against the Creek Indians in 1814. So, both men knew each other. They were both planters that settled in Lincoln County, North Carolina. However, Joseph Graham, who fought in the Revolutionary War, made his wealth by producing iron, hence Iron Station in Lincoln County. His youngest son became the Governor of North Carolina, William Graham (1804-1875). William Graham like Henry W. Connor was also a North Carolina senator. The 1860 Census listed the slaves H. W. Connor owned, by their age, gender and color (black or mulatto). He owned close to one hundred enslaved people.

While Connor was serving in the state senate, Joseph Graham's youngest son was the governor of North Carolina, William Alexander Graham. William Graham was also a Confederate senator. He belonged to the Whig party and it was speculated that he did not want to break from the union. However, he felt that the neighboring states around him gave him little choice.

My great-great grandmother, Pegi Graham aka Margaret Connor, was a product of this changing south. She was called Pegi Graham because she probably came from the Graham plantation and was sold to Henry W. Connor from Joseph Graham. Henry W. Connor had served under Brigadier Joseph Graham in the War of 1812 against the Creek Indians. This was significant because some of the Native Americans were made slaves as well as integrated into the family of the slave-owners as husbands and wives. Some of that Native American heritage made its way into my family.

I have only been able to trace three of Margaret's children and the youngest was my great grandfather, Cheeseman Monroe Connor. Although her parents were both Africans, and I think probably from Nigeria because of my DNA tracing, all of her children were Mulattoes. They all had different fathers. I was able to find the marriage certificates of her three children. Of course there may have been more. The oldest was Cue Connor. The written census spells Quincy with bad penmanship. Therefore, I believe his name was Quincy.

He was born around 1843 and according to my research he was married twice. His first wife was Francis Wingate. They were married in 1869 and had four children. Her parents were Issac Brevard and Susan Wingate.. Cue Connor's father was listed as Lee Houston and Pegi Graham was listed as his mother. Cue's second wife was Betsy Elizabeth Johnston. Her father was Pinckney Johnston and her mother was Callie Johnston. She was born in 1866 and died of pneumonia in 1919 at the age of 53 years old. Cue died on May 30, 1921. They had 8 children together and lived in Davidson, North Carolina.

(The story of Cue Connor will continue in our next issue. —ed.)

Historical Cooking Guild of the Catawba Valley: Update and Recipe

by Susie Worcester

The Cooking Guild would like to express our deepest sympathy to long time member, Audrey Mellicamp for the loss of her husband, Larry. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

September's meeting was held at the Polk birthplace and our subject was apples. Carolyn Dilda presented different types of apples for sampling. Varieties such as Rome, Cortland, Red Delicious, Wolf River, and Carolina Crunch were cut open and sampled. We also judged how the various varieties turned brown.

Along with the apples, we sampled different cheeses which were common in 18th century England, Stilton, Farmer's Cheese, Brie, Raclette, Cheddar and St. Andres Triple Cream were all sampled on various apples where we found some combinations better than others. It was common practice to grow different apples for different uses, pies, cider, vinegar, applesauce and apple butter. Sometimes a combination of apples were used. They were also popular dried for use during the summer.

The history of apples dates back thousands of years and it is said that the first apples to come to America were brought by the Puritans in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Native Americans are said to have found uses for the sour crab apples but didn't grow apples. Ancient Greeks developed the grafting techniques about 800 BC and the Ancient Romans are credited with planting apple orchards in England in 200 BC.

Linda Beverly brought an apple pie which she made at home, using McIntosh apples. After starting up the fire, Pam Dudeck cooked a popular dish of sausage and apples, seasoned with a dash of cinnamon and a bit of brown sugar. This would have been a good winter dish after the sausage was made during the winter butchering.



FRIED SAUSAGES

From Susie Worcester

Take half a pound of sausage and six apples.

Slice four about as thick as a crown (*ed. Old English coin*).

Cut the other two in quarters.

Fry them with the sausages of a fine light brown.

Lay the sausage in the middle of the dish and the apples round.

Garnished with the quarter apples.

From “The Backcountry Housewife” by Kay Moss, page 52.F

For this receipt, you can use either link-type sausage or ground sausage. Either will work. I like using MacIntosh apples for this receipt, if I can find them.



CHRISTMAS, FIGGY OR PLUM PUDDING?

It is that time of the year when you may hear one of these terms being spoken but do you know what they are besides one being a line in a popular, treasured Christmas carol?

Let's start with the Christmas pudding. It is usually made as a special dessert around Christmas time, there's even a special day set aside to stir it up. It wasn't a sweet dessert. It is believed it originated in the 14th century and was more of a porridge known as "frumenty" and was very different from the ones we enjoy today. Originally made with hulled wheat, boiled in milk and seasoned with a few spices, it was associated with meatless days, such as lent or advent. However there are receipts that do have additions of beef or mutton and may have included currants, raisins, prunes, wines and spices.

During the 17th century, the Christmas Pudding went through some changes which included adding eggs, breadcrumbs, spices and spirits making it more of a sweet pudding. It wasn't until the Victorian era that it became more like the pudding of today.

The method of making the Christmas pudding hasn't changed much. It is mixed up, wrapped in a wet, buttered - cloth, tied securely and placed in boiling water for hours. It is an exciting moment when you remove the cloth and tip the pudding on a plate to dry and sit so the flavors can blend until it is presented at a Christmas feast.

Christmas puddings are generally made with currants, raisins, candied lemon, orange or citron peel, suet, breadcrumbs, cinnamon, nutmeg and some sort of spirits such as rum, brandy or wine. After it is made, some receipts call for the pudding to be soaked in rum or brandy months ahead of time to help preserve it.

Figgy pudding is also familiar and while similar to a Christmas pudding, it appears to have more dried fruit but made the same way with much of the same ingredients and spices. It is also boiled or steamed and may contain suet as well.

Plum pudding is very similar to the above puddings but with dried plums. But the tricky part of these three puddings is the interchanging of the terms. Figs could mean figs or any dried fruit that was available. The same with plums.

So if you want to try a long - honored Christmas dessert, give one of these a try. Recipes abound on the internet. Maybe you will find one your family enjoys and can start your own tradition of serving a pudding at Christmas.





"Preserving Mecklenburg's Heritage"

VISIT US ONLINE

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

MHA Dues Membership Renewals

Now is the time to renew your MHA membership for 2023. Our fiscal year runs from Jan 1 to Dec 31.

Current Members: Please complete all sections of the form below so that we can ensure your contact information is accurate and complete. Write your check in the amount based on membership level and make it payable to "Mecklenburg Historical Association." Mail check and completed form to the address below. If you are not certain about the status of your membership, send an email to ttcottingham3@gmail.com for verification.

New Members: Payment to any of the levels of membership listed below (except Life) entitles membership to the MHA for one calendar year (Jan.1st – Dec.31st).

Please complete all sections of the form below so that we can ensure your contact information is accurate and complete. Write your check in the amount based on membership level and make it payable to "Mecklenburg Historical Association." Mail check and completed form to:

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

MHA Membership Form:

| Levels of Membership | Single | Couple | Contact Information |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|-------------------------|
| Senior (60+) | \$15.00 | \$25.00 | Name: _____ |
| General | \$30.00 | \$50.00 | Address: _____ |
| Patron | \$60.00 | \$100.00 | City, State, Zip: _____ |
| Life (single payment) | \$300.00 | \$500.00 | Phone: _____ |
| Student | free | n/a | Email: _____ |

Please check one or more membership type:

| | | | | |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------|------------|
| General _____ | Patron _____ | Senior _____ | North Branch MHA _____ | Life _____ |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------|------------|

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