

Newsletter of the

Mecklenburg Historical Association

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

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

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From the President

by Sarah Sue Hardinger

For those of you who do not know me, my name is Sarah Sue Hardinger. I have been the editor of this newsletter for some time. I am an amateur historian, a colonial era reenactor, a docent at Hugh Torrance House and Store, and an author of historical fiction. I have been a member of MHA for decades and on the Board for several years. I now have the privilege of serving as the President of the Mecklenburg Historical Association. I follow Linda Dalton in this role but will never fill her shoes.

Concurrent with this change in leadership, we are extending the makeup of the Board to represent more geographic areas of our county, more connections to neighboring counties and more generations of our population. If you are passionate about our local history and would like to be a voice for your town, community, or generation, please get in touch with us via our Contact tab on our website, [meckdec.org](http://www.meckdec.org).

Besides this newsletter and our monthly calendar, one of our signature events is our series of dinner programs at Trinity Presbyterian Church in south Charlotte. We continue to have popular boxed dinners and intriguing speakers. In May we learned a great deal about Colonel Thomas Polk and his role in the American Revolution. On September 18, the speaker at our next dinner meeting will be Dan Morrill who will tell us about the new organization, Preservation Mecklenburg.

With the warmer weather comes a flock of opportunities to experience living history, battle reenactments, visits to historic sites and museums. These are fabulous chances to bring the family for a wholesome outing, introduce out of town visitors to our county or just come on your own. Do explore the calendar for details.

I look forward to meeting many of you at one of these events. You will be hearing much more from us in the future.

MHA Announcements

MHA Newsletter Dandelion Article Submission Deadlines

The deadline for submitting articles to the Fall issue of the MHA Newsletter Dandelion is Friday, August 25th. Please send articles to Sarah Sue Hardinger at sarahsuenc@gmail.com. Please put the words MHA Article in the subject line.

May MHA Dinner Meeting



Bill Anderson gave us a variety of insights into one of our founding fathers, Thomas Polk, Founder of Charlotte, and His Military Service During the American Revolution.

About thirty MHA members enjoyed a boxed dinner and a detailed journey through the years of the Revolution during which Polk was both an officer and a statesman. He was a signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration and Resolves, a

Colonel in the NC militia, an officer of militia at the battle of Moore's Creek Bridge, a Colonel of the Continental Line at Brandywine, and Germantown, and the Commissary General for the NC Continental Line. His struggle to obtain what he thought was proper recognition of his service was fascinating.

Bill did considerable research for this presentation which is typical as he is a dedicated historian who has written many reports on the American Revolution. He is active in several history groups including ours and the SAR. He has applied for and secured two state-approved historical markers. And he created the web application "American Revolution Sites, Events and Troop Movements by Day" that plots daily events, including troop movements. All are on the Web at elehistory.com.

Battle of Charlotte – SAVE THE DATE

On September 2 and 3, The MHA and Rural Hill will sponsor the annual reenactment of the Battle of Charlotte. This is both a living history event and a battle reenactment. Watch the calendar for more.

News and Announcements

Upcoming at Cedar Grove

The summer programs at Cedar Grove are Junion - June 10, Healing History - July 22, and Sacred Grounds - August 19. Check our calendar for details.

In June, Andre Kearns returns this year to give an update on his amazing personal genealogical journey back to Charlotte Torance, an enslaved woman on the James Torance farm. Descendants of the Torances and related families are specially invited.

July brings a look at the medical profession as practiced in this area. And August explores how this land has been sacred ground for local people.

Each event runs from 2 – 5 PM and includes information on the topic as well as music to complement the theme. All events are free, but they ask that you RSVP so they can prepare for the number coming. Light snacks and beverages are available.

Hugh Torance House and Store, supported since its opening in 1989 by MHA, will be open for each of these events as well as every Sunday from 1-4 PM.

[Click here to Learn More](#)

Landmarks House Tour a Big Hit

Lincoln Landmarks arranged a fundraising twelve-stop tour on April 28 and 29 of seldom available historic sites. Three are in Mecklenburg County; The Hugh Torance House and Store, Cedar Grove, and Holly Bend. Over 700 tickets were sold. A typical comment was, “I drive by here all the time and have always wanted to see this place.” The Lincoln County sites included five houses, a church and cemetery, a mill, a round barn and Pleasant Retreat, the home base of the enterprise. We are anticipating this to be an annual event that will

grow each year with more sites in Mecklenburg County.



Holly Bend

Meck Dec Day

Several hundred people attended this year's annual Meck Dec Day celebration on May 19 in Uptown Charlotte. The usual elected officials attended and spoke. The Mecklenburg Declaration was pronounced, the guns saluted and a few hearty souls followed the uniformed color guard to Settler's Cemetery where wreaths were placed on the grave our Founding Father, Thomas Polk.



The speaker for this year's dinner was David Fleming who spoke about his new book Who's Your Founding Father?, an exploration of the history of the Meck Dec in which he "shines new light on one of the most fantastic, important—and controversial—stories in American history" (Amazon review).

Voices From the Past

On May 20, delayed from April 1 due to weather, the Voices From the Past (VFTP) event was held at Pinewood/Elmwood Cemetery. First person reenactors in period costumes told the stories of some of the notable people buried in the heart of Charlotte. This was a very fitting follow on to the Meck Day celebration the previous day.

(Editor's note: We are sad to report that Lynn Weis, the President of the Historic Elmwood Pinewood Inc. (HEPI) which sponsors VFPT, recently passed away. The history community is grateful for his years of contributions. A Celebration of Friends will be held at the cemetery from 5 to 7, Friday June 2.)

Two Mecklenburg Towns Turn 150



Happy Birthday!

Both Mooresville and Huntersville are celebrating their sesquicentennials this year! Activities are planned throughout the year. Please check the town websites for details.



NC DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Two lunch & learns highlighting research in the State Archives!

June 14, noon - 1 p.m. [Flag Day: Time to Change North Carolina's State Flag?](#)

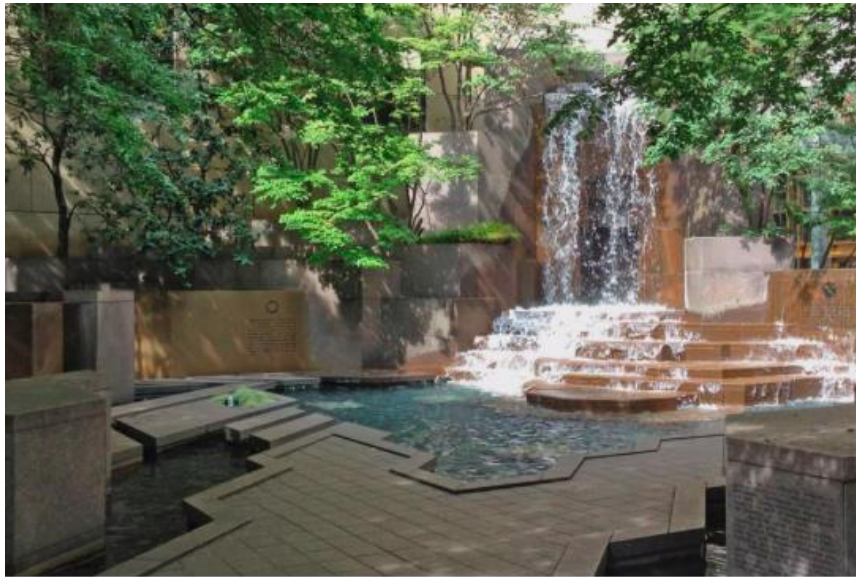
Join us for a Flag Day lunch & learn discussion to consider the history of North Carolina's state flag and a current proposal to change it. Learn about why two N.C. State University engineering majors, Wyatt Hamilton and Adam Fleischer, believe it is time for a change, the design they will recommend to the state legislature, and the records in the Archives that have helped shape their proposal. Register for this

FREE virtual program [here](#).

June 15, noon - 1:30 p.m., **Untangling Our Roots: Experiences with African American Genealogy.** The State Library and State Archives of North Carolina, in partnership with the Capital City Juneteenth Celebration Committee, present a lunch & learn panel of experienced family history researchers. The panelists will offer research strategies and share their stories untangling the intersecting knots of memory and surviving records to reveal their ancestral roots. Q & A will follow with panelists and reference staff. Speakers: Cheryl Williams, Emerson Foster, and Lisa Withers. Watch the livestream on [YouTube](#).

Historic and Architectural Landmark Is Lost

Op Ed by Sarah Sue Hardinger



The pictures say it all.

This is/was Thomas Polk Park at the corner of Trade and Tryon in the heart of Charlotte. The park was opened in 1991. The architect was Angela Danadjieva who designed the park and the amazing and unique waterfall feature. Nationally renowned architects and the Cultural Landscape Foundation rate this design and especially the waterfall as a national treasure.

In 2019 a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was put forth by Charlotte Center City Partners (CCCP), in partnership with the City of Charlotte (“the City”), inviting firms to submit proposals to reinvent the park. Per their RFQ, CCCP and the City believe that “...Polk Park can and should be the premier urban public space in Charlotte.” The challenge for the contracted firm, Agency Landscape + Planning, was to evolve the park for twenty-first century use while recognizing its history, both retaining the Danadjieva-designed fountain and components of the existing mature tree canopy and reinventing the surrounding space.

Gina Ford, principal of the chosen agency states in this video that the water feature in Thomas Polk Park is a treasure and that it is later additions on that corner (trash cans), lack of maintenance and overgrowth that came to detract from the original design. I encourage you to read this site and watch the video:

<https://www.tclf.org/sites/default/files/microsites/landslide2020/thomas-polk-park.html>)

In the spring of this year, the Charlotte City Council apparently reversed their opinion of the park and approved \$350,000, not to restore the park but to demolish it. MHA became aware of this vote a couple of weeks later. We sent a letter to protest this action to the Council members and the Mayor. We received minimal response and no encouragement that our protest would be respected. In fact, the demolition proceeded very quickly for this type of project and began in mid-May.

The plan for the site appears to be to level the area and put down turf. A private group that is raising millions to create a space to honor Hugh McColl, former President of Bank of America, triggered the vote by the Council to demolish the park. But they have no design and no immediate plans for a McColl park.

Interesting side note, on the morning of May 19, the day that the Meck Dec celebration would take place at noon, the demolition was continuing and was open to view. That morning, the demolition crew or the city quickly put up a fence with a solid plastic surround to hide the work from the crowd that was expected later that day.

Not only have we lost an architectural treasure, we have lost the marker of the founding of our city. Thomas Polk built a courthouse in the middle of the intersection of Trade and Tryon and then convinced the state to make Charlotte the county seat because there would be no need for the state to put out money to build a courthouse since we already had one. Polk had fought in the Snow Campaign, led militia at Moore’s Creek, led Continentals in Pennsylvania and North Carolina and finally was appointed the head of the commissary for the 1st Continentals in North Carolina. Later he became a statesman as well as a wealthy landowner in Mecklenburg County living just a lot away from the courthouse. He is a fine representative of the families who founded our county and having a park as close as possible to the site of our first government building in his honor has been most appropriate.

In the park were two plaques that told Polk’s story. Tours of Charlotte stopped at this spot to tell the story of our founding. We understand those plaques have been salvaged and will be given to Settler’s Cemetery so they can be displayed near Polk’s gravesite. Such is what remains of Thomas Polk Park.

It is a sad end to a fine park and speaks clearly as to how much Charlotte values its history.

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.)

In our last issue, we left off with cousins Sinclair and Ralph and the tale of the murder of a sheriff. We should note that Ralph Connor who was electrocuted on September 20, 1920 was buried at Chapel Hill Missionary Baptist church in Huntersville, North Carolina. It is located off Highway 73.

Now we resume with Michael's direct line. – ed.

Margaret's second child was Sara Connor. Sara's father's name was Cross Woodice. Sara got married to Albert Johnston on December 17, 1868. His parents were Jack and Eliza Johnston. They were married two years after Cue's second wife was born. I say this because Cue's second wife was Betsy Elizabeth Johnston. Perhaps a relative of Albert Johnston or came from the same plantation. Sara and Albert remained in Catawba Springs, Lincoln County, North Carolina. She passed away around 1928. She was about 75 years of age. It is unknown to me when Albert Johnston died. Therefore, I will not speculate.

Her third child known to me was my great grandfather, Cheeseman Monroe Connor. He was born on March 18, 1855 and died on August 1, 1933. His father was Cyrus Connor. Cyrus was a Caucasian. Cheeseman Monroe Connor's death certificate lists Cyrus Connor as his father. According to military records, Cyrus L. Connor was a major in the Civil War on the union side. He commanded along-side with Colonel Martin R. Archer, Lieutenant Colonel William C. Young and Corporal Thomas Jefferson (Doc) Lowe. It was the 137th Regiment, United States Colored Infantry. One of their jobs was enclosing Andersonville's Prison Cemetery in Georgia, cleaning it, digging graves, making the headstones, fencing the perimeter of the cemetery, etc. The mostly colored regiment mustered out on January 15, 1866 in Georgia. Lowe was discharged in 1871 and died at the age of 99 years old. Lowe had been born in slavery in Ohio before joining the regiment in 1868.

Major Cyrus L. Connor was married to Elmira Allabaugh and he died around 1866. She applied for his pension. However, there was another Cyrus Connor who fought on the Confederate side of the Civil War. He was captured and put into a Tennessee prison in 1862 and died around 1865. It seems probable that Major Cyrus L. Connor fathered Cheeseman Monroe Connor since he was with a colored regiment.

My great-great grandmother Margaret was listed as a free person of color in 1863. She was co-habiting with Rans Beatty, also a free person of color, from August 1863 to August 1866. Margaret was not alive when Cheeseman married his second wife in 1885. The 1880 census has her living with her son, Cheeseman Monroe Connor and his first wife Nancy Jane Longcry. Margaret was 65 years old Cheeseman was 25 years of age and Nancy was 21 years of age. Their first child Rosebud was one year old. They had gotten married in Lincoln County, North Carolina on July 24, 1878 while he was 23 years of age and she was 19 years of age. It is assumed that since the Connor Plantation had integrated with Native Americans it was permissible for them to marry. Native Americans had come to the Connor Plantation during the Creek Indian War in 1814. Some of the slave-owners had also married Native Americans.

Nancy Jane Longcry (presumed to be Native American) had the following children by Cheeseman Monroe Connor: Rosebud born in 1879; Jessie Rofard Connor born May 9, 1880; Banner Connor-Wyke born September 9, 1881 died June 28, 1973; and Ester Lalender Elizabeth Connor born February 20, 1882. Nancy Jane Longcry died around 1883 or 1884. She died of dropsy. A disease that has to do with fluid over the heart.

John Dolphus Connor was born May 23, 1884. He was my grandfather and his mother was Janie Johnston who was born in 1868 and Cheeseman Monroe Connor was his father. Janie Johnson was Clementine Simonton's sister.

Cheeseman Monroe Connor asked permission from Clementine Simonton to marry her daughter Sylvia, who was born August 20, 1871. Their marriage certificate listed Sylvia as 17 years old and Cheeseman as 31 years old. Sylvia's mother was born in 1853, two years older than Cheeseman. Sylvia's father had died according to her marriage certificate. His name was Raeford Johnson, a Caucasian that was her mother's slave owner. Clementine had worked in the house of Raeford Johnson during slavery times. Cheeseman's father Cyrus and his mother Peggy aka Margaret were listed as dead. Cheeseman and Sylvia got married in Denver, North Carolina at Ebenezer Methodist Church on December 3, 1885. They were both buried in the church's cemetery. Sylvia had sixteen children by Cheeseman and she died on January 29, 1922 in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

These were their children: James Sidney Connor born November 18, 1888-died December 28, 1968; Beulah May Connor born May 2, 1889-died July 6, 1972 (she was married to Elmore Stinson); Charley Loucil Connor born November 9, 1890-died December 6, 1929; Jennie Elizer Connor born February 16, 1893 died August 26, 1988 (Jennie Cowan married her second husband Marshall Carr in 1951); Ladela Odell Connor born March 27, 1895-death unknown; Mary Clementine Connor born January 6, 1897-died March 10, 1917; Josiah Connor born December 21, 1898-died September 27, 1949; Jettie Creola Connor born September 19, 1901-died May 11, 1993 (Jettie married Gillie Mayhew on March 11, 1918, he was born May 27, 1900); Gage Brown Connor born May 25, 1902-died February 3, 1971 (Gage was married to Bessie Gamble); Thelma Graham Connor born April 18, 1904-died September 1, 1943; George Washington Connor born April 10, 1906-died January 1, 1972; Gaither Elizabeth Connor born April 19, 1908-died August 27, 1998; Mildred Louise Connor born June 6, 1910-died April 9, 2016 (Mildred married Blondell Morey on November 8, 1943); James Henry Connor aka Jay Bird born June 1, 1913 died January 29, 1979.

Cheeseman Monroe Connor had a third wife, Cora Harwell born on March 3, 1886-died May 2, 1953. They were together for about 11 months and according to Cheeseman, "She left me." He passed away on August 1, 1933 at the age of 78.

Cheeseman Monroe Connor reared my grandfather, John Dolphus Connor, with his other children because Janie Johnson may have died.

Cheeseman and Sylvia moved to Lemley Township also known as Mecklenburg County in the early 1900s. Cheeseman was one of the founding members of Hunters Chapel church, which was founded in 1909. His youngest girl child, Mildred Louise was born a year after in 1910. He was a Sunday school teacher and a member of the Masonic lodge. He was a farm laborer and owned horses. His brother, Cue Connor, moved to Davidson, North Carolina and his sister remained in Lincoln County before moving to Iredell County. John D. Connor represents the fourth generation of Connor's in this country, if we count the African parents of Maraget as being the first generation. He was married to Roxie Burton (August 26, 1887-July 26, 1964). They got married on December 25, 1907. Roxie's father was John Robert Cathy and her mother was Georgia Burton. They had twelve children together.

Their first child was Rossie Lee Connor born September 26, 1908, died July 21, 1941. He was married to Kathleen Berry who was born June 10, 1901-died November 11, 1996. They got married in 1928. However, Rossie Lee died in a saw accident. He was cut up by the saw so bad that he died on July 21, 1941. When he died he and Kathleen had a six month old son named John Wesley Connor, born in 1940. Kathleen took their children and lived with her parents. Her father was Anderson Berry born 1876 and her mother Hattie B Berry born in 1890. Kathleen was about twenty-nine years old when Rossie Lee, Sr. passed. Their children were: Mary Audry born in 1932, Rossie Lee, Jr. born in 1934; Shirley born in 1937; Joe Louis born in 1939 and John Wesley born in 1940. All were born in Mecklenburg County before moving to Gastonia, where the majority of their family lives today.

John and Roxie's second child was Dowdard born October 15, 1909-died November 8, 2000. He was married to Grace Howard. They had three sons and one daughter. They were John Howard aka Junior was born October 1, 1933-died June 3, 1967; James, Keith and Elizabeth. John Howard was killed on the highway while thumbing a ride to Alabama. James W. was born March 25, 1939 and died December 19, 1955. He was killed in a car accident near Torrance Lytle High School and died at the age of sixteen. Keith was born in 1941. Elizabeth, the only girl, was born September 15, 1937.

Their third child was Georgia Connor-Torrance born November 16, 1911-died May 15, 1997. She married James Torrance. This was her second marriage. Her first marriage was to Jethro Munday, she was only eighteen and he was twenty-one. However, her second marriage to James, they reared four foster boys.: Allen and Gene and lastly Ronnie McFadden and Jerry Mims.

Their fourth child was Jannie Connor-Alexander born April 23, 1914-died November 23, 2009. She married Roy Alexander and they had one daughter, Mary Alice. Mary Alice had one daughter, Michelene aka Mickie. She had two children. They were Collin and Keisha.

Their fifth child was Josephine Connor-Leazer-Brown born January 5, 1916-died July 16, 1946. Her first husband was Sam Leazer and her second husband was Allen Brown. Allen Brown murdered Josephine on July 16, 1946 with a gunshot wound to her head. She had two children by Sam Leazer. They were Johnny Lee Leazer and Beulah Mae Leazer-Cherry.

Josephine was shot the same day John Connor was burying his daughter Clementine. This daughter was born out of wedlock with Mary Reid in 1910 and died July 12, 1946. Mary Reid was the sister of Sylvia Johnson, who was the wife of Cheeseman Monroe Connor, John Connor's father. Clementine was married to Henry Wheeler. She died in the State Hospital in Goldsboro, North Carolina. The cause was exhaustion

from mania. She was manic depressive. She had one son named Joe and John D. Connor reared him after Clementine died. They had been living in Iredell County before she died. Joe was born around 1926. However, his obituary list him as being born February 15, 1928 and he passed September 19, 2022. Although, he was not formally educated he grew up farming and was a superb fisherman. He outlived all his maternal aunts and uncles even though one uncle lived to be 100 years old. Henry Wheeler was much older than Clementine. Clementine was named after her grandmother, Clementine Simonton who died around 1938.

Their sixth child was John D. Conner born November 9, 1918-died October 30, 2014. He married Marian Gertrude Brown on August 7, 1945 in York, South Carolina. They lived in Boston, Massachusetts and later moved to Detroit, Michigan before moving back to North Carolina. They lived next door to John's Aunt Mildred while in Detroit, Michigan.

Their seventh child was Garfield Conner. He was born April 22, 1919-died August 20, 2019. He was married twice. His first wife was Elizabeth and she previously had a son named Bow, which was not Garfield's son. Garfield's second wife was Aileen Gaston. They got married October 7, 1967. He lived to be 100 years old. While serving in World War II he was given the name James. Although his youngest brother already had the name James at birth.

Their eighth child was Maggie Connor-Russell born September 13, 1920-died December 19, 2001. She was married to Allen Russell. They reared an adopted son named Joey Russell. She was a school teacher as well as a principal in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School system. She was a graduate of Johnson C. Smith University.

The ninth child was Cheeseman Connor born January 13, 1913-died August 26, 2002. He was married three times, which was the same number of times his grandfather Cheeseman Monroe Connor was married. His first wife was Anna Louise Luckey-Connor born July 14, 1927-died December 19, 2001. They had four boys and four girls together. Anna had a girl, Thelma Luckey, before their marriage. His second wife was Ada Caraway, who previously had two boys and one girl: William Caraway, Gwendolyn Caraway-Dawkins and Wayne Caraway. His third marriage to Carol Blakeney did not last, just as his grandfather's third marriage didn't last and no children. He and Carol were divorced in 1998. He was a twin and named after his father's father. He died of small cell lung cancer. His children from Anna were: Josephine Connor-Williams, Michael Connor, Sylvia Connor-Sims, Marion (Chuck) Connor, Cheeseman Connell Connor, Denise Connor-Moorer, Pamela Connor-Coleman and Desmond Cornelius Connor. His youngest son died December 10, 2020.

The tenth child was Robert Connor born January 13, 1923-died February 19, 2009. He was married to Lucille Sifford who was a relative of the late great golfer Charlie Sifford. Lucille previously had been married before being married to Robert. Robert and Lucille reared a relative of Lucille's named Vanessa Sifford. They never adopted her. However, Robert had conceived three daughters out of wedlock. They were Shirley Ervin of Cornelius, North Carolina, Sandra Jackson of Washington, DC and Vera Lowe who preceded him in death. Robert was Cheeseman Connor's twin and was named after his mother's father. They were fraternal twins. A distinguishing feature about them: Robert was right-handed and Cheeseman was left-handed. Cheeseman smoked and Robert did not.

Their eleventh child was Louis Connor born February 10, 1925-died October 26, 2003. He was married to Eva Colene Brice-Connor. They adopted two children: Dely and Derrick. Derrick was the son of Josephine

Connor-Williams. Josephine was Cheeseman Connor's daughter. Derrick was her first born. Dely's parents are unknown to me.

Their twelfth child was James Arthur Connor born December 15, 1930-died July 2, 1993. He was married to Darlina Abraham. He died in New York of cancer a day before his wife's birthday. They had three children. They were Angela, Valerie and Leslie. They now have children.

All of John Connor and Roxie Connor's sons served in World War II with the exception of one of the twins, Robert Connor. He stayed to help John on the farm. John Connor had purchased about 125 acres of land on October 16, 1922. It was a year before the twins were born and his step-mother, Sylvia had passed away. He was a farm laborer. He grew corn, cotton, sugar cane as well as many fruit trees, like plums, apples, pears, figs, etc.. On his farm he had cows, mules, bulls, horses, pigs, chickens, etc. He hunted on his land, rabbits, squirrels, possum, etc. He grew vegetables, water-melons, cantaloupes, honey dew melons, etc. Duke Power at the time had given him a pond to fish in adjacent to his property.

John and Roxie had other members of their family living with them. Joe Wheeler-Connor, John's grandson out of wedlock; Sherman Burton, a relative of Roxie; Johnny Lee Leazer born November 27, 1938 and Beulah Mae Cherry born January 31, 1935 were the children John and Roxie's daughter Josephine, who was murdered in 1946. They all worked on the farm.

John and Roxie's children had many stories to tell. The family's have expanded over the years and decades. All of their children finished high school and some went on to college. John was a visionary that loved his family. He built a store and gas station on his property although he never drove a car. My aunt Janie said he walked further than any man in his life. Roxie was a very compassionate lady. She would meet her children each evening when they would come home from school with lunch. When the first airplane flew over her house, it was said that she got all of the children to go into the house. It was the first airplane she had seen. When the Lakeview Country club was constructed, John Connor's wife had passed away. He told me that the club was for the younger generation and he missed not being able to share it with grandma Roxie. John Connor passed away on October 16, 1982. It was exactly sixty years after he had brought the property. He was 98 years old when he died. RIP John Dolphus Connor

(This concludes the Connor family saga. Should you find yourself in Cornelius, drive out Peninsula Drive and look for John Connor Road.

If you have a family story to tell, please contact me. – ed.)

Historical Cooking Guild of the Catawba Valley: Update and Recipe

by *Susie Worcester*

As the newest member of the Cooking Guild, I have been so impressed with the members recall of receipts and cookbooks. I thought finding cookbooks from the 18th century should be easy. What a lesson I learned!

So where do you find receipts from the backcountry? I asked the members and will post their favorites but I think Carolyn and Sharon offered great advice. It isn't about the book but about the time, place, social status, seasonality, economic status, availability, weather and other circumstances, some out of the family's control.

Area is very important. Things that grow in the North may not grow in the backcountry of North Carolina. Influenced by the length of the growing season, climate, rainfall, soil and terrain, crops planted here may not have been the same. Receipts from the New England area may include foods that were not found here. Cookbooks may have also traveled across the ocean with families coming to the Colonial states with receipts of foods not found here. It was also the same for foods grown here, they might not be found in European cookbooks.

Techniques in 18th century cooking were difference too. Terms such frying, baking, stewing, roasting all were used but maybe in a small different way than modern day techniques. Cast iron, tin and for those who could afford it, copper, were the cooking vessels most often used. Pottery, stoneware were also used but not directly over the fire. Boiling was often used to make puddings.

Research is a big part of searching for 18th century receipts. Digital and online sources make this so much easier today. I have found several handwritten Scottish manuscripts of receipts dating back to the 17th century on the National Library of Scotland's website. Universities are a great source and many have digital collections. You never know where you may find a treasure!

I think the first book for most of the Cooking Guild would be "The Backcountry Housewife" by Kay Moss. It is an invaluable tool for foodways, receipts and life in the backcountry during the 18th century. For research, I frequently go to Kay Moss' 'Searching the Historical Cook" which is full of data about 18th century foodways.

Receipts from the 18th century are often similar to our modern receipts but I believe as far as ingredients go, much simpler. The usage of sugar was influenced by its availability and cost, so was generally used sparingly, as were many other ingredients.. Time also played a part in what receipts were prepared. The fire had to be hot and produce coals before any cooking could be done. Some methods would require steps taking several days or weeks. Soups and stews would be cooked all day and added to as needed. Bread was baked, toasted and crumbled to add substance to receipts.

I think the hardest part of using 18th century receipts is leaving out the 21st. Century. With so many foods available to us all year, keeping in mind what they had and when, can be a challenge.

Here is a list of books frequently used by members of the Cooking Guild.

Mary Randolph.... The Virginia Housewife
Polly Burling...a Book of Receipts 1770
Amelia Simmons.. American Cookery 1796

Hannah Glasse.. The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Simple 1747 and 1796 Susan Rutledge...The Carolina Housewife

Martha Washington....Booke of Cookery

Lettuce Bryan... The Kentucky Housewife

Eliza Smith... The Complete Housewife

Harriet Pickney Horry....The Receipt Book of 1770

Kay Moss and Katherine Hoffman..... Backcountry Housewife Kay Moss..... Seeking the Historical Cook

Pete Rose....The Sensible Cook, Matters of Taste

So if you are looking for something different for dinner, give one these books a try. Several can be found for free online. You may find a new favorite.

RECEIPT - LEMON BISCUITS *From Susie Worcester*

Take six yellow rinds, well beat, with a pound of double refined sugar, and whites of four eggs, till it come to a paste ; lay them on wafer papers, and so bake them.

This light biscuit is from a handwritten manuscript found at The National Library of Scotland's digital collection. Inscribed are the words "Given to Lady Mary Murray, September 5, 1787." One could ask who gave it to her? Was it a gift? Was it a blank book which she filled with receipts? There are several different handwriting found throughout the book.

RECEIPTS - TO PRESERVE BEANS IN VINEGAR

From Susie Worcester

Take small thin green beans, clean them and slice them through length wise, parboil in salt and water then drain them. Put the beans in a large bowl, add whole peppercorns, a few bay leaves, and pour vinegar over the top. Cover and store in a very cold place. When one wants to serve them, remove as many as needed and treat them with sliced onions, vinegar, oil and salt and serve as a salad. These can also be used as a vegetable in a butter sauce over potatoes, noodles or rice.

These beans are well preserved for winter when there are no fresh vegetables available. They must be put in stoneware and stored in a very cold place.

From "The Raised Hearth" Old Salem translation of two German Cookbooks



“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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Please send my MHA Newsletter by: (One option only.)

(To help us save time, effort, and expense, while preserving the environment, please choose to download newsletter by a PDF download. You will be notified of publication by Email. Select Email for this option.)

Email _____	US Mail _____
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P. O. Box 35032
Charlotte, NC 28235**