

# FOOTPRINTS OF THE PAST

PRESERVING FUQUAY-VARINA'S HERITAGE

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2 SEPTEMBER 2013

MUSEUMS OF FUQUAY-VARINA

## WE BUILT IT AND THEY DID COME!

Christopher Dunbar and family emailed us that they would like to tour the Museums of Fuquay-Varina while in the Raleigh area. Chris was attending a professional workshop and brought his wife and three children along to visit North Carolina. Hailing from a town north of Philadelphia, the family had never vacationed in the south. "Papa" thought it would be good to provide some educational experiences like ours within their agenda.



Reading from the Big Red Book in the Ballentine Schoolhouse.

Our old school desks delighted Noah, David and Olivia. Grandmother had read some of Dick & Jane to Noah previously. Our Big Red Book fascinated four year-old Olivia. Looking through jail bars was certainly a "new experience" for the two boys. Trying John Brown's head phones from the depot invited participation from the entire family, while tobacco culture was foreign to both parents. The "magic waters" of our mineral spring, even on the day of tropical storm rains, culminated the Dunbar family visit.

The adult Dunbars, Chris and Kara, reported that the kids talked all the way home about their experience. They considered the visit a highlight! They happened to have planned the tour on the same day that the tropical storm hit town but we were not deterred.

Josephine Bryne works for a botanical garden in St. Louis, Missouri but arranges to vacation in different state capitals each year. Her 2013 destination was Raleigh. From her rental car, she called one Wednesday. Reading our museums brochure back to us, she sought help in finding the mineral spring, food, and quaint shops. Promptly at 1:00 p.m. she awaited docents at the museum door.

Rarely does our experience uncover a guest who enjoys reading all the interpretative displays. Jo makes that a regular practice. Heulon Dean's photographic collection fascinated her with its presentation of Fuquay-Varina. Pictures of the mineral spring and hotels uncovered a new era of American life. Hattie Parker's little post office provided intriguing postal records.

This guest left with directions to the Page Walker in Cary, Salem Street in Apex, and the Birthplace Museum of Wake Forest. Working out of Raleigh, she had already spent a day at the N. C. History Museum, the Sarah B. Duke Gardens, the Raleigh City Museum, the General Assembly in session, and planned a second afternoon in the Natural Science Museum. We suggested she add the North Carolina Museum of Art and the J. C. Rawlston Arboretum to her "must visit" agenda.

Numerous other out-of-town guests are visiting with relatives. At least once a month we have daughters bringing in parents to show them Fuquay-Varina. We also have had a number of home school students in tow with a parent.

## FUQUAY-VARINA MUSEUMS DESIGNATED A BLUE STAR MUSEUM



The Fuquay-Varina Museums became one of more than 2,000 museums across the United States to become a designated Blue Star Museum. Beginning with a grand opening of May 21, these museums offer free admission to active military personnel and their families between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

A collaboration with the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families, and the Department of Defense, this program has become one of the nation's fastest growing offerings. The program provides families an opportunity to enjoy our nation's cultural heritage and learn more about their new communities. A complete list is available at [www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums](http://www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums).

Fuquay-Varina Museums have publicized this through local newspapers, with Military Missions in Action, via news releases to Fort Bragg and other N. C. bases, and through our local American Legion Post # 116. Military families are welcome on any of the regular Wednesday open dates. The staff will be delighted to arrange special tours on other days for groups or individual families. This will continue throughout the year, SO COME ON IN.

The local veterans who are members of the American Legion Post # 116 have received a special invitation to tour. The museums would also welcome any pictures, artifacts, and information which member veterans might share with the staff.

July 12 was the first designated day set aside for members of the local post. August 9, 5:00-8:00 pm was the second date on which a special invitation was extended to veterans. During these Art After Dark events, everyone may enjoy the museums in addition to participating in the special artistic displays held throughout the town. We will not continue the Art After Dark openings during the winter months as the traffic does not warrant but we will resume participation next spring.

## NEEDED FOR OUR COLLECTION

Pictures have been taken of the rooms and area which were once our town hall. For those who might not know, this was upstairs over what was Elliott's and other stores on Main Street. Pictures help us but we still need details. Our staff is very interested in talking to persons who can assist with memories of just what was located upstairs. We know the list is a changing one over time, but we need to complete everything possible. What do you remember?

Some courtroom stories are coming forth. Do you remember being there for court? Was someone in your family a judge or officer of the court? Can we have their picture? Should you uncover a picture of an office or event there, please share that. For example, did you take a picture when you went there for "shots?" Were you there for polio vaccine? For other things? Who administered them?

Did you shop with VI Smith? Did you need the services of Robert Cotten, Lawyer? Did you know a town employee who worked there? Did you have an appointment with Dr. Cheek? Or did you visit with another professional?

Help us re-create the past? We are indebted to Barney Fish, Curtis Holleman, Edwin Holleman, and Melick Elliott for access to the building and for assistance.

## INTERNS AT THE MUSEUMS

There continue to be a number of tasks which docents do not have time to complete or even to begin on tour days. "We have been most fortunate to have two young volunteers serving as non-paid interns this summer," says Shirley Simmons, Volunteer Director. "These two youths have stepped into the void, just because they love history."

James Stephens, a graduate of South East High School in Raleigh, actually worked during one of his high school courses. That project earned him partial course credit. James is now enrolled at Wake Tech and plans to major in some historical field. After beginning with the museums, James worked in arranging displays, in cleaning, and even conducted several tours for special days.



James works on a scrapbook

Ashton Jones, a local high school student, thinks she might be interested in a history field and wanted to learn. One week, Ashton created a sales display for the museum which allows us to present notecards, books, post cards and other items.



Ashton shows off the sales display

Shirley had several important projects she expected them to complete. Most interesting to them was the refurbishing of scrapbooks so that they can be viewed by the public. Old pages have become brittle. Old tape has turned loose. Pictures have come out of their corners. These materials have to be faithfully preserved exactly as they were presented. Then new cords have to be threaded through the new acid free carriers and the entire scrapbook readied for viewers. These two wrestled with what, if anything, could be done to preserve pages which used the "sticky" overlays. Certainly, after this summer's experience, they would urge the public to prepare scrapbooks with a more preservation orientation.

Their final days before returning to school were devoted to arranging the newly acquired copies of *The Fuquay-Varina Independent*. These youth were wonderful examples of giving back to one's community which we could all emulate.

## HISTORIC HOMES MARKERS ARE COMING

The Questers are very excited to announce that the first order for historic home markers has been placed. Delivery is expected in early fall and home owners will be contacted about installation of these markers.

The Fuquay Springs Quester Chapter # 1134 had planned to place Historic Markers on significant structures throughout Fuquay-Varina since beginning their museum projects and tours in 2000. Later Downtown Revitalization decided to take the business sites as their project in 2012, leaving the homes markers for Questers. Questers will, however, conduct tours from the museums which will feature both residential and business sites and town history. Much of the actual historical information for both home and business markers has been provided by the museums staff.

Our goal was to work with structures in the Fuquay Springs Historic District in the initial phase. Houses which have been designated on the National Register or Landmarked by Wake County will not receive additional markers but will be a vital part of all tours and materials.

Especially with "step-on" tours for groups, docents noted much interest from individuals who have moved into our area. Locating markers has become a major requisite for these tours. Interest from home owners and entrepreneurs has encouraged Questers to eventually plan a printed brochure and perhaps to produce a recorded guide. During Quester trips around North Carolina, many helpful ideas have been noted which can be adapted for Fuquay-Varina.

Funding for these Historic Homes Markers was the major goal of the first Historic Homes Tour conducted on May 5, 2013.

Supplemented with generous individual donations, the first markers have now been purchased. Questers have a continuing "Historic Marker Fund" to which individuals or groups may make donations. Make checks payable to: Fuquay Springs Quester Chapter # 1134, P. O. Box 595, Fuquay-Varina, N.C. 27526.

Future Historic Homes Tours will be planned for each spring until Questers have been able to place markers throughout our residential areas. Based upon the successful evaluation of our first tour, Questers will continue to serve as hostesses at each home. Owners will continue to provide details of restoration and preservation. Members of original owner families proved to be the most exciting innovation of the tour. Their memories, pictures and anecdotal records delighted all participants.

Watch for business markers which Downtown Revitalization will be ordering to supplement the Historic Homes markers. Their goal is to begin with the older structures throughout the Fuquay and Varina business districts.

Preserving our history is the mission of International Questers and our local chapter. Using our history to educate, inspire, and experience is the purpose of the Museums of Fuquay-Varina. Pictures of the tour are courtesy of the *Fuquay Independent*.

## A NEW BUILDING AT THE MUSEUMS

The long anticipated Johnson Playhouse arrived at the museums park on Friday June 27, 2013 upon the forklift of Ben Slaughter. The Friends of the Museums were privileged to have Ben volunteer to move the tiny building free of charge.



The town has installed footings for the building behind the Ballentine Schoolhouse as per the park master plan. Special thanks to Rick Russell and Jimmy Barnes and the department of Arthur Mouberry at the town for providing the blocks upon which it rests. Volunteers,

Arthur Johnson and Mike Jones, have agreed to repair the structure now secure upon the final foundation laid by Marty Tart.

Hettie Johnson was the daughter of Woodrow Johnson for whom the playhouse was constructed. Woodrow and one of his drugstore employees were the builders. The date would be at the earliest in 1949. Likely it was built during the early 1950's. If that unidentified employee is known, please contact us with more details. Johnson employed a number of high school youth at the drug store who might remember something.

At this time, the museums are soliciting period playhouse furnishings. Maybe we can find them, or maybe we will have to construct some to look period. Hettie remembers having: a crib for dolls, a child's rocker, a cabinet or shelves for cups and saucers, a child sized table and chairs, and a stove. Other things may be considered, too.

We know some friends of Hettie who remember visiting this playhouse. If you are one, please, share your memories of this unique building with the staff.

The opening will be announced on the Web site and our "little playhouse" will be officially on the tour for visitors at that future date.

## PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

Have you seen *The Gazette*? J. C. Knowles, a renowned local historian, collector, and businessman, is publishing a monthly paper devoted to local and state history. The museums are contributing an article for each edition featuring information gleaned from our collection. Each month contains a feature: "Picture of the Month." Sometimes we are asking for identification; other times we are giving you a glimpse of the past. The paper is free, supported by advertisers in Fuquay-Varina and Apex. Copies are available at the museums and local businesses.

Did you read the last edition of *Cary Living*? The editors opened with an article on the Fuquay Mineral Spring, featuring our Mayor, John Byrne, with a few additional comments from an interview with our museum director. The article showcased a photo of Neil's Creek at the Mineral Spring by Melodie Estes, a local artist. Among items for sale at the museums you will find this postcard.

New Footprints of the Past Editor: Thank you, James Spidle (Frank Pore's job has not allowed him to work this issue)