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# Johnston County Heritage Center

# Update



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Summer 2014

Volume 12, No. 4

## Special points of interest:

**Ann Lee Huckenbeck elected Chairman of the Heritage Commission**

### SAVE THESE DATES:

Ghost Walk, Thursday, October 16, 2014

Contributing Patrons Dinner, Tuesday, March 17, 2015

Civil War Sesquicentennial, 2015

- February 28 (tentative), exhibit opening
- March 21, Candlelight tours of Smithfield Civil War sites
- April 11, Town of Clayton's commemoration of Raleigh's flag of truce negotiations
- May 17, Reception for "Washington Duke"

## Endowment Gets a Boost

Brothers Thomas J. and William C. Lassiter, Dr. James W. and Sara Storey Batten, and Ellen Broadhurst Taylor all had something in common. They were lovers of history and wanted lessons of the past imparted to the citizens of Johnston County. They were particularly interested in making sure local history was not lost. Between 1976 and 1992 these individuals collectively established endowment funds totaling \$105,000 to benefit the Johnston County Room of the Public Library of Johnston County and Smithfield. Lassiter, Batten, and Taylor endowment earnings to date, totaling over \$80,000, have helped to provide many of the collection materials and archival supplies now used for research and for exhibits in our acclaimed Heritage Center.

Library Trustees recently voted to transfer these funds to the North Carolina Community Foundation's Johnston County Heritage Center Endowment. Frank B. and Lewis R. Holding of First Citizens Bank established the fund in

1999 with a quarter million dollar gift after donating the bank's former home office to the county to serve as the Heritage Center's permanent home. Distributions from this fund for the Center's annual operations to date have totaled over \$150,000.

"Words are inadequate to express our gratitude to these generous benefactors who have led the way in financial giving," says Ann Huckenbeck, newly elected chairman of the Johnston County Heritage Commission. "They leave a wonderful legacy that will continue to benefit our county for many years to come."

"We have a shared legacy and a deep commitment to help preserve the history of NCCF founder Lewis R. Holding's home county," adds Jennifer Tolle Whiteside, NCCF president and CEO. "We feel honored to hold this endowment."

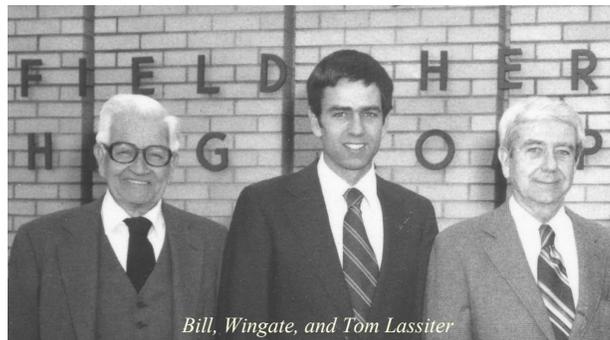
Library transfers bring the Heritage Center fund up to about \$414,000.

## Saluting Johnston County Room Benefactors

### Thomas J. and Rena B. Lassiter Family

Three generations of this family served as editors of *The Smithfield Herald* from the 1890s to the 1990s. They were writers of history as well as makers of history in Johnston County, including our own Wingate Lassiter, former director of the Heritage Center.

William C. "Bill" Lassiter, elder son of Thomas Sr. and Rena, was not directly involved in the paper but had a distinguished career as an attorney in Raleigh, where he was City Attorney, 1947-1951, and general counsel of the North Carolina Press Association, 1938-1984.



His brother Thomas, Jr., "Tom" (Wingate's father), returned to Smithfield in the 1930s after graduating from Duke University and eventually succeeded his mother as editor. In 2000 the NC Humanities Council bestowed on him its highest honor, the John Tyler Caldwell Award, giving him

praise for his thought-provoking editorials and for his leadership of the Johnston County Forum. The Forum, begun in 1973, brought hundreds of local citizens to the public library each year for over two decades for stimulating

talks on race relations, poverty, and other important issues.

In 1980 Tom and Bill Lassiter established a \$50,000 endowment in memory of their parents to benefit the Forum and the Johnston County Room and to provide humanities books. Over the next decade they increased it to \$100,000, half going to the Johnston County Room.

### Dr. James W. and Sara S. Batten

Dr. Batten, who grew up in Micro, was one of the state's leading educators. He graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1940 and later studied astronomy at Columbia University. He was a science, math, and French

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR

After an absence of 11 years, it is surreal to be back in my old office. Thomas Wolfe was correct in saying you can't go home again, although this place still feels like home in a lot of ways. I had forgotten just how much running up and down stairs there is in this job, so maybe I'll shed a few unwanted pounds.

It is encouraging to see all the team work that is moving the Heritage Center continually onward and upward. Many thanks to my successor/predecessor Wingate Lassiter for bringing the Center to its present state—a financially healthy, well-run organization with easier access to its wonderful collections. Margaret Lee, Claudia Brown, and Lib Ross would be amazed by all of the data entry that has taken place on the first and third floors to allow folks to do research in the comfort of their own homes. Of course, there are still a lot of sources one can find only by coming in person. We want to keep it that way, because there simply is no substitute for direct interaction with books, photographs, documents, and people.

Please mark your calendars and plan to be a part of the following events taking place in the coming months:

- Thursday evening, October 16, 2014, Ghost Walk in Riverside Cemetery, Smithfield.
- Saturday, February 28, 2015 (tentative), Opening of Civil War exhibit, commemorating 150th anniversary of the Battle of Bentonville and the war's end.
- Tuesday evening, March 17, 2015, Contributing Patrons Dinner, Johnston County Agricultural Center, featuring monologues by Civil War personalities and 1860s music.
- Saturday evening, March 21, 2015, Candlelight tours of Civil War sites in Smithfield, including encampment, living history, and carriage rides.
- Sunday, May 17, 2015, Reception at Heritage Center for "Washington Duke" as he travels through Smithfield on his walk home from the Civil War.

We appreciate your continued support as we preserve and share Johnston County's unique story.

Todd Johnson

## Leadership Changes

In May Heritage Commission Chairman Mary Nell Lee Ferguson turned over the gavel to Ann Lee Huckenbeck. Ann is a native of Four Oaks and grew up in Smithfield. She earned B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Connecticut and served on the administrative staff of the university from 1970 to 1997. She and husband Rich live in Clayton and are active members of Smithfield's First Presbyterian Church. Ann has been a member of the Heritage Commission since 2009.

Commission member Belle Allen of Clayton has turned over chairmanship of the Events Committee to Vicky Temple-Rains of Princeton. This committee is responsible for planning the hugely successful Patrons Dinner and other special events.

Tom Howerton, newest member of the Heritage Commission, was appointed chairman of the Collections and Outreach Committee, formerly chaired by Ann Huckenbeck. This committee is now busy with plans for the upcoming Ghost Walk in October.

These committees, together with the Black History Committee, chaired by Pearl Blackmon, are working diligently to plan exciting and engaging events and programs for the coming year.

Many thanks to Mary Nell Ferguson for a job well done as past chairman and for her dedication to the work of the Heritage Center since its inception.

## Recent Material Donations to the Heritage Center

The Heritage Center gratefully acknowledges these items donated between April and August 2014:

Personal papers of Dr. George A. McLemore, Jr. – from Beth McLemore Brown.

Audio CD of radio interview with Brad Crone, by Carl Lamm, May 6, 2014, re: Johnston County politics – from WTSB Radio.

National Genealogical Society Conference syllabi, 2011, 2014 – from Rebecca Smith Owens.

Earpsboro Farms memorabilia and quilt with tobacco motif – from Dr. Joe E. Jeffreys.

Margaret McLemore Lee photographs, clippings, ephemera, Hastings House preservation memorabilia – from Mary Nell Ferguson.

Cleveland Elementary School yearbooks, 1992-2005, and News-in-Review, 1993-2002 – from Mary Nell Ferguson.

South Johnston High School scrapbooks, 1970s-2000s, photographs, audio-visual recordings, and 2005 Yearbook – from Donna Tart.

Book, Massengill, *Photographers in North Carolina: The First Century, 1842-1941* – from David O. Stephens.  
South Carolina genealogical books (Lancaster County, Georgetown) – from Dr. Henry N. Wright.

2014 Yearbook of Corinth-Holder High School – from Charles and Carmen Creech.

Farming and household artifacts, including 19<sup>th</sup> century linen bed spread purportedly made by Bethany Bryan Beasley of Elevation Township – from Robert A. Ray, Jr., and Laura Ray Aycock, in memory of their parents, Robert A., Sr., and Evelyn Calhoun Ray.

Barbara Hinton Finch collection of genealogical and historical research on Sanders, Smith, Hinton, Finch, Williams, Edmundson, and related families – from Leigh Finch Harris.

Genealogy and local history books from South Carolina, Virginia, North Carolina, and Missouri – from Creola S. Campbell.



Mark Pace at Thornton Library in Oxford, NC, recently shared a scan of this 1906 school group photo. The name Melissa Mazingo is written on the back, and it is believed to be in Beulah Township. Any assistance in identifying the name and location of the school, teacher, or students would be much appreciated.

**Saluting Benefactors** (continued)

teacher in the Johnston County Schools in his early career and was a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy during World War II. After serving as principal of Micro High, 1950-1958, he received a teaching fellowship at UNC and pursued an Ed.D. degree. It was during this time he made a name for himself as a narrator for the Morehead Planetarium. In 1961 the National Aeronautics and Space Administration selected Dr. Batten to train the original Project Mercury astronauts in space navigation. He finished out his career as a professor and department head in the School of Education at East Carolina University, retiring in 1986.

Throughout his life, Dr. Batten maintained close ties to his home county. Between 1976 and 1978 he made numerous trips from Greenville to Smithfield to donate almost 800 books on science, education, and history to the public library, including several books he authored on astronomy and family history which are now part of the Heritage Center's collection. He was one of the first contributors to the library's endowment fund in 1978. Mrs. Batten, the former Sara Storey of Murfreesboro, was a librarian herself, earning a master of library science degree at UNC in 1960. Her thesis was a history of the Johnston County Library System, 1941-1959.

In 1991 the Battens established a separate endowment for the Johnston County Room, building it to \$50,000 within a few years.



*Dr. and Mrs. James W. Batten*

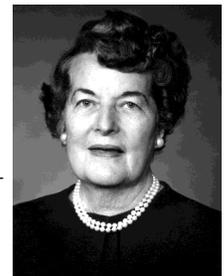


Dr. James Batten (right) observes astronaut Scott Carpenter and others during training at Morehead Planetarium in 1962. (courtesy of Morehead Planetarium)

**Ellen B. Taylor**

Ellen Broadhurst Taylor, a lifelong resident of Smithfield, was known for her interests in gardening, beautification, historic preservation, genealogy, and libraries. She was a charter member both of the Johnston County Historical Society in 1955 and the Genealogical Society in 1973. As a member of the Board of Trustees of the new Public Library of Johnston County and Smithfield in 1967, she was instrumental in planning and selecting furnishings for a room set aside for local history and genealogy.

In 1976 she established a \$5,000 endowment for the Johnston County Room. Earnings from this fund were used in 2002 to purchase the Heritage Center's highly prized 1709 edition of John Lawson's journal.



**High School Yearbooks  
Now Online**

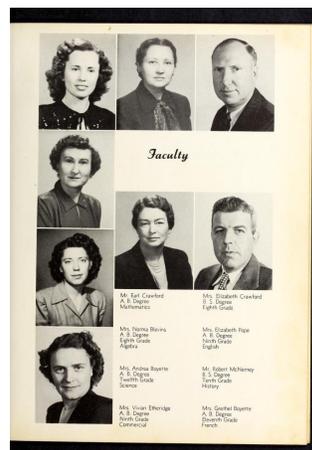
**HERITAGE CENTER BASICS**

- The Johnston County Heritage Center is located at 241 E. Market Street in Downtown Smithfield.
- Our phone number: 919-934-2836
- Our mailing address:  
P.O. Box 2709, Smithfield, NC 27577
- Our web address: [www.jcheritagecenter.org](http://www.jcheritagecenter.org)
- Our hours of operation:  
9am-5pm, Mon.-Sat. (closed Sun.)

**Johnston County Heritage Commission**

Belle Allen  
Art Andrews  
Pearl Blackmon  
John Booker  
Charles Creech  
Carolyn Ennis  
Mary Nell Ferguson  
Heather Ford

Tom Howerton  
Ann Huckenbeck  
Tanya Jones-Boland  
Stanton Massengill  
Julia McCullers  
Helen Smith  
Mary Stephens  
Vicky Temple-Rains  
Myra Wallace



*A page from the 1950 Glen-Cedo of Glendale High School*

Thanks to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, many pre-1970 Johnston County high school yearbooks can now be viewed online. Staff of the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center, housed in the North Carolina Collection at UNC's Wilson Library, recently scanned about 150 yearbooks from the Heritage Center's collections for their "Digital NC" website.

Individuals with missing yearbooks are encouraged to contact JCHC Director Todd Johnson at 919-938-4708, or by email, [todd.johnson@johnstonnc.com](mailto:todd.johnson@johnstonnc.com), to make arrangements for getting their yearbooks scanned so this project can be as complete as possible. "Yearbooks may be

loaned," Johnson adds, "and rest assured they will be given the utmost care and returned promptly."

Here is the URL for yearbooks at the Digital North Carolina site: <http://www.digitalnc.org/collections/yearbooks>.



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4 Update

Johnston County Heritage Center

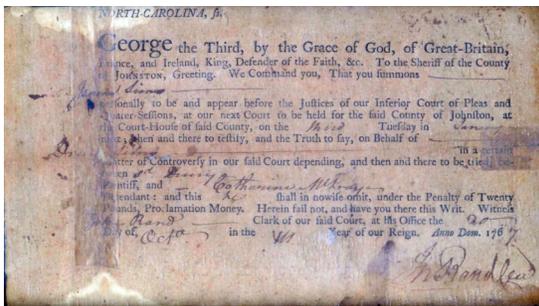
Summer 2014

## A Call for Civil War Artifacts

The Heritage Center needs your help in assembling items for an exhibit to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Bentonville and the end of the Civil War. Donations are preferred, but items on loan also will be gratefully accepted and given the utmost care.

“We are interested in clothing, tools, weaponry, daguerreotype photographs, letters, furnishings, or anything else representing the life of a soldier or everyday life on the home front during the period 1861-1865,” says director Todd Johnson. Items already on hand include the following:

- Tin cup used by a local soldier;
- Confederate currency;
- Minie balls and artillery pieces;
- Photographs of soldiers in uniform;
- Silverware hidden in a well;
- Books published in Confederate territory;



### Sample items for upcoming Civil War exhibit:

- Colonial-era document removed from the Johnston County Courthouse by a Union soldier in 1865;
- Tin cup carried by Pvt. William G. Lassiter, present at funeral of Gen. Stonewall Jackson

- 1767 document “found” by a Union soldier in the courthouse and returned by a descendant in the 1990s;
- Confederate reunion flag and commemorative pins from late 19th/early 20th centuries;
- Sunday School hymnal compiled by a local Baptist preacher (incidentally, grandfather of band leader Kay Kyser) who was a chaplain in the Confederate army;
- Letters to and from soldiers;
- Store account book showing purchases by early enlistees in Smithfield, 1861.

