



## **Tar River Center for History and Culture Annual Report**

**June 1, 2015-May 31, 2016**

### Introduction

During the 2015-2016 fiscal year, the Tar River Center for History and Culture, an office of Louisburg College, undertook a wide range of activities to promote interest in the history of Franklin County and the Upper Tar River region. The director wrote historical articles for the local press, crafted grant proposals, developed programs for adults, provided materials to the Franklin County Schools, and supported a variety of historic preservation efforts. This work was made possible by the financial support of Louisburg College, Franklin County, and the Town of Louisburg. The members of the Board of Directors of the Tar River Center for History and Culture Foundation aided these efforts.

### Accomplishments

#### ***Tar River Roots***

The Director continued a twice-monthly column in *The Franklin Times*, Tar River Roots. During the fiscal year, he published twenty-two articles in this series. An effort was made to base the articles on primary sources and to address topics that have been neglected by historians. The articles are available on the Web site of the TRCHC. The Director received many favorable comments concerning these articles.

#### ***Lecture Series***

The TRCHC sponsored a lecture series, Agricultural Improvement in North Carolina and the Tar River Valley:

Monday, September 28, 2015

“Higher Ed for North Carolina Farmers: the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Agricultural Fair.”

Dr. Melton McLaurin, *Professor Emeritus*, University of North Carolina at Wilmington

Wednesday, December 2, 2015

“Leaves of Gold: North Carolina Tobacco Culture.”

W. W. Yeargin, lecturer, North Carolina Humanities Council

Thursday, March 3, 2016

Annual Joseph E. Elmore Lecture

“Anne Pauline Smith: Franklin County Home Demonstration Agent and Daughter of the New South.”

Dr. Lu Ann Jones, historian, United States Park Service

Thursday, April 28, 2016

“The First Environmental Governor: Kerr Scott and His Agricultural Policies.”

Dr. Julian Pleasants, *Professor Emeritus*, University of Florida

The lectures attracted an average of twenty-eight adults.

### ***Oral History Initiative***

During the year, exciting work was accomplished on the TRCHC’s Oral History of School Desegregation in Franklin County, North Carolina, a project funded by the North Carolina Humanities Council. The Director and three volunteer interviewers—Dr. Kelvin Spragley, Professor Will Hinton, and Charles Davis—completed twelve interviews with individuals and couples who had experienced the process of school integration in the county. These included former students, teachers, parents, an administrator, and an attorney who assisted the Franklin County Board of Education as it responded to a lawsuit brought by a group of African American citizens. On October 19, 2015, a very diverse crowd of approximately 175 citizens and Louisburg College students packed the Benson Chapel for a public program during which six of the interviewees made remarks. Following this panel discussion, many in the audience rose to share their own experiences and perspectives. The event drew widespread publicity and resulted in a follow-up program produced by WUNC Radio in Chapel Hill. Louisburg College webmaster Robert Strickland is making interview transcripts, audio excerpts, and photographs of the interviewees available online: [www.louisburg.edu/tarrivercenter/oralHistoryProject.html](http://www.louisburg.edu/tarrivercenter/oralHistoryProject.html). The North Carolina Humanities Council chose the project as one to showcase when it sent staff members to Capitol Hill to share accomplishments with members of Congress during “Humanities on the Hill.”

### ***O. W. Gray and Son Map of Louisburg***

With seed money provided by the Tar River Center for History and Culture Foundation, the Director oversaw the publication of a high-quality reprint of *Gray’s New Map of Louisburg, Franklin County, North Carolina*, which was published in *O. W. Gray & Son’s National Atlas* (Philadelphia, 1882). The map shows residences, businesses, churches, schools, and other features, and therefore constitutes an important tool for local historians and preservationists. Printed on 80-pound, acid-free paper and suitable for framing, the maps are being sold for \$20 and are mailed in heavy mailing tubes for an additional \$5. The maps were picked up from the

printer in March 2016; by the end of May, approximately 40% of publication costs had been recouped through sales. Several people who came to the Franklin Male Academy building to purchase a map viewed the museum-quality exhibit pertaining to the Academy on the second floor. It is hoped that sales of the map will provide revenue that can be used to undertake additional projects.

### ***Outreach to Franklin County Schools***

In April 2016 the Director provided the Franklin County Schools with copies of the O. W. Gray map of Louisburg and the TRCHC's walking tour booklet (*Tour Historic Louisburg, North Carolina*), for use in all eighth-grade North Carolina history classes. He prepared suggestions for how the map and booklet can be used to relate aspects of the history of Louisburg to the state's eighth-grade social studies curriculum.

During the summer and fall of 2015, the Director spent many hours preparing a proposal for a GlaxoSmithKline Foundation Ribbon of Hope grant. The grant, which was not funded, would have enabled the TRCHC to have a museum-quality exhibit case built to house a dugout canoe found in the Tar River in 2001. The proposal also called for the production of a video that could be used to introduce the canoe and its historical context to students prior to field trips to see the canoe at Terrell Lane Middle School in Louisburg. Teachers were to craft lesson plans that tied the canoe and local history to aspects of the state's middle school curriculum. Currently, the Director is exploring alternative sources of funding, with a view toward having the exhibit case constructed by the fall of 2016.

### ***Second Saturday Walking Tours of the Louisburg Historic District***

The TRCHC conducted a series of monthly walking tours of portions of the Louisburg Historic District. The tours began at 10 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month, excepting December, January, and February. The following volunteers assisted the director in leading the tours: Peter Andrews, Sharon Billings, Joanne Carpenter, Alex Cheek, and Matt Perdue. Participants were introduced to the museum-quality exhibit on the history of Franklin Male Academy that is located upstairs in the Academy building. Each of them received a copy of the *Tour Historic Louisburg* booklet. Attendance ranged from zero to eleven participants. One of the tours was co-sponsored by the Franklin County Arts Council, which provided refreshments for tour participants.

### ***Historic Preservation Efforts***

During the summer and fall of 2015, Dr. Jeroen Van den Hurk, an architectural historian affiliated with Commonwealth Heritage Group, began Phase 1 of a comprehensive survey of the historic architecture of Franklin County. The Director of the TRCHC assisted this effort by serving as a liaison between the consultant and local volunteers who offered to provide information about and access to historic properties throughout the county. With the help of Robert Strickland, Louisburg College's webmaster, he developed an online form that citizens could use to bring properties to the attention of the consultant. The Director organized a public program held on January 7, 2016, in the Benson Chapel of Louisburg College. During this well-

attended presentation, Dr. Van den Hurk showed slides of a sampling of the broad range of buildings he surveyed during the project. The consultant noted that he had checked the status of 233 previously recorded structures and conducted a reconnaissance survey of 325 properties that had never been surveyed. These included, in addition to residences, 28 stores, 24 churches, 19 farm complexes, and 11 schools. He explained that a second phase of the project, if funded, will provide more in-depth information about the newly surveyed properties. The Phase 1 report is available online: <http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/surveyreports/FranklinCountySurvey-2015.pdf>. The Director worked with Franklin County officials and the State Historic Preservation Office in planning subsequent phases of the survey. In May 2016, he made arrangements for a meeting of local citizens who volunteered to give Dr. Van den Hurk the locations of and/or information about properties that merit inclusion in the survey.

The Director served as a member of a committee appointed by Franklin County to make recommendations for the establishment of an ordinance for a historic properties commission for the county.

#### ***Support for Louisburg College 2016-2017 Traveling Exhibition Series***

During the winter and spring of 2016, the Director raised approximately \$2,500 from individuals and businesses in support of the first exhibition in Louisburg College's 2016-2017 Traveling Exhibition Series: *Betty McKinne: Lost Landscapes*. Funds will be used to defray expenses associated with the exhibition, including the production of a brochure. The exhibition will feature 24 pastel drawings produced in the late 1960s and early 1970s by Louisburg resident Betty McKinne. The pictures depict historic buildings and rural landscapes in Franklin County. The opening on Monday, August 22, 2016, will feature an introductory presentation by Mrs. McKinne's daughter, Elizabeth.

#### ***Tar River Center for History and Culture Foundation, Inc.***

During the fiscal year, the Director met three times with other members of the Tar River Center for History and Culture Foundation Board of Directors (Felix Allen, President; Randy Thomas, Treasurer; Sharon Billings; Dewey Botts; and Dr. Mark La Branche). He took minutes of meetings and kept board members apprised of developments related to the work of the TRCHC. He worked with the President and Treasurer to ensure that bills, including monthly rent payments to Louisburg College, were paid in a timely fashion.

The Director facilitated the work of consultants hired by the Foundation to determine the cost of stabilizing the old Franklin County Jail in downtown Louisburg. This would include replacement of the roof, repair or replacement of metal windows, and reconstruction of the front porch. Members of the board met in February 2016 with Franklin County Manager Angela Harris. During this meeting, President Felix Allen summarized the costs involved in stabilization of the building (approximately \$60,000). Board members offered to raise \$20,000 of the total needed.

The foundation received generous contributions during the year from Franklin County and the Town of Louisburg.

### ***Publicity***

In addition to periodic press releases, the Director produced thirty-three posts for the TRCHC's Facebook page. These provided access to Tar River Roots articles and promoted events sponsored by the TRCHC. By the end of the fiscal year, more than 220 persons had "liked" the page—an increase of 70 during the period. The Director also worked with Robert Strickland, Louisburg College's webmaster, to keep the TRCHC's Web pages up to date. In addition, the Director wrote three articles for the Spring 2016 issue of *Columns*, the magazine for Louisburg College alumni and friends. The director distributed hundreds of copies of the *Tour Historic Louisburg* booklet to Interstate Highway welcome centers in North Carolina.

### ***Community Service***

The Director undertook the following community service activities during the year:

June 11, 2015 – Supplied Richie Duncan of the Franklin County Economic Development office with three documentary photographs of Louisburg for a statewide display of photos representing each county in the state.

June 29, 2015 – Supplied Mr. Rob Gourlay of Covington, Georgia, with information concerning Gen. John Napier Williamson of Covington, Ga.

June 29, 2015 – Assisted pastor of Hickory Rock Baptist Church with information to assist him in researching the history of the congregation and the adjacent academy.

July 23, 2015 – Supplied E. T. Malone Jr. of Warrenton a photograph of Franklin Male Academy for use in a book he is writing. At his request, the director read one of the chapters and made suggestions concerning it.

July 23, 2014 – Assisted local individual with application for an EIN for a non-profit organization with which she is involved.

July 27, 2015 – Supplied the Ben Franklin Society with thirty-four pages printed from microfilm of original manuscript census manufacturing schedules (1850, 1860, 1870, 1880) documenting the activity of historic grist mills in Franklin County.

August 3, 2015 – Assisted Mr. Steve Douglas of Columbus, Ohio, with information on his ancestor, James Madison Moss, who may have been a student at Louisburg Male Academy prior to the Civil War.

August 24, 2015 – Assisted Mr. Phillip Robertson with information about Joseph B. Littlejohn of the Louisburg vicinity, a large land owner in 1860.

September 8, 2015 – Assisted Ms. Renate Sanders with information concerning the origin of St. Paul Presbyterian Church in Louisburg.

September 24, 2015 – Gave tour of Louisburg Historic District to spouses of members of the Louisburg College Board of Trustees.

November 18, 2015 – Met with members of the board of directors of the Person Place Preservation Society to plan a fund raising effort to pay for transcription of the society's Voices of the Century oral history project. Subsequently prepared letter used to solicit donations.

December 4, 2015 – Made a presentation about the Voices of the Century oral history project at the annual meeting of the Person Place Preservation Society.

January 12, 2016 – Met with members of the Person Place Preservation Society to begin planning the biennial tour of homes scheduled for the spring of 2017.

January 25, 2016 – Provided information about Covington Foundation to Mary Raiford, a representative of Cherry Hill Plantation, which is seeking grant funds for the restoration of service buildings behind the plantation house.

February 1, 2016 – Assisted a resident of Old Sparta, N.C., with information concerning a group that does reenactments of the tar, pitch, and turpentine industry in North Carolina.

February 2, 2016 – Assisted a researcher from France with information concerning the Portis Gold Mine and other gold mines in North Carolina.

March 9, 2016 – Spoke on the history of Franklin County at Leadership Franklin, an annual leadership development program of the Greater Franklin County Chamber of Commerce.

March 21, 2016 – Spoke on the work of the Tar River Center for History and Culture at monthly meeting of the Vance County Genealogy Society 1881, Henderson, N.C.

March 31, 2016 – Provided Robert Elliott of Cypress Hall Plantation information on state tax credits available for restoration of properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

April 2016 – Assisted the Person Place Preservation Society by providing copies of Sanborn maps and documentary photographs showing the Person Place, to assist the organization in interpreting an outbuilding that was removed from the site in the 1970s.

April 22, 2016 – Provided Mrs. Dorothy Wilkinson of Granville County information about a Franklin County home demonstration agent, Mrs. Alta Shilling.

Spring 2016 – With the assistance of Kurt Carlson, wrote a grant application to the Marion Stedman Covington Foundation for a matching grant for the replacement of the wooden shake roof of the Franklin Male Academy. The grant was funded.

## Donations

The Tar River Center for History and Culture Foundation gratefully acknowledges generous donations from the following individuals and institutions:

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## Conclusion

The Tar River Center for History and Culture continues to fulfill its mission of bringing people of the Upper Tar River region together around a sense of shared history. During the year, the TRCHC provided meaningful cultural opportunities for area citizens, supplied local public schools with materials that will enrich North Carolina history classes, and supported work that can, in time, enhance the region's appeal as a tourist destination. This work would not be possible without the outstanding support of Franklin County, the Town of Louisburg, and

Louisburg College. The Director is grateful for this financial assistance and for the opportunity to serve the people of the region.