



## **Tar River Center for History and Culture Annual Report June 1, 2014-May 31, 2015**

### Introduction

The Tar River Center for History and Culture (TRCHC), an office of Louisburg College, was established in 2013 by President Mark La Branche in an effort to bring citizens of the Upper Tar River region together around a sense of shared history, to promote economic development through heritage tourism, and to support the teaching of local history in the public schools. During its second year, the center's director, Maurice C. York, focused on the implementation of a strategic plan that was developed early in 2014 after gathering ideas from area citizens.

### 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 include articles pertaining to all sections of Franklin County and, insofar as possible, to address aspects of the history of the Upper Tar River region. The articles are available on the Web site of the TRCHC.

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

The center sponsored a lecture series, The Early Development of the Tar River Valley of North Carolina:

Thursday, September 25, 2014

“Geology of the Upper Tar River Basin: How Has It Influenced Human Activity?”

Edward F. (Skip) Stoddard, PhD, Retired Faculty, North Carolina State University  
Part-time Geologist, North Carolina Geological Survey

Thursday, November 6, 2014

“The Earliest North Carolinians: Native American Occupations along the Tar River Valley”

Dr. I. Randolph Daniel, Jr., Professor and Interim Chair, Department of Anthropology, East Carolina University

Thursday, January 29, 2015  
Annual Joseph E. Elmore Lecture  
“18<sup>th</sup> Century Architecture in the Upper Tar River Valley”  
Michael Southern, Senior Architectural Historian and GIS Coordinator,  
North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office

Thursday, March 26, 2015  
“Precursors of the Regulator Movement in Old Granville County:  
Reuben Searcy’s Petition (1759) and George Sims’s ‘Nutbush Address’ (1765)”  
Dr. Carole Watterson Troxler, Professor *Emerita* of History, Elon University

All of the lectures were well attended. The lecture on January 29, 2015, attracted eighty persons from seven counties.

### ***Louisburg Historic District Walking Tour Booklet***

A committee composed of the director, Lucy Allen, Sharon Billings, and Dru York developed the text and images for a thirty-four-page walking tour booklet for the Louisburg Historic District. The director secured a grant of \$4,500 from the Franklin County Tourism Development Authority and raised additional funds from private donors. Funds supplied by Franklin County and the Town of Louisburg were also used. Seven thousand copies of the booklet were received from the printer in April 2015. Copies were distributed to the Greater Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, the Franklin County Library, the Town of Louisburg, twelve Interstate highway welcome centers, selected historic sites in the region, and public libraries outside of Franklin County.

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

The TRCHC initiated a series of monthly walking tours of portions of the Louisburg Historic District. The tours will be conducted at 10 a.m. on the second Saturday of each month, excepting December, January, and February. During the spring of 2015, the director solicited volunteers to lead the tours; developed guidelines, a liability release form, and suggested talking points; and held two training sessions. The first tour was held on May 9. At the conclusion of the tour, Myrtle King, who was sitting on the front porch of the Fuller-Malone-Parham House on Main Street, read from her 1999 book, *Anna Long Thomas Fuller's Journal, 1856-1890 : a Civil War Diary*. The event commemorated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the encampment of Union troops in Louisburg just after the end of the Civil War.

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

The director and Dr. Peggy McGhee, a retired Franklin County school administrator, met with eighth-grade social studies teachers in the Franklin County Schools in the fall of 2014 to propose a project called “Bringing History Home.” Through this initiative, retired school personnel would develop lesson plans that would tie aspects of the history of Franklin County to the State

of North Carolina's Essential Standards: Eighth Grade Social Studies. When the teachers expressed strong support for the project, Dr. McGhee developed lesson plans pertaining to Aunt Abby House of Franklinton, a plain-spoken farm woman who ministered to Confederate soldiers during the Civil War, and to John Hendrick Williamson, a former slave who served Franklin County in the North Carolina House of Representatives after the war. PowerPoint presentations developed by the director's North Carolina history classes at Louisburg College were the basis for the lesson plans, which were delivered to the teachers in May 2015.

During the spring of 2015, the director approached the Franklin County Schools, to see if the system's personnel had an interest in displaying a dugout canoe discovered along the bank of the Tar River near Louisburg in 2001. The vessel, which may have been one of two pontoons lashed together to form a platform for conveying farm commodities, had been conserved by the North Carolina Office of Archaeology and subsequently placed in storage by the Town of Louisburg. Administrators in the Franklin County Schools and the principal of Terrell Lane Middle School expressed strong interest in having the canoe exhibited at Terrell Lane Middle School. In May 2015, the director met with a group of teachers and administrators to discuss the project. It was agreed that the center would apply for a grant to have a suitable exhibit case and interpretive panel constructed. The grant would support the development of lesson plans related to the canoe, to enhance its value as a teaching tool within the school system.

To date, the director has undertaken considerable research concerning the canoe. He secured the services of Michael Worthington, a dendrochronologist, who examined the canoe on May 13, 2015, to determine whether tree rings in the canoe's stern can be used to determine when the tree used to make the canoe was felled. Currently, the director is assembling information needed for the grant proposal.

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

In December 2014, the Tar River Center for History and Culture Foundation received a grant of \$1,200 from the North Carolina Humanities Council to undertake a project entitled An Oral History of School Desegregation in Franklin County, North Carolina. After suitable training, several volunteers joined the director in conducting twelve interviews in the spring and early summer of 2015. The volunteer interviewers were Charles Davis, Will Hinton, and Kelvin Spragley. The interviewees included administrators, teachers, parents, and students who had direct knowledge of events surrounding the integration of the Franklin County Schools and the schools in Franklinton (a separate system) during the 1960s. The interviews are being transcribed by an experienced oral history transcriptionist. A public program to showcase the results of the project will be held in the fall of 2015.

### ***Survey of Historic Architecture in Franklin County***

The director facilitated the beginning of phase I of a comprehensive survey of the historic architecture of Franklin County. A kickoff meeting for the project was held in the County Office Building on January 29, 2015. It was attended by County Manager Angela Harris; Sidney

Dunston, chairman of the Franklin County Board of Commissioners; Claudia Brown, head of the Survey and National Register Branch of the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office; Richie Duncan and Ronnie Goswick of the Franklin County Economic Development Commission; and a group of citizens who had volunteered to assist with the survey. In the spring of 2015, using funds provided by the Franklin County Tourism Development Authority, the county hired a consultant, Dr. Jeroen van den Hurk, of Coastal Carolina Research, to undertake Phase I of the survey. In May 2015, the Tar River Center for History and Culture hosted a meeting at which volunteers heard a presentation by Dr. van den Hurk and had a chance to meet him. With assistance from Claudia Brown, who is supervising Dr. van den Hurk's work, the TRCHC developed paper and online versions of a form that volunteers can use to apprise Dr. van den Hurk of properties that should be surveyed.

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

During the fiscal year, the director met four times with other members of the Tar River Center for History and Culture Foundation. 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. 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 forty-four 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 150 persons had "liked" the page. He also worked with Robert Strickland, Louisburg College's webmaster, to keep the TRCHC's Web pages up to date.

### ***Community Service***

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

June 5, 2014 – Assisted Louisburg Historic District Neighborhood Association with incorporation and obtaining EIN.

June 19, 2014 – Assisted Ben Franklin Society with books and newspaper articles pertaining to kitchen gardens in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

July 7, 2014 – Gave Joanne Carpenter information about Hemden and Hickory Grove academies in Franklin County.

July 7, 2014 – Gave Allen De Hart information about the cost of the Civil War Trails marker and the contact information for Mitch Bowman, the director of the CWT program.

July 11, 2014 – Gave Ben Franklin Society information on how to find facts about grist mills in Franklin County from the 1850-1880 censuses (manufacturing schedules) and from minutes of the Franklin County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions.

July 15, 2014 – Spoke to Vance County Genealogical Society in Henderson on TRCHC.

August 12, 2014 – Met with Cathy Duggan to give her advice on the disposition of her family papers, photographs, and artifacts.

August 12, 2014 – Met with Ann Merritt to discuss the possibility of having William Dunstan to give a book talk in Louisburg concerning his books that include references to the history of Louisburg and Louisburg College.

August 21, 2014 – Spoke to Louisburg College Golden Anniversary Club on status and plans of the TRCHC.

August 29, 2014 – Helped e-mail correspondent with information concerning Thomas Blacknall.

August 2014 – Helped coordinate the effort of Trent Strickland, president of the Carolina Chapter of the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, to work with the Town of Louisburg in placing a free interpretive marker for Richard Warfington in Louisburg.

September 13, 2014 – Staffed a booth for the TRCHC all day at the Tar River Festival in Louisburg. Distributed cards for the 2014-2015 lecture series and maps for the Civil War Trails markers in North Carolina.

October 16, 2014 – Sponsored book talk by Dr. William E. Dunstan concerning his “Adventures of a Southern Boyhood” series.

October 26, 2014 – Conducted walking tour of Louisburg Historic District for Franklin County Arts Council.

October 29, 2014 – Provided Ms. Margie House Brummitt with information about the site of Abby House’s grave.

October 2014 – Assembled representative materials pertaining to Louisburg College for deposit in a time capsule sponsored by the Heritage Society of Franklin County, to be opened in 2114.

November 4, 2014 – Provided Diane Taylor Torrent with biographical materials concerning Cecil W. Robbins for a talk to be given at the Oakwood Cemetery when the time capsule was deposited in its vault.

November 24, 2014 – Assisted Person Place Preservation Society by providing guidance on how to have seventeen oral history tapes transcribed.

November 25, 2014 – At the request of Brantley Parrott, a realtor, assisted the new owners of Purple Berry Plantation with information about Preservation North Carolina and Dean Ruedrich, to assist them in the preservation of the original house at Purple Berry.

December 17, 2014 – Assisted State Library of North Carolina with reference question concerning Louisburg College and an alumnus who attended during the 1938-1939 year.

January 8, 2015 – Assisted Billy Yeargin of Durham with information on tobacco in Vance County for a lecture he was preparing for delivery in Henderson the following week.

January 20, 2015 – Gave advice to Peter Andrews concerning his proposed book on Almont Barnes.

February 4, 2015 – Gave advice to County Manager Angela Harris on how to display the old courthouse bell.

March 11, 2015 – Gave a presentation on the history of Franklin County to attendees of Leadership Franklin, sponsored by the Greater Franklin County Chamber of Commerce.

April 7, 2015 – Assisted Archie Portis with his research on the Portis Gold Mine for a book he is writing.

May 8, 2015 – Provided the County Manager with historical information concerning the building currently occupied by the county's Tax Office.

May 23, 2015 – Gave presentation on early history of Louisburg to meeting of Carolina Chapter, Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation; made arrangements for the meeting. At the request of *The Franklin Times*, wrote article about the meeting and the dedication by the chapter of a marker at Joyner Park honoring Richard Warfington, a member of the expedition from Louisburg.

### Donations

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

Mrs. Lucy T. Allen  
Allen Woodworks  
Ben Franklin Society  
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Reney Bennett  
Mr. and Mrs. Dewey Botts  
James Bryan Cash

Mr. and Mrs. Robert D. Elliott  
First Citizens Bank  
Franklin County  
Johnny Bull's Steakhouse  
Dr. and Mrs. Mark D. La Branche  
Louisburg College  
Mr. and Mrs. J. Parker Lumpkin, II  
Danny Massey  
North Caroliniana Society  
Mark A. Pace  
Pilot Lions Club  
Town of Louisburg  
Phyllis Bailey Whitaker  
B. N. Williamson, III  
John P. Williamson, Jr.

### Conclusion

The Tar River Center for History and Culture accomplished considerable work during its second year. The organization has been well received by many individuals and organizations in Franklin and some surrounding counties. In many ways, it has brought people together around a sense of shared history, which is one of the primary objectives envisioned by Louisburg College President Mark La Branche. The director looks forward to building upon this foundation with the help of interested citizens and volunteers.