



The Link



preserving our heritage and building a future together

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Floor at Oak Hill School Undergoes Restoration



Oak Hill School

Oak Hill School once stood at Knob Creek, about seven miles east of Jonesborough. Built in the 1880's, the schoolhouse served first through eighth grades for over 60 years.

The schoolhouse was abandoned in 1952. It sat empty and deteriorating until 1996 when the Jonesborough-Washington County History Museum moved the building to its present location in Jonesborough and restored it. For two decades the revitalized Oak Hill School has served a key

role in the Heritage Alliance's educational programs.

Heritage Alliance personnel had recently noticed a soft spot in a section of the school's floor. Local businessman Paul Morin, a master carpenter and owner of Jonesborough store "Paul's Pens Odds and Ends," stepped up and agreed to take a look at the problem.

Paul found that a floor joist had rotted and was in need of immediate replacement, probably due to a roof leak during the many years the building sat empty. Paul volunteered to replace the

damaged joist and repair the floor, making the schoolhouse safe for many future programs and events.

Paul says he supports historic preservation because, "If we forget our heritage, we can lose our way, as ourselves and as a country."

Paul's store opened in 2014 and he has lived in the area for twenty years. He specializes in hand-crafted pens and other accessories. The Heritage Alliance greatly appreciates Paul's assistance in repairing the schoolhouse floor.



Paul Morin at his Saw



Study Under Way to Identify Possible Changes to Jonesborough's National Historic District

The Town of Jonesborough recently entered into a contract to update the historic significance of structures in Jonesborough's National Historic District. The contractor, Phil Thomason and Associates, is in the process of identifying historically significant structures that lie outside the current historic district boundaries, or that may have become historically significant since 1997, when the district was updated. The properties will be documented, mapped and photographed. Historical research will be done by consulting historical maps and archival information.

The National Register can consider structures more than 50 years old for possible historical significance. Since the Town's original National Register nomination was done 47 years ago, and updated nearly 20 years ago, many structures not eligible for consideration then can be considered now. These include 1940's post-World War II construction, midcentury modern structures from the 1950's, and ranch structures from the early



Historic Downtown Jonesborough

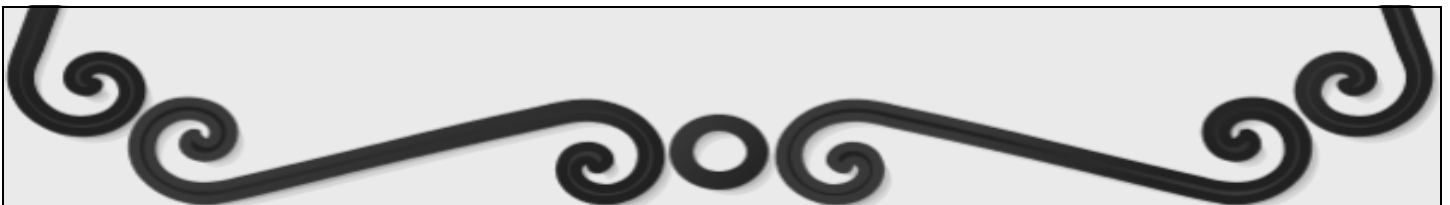
1960's. The final report will identify and document structures (inside and outside of the existing historic district) that are eligible for National Register nomination.

Property owners or occupants have already been contacted by mail to provide input on their property's history and changes that have occurred to the structures over time. In order to keep the public updated and get the input of others in the process, the contractor is conducting three public meetings and also two

workshops during the project.

Work began in January and is scheduled to conclude with a final report in September.

Public meetings will be scheduled soon. For more information on the status of this project, you can contact the Heritage Alliance by email (info@heritageall.org) or phone (423-753-9580).



New Signs for Chester Inn and Other State Historic Sites

Finding the Chester Inn should be a bit easier this year, as the State of Tennessee recently replaced its entry signs. One new sign faces Main Street, the other is visible to individuals in the International Storytelling Center Plaza.

This project is part of a statewide effort to update and improve signing at state historic sites. Other historic sites in the area that received new signs are Rocky Mount State Historic Site and Tipton-Haynes State Historic Site.



New Signs Installed at Chester Inn



Town Tour Guides Anne G'Fellers-Mason, Bob Dunn and Mary Noel

Town Tours to be in Costume for 2016

Jonesborough Town Tours will take on a different look this year as the tour guides will now be in historical dress.

Spanning the late eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the costumes will add another dimension to the stories of Jonesborough's past.

We thank our town tour guides Anne G'Fellers-Mason, Bob Dunn, Mary Noel and Deborah Montanti for their willingness to share another aspect of the past with Jonesborough visitors.



Guest Curator's Exhibit at Chester Inn



Toy Horse from the Guest Curator Exhibit Currently at the Chester Inn

A new exhibit, currently in place at the Chester Inn, consists of artifacts chosen by seven “guest curators.” The items were picked because they provide each of the contributors with a personal connection to the past.

For example, guest curator Anne G’Fellers-Mason chose a homemade stuffed toy horse made in the late 1800’s. “I chose it because the toy was made with great care and detail - someone worked really hard to create it. It also shows wear, so it’s clear it was loved by its owner.”

Robert R. Archibald, past President of the Missouri History Museum said, “The most profound effect of an artifact is emotional, its ability to make us call to mind another time, another place, a story, and perhaps a memory.”

The exhibit will be on view at the Chester Inn through early May.

Archives Update

Heritage Alliance personnel are hard at work organizing, sorting and relocating papers and artifacts in the Jonesborough-Washington County History Museum and Archives. This work is being funded by a Local Archives Development Grant from the State of Tennessee.

For documents, the first step has been to organize them by collection (who donated the materials). This step is 90% complete. New shelves have been ordered, and the final future step will be to move the documents

back into the archives room. Also, items will be entered into PastPerfect, a database program that allows for better, future access to the collections.

Work has also been under way to clean and inventory museum artifacts and insure they are in their proper location in museum storage. This part of the project is about 80% done.

Chad Fred Bailey has taken the lead in completing this work, with assistance from Heritage Alliance staff.



Chad in museum storage



Heritage Alliance Annual Meeting a Success!

The Heritage Alliance's 2016 Annual Meeting was held this past February fourth. About 100 members and guests were in attendance.

Topics addressed included updates on education programs from last year and the Jackson Theater renovations. Key volunteers who made significant contributions were recognized, including Bob Dunn for his town tours, Gordon Edwards for his cemetery tours and work on cemetery restoration, and Patricia Stern for her dedication in running the Architectural Salvage Warehouse.

Also, Anne G'Fellers-Mason gave a brief preview of the dramatic play that will be offered at the upcoming summer dinner theater in June (*see Page 6 for information on tickets!*).



Director Deborah Montanti addresses the attendees



Guests enjoy the potluck and share historic interests

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Reminder: Early Bird Pricing Ends April 16 for Outdoor Drama

New for 2016! The Heritage Alliance will be presenting "Not Your Ordinary Dinner Party" on June 11th at 6:30. Held near Jonesborough's historic cemetery, this all-new original outdoor drama features tales from Washington County's past, served with cocktails, a BBQ dinner from Commissioner Joe Gandy and a show-stopping dessert.

The drama, written by Anne G'Fellers-Mason, will be directed by Jules Corriere.

Tickets are \$80 (through Apr. 16; \$85 thereafter). Reserve your seat by calling 423-753-1010.



Photo by Mountain Photographics, Inc.

Calendar of Events

- **Chester Inn Museum:** Open Fri, Sat, Mon 11-6 and Sun 1-5. Open Wed & Thurs from 11-6 beginning May 4.
- **Architectural Salvage Warehouse:** Open from 8:00-11:00 the first & third Sat of every month starting April 2
- **Town Tours:** 1:00 every Mon, Wed (starting May 4), Fri, & Sat. Tickets \$5 at Chester Inn.
- **Jonesborough's Dulcimer Weekend** May 20-22, find info on our website or Facebook page.
- **Jonesborough Days (June 30 - July 2):** The Chester Inn will be open extended hrs with added Town Tours. We'll also be sharing lessons from Oak Hill School in the kid's area and some hands-on, archeology activities! Stay tuned for more info!

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From the Director's Desk

The Christopher Taylor House needs our help! Originally built about 1777 by Jacob Womack, it is one of East Tennessee's best examples of pioneer architecture, exemplifying early log construction. The V-notched logs and beams were hand hewn. Once sawmills made cut lumber available, the exterior was covered with clapboards to provide a finished appearance.

Christopher Taylor purchased the home from Womack in 1778. He claimed land grants afforded him from his service in the French and Indian War. The house originally stood on the stage road about two miles west of town on Little Limestone Creek. Taylor is said to have opened his home to many a weary traveler, including a young Andrew Jackson.

In 1973, with the house facing demolition due to development on its original site, the cabin was disassembled and rebuilt at its present location. It has served many uses over the years, including welcoming visitors to town and providing workspace for various craftsmen. The log house has long served as festival headquarters for the National Storytelling Festival. The house also provides an excellent educational opportunity. It is one of our most popular photo opportunities; in fact, it is as emblematic of Jonesborough as the Courthouse. Anytime the doors of the Christopher Taylor House are opened, people flock to see the inside. Imagine what additional

opportunities could exist if the structure were restored, opened regularly and actually used (as it was in the early days of its relocation)!

The Christopher Taylor House and the adjacent Chester Inn, taken together, represent the evolution of settlement patterns and architecture from the area's earliest settlement, and stand as artifacts of lodging available along the great stage road. The Inn's juxtaposition with the Christopher Taylor House provides a unique opportunity to discuss our country's westward expansion, as well as the architectural and sociological evolutions that accompanied it. Even though the Christopher Taylor House has been relocated, it stands as an example of the early building techniques that put a roof over our forbearers' heads.

Unfortunately, there is a lot of work to be done and it will be expensive. Christopher Taylor's house is in urgent need of immediate maintenance. The second floor is unsafe and should not be utilized at all. The roof needs to be replaced, as do several of the exterior logs and

the chimney. The town will lose this structure if work is not done soon.

That is the bad news. The good news is that we can take certain steps right now that can start to make a difference. In my comments to the membership during this past February's Annual Meeting, I proposed the establishment of a Christopher Taylor Task force to look at options for 1) stabilization and usage, 2) identifying funding for restoration, and finally 3) actual restoration. My thinking is that if we can utilize local donated labor and some materials to stabilize the structure short-term, we can generate the interest (and funding) needed to restore it.

What do you think? Over the years there has been a lot of talk surrounding the structure: Is it located in the right place? Should it stay downtown or be moved? How should it be interpreted? All of these questions are worth discussing. But the plain truth is that if we don't do something to stabilize the Christopher Taylor house...and do it soon... there will be no more need for discussion.



Christopher Taylor House - As it Appeared in its Original Location





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