



The Link



preserving our heritage and building a future together

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Fall 2021

Chester Inn Museum Celebrates 10th Anniversary

Even amidst the chaos and turmoil of the past two years, the Heritage Alliance has had plenty to celebrate as an organization. Last year we marked the 50th anniversary of the Civic Trust and the Historic Zoning Commission, two organizations that helped spearhead the historic preservation movement in Jonesborough. This year, the Heritage Alliance is celebrating its 20th anniversary, and the Chester Inn Museum is celebrating its 10th!

We have installed a new exhibit to commemorate the anniversary: "How We Got Here: The Chester

Inn Museum at 10." The exhibit explores the history of the building, the initial restoration of the building in the 1980s, and the planning process for the museum itself.

The State of Tennessee acquired the Chester Inn, then being used as apartments, in the late 1980s and began restoring the building to its late 1800s appearance. Initially the building was operated by the International Storytelling Center.

The Chester Inn Museum did not arrive until several years later

when it opened to the public on September 17, 2011. The museum is operated by the Heritage Alliance and has served as the public face for the organization since it opened.

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Chester Inn ribbon cutting ceremony

"A Spot on the Hill" Returns This October to the Cemetery

We're excited to be back in the Old Jonesborough Cemetery this October with the seventh edition of "A Spot on the Hill." This year's show includes ten new stories from the Rocky Hill and



Picture from 2019 production

College Hill Cemeteries. Stories this year include Sid Armstrong who got into a sticky situation on Main Street, Lucy Stuart who has been reunited with her family, and several past members of the Schubert Club including Katherine Simpson Panhorst, Daisy Panhorst Laird, and Ethel Panhorst Cooke. This play is the main fundraiser for tombstone repair and maintenance.

Tickets are available online through the Town of

Jonesborough and by phone at the Visitor's Center. Performance dates are Oct 15, 16, 22, and 23 with six performances total. As usual, the cast are dedicated community actors. Audiences will recognize some familiar faces and will meet some new ones. Due to the ongoing pandemic, this year's show does not have an indoor location. So, bundle up, and bring your chair and your umbrella to the Old Jonesborough Cemetery. What do the spirits have to say? Come listen and find out.



“A Tale of Three Houses” Shares Found Items



A new exhibit at the Jonesborough & Washington County History Museum (JWHCM) turns the spotlight on three homes located in Telford, TN. The Stern family generously shared a selection of historic artifacts found in the Embree House, Kyker House, and Wassom House with the Heritage Alliance. These items help to tell

the stories of the homes, the families who built them, and the families who lived there. Objects on display include shards of pottery, a stuffed dog, horseshoes, soles of people shoes, and a beautiful crazy quilt from the early 1900s that contains the initials of several members of the Wassom family. This exhibit also includes two pieces of art. It has a little bit of everything, including a piece of a yoke that was found buried underground, and that's what makes it so exciting.

“I love that this exhibit shares the history of three very different houses,” says Executive Director Anne Mason. “The houses are built from stone, brick, and concrete block. They span centuries and building styles, but

they are all so close together in terms of geography. They also share some familial connections. It has been a lot of fun working with Dr. Patrick Stern and his family to curate this exhibit.”

“A Tale of Three Houses” will be on display through the end of the year, so make sure you stop by and check it out. Also, tune in for a special edition of “Exhibit Extras” on the Chester Inn Museum’s YouTube channel that will talk about this exhibit and what it’s like to base an exhibit around found items.

A special reception was held at the JWCHM on 9/23. We hope to do more events in the museum in the near future.

New Exhibit at the Chuckey Depot Museum

On Thursday, September 9th visitors gathered at the Chuckey Depot Railroad Museum for an opening reception celebrating the debut of a new exhibit, “The Greatest Good to the Greatest Number: The Railroad in Northeast Tennessee.” “The Greatest Good” is the latest display to emerge from the ongoing collaboration between the Watauga Valley Railroad Historical Society, the Town of Jonesborough, and the Heritage Alliance, a partnership that started with the museum’s opening in 2017.

The exhibit was curated by members of the Railroad Society and the Heritage Alliance. It includes an assortment of artifacts documenting the histories of the three railroads that would eventually become the Southern Railway,

particularly the phases between each of the railroad’s iterations.

“These rail-lines have had a dramatic impact on the development of our region, economically, socially, politically, and culturally,” states Megan Cullen Tewell, Programming Coordinator of the Heritage Alliance. “This exhibit attempts to explain how the various stages of the railroad played a part in that story throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.”

Avid collectors graciously loaned items for the exhibit, which includes photographs, paper materials, and three-dimensional objects documenting the life of the railroad beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. The exhibit also discusses the relationship that East

Tennessee shared with the States of Georgia and Virginia, especially their mutual interests, which facilitated the creation and growth of the local rail lines.



“Nancy” Original Play at Washington College on Nov 13th

In 1820, Elihu Embree published his newspaper *The Emancipator* on Main Street, Jonesborough. The seven edition paper is the first publication dedicated solely to the cause of abolitionism. Embree passed away in December of 1820, and the paper died with him. Even though it was short-lived, *The Emancipator* had over 2,000 subscribers and its reach went all the way to Boston and Philadelphia. In spite of his abolitionist beliefs, Embree himself was an enslaver. Nancy was an enslaved woman owned by Elihu Embree, and her story will be shared at Washington College Academy on November 13th in an original play entitled “Nancy.”

Written by Anne G’Fellers-Mason, Executive Director of the Heritage Alliance, “Nancy” follows a year in the woman’s life, from January 1820 when Elihu Embree wrote his will to January 1821 when his will was read before the Washington County court. In his will, Embree tried to free Nancy and her five

children, but were his wishes carried out? What was Nancy feeling and thinking during this time? The play is based on primary research relying heavily on documents from the Washington County Archives. The role of Nancy will be performed by local actress Ubunibi-Afia Short. “Nancy” premiered on June 19th at the Embree House Historic Farm to three, sold out audiences.

“It is an honor to bring the show to Washington College Academy, the oldest college in the state,” Mason says. “We are very excited to partner with them.” The performance at 6:00 pm on November 13th will be a fundraiser for the Washington College Academy Alumni and the Heritage Alliance. The show will be performed in the historic girls’ dormitory on the campus. Tickets are \$20.00 and can be purchased directly through Washington College Academy by calling 423-257-5151 or by emailing their office at washingtoncollegeacademy@gmail.com. Seating is limited to only 50 people, so

make sure you purchase your tickets in advance. Tickets can also be purchased by visiting Washington College Academy’s website at www.wca1780.com.

Washington College Academy is now home to the Washington College Academy School of Arts and Crafts. It is becoming known as a center for the arts where the forms of artistic talents are as diverse as the mountain leaves. It is a wide heritage that draws students and friends to campus. Washington College is on the National Register of Historic Places. Take a class at Washington College Academy School of Arts and Crafts and be a part of their ongoing history.



Ubunibi-Afia Short as Nancy

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Charlene Cleveland: 10 Years of Service at the Chester Inn

Volunteers are the lifelines of most historic sites and museums, and the Chester Inn Museum is no exception. When the museum opened in 2011, a call went out to the public, and several people signed up to become museum docents. Charlene Cleveland was among that first group of volunteers, and she is celebrating her 10-year anniversary with the museum!

Not only was Charlene among that first group of volunteers, she is the only one remaining from that original, volunteer docent cohort. We wanted to take time to thank Charlene for all of her service.

Since Charlene has been with the museum from the beginning, it is hard to imagine it without her! She spends most of her time as a docent at the Chester Inn, but she also does behind the scenes work with our archival collection, volunteers at the Chuckkey Depot Museum, and helps out with the Progressive Dinner



You can also find Charlene assisting with special events like Jonesborough Days, Storytelling Festival, Halloween Haunts and Happenings, and Chocolate Fest. We appreciate all you do, Charlene!



Charlene in action, seen here with other volunteers and on Halloween with Executive Director Anne Mason

In Memoriam: John White, Volunteer

We are saddened to hear of John White's passing. He served as a volunteer docent at the Chester Inn Museum for several years. Although he stopped volunteering at the start of 2020, John stayed in regular contact and would stop in for a visit whenever he was in town.

John would normally volunteer in tandem with Joe Allison, and

would also help on major events like Jonesborough Days or the Storytelling Festival. John loved to talk to people and share stories. We will definitely miss seeing him around the museum and hearing his stories. Thank you for all the help you gave us, John.

To the right, John White and Joe Allison at a volunteer event in Oak Hill School.



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The Chester Inn Museum focuses on programming, education, preservation, and serving the community. It is central to many of the Heritage Alliance's programs and events, and is a very recognizable building in the community.

The 10 year exhibit looks at historic items from the Inn including bottles found between walls during a 1950s remodel that go back to the early 19th century and items from when the Inn served as the town library. Other artifacts, such as structure reports, photographs, and floor plans, show how

much time went in to the building's restoration and how the museum landed in its current appearance.

The exhibit is on display through the end of the year. Stop by and celebrate with us!



Volunteer Spotlight: Adam Gourley

Hi, I'm Adam Gourley, and I'm currently working on a Master's in Library and Information Sciences from San Jose State University. I have chosen an archival focus as part of my degree path. My mom recommended that I also get some professional experience while I was working on my degree to help prepare me when I graduate, so we looked around the area. The Heritage Alliance was our main choice because I could get to it easily, but also I feel that getting experience in a different work environment than my previous experience is very beneficial to my future goals.

Visitor Center. When I started out, she offered me a few potential projects to help work on: inventory/cataloging and digitizing documents. While I don't have any experience in digitization, I chose the inventory project because I felt it would be a good opportunity to learn PastPerfect, since that is a new system for me, and one that I'm likely to come across if I end up working in a historical or museum environment. I'm mostly just thankful for the experience, I've been able to look at some interesting artifacts and objects, including some strands of barbed wire!

planning on working in some sort of archival environment. That might be in a historical society/archive, in which case volunteering here would be most applicable. But I imagine any experience in the field can be beneficial in a general sense. I might also go back to working at the Family History Library, which is my main library experience, where I worked as a volunteer missionary and also as an intern with the Collections team. It was also my spur to get this degree. My dream job, though, would be to work at the Walt Disney Archives.

I volunteer with Megan Tewell at the

After finishing my degree, I am

Heritage Alliance Board Member Feature: Fred Counts

This month's Board Member spotlight is on Fred Counts! Fred is completing his first year on our board. According to Fred: "I joined board member Kati H. Jenkins in welcoming a new generation to the board."

Gordon Edwards played a huge role in getting Fred involved with the organization. Fred said, "Gordon has been an enthusiastic and active board President, as well as a pivotal part of the Heritage Alliance's Architectural Salvage Warehouse. In my five seasons volunteering with him at the warehouse, he was sure I would bring value and a fresh perspective to the board." He adds: "I was honored to accept his nomination!"

Fred's favorite part of serving on our board is seeing the impact of the board's work in the region happen in real time. According to Fred: "Executive Director Anne Mason has brought fresh energy and highlighted the mission of our organization with both expanded programming and more inclusive approaches to preservation. Board members are enthusiastic in contributing their unique contacts and skills to make funding and operation of our programs a reality. Seeing this kind of teamwork at each meeting gives me great hopes about our future in the area."

Away from the board, Fred is Front House Manager at Main Street Café, a Jonesborough lunchtime institution since 1982. Fred enjoys that work as well: "I

get to work with my best friends from my undergrad days at ETSU and rub shoulders with every facet of our town's social scene. I can't think of a career that helps me keep a clear pulse of what's going on - and what's important - in Jonesborough." When not working or volunteering at the Salvage Warehouse on Saturdays in the warm months, Fred is traveling, researching local history, or working on the continued historic rehabilitation and documentation of his 1956 Mid-Century Ranch home in North Johnson City. Last year, he restored the original wood siding, hidden under vinyl since the early 90s. In a couple of months, they're rehabilitating the original bathroom. Be sure to ask Fred

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about the perils and hardships of the great 1950s bath-on-a-budget fad that was Polystyrene Tile!

Fred has deep ancestral roots in Dickenson County, Virginia, a coal-rich area of the Cumberland Plateau that borders Kentucky. Economic conditions have been difficult there for many decades now, and after a couple years in neighboring Wise County, Fred's mom moved them to Kingsport when he was 10. His family thrived there, and his mother still practices in Kingsport, even though she's called Asheville home since 2017. Fred graduated from Dobyns-Bennett in 2007 and earned an Associates Degree from Northeast State in 2009. It was then that he moved to Johnson City and earned a Bachelor's Degree from ETSU in 2012. He fell in love with the area while here, and after a few years in Minneapolis, he found he couldn't stay away. "I'm so glad to call both of these towns home," Fred adds.

We asked Fred why people should get involved with the organization. His response: "So many organizations struggle with stagnation, but not the Heritage Alliance. There is something for everyone, and it encompasses the story of everyone in our region. It is always looking to do more to fulfill its mission. I encourage everyone to take advantage of the many volunteer opportunities, you never know what you might find!"



Board Member Fred Counts, hard at work on his historic house.



POSTPONED!

THE IN-PERSON
TASTE OF TENNESSEE FESTIVAL HAS
BEEN RESCHEDULED FOR...

SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 2022*

Out of respect and concern for our neighbors and our community, The Heritage Alliance has made the difficult decision to reschedule the 2021 Taste of Tennessee festival. Our new date is Saturday, June 18, 2022.

We appreciate your understanding and support during this difficult time.

And we look forward to celebrating all things edible and all things Appalachian with you next year!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT THE HERITAGE ALLIANCE:

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From the Director's Desk:

Dearest members, volunteers, and community at large, thanks for hanging in there with the Heritage Alliance as we continue to navigate the ongoing pandemic. Right after we published the Summer edition of this newsletter, we sadly had to postpone our Taste of Tennessee festival and our 20th anniversary potluck due to the Delta variant. We are looking forward to launching our Appalachian Foodways Festival in June of 2022, though, and we're also excited about gathering at Grace Meadows Farm next year to celebrate 20 years. Since we officially turn 20 on October 15th, we'll still be celebrating in a timely fashion.

On October 15th of this year, we encourage you to think about your favorite Heritage Alliance memory. We also encourage you to reach out to a friend or relative and share with them why you're a member of the Heritage Alliance and why it's important to you. Tell them why you volunteer with us. You never know, you just might influence them to become a member or volunteer. The Heritage Alliance is always looking

to grow our family and serve our community in new ways.

Even though some programs had to be postponed this summer and fall, we've forged ahead with several others. Our Summer Suppers were a huge hit, and we're very thankful to all the people who came out to enjoy those evenings and to all the many volunteers who worked to make that series a success. Summer Suppers will be back in some form or fashion in 2022. The Heritage Alliance hosted a packed, albeit wet, trivia night at the Historic Eureka Inn on October 8th, and our True and Chilling Tales Tours are completely sold out at the end of this month. In November, the play "Nancy" returns to the stage at Washington College Academy, and we hope several of you who weren't able to come and see it in June are able to come in November.

Now, I know what you're all thinking, what about the Progressive Dinner? At this moment, we are planning to host the 43rd Progressive Dinner on Saturday, December 4th. Tickets for the holiday event will go on-sale to past attendees and Members on Monday, October 18th. We are excited to feature two homes that have never been on the dinner before, the Deaderick/Ponder Home on East Main Street and the Emerson/Bible Home on East Woodrow Avenue. Other locations for the event include the Chuckey Depot Museum and the McKinney Center. The Progressive Dinner is a perfect start for the holiday season and tickets for the unique evening are \$100.00. There are three seating times this year at 4:00 pm, 6:00 pm, and 7:40 pm. The four course meal will include food prepared by Boone Street Market, Main Street Catering,

and Embree House Cakes. We do not have a menu yet at this time. We encourage you to purchase tickets early, because this event always sells out. Tickets will be available (10/18/21) at Jonesborough.com/tickets or by calling the Visitor's Center at 423-753-1010. We are keeping an eye on all CDC guidelines and will continue to make the best decisions we can regarding this fundraiser. The Progressive Dinner is the largest fundraiser for the Heritage Alliance. It is sponsored by First Horizon Bank and Celebrate!

I'd like to close my column with a special remembrance. We recently lost Elaine Scott Cantrell. Her contributions to chronicling the history of Washington County, TN, are immeasurable. During her long life, she was able to compile books and books on the County's history. Her photos document a changing landscape. Her dedication to history, preservation, and genealogy earned her many awards. Thanks to her, the history of Washington County has been saved for future generations. I will miss Elaine so much, and I know several of you will as well. Whenever I saw her, she'd take my hand and tell me she was proud of me. Thank you, Elaine, for your support and for all your tireless work. You have laid a strong foundation, and we'll take it from here.

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