



# The Link



*preserving our heritage and building a future together*

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Winter 2021

## Happy Holidays from the Heritage Alliance!

The Heritage Alliance had a very festive and successful holiday season! We kicked things off at the Chester Inn Museum by bringing back “The Grinch” readings in our parlor room and introducing a new holiday program: Living Victorian Christmas cards!

We also brought back the Progressive Dinner which was missed last year. This holiday staple is our major fundraiser event, and it was a huge success! We could not have done it without our dedicated volunteers, staff, and partners. A special thank you to our homeowners Aaron and Ashley Bible and Brian and Shelyne Ponder for

opening your homes to us. Also thank you to the Town of Jonesborough for letting us showcase the McKinney Center and the Chuckey Depot Museum on the dinner.



*Above: Living Christmas Cards w/ Santa. On the Right: The McKinney Center during the Progressive Dinner, Anne Mason reads The Grinch.*



## 2022 *Herald & Tribune* Calendar Features the Heritage Alliance

This year, we’ve been writing monthly articles for the *Herald & Tribune* to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Heritage Alliance. Well, the celebration continues in calendar form. We are pleased to announce that archival photos from our collection will be showcased in the 2022 *Herald & Tribune* calendar. We have 12 months of fascinating photos and historical tidbits to share with you.

Proceeds from calendar sales will also help benefit the educational programs of the Alliance.

In 2020, we partnered with the *Herald & Tribune* on their calendar, and we’re so happy to be able to do it again. (Don’t worry, we’re not repeating any photos.) If you subscribe to the paper, you’ll receive your copy of the calendar in the last edition of the year. If you don’t subscribe,

we’ll have calendars for sale for \$1.00 at our office in the Duncan House starting on Tuesday, January 4th. Here’s a little taste of the calendar below with the Andrew Jackson Tavern.



## Birds in Vogue in 1911

As reported in the “In Vogue” section of *The Johnson City Comet*, February 16, 1911:

*Bird Petticoat Is Latest: Peacocks and Parrots Seen Strutting About on Flounces of London Women*

*The latest thing, it appears now, in petticoats, is the bird petticoat. Do not be horrified. The birdies have not had to give up their feathers for this latest eccentricity of [women]. Birds are merely stamped upon the garment, and one sees peacocks and parrots strutting about on the flounces of fashionable London women.*

*With the peacock petticoat the peacock stocking is worn. This hosiery has a large silk peacock embroidered above the ankle in gorgeous coloring. And there are even snake stockings to harmonize with the snake hat. Surely this is eccentricity run mad.*

*A specimen of the snake stocking in black silk is ornamented with a large serpent of sequins. It is worn also with the glittering serpentine bandeau.*

*Fans sport peacocks or fowls with a head and beak finish. The woman who wears a butterfly hat, brooch or butterflies in her hair,*

*carries a butterfly handkerchief. These are very pretty and have the embroidered wing detached from the groundwork of the handkerchief.*



“Evening Dress, 1910.” Brooklyn Museum Costume Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gift of Dr. Ruth M. Bakwin, 1961.

## “Eight Myths of Appalachia” Exhibit in the Works

J.D. Vance’s 2016 memoir, *Hillbilly Elegy*, made its appearance on screen in 2020, in a much-anticipated adaptation directed by Ron Howard. Many applauded the film’s depiction of the common struggles of Appalachians, while others critiqued it as “one of the worst movies of the year.” The actual book received a mixed response as well with reviews ranging from admiration to admonishment, especially from Appalachian residents themselves.

As a result the *Hillbilly Elegy* debacle raised an important question in the national consciousness: what are the common misconceptions about Appalachia as a region and the people that live there? Another important question: how do these

stereotypes stack up against the region’s actual past and present? These are considerations that The Heritage Alliance plans to address in an upcoming Spring 2022 exhibit set for the Jonesborough/Washington County History Museum, tentatively titled “The Eight Myths of Appalachia.” The exhibit, which is currently slated to contain a series of panels, plans to identify and investigate eight prominent myths about Appalachia and determine whether or not these myths hold up under historical scrutiny.

The forthcoming exhibit promises both an earnest and evidence-based evaluation of Appalachia’s past. And as discussions about the “true Tennessee” continue to swirl in debates about economics,

development, culture, and education, the exhibit also offers an opportunity to reflect on important contemporary questions, such as how we see ourselves as Appalachians, as well as how others view us. Follow The Heritage Alliance on Facebook or check our website for more information. We hope that that you enjoy “The Eight Myths of Appalachia,” debuting Spring 2022!



Open by  
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## What the Dickens?

Did Charles Dickens ever visit the Chester Inn? It depends on who you ask.

In 1985 Wilma Dykeman published an article about the Storytelling Festival in the September 15th edition of the *New York Times*. Her description of Jonesborough included the Chester Inn, noting that “Charles Dickens and Presidents Jackson, Polk and Johnson once visited.”

The Inn’s presidential history is well-covered today in the museum, and makes sense given their ties to Tennessee. But how could Charles Dickens end up at the Chester Inn?

The short answer is that Dickens probably did not spend time at the Inn. Dickens visited many major east coast cities on both of his

U.S. tours including Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. He also made it as far south as Richmond, VA, before embarking on the western portion of the trip. In 1842, he travelled west through Pennsylvania into Kentucky and Ohio. He recorded the trip in the book *American Notes for General Circulation*, published the same year. The second trip in 1867 was more centrally located on the east coast and the Great Lakes area.

There is a possibility that there was a western route that connected Dickens through Central Appalachia. That would have brought him in closer proximity to Jonesborough, though that has not been a previously documented route.



*Dickens 1842 U.S. Route Map*

The question remains, where did that reference come from? According to an online travel site there is a similar reference to Charles Dickens as a figure that staid at the Chester Inn in the book *TENNESSEE - A Guide to the State* which had a third printing 1949.

It is highly unlikely that Charles Dickens staid at the Chester Inn, but his appearance on a couple of lists remains an odd mystery. It also serves as a reminder of the power of rumor and the difficulty in verifying obscure historical references.

## Heritage Alliance Receives TSLA Grant

In late 2020, The Heritage Alliance received a Tennessee State Library and Archives (TSLA) grant, funding a contract archivist position for Spring 2022. The grant will be used to hire an individual to digitize photographs in our archival collection and make them accessible to the public via an online program where individuals can find, view, and learn more about our digital collections remotely.

“Some of the photographs in our care are real treasures,” explains Anne G’Fellers-Mason, the Executive

Director at the Heritage Alliance. “We’re happy to have them in our collection, and preserve them for future generations, but we haven’t been able to share them with the public as widely as we would like. This grant will help change that.”

The contact archivist will work on this digitization project from January to May 2022, primarily in the archival division at the Jonesborough/Washington County History Museum located inside the Jonesborough Visitors Center. The digitized files, complete with informa-

tion and provenance (the history of the item’s origin and ownership), will be available to viewers online, including school groups, researchers, families, and the general public.

Many thanks to TSLA for helping the Heritage Alliance to make this important project a reality! Stay tuned for updates.





## Joe Spiker Leaving the Chester Inn Museum

Anne and I always joke that I am like Jack Torrance at the end of the *Shining*: that I have always been the caretaker at the Chester Inn. If history teaches us anything, however, it teaches us this: nothing is permanent.

I began at the Chester Inn in the summer of 2016. I had an awkward video call phone interview (before they were commonplace) and by the time I drove home from my second interview former director Deb Montanti somehow called to offer me a position. I am stepping away to accept a full time teaching position with Walters State Community College, a place I have been teaching part time since 2014.

To say that this job has been endlessly rewarding would be an understatement. I have had the chance to do what I love while being unashamedly myself. I have found levels of creativity I wasn't sure that I still had while being equal parts ridiculous and serious. I am proudest of my work on the two digital series "Exhibit Extras" and "With the Victorians," helping the

Inn grow a more public profile, the History Happy Hour program, and perhaps my favorite thing: co-hosting trivia night with Megan!

Beyond the joys of professional accomplishments, the biggest thing I am taking from the museum is this: advice for what to look for in a job. Work with an institution that you are proud to be affiliated with. Find a staff that welcomes you for who you are and challenges you to become better. Work for leaders that are open to suggestions and that balance high expectations and encouragement. Work with colleagues that support each other and help pull towards common goals.

I have been blessed to be part of a small but amazingly talented staff that has basically become family. We get each other, and genuinely enjoy each other's company. Deb was the executive director who took a chance on me, and I cannot repay that enough. Megan Tewell is like the other pea in my quirky history nerd pod. Jacob was someone who shared my love of

crazy plans including the idea that no plan is too crazy, or unattainable. And I have been with Anne the whole time. She is a fantastic sounding board, strong leader, and above all an amazingly kind human. And all of our volunteers are exceptional, especially Charlene, Janice, Joe, Gordon, and Bob, who have also been here for my whole tenure.

Goodbyes are sad But, I am grateful for my time with the museum, and am excited to see what is next for both the museum and myself.



*Joe filming "With the Victorians"*

## Ashe St. Courthouse Feasibility Study Update

In early September 2021 architectural firm Clark Nexsen completed a feasibility study of the historic Ashe Street building in downtown Johnson City. This analysis was part of the Heritage Alliance's ongoing partnership with Washington County to act as the building's "preservation coordinator," a status conveyed to

the organization in January 2020. Washington County, the Johnson City Development Authority, and the Southside Neighborhood Organization (SNO) all contributed funds for the study.

Throughout the summer and fall of 2021, Clark Nexsen compiled information about the building's

conditions. The firm also identified areas of immediate concern and mused on potential reuses for the historic structure.

The feasibility study follows the successful addition of the building to the National Register of Historic Places, as well as a \$5 million allocation from the State for the building's renovation.



## Volunteer Spotlight: Debbie Myers

In this edition of the Volunteer Spotlight, we are highlighting Debbie Myers, a recent addition to the Heritage Alliance volunteer staff!

Debbie is a docent at the Chester Inn Museum, and she is also a town tour guide. Debbie was looking for a venue to volunteer, so she decided to join the organization in 2021. According to Debbie, "I love history, so this seemed like a perfect fit." We certainly agree!

Originally from Ohio, Debbie made her way to the area because she was

looking for a spot to retire that had a little better weather than Ohio. She adds, "I came down to look at Jonesborough and was in love immediately and moved here several months later."

Debbie spends her volunteer time at the Chester Inn Museum and as a town tour guide. Those positions let her work with the public, often working alongside other volunteers at the museum. She adds, "I really enjoy the interaction with the other volunteers and the visitors. There is so much history to learn and it is great fun sharing it."

Debbie thinks that this is the perfect place to volunteer if you love history. "It is very fulfilling and everyone is great to work with," she says. The Heritage Alliance staff agrees, and we are glad to welcome Debbie aboard as a volunteer!



## Heritage Alliance Board Member Feature: Gordon Edwards

We are delighted to shine this issue's spotlight on Gordon Edwards who is completing his second 3-year term as a trustee and fourth year as President of the Board of Trustees. Gordon was born and raised in a New Jersey town settled by Germans in the early 1700s. His 6x great grandparents were original settlers of the town and his Edwards 2x great grandparents came from Wales. "They settled in upstate New York just before the Civil War," Edwards said, adding: "I had early exposure to things historic, as well as old burial grounds."

Gordon has a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Rutgers University but was drawn to northeast Tennessee by his wife, Beverly. She was born and raised in Johnson City, and he started visiting this area in the early 1990s. Gordon retired in 2005 as a Production Control Manager from Kennedy Space Center, having worked for a government contractor, and moved to this area permanently. Gordon is

also a member of the Kings Mountain Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution. Ezekiel Johnson, who was a Massachusetts Infantryman, is his primary patriot ancestor. Gordon's son, daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren live in north Georgia.

Gordon has too many memories with the Heritage Alliance to pick a favorite, but some that stand out the most include: finding a casket handle near a groundhog hole at Rocky Hill Cemetery, seeing the new roof added to the Christopher Taylor House, seeing stock come and go at the Warehouse, wearing the Dunce Cap at Oak Hill School, playing the Old Funeral Director and Christopher Taylor, working with school groups that visited the town, playing a host at the Progressive Dinner. "These memories and many more each have a special spot in my soul," Gordon adds.

Gordon is proud of the growth the

organization has shown over the last six years, which has come in many forms. Gordon was especially proud of expansion of current programs, seeing new ideas put to work, the partnerships with other companion organizations, staying vital through the pandemic, reaching new audiences (especially younger crowds), and remaining true to our mission.

*Continued on Page 6*



*Board President Gordon Edwards in his Funeral Director attire.*



*Continued from Page 5*

Gordon is also excited for the organization's future. "It was an honor to have the opportunity to select and usher in Anne G'Fellers Mason as the organization's Executive Director," he said. "If we remain true to our mission and take controlled growth steps that can be realistically managed, the horizon is very promising."

After his term as president ends, are we going still going to see Gordon around? "I certainly plan to stay involved as a volunteer and continue with the programs that are close to my heart," he said.

We can't thank Gordon enough for his leadership and support during his tenure as president.

## Oak Hill School's Fresh Coat of Paint

The Heritage Alliance was the recipient of a Historic Preservation Grant from the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (NSDAR). The grant provided new paint and wood repair for Oak Hill School. Local painter Christopher Basar and his team with J. Ross Historic Restoration repainted the schoolhouse and repaired/replaced rotten wood. "In a normal year, Oak Hill School welcomes thousands of people for educational programs," said Executive Director Anne Mason. "It's such a part of the community, and this preservation grant from the NSDAR has made it possible for us to keep the schoolhouse in operation for years to come."



*Funding for this project was made possible by the State of Franklin Chapter of the NSDAR which has been based in Jonesborough since 1929. Row 1 (L to R): Anne Mason, Carol Redmond (Registrar), Marilyn Hart, Susan Jackson (Treasurer) Row 2 (L to R): Morri Bookout, Laurel Reaves (Secretary), Judie Cooper Camak (Vice Regent), Allyson Wilkinson (Regent)*

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## From the Director's Desk:

Here we are, at the end of another year. This was no ordinary year, for many reasons. October marked the 20th anniversary of the Heritage Alliance as an organization. Wow, 20 years! We celebrated as we could with new events, like our Summer Suppers, monthly newspaper articles in the *Herald & Tribune*, and on social media. Our attempt at having a 20th anniversary potluck in September was impacted by the Delta variant, but we plan on hosting a big celebration in the spring of 2022 at Grace Meadows Farm. Stay tuned for an official date.

We continued to grow in 2021. We welcomed new Members and community partners. We also mourned some losses in 2021 including Elaine Cantrell, John White, Jim Reel, Jeff Dupre, and Doris Dean. I'd like to take a moment to share some memories I have of Doris. She was always a strong supporter of the Alliance. She was a friendly face at events. She made me feel welcome whenever I walked into a

room and she was there. Doris taught me a lot about archives and proper archival practices. I am honored to carry on her mantle of historian for the Schubert Club. Before she passed, Fred Counts brought some items that Doris wanted to donate to the Heritage Alliance's archives. I hadn't had a chance to go through them yet, but now I will look through them with a new reverence. Doris was such a giving person, and she will be dearly missed, but what a life she lived, and what a legacy she leaves behind. I will miss seeing her face at our 20th anniversary party, but I know she will be there in spirit, as will everyone we've lost this year. We take them with us as we go.

As we move into 2022, our Annual Meeting will be a little different again this year. Since we're having a 20th anniversary gathering in the spring, our Annual Meeting will be conducted via email or physical mail, like we did last January. Per the Heritage Alliance By-Laws, the new and returning members of the Board of Trustees must be voted on by the general Membership in January. We do not have to meet in person to do this. There are options for voting, and I've outlined them below.

On Friday, January 14, 2022, the Heritage Alliance will open the Annual Meeting at 12:00 pm. I will send out an email to the Members from Board President Gordon Edwards with the official Board of Trustees' ballot. Members will vote to confirm the returning Trustees for a three year term and the new Trustees who are joining the Board in 2022 for their first three year

term.

If we do not have your email address on file, do not worry. We will be mailing paper ballots with return envelopes to Members who do not wish to receive communication via email. If you'd rather receive a paper ballot as opposed to an email ballot, please contact our office and let us know.

All ballots, email and paper, must be returned to us by Wednesday, January 26, 2022, at 12:00 pm. On that day, Board President Gordon Edwards will close the Annual Meeting and the results of the election will be announced. I hope this is clear. If you have any questions about how the Annual Meeting will work, please reach out to me at the office. We will be sending further communication on this matter at the beginning of the new year.

I know many Members pay their dues at the start of the year. We will also send out reminders to those of you who are due for renewal. If you have any questions about your status, you are welcome to email me or call the office. You can also renew online through our website. Thank you for all you've done for the Alliance this year. Here's to new possibilities in 2022!

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Historic Commission.*

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