



The Link



preserving our heritage and building a future together

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Summer 2022

Heritage Alliance Wins Awards!

On Thursday, June 9th, the Heritage Alliance received Partner of the Year at the Pinnacle Awards hosted by the Northeast Tennessee Tourism Association. Every year, the Pinnacle Awards recognize the best in regional tourism. We were nominated by the Town of Jonesborough's Tourism Department. It's an honor to work so closely with the Town and its staff. The Heritage Alliance is very thankful for the partnerships we have throughout the region. We are beyond grateful for this award and we share it with our Members, our volunteers, our dedicated staff, and our

community. We hope we can continue to be a good partner for the next twenty years and then some.

That same week, the Heritage Alliance received an award for the original play "Nancy" from the East Tennessee Historical Society. The performance piece won a History in the Media Award. This is the third award for "Nancy," which tells the story of a woman and her children that were enslaved by abolitionist Elihu Embree. Unfortunately, we had to miss the ceremony, but we look forward to a future award

presentation from ETHS Director Dr. Warren Dockter.



Executive Director Anne Mason accepts the award for Partner of the Year at the 25th Annual Pinnacle Awards. The Town of Jonesborough took home four awards that afternoon.

20th Anniversary Potluck Celebration on August 4th

Better late than never! Join the Heritage Alliance for a celebratory potluck dinner as we finally get to commemorate our anniversary. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, this celebration was postponed in September of 2021. We're very excited to host it now, though, on Thursday, August 4th at Grace Meadows Farm. The event starts at 6:00 pm. The Kitchen at Grace Meadows Farm will be serving up the main entrée. Please bring a side dish or dessert to share. We

also hope you'll bring your ideas with you, ideas on how the Heritage Alliance can continue to improve and better serve our community in the next twenty years.

Please RSVP for the event by Wednesday, July 27th. You may RSVP by calling our office at 423.753.9580 or emailing our Executive Director directly at amason@heritageall.org.

The Heritage Alliance would not

exist if it weren't for our members and volunteers. We hope to see you on August 4th. This is your celebration, too.



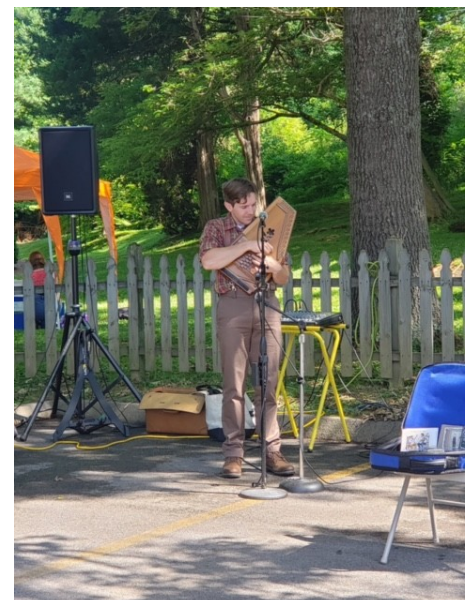
First Taste of Tennessee Festival is in the Books!

History, like life, is a little bit sweet and a little bit savory (and sometimes even a little bit salty). That's also what seems to create the best recipes, as well. Some of these foods that we know and love, that get passed down each family generation, that bring us together as a community, were on display during the first in-person Taste of Tennessee Festival, the region's premiere Appalachian food festival. Taking place on Saturday, June 18th from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM in the parking lot of the Washington County Library (in downtown Jonesborough), the festival offered the sights, smells, and sounds associated with all things edible, all things Appalachian. This free, family-friendly event

featured food trucks, an open-air market with booths and vendors, musical performances, a Speaker Series, demos, and more! Approximately 500 people filtered through the festival's campus throughout the day, including local residents and tourists alike. There was also a "Take the Cake" competition, where bakers of all backgrounds and experience levels showed off their talents, as well as a public tasting opportunity. "This festival has been a dream of ours for the past three years," says Megan Cullen Tewell, Programming Coordinator at the Heritage Alliance and coordinator for the event. "We recognize the power and the potential of food, to help us explore history, culture,

identity, art, and community. That's what we wanted this festival to do for people- serve up a generous, delicious helping of education and entertainment." More information can be found on the Heritage Alliance website (www.heritageall.org) and on Facebook at @TastyTennessee. Thank you to our sponsors, the Wild Women of Jonesborough, Timber!, Jonesborough Area Merchants & Services Association (JAMSA), and Humanities Tennessee. The festival will be back in 2023!

Pictures below include Isabella Martz with her award winning cake, spoon maker Scott Thompson, vendor Atlas Books, and musician Tyler Hughes.



Volunteer Spotlight: James Coyle

In this edition we turn the spotlight on one of our newest, and also one of our handiest volunteers.

1) Where are you from? What brought you to the area?

I am from the Hudson Valley, New York. I truly feel God directed my path to Jonesborough. After looking for almost two years in the North Carolina/East Tennessee region, we found the lovely town of Jonesborough.

2) What inspired you to get involved with the Heritage Alliance?

Meeting Megan at the Visitor's Center museum and talking. I liked how the Heritage Alliance had nice displays and information that I found interesting and educational, so I thought I would offer to help with what I could.

3) How would you describe your volunteer role? What do you enjoy about it?

I would say kind of a handyman role. I am utilizing my years in the construction industry. I enjoy seeing how historical buildings were put together back then.

4) When you're not volunteering for the Heritage Alliance, what are your interests?

I enjoy reading, working on my property, and building, learning new things and experiencing new adventures. Enjoying nature, but most of all spending time with my family.

5) What is your favorite historical period, subject, or event? What makes it your favorite?

My favorite historical period is the founding of America. Although I do enjoy reading about all great empires throughout history.

6) Why do you think other folks should get involved with the Heritage Alliance, in a volunteer capacity?

I think it is important for everyone to help out in whatever form they can, from food pantries to local clean up to preserving historical places and events. Being that I am somewhat of a history buff, I thought the Heritage Alliance was a good place to begin.

James has been instrumental in helping us make needed repairs to the Naff Tailor Shop. The building was restored by the Civic Trust in the 1990s and is used as storage for the Heritage Alliance.



Please Frequent Our Business Members as They Help Support Our Region's History:

Embree House Wedding Cakes & Historic Farm, *The Herald & Tribune*, Jonesborough Genealogical Society, Law Offices of Edmonds & Edmonds, Law Offices of James R. Wheeler, Linnaea Gardens, Main Street Café & Catering, MEK Restoration (Historical Restoration & Carpentry), Tennessee Quilts & February Hill Quilting Retreat, The Kitchen at Grace Meadows Farm

For full contact information visit our website at www.heritageall.org/links.



Research Dive with Josh Dacey: Convict Labor in East TN

My interest in labor laws and convict leasing dates back to my graduate studies. My cohort at UNCG in the Museum Studies program spent two years researching and participating in a ground breaking traveling exhibition detailing the various aspects of the carceral state entitled “States of Incarceration.” Our contribution was a panel focused on the use of convict labor in North Carolina to build roads. The exhibit I am currently researching for the Chester Inn Museum will continue to explore the complicated history of exploitative labor practices that were used throughout the South well into the 20th century. A primary focus will be on race relations as a significant amount of incarcerated men during the time period were black.

With the abolishment of slavery and the conclusion of the Civil War, officials at the state and local levels in many of the former Confederate states vigorously fought to keep the racial caste system in place. This early Jim Crow period saw the enactment of laws and “Black Codes” specifically targeted at formerly enslaved individuals. More than just making them criminally liable for little more than standing on a street corner, these laws led to a revived system of the exploitation of black flesh. For generations, skilled and unskilled enslaved men were “hired out” to perform menial labor that their enslavers

financially profited from. In this new system of convict labor leasing, state and county governments likewise profited by using their prison populations to labor on commercial or private projects such as road construction, railway maintenance, logging, or mining. What allowed them to do so was a loophole in the 13th Amendment that stipulates “involuntary servitude” will only be used as “punishment for a crime.” A pattern that continues today.

Beginning in 1866 and continuing until 1886, Tennessee quickly became one of the first states to implement convict labor leasing. Preliminary evidence also indicates that a system of convict labor leasing was utilized in Jonesborough as early as 1822. One man in particular, Michael Clem, was a well known advocate for the practice as well as a known enslaver. In addition to operating a local inn, Mr. Clem and his brother also held the contract for constructing the railroad track through Jonesborough. When it came to building railroads in the South, it was a regular practice to use enslaved labor as a means to increase profits. Numerous members of the “Immortal Thirty” were indeed enslavers including Michael Clem and John P. Chester. Coincidentally, John P. Chester’s father, William Chester, brokered a real estate deal in 1820 in which he sold land

to the Embree brothers that was subsequently turned into an iron mine. Known as Embreeville Iron Works, the ore was mined by both hired free white men and enslaved black men. In fact, company receipts indicate that some of the iron was used to build portions of the railroad in eastern Tennessee. After the completion of the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad, mining operations became the largest industry to engage in convict labor leasing. At the end of the Civil War, numerous large deposits of coal, iron, and limestone were being mined in Tennessee by incarcerated men. Working conditions were brutal, but the hardships did not end when the men left the mines. These men were kept in cages, starved, beaten, and murdered. In a way, facing such grim circumstances calcified the prisoners beyond racial lines. They wrote thousands of letters to state officials, including the governor, detailing the camp conditions. After each man signed his name, he indicated his race.

These documents were meant to advocate for the reform of a system that subjected men to such horrible environments, and racial bigotry between the prisoners became a marginal issue. They advocated for themselves as a group with one voice devoid of skin color. Another byproduct of the system was increased tensions between the mining companies



and paid laborers who were passed over for jobs in favor of the cheaper labor alternative of incarcerated workers. This disdain resulted in multiple strikes, physical violence, and skirmishes. By 1883, investigations into labor camp conditions spread statewide. The Blair Committee took testimony for thousands of prisoners detailing the horrors they were made to endure in the camps. After three years, the Committee's investigations, along with the labor strikes, led to reform and the perceived abolishment of convict labor leasing in Tennessee. The vestiges of these practices of exploitive labor continue to plague our society.

In contemporary society, incarcerated individuals are still used as a cheap labor source to produce license plates, office furniture, and uniforms. Rarely paid more than \$.30 to \$.70 a day for their work, they must then pay exorbitant prices for toiletries, food, and clothing. Even a ten minute phone call can cost upwards of \$30. The racial demographics have changed little since the days of Jim Crow as men of color disproportionately account for the largest segment of prison populations. Recently, historians and activists have come forward, drawing the parallels between current penal institutions and the antebellum South, leaving some to call it the "New Jim Crow."

This exhibit is still in its infancy. Little has been written about the history of convict labor leasing in eastern Tennessee. There has been archeological and archival research produced by professors at Sewanee and we hope to collaborate with them to craft a holistic narrative of convict labor leasing in Tennessee. To support our exhibit, we are consulting primary source materials from repositories in Washington County, ETSU, UT Knoxville, and Appalachian State. A robust narrative is essential in a project such as this. When dealing with social justice and racial issues, methodical research is the only way to remain objective while examining such divisive issues. To help in this endeavor, I have the pleasure of co-curating this exhibit with Megan Tewell who is the Programming Coordinator here at the Heritage Alliance. Her doctoral studies are also rooted in the carceral state. We will keep you up to date with new developments and a potential opening date.

The political ad on the left showcases some of the concerns with the convict labor leasing system in Tennessee. It is from the late 1800s.

TENNESSEE'S SHAME!

Convicts in the Coal Creek Mines.



CONVICTS AT WORK.



ONE OF THE RESULTS-STARVATION.
The father and husband has gone to a distant State for work.

Vote for **TURNEY** for Governor and **WELCKER** for Congress, if you wish this to continue.

Vote for **WINSTEAD** for Governor and **HOUK** for Congress, if you wish to abolish this great crime, which has so long been committed in order to raise Democratic campaign funds from the lessees



HA Board Spotlight: Hal Hunter

Get to know Heritage Alliance Board Member Hal Hunter.

1) How long have you been on the Heritage Alliance Board and are you an Officer?

I am now serving my fourth year on the Board, and I also serve as Secretary, as I have done for the past two years.

2) What is one of your favorite memories from your time on the Board?

My favorite project was working with Anne and Megan on the recommendation of the Johnson City Postal Savings Bank (Ashe St Courthouse) for the National Register of Historic Places. Placing this building on the NRHP provided greater recognition of an amazing building unique to Johnson City and Washington County. One of the direct results is the current work being carried out by Johnson City to restore the building and bring everything up to code.

3) Why did you decide to join the Board?

I was basically recruited by Deborah Montanti. She and I had worked together on a conference project for a state conference in Johnson City that fell apart. For three years she kept telling me that I needed to be on the board. Finally, I was invited by Gordon

Edwards to join. At the time we had some ideas of how HA could expand its outreach. Unfortunately, the pandemic prevented us from pursuing those. Hopefully, now that we are coming out of the pandemic, we may be able to pick up those ideas.

4) What do you like to do when you're not serving on the Board?

For me serving on the Board is not just showing up for a quarterly meeting. I serve as a docent at the Chuckey Depot Museum and on the Johnson City Historic Zoning Commission. At the moment I am very involved in rewriting the guidelines for the Tree Streets Historic District. When I have time, I like to research other historic buildings and events in the area. With others I am also looking for potential occupants of the Postal Savings Bank.

5) Why should people get involved with the Heritage Alliance?

I believe that the Heritage Alliance can become a major force in the preservation movement in Northeast Tennessee. We have a strong staff that does incredible work, but we could fill in some gaps that exist in preservation work. One way would be to pull together the many varied historic groups and do a regional

conference with national experts as featured speakers/presenters. These could be from any area of preservation. In order to make this happen, we need more volunteers with diverse interests to join and support the Alliance.



The current exhibit at the Chuckey Depot Museum all about the Railroad and Pop Culture is on display now through August 21st.





From the Director's Desk:

Happy summer! I hope you all are staying cool and well. This year has flown by. In the midst of the hottest months, it's already time to think ahead to fall and holiday events like A Spot On the Hill and the Progressive Dinner. As we plan, there's still plenty to keep us busy for the next three months.

We are honored to host preservation guru Dr. William Kennedy for our upcoming History Happy Hour on July 21st at 6:30 pm in the Chester Inn board room. His presentation has been two years in the making. You can also stream his program online on the Chester Inn Museum's Facebook page. That following Friday (7/22) we'll have our last History Trivia Night of the summer at the Olde Towne Pancake House. They'll open for dinner at 6:00 pm and the game will start at 7:00 pm. You can

register your team of up to six people via our website (heritageall.org). It's only \$10 to play. I have to say, trivia nights are some of my favorite nights. Our Summer Supper on July 23rd on Spring Street is sold out.

Whew! This has certainly been a full summer. Unfortunately, we had to postpone our performances of "Nancy" on June 25th due to illness. We are working to reschedule that show with the Telford Ruritan Club and will have a new date announcement soon.

Our annual Constitution Week Bell Ringing with the State of Franklin Chapter of NSDAR will take place on Sunday, September 11th on the lawn of the Oak Hill Schoolhouse. Stay tuned for more information on that program. I feel like there's another event I'm skipping over in the middle. Oh, yes, our 20th Anniversary Potluck Celebration on August 4th. I do hope you all will come out and celebrate, and I hope you will bring your hopes and dreams for the future of the Alliance with you. I will have my own to share, but above all, I hope we continue to be an organization that researches and shares every aspect of our history, the good, the bad, the ugly, and the beautiful, and uses all those pieces to build a better future.

As the seasons change, we've had some changes on our Board of Trustees. Unfortunately, Kati Jenkins has had to step down

from the Board. We thank her for her service. Fortunately, HA member and community mover and shaker Dana York has graciously agreed to join the Board and complete Kati's term through the end of the year. Thank you, Dana, for coming on deck. We look forward to working with you.

Our next Board Meeting will be Thursday, August 12th at 8:00 am at the Visitor's Center. As Members, you are always welcome to attend our meetings or ask for the minutes after the fact. The rest of our 2022 Board Meetings are scheduled for September 22nd at 8:00 am at the International Storytelling Center, and November 10th at the McKinney Center.

On a final note, everything old is new again at the Chester Inn Museum. The State of Tennessee, under the purview of the Tennessee Historical Commission, is restoring the third floor railing and two doors to the top of the Inn, bringing it closer to how it looked over a hundred years ago. We never get tired of admiring this historic building.





212 East Sabin Dr.
Jonesborough, TN 37659

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HA Office Phone: 423-753-9580
Chester Inn Museum: 423-753-4580
www.heritageall.org
info@heritageall.org

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Historic Commission.*

Executive Director:: Anne G'Fellers-Mason
amason@heritageall.org

Chester Inn Museum: Josh Dacey
chesterinn@heritageall.org

Programming Coordinator: Dr. Megan
Cullen Tewell
mtewell@heritageall.org

Oak Hill School: Deanna Carey



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