



# The Link



*preserving our heritage and building a future together*

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Summer 2023

## **Taste of Tennessee Returns September 17-24**



The Taste of Tennessee Appalachian Foodways Festival is back this fall. Last year the festival was an one day event, but this year the Heritage Alliance will be sharing food and history over the course of a week. The event will kick-off on Sunday, September 17th, with a Food Tour of Jonesborough. On

Tuesday, September 19th, we'll have a special dinner focusing on the history of African American cuisine and its influence on Appalachia at the Langston Centre.

Wednesday, September 20th you'll find us chopping cabbage at Persimmon Ridge Park with Katie Hoffman in her sauerkraut making class. Katie Hoffman with Create Appalachia will also be hosting a Cast Iron Clinic that Thursday evening at Create Appalachia's office space in Johnson City. Earlier that day we'll be partnering with the Exchange Place in Kingsport for an open hearth cooking class geared toward school-aged students.

The Town of Jonesborough will be hosting Pumpkin Fest on Saturday, September 23rd, and our event will end with the official festival in the Jonesborough Library parking lot on Sunday, September 24th. On that day we'll have vendors, demos, live music, and the ever popular "Take the Cake" competition. Event details, ticket prices for ticketed events, and more info will soon be posted to the Taste of TN Facebook page as well as the Heritage Alliance's website.

We are honored to share that we received an Arts Project Support Grant from the TN Arts Commission for this year's festival.

## **Summer Social in Cemetery set for August 12th**

Join us in the Old Jonesborough Cemetery on Saturday, August 12th from 6:00-8:00 pm for our Summer Social in the Cemetery. We'll have costumed guides on hand to share history and yummy ice cream donated by Mom's Old Fashioned Ice Cream at the East TN Hemp Company for only \$2.00 a scoop. We'll also have a hand churn if you're interested in working your arm muscles and churning your own ice cream for \$2.00. All proceeds will go to the continued preservation of the cemetery.

In the mid-late 1800s, public cemeteries were designed to be gathering spaces in addition to spaces of remembrance. We are excited to bring that tradition back to Rocky Hill. If you plan to attend, please park at the First Baptist Church and either walk up or catch a golf cart shuttle. During the evening we will also be unveiling the temporary marker to honor the mass grave and the victims of the 1873 cholera epidemic. The grave was recently re-discovered using GPR (ground penetrating radar) technology.

More on this in my Director's Desk, including the information on the photo below.





*Top picture, the Duncan House on a winter's day. Photo taken by John Livingston.*

*Bottom picture, the Duncan House at the turn of the 20th century hidden behind the trees in Duncan's Meadow. Look at that corn!*

## Heritage Alliance Receives DAR Grant

We are pleased to announce that the Heritage Alliance has received a Preservation Grant from the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution. The grant will help us repaint and repair rotten wood at the Duncan House, our headquarters on East Sabin Drive. We are extremely grateful to the State of Franklin Chapter of the NSDAR for sponsoring us for the grant.

The original part of the Duncan House dates to the 1840s. It was built by the Naff family. A back half addition followed in the 1870s and a second story in the 1890s. The Duncan family owned it at the turn of the 20th century, hence why we refer to it as the Duncan House. The area surrounding the house, where the library, Town Hall, and Visitors

Center are today was once known as Duncan's Meadow. Some townsfolk remember playing baseball on those fields. Work on the project will begin later this year with Chris Basar of Architectural Restoration and Paint. This is the third NSDAR preservation grant we have received.

In 2018, the Heritage Alliance partnered with the Town of Jonesborough on a grant to replace the cedar shake roof on the Christopher Taylor House. In 2021, we received a grant to help us repaint the historic Oak Hill Schoolhouse.

After being a private residence for many years, the Duncan House was restored by the Civic Trust in the 1990s. The Heritage Alliance is proud to care for it today.

## Constitution Week Bell Ringing

In other NSDAR news, the Heritage Alliance will be co-hosting the annual Constitution Week Bell Ringing with the State of Franklin Chapter on Sunday, September 10th at 1:30 pm. The program will take place on the lawn of Oak Hill School and will include re-enactors, music, and history. This event is always a great gathering for not only the general public, but also for the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution. This year's event will focus on the history and legacy of the 13th Amendment, added to the U.S. Constitution in 1865 right after the Civil War.

The 13th Amendment abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime.

Throughout American history, this loophole in the 13th Amendment has caused contention. Joshua Dacey will be exploring this contention more at the September History Happy Hour on Thursday, September 21st at the International Storytelling Center. Please note this is a change in the History Happy Hour schedule. He also wrote an article on this topic in the Summer 2022 edition of The Link.

In 1955, the DAR petitioned Congress to set aside September 17-23 annually to be dedicated for the observance of Constitution Week. The resolution was adopted by Congress and signed into law on August 2, 1956, by President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The State of Franklin Chapter of the NSDAR has been based in Jonesborough since 1929.

When you come out on September 10th, make sure you bring a chair to sit in and your bell to ring.



*Allyson Wilkinson, Regent addresses the crowd at last year's event.*



## New Staff Spotlight: Amy Steadman DeWitt



*New Collections Manager & Museum Coordinator Amy Steadman DeWitt*

The Heritage Alliance is excited to welcome new Collections Manager & Museum Coordinator Amy Steadman DeWitt! We asked Amy a few questions to find out more about her and what she's looking forward to.

### **What other institutions have you worked with before coming to the Heritage Alliance?**

I was fortunate to be able to return to my home area immediately after completing graduate school after being hired

as the Collections Manager at Rocky Mount Museum. After a few years there, the perfect job opened up and I grabbed it: Curator at the Eudora Welty House Museum in Jackson, Mississippi; therefore combining my love of southern literature and history.

While in Mississippi, I also took a weekend position at the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame, something completely out of my wheelhouse but I learned a bit about preserving deflated footballs. Ten years ago, I returned to the Tri-Cities area to be closer to my parents, and have worked at some wonderful local institutions such as The Reece Museum on the campus of ETSU, the Kingsport Carousel, and Hands On! Museum.

### **What are you looking forward to in your new position?**

Learning more about the history of the area where I am from! Also, I look forward to working with others who share the same passions as I do, in preserving both tangible and intangible culture of the southern

Appalachian region. While during Jonesborough Days and spending that time talking with visitors about the Chester Inn, I realized how much I missed interpreting architectural history and material culture. To see both children and adults alike become so excited about looking through a stereoscope made my own work so much more enriching.

### **Outside of work, what are your hobbies and interests?**

Just picked some cukes grown in my garden last night, but I am more interested in my blooming flowers and keeping subtropical plants alive here in the winter! My husband TJ and I are very proud of our huge Night Blooming Cereus that came to us as a small cutting from Louisiana (and if anyone wants a cutting let me know). I also love being at home reading along next to my two dogs and two cats, but have been fortunate in the past few years to travel as well. Already have taken San Francisco and Florence, Italy off my bucket list.

**Continued on Page 6**

### **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, Architectural Restoration & Paint with Chris Basar, Speed Goat Solutions

For full contact information visit our website at [www.heritageall.org/links](http://www.heritageall.org/links).



## New YouTube Series Unboxes History

Former Chester Inn Site Manager Joe Spiker has developed a new digital series for the Chester Inn YouTube channel as part of his summer contract work for the Heritage Alliance. The new series is titled “What’s in the Box?” Each video takes a look at an item or items housed in the Heritage Alliance archival collection while also giving a behind-the-scenes look at the archives.

“I wanted to come up with a way to spotlight items in our collection in a new and unique way,” Spiker said. “I have two kids that are 8 and 9, so I have been exposed to my fair share of children’s YouTube where unboxing is a really popular video format. The title of the series is a nod to Brad Pitt’s overacting in the closing scene of the movie *Seven*.”

Each video picks an item (or items) and uses them as the jump-



*Joe Spiker with the “Mystery Box,” as part of the new digital series “What’s in the Box?”*

*To follow along with the series, like and subscribe to the Chester Inn YouTube channel!*

*Watch the first episode here:*  
<https://youtu.be/TyypFwPfwcs>

ing off point to talk about multiple things and historical themes. One goal is to talk about the physical characteristics of the items: What are they made of? How do they feel? What are their different components? “I wanted to create a somewhat sensory experience, even if viewers aren’t actually seeing and touching the items directly,” Spiker said.

The other goal is to talk about broader historical themes. For

example the first video, which is already debuted, uses a typewriter in our collection to talk about different themes including the history of typewriters, manufacturing, and keyboard layouts.

Spiker added, “I love how history and museum work can use one item to tell so many different stories. So far this is a four-part series, but the format is in place so that it can continue indefinitely. We have a lot of items and history to unbox!”

## “Much is Changed”: New Exhibit at Chester Inn Museum

The history of abolitionism in Eastern Tennessee can be often overlooked, given that Tennessee is a southern state and was loyal to the Confederate States of America. When it comes to Jonesborough’s history of abolitionism, there is indeed a unique history. The accounts of Elihu Embree and his publications, *The Manumission Intelligencer* and its second iteration *The Emancipator*, can be easily found in the annals of Jonesborough’s past. *The Emancipator* was the first publication solely

dedicated to the cause of abolitionism in the United States, let alone the South. While this stands as a testament to Embree’s character, what is not so easily found is how Embree’s publications were received by the general public and state politicians. Our latest exhibit, “Much is Changed,” provides an opportunity for visitors to not only explore Embree’s reception in the 1820s, but an overall picture of how southerners during the antebellum period first became aware of the abolitionist movement.

At that time, northern abolitionists, like William Lloyd Garrison and Arthur Tappan, were still formulating their opinions about slavery and didn’t begin their publishing campaigns until 1831, but they would face many of the same challenges that Embree had a decade earlier. As subscriptions to *The Emancipator* increased during the year 1820, a growing concern among Tennessee’s politicians also grew. To them, the cause of abolitionism was an affront to the southern way of life. More importantly, abolition-



## Changed Cont'd.

ism was a threat to the entirety of the southern financial network. So when Embree's papers started gaining a readership, state politicians saw it as their duty to quell any notion that slavery should be condemned. Their efforts began at local levels, seizing shipments of *The Emancipator* under the justification of protecting the public from dangerous defamation. Once they had found a way to stop the spread of the publication, they began a campaign against Embree himself. They publicly called into question his moral character and often eluded to financial misdeeds including embezzling subscribers' money. Unfortunately, Embree did not live long enough to redeem himself against such criticisms. Elihu Embree died suddenly shortly after the first seven issues were published.

As the abolitionist movement gained momentum over the next decade in the North, so too did it gain momentum in the South. So much so, that by 1835, Garrison and Tappan's anti-slavery publications had over 20,000 Southern subscribers. Massive shipments of *The Liberator* and the *Journal of Commerce* were mailed South on a monthly basis. That is until southern politicians sought to put an end to the spread of abolitionist ideals. Similar to the actions of Tennessee's government against Embree in 1820, southern pundits loyal to the preservation of chattel slavery led a campaign to seize any and all Northern publications sent South, essentially infringing on the First Amendment rights of the citizens. Their efforts grew

even stronger when petitions to the President of the United States, Andrew Jackson, to seize mail at the Federal level began flooding the White House. Jackson acted quickly. With the guidance of the Post Master General, a systematic seizure of abolitionist newspapers was put into practice. Consider that for a moment, a standing President of the United States ignoring the First Amendment rights of all citizens based on the fears of Southern politicians. Jackson justified his actions by espousing that by sending their papers South, abolitionist in the North were interfering in the affairs of Southern States. The fear was that such interference could lead to rebellion led by southern abolitionists. And as history has shown us, a Southern rebellion did rise.

"Much is Changed" explores the unique history of how abolitionism was first received in the South by the general public and politicians. It is a window into the successes and struggles abolitionists faced in the 1830s. The outcome of their anti-slavery campaigns might not have incited rebellion in the way Andrew

Jackson thought, but the political divides and moral questions these publications tackled are a vital component of what brought our country into Civil War. The exhibit features two unique artifacts generously on loan to us by Richard A. Miller of Telford, TN. Mr. Miller's collection focuses on Benjamin Franklin medals and is "easily one of the biggest in the state." He also branches out to abolition, portrayal of American Indians, and the Civil War. The first artifact is a coin that made its way to fame through Josiah Wedgwood. Wedgwood shared the design with Benjamin Franklin, who then shared the image in the United States. The American Anti-Slavery Society would modify the design slightly, resulting in the second artifact, another medal dated 1838.

See this exhibit at the Chester Inn Museum, and a special exhibit on the history of the Tipton-Haynes State Historic Site on loan through September and on display at the Chester and JWCH museums!

*Article by Joshua Dacey*



*Jacob Howard's print shop where Embree published his paper in 1820. Building was located at the corner of W Main and First Avenue.*

OF "EMANCIPATOR" FIRST ABOLITIONIST PAPER IN AMERICA. PUBLISHED IN JONESBORO, TENN., IN 1820



## Spotlight Cont'd.

### What do you hope to achieve in your new position?

First off, to complete an inventory of the collections, especially the newer artifacts that have been donated. Having the knowledge of what we have is the basis of good preservation. But, through this, other staff members and I can develop new exhibits and educational opportunities, both on-site and online. Also, I hope to update both the museum at the visitor center and collections storage with improved lighting, better accessibility, and updated content. Its a huge project, but bit by bit, our staff and community could have a world-class museum for all the thousands of visitors who pass through Jonesborough each year.

We are excited to have an intern from ETSU working with us this summer! Miguel Parrilla has been helping out with the Chester Inn Museum. We asked Miguel a few questions to learn more about him and his work.

**What are you currently studying at ETSU?** I am currently studying Park and Recreation Management, History, and Appalachian Studies at ETSU.

**What other parks/sites have you worked at?** I have worked as a Seasonal Interpretive Recreator at Warriors' Path State Park, and I have also volunteered at Lamar Alexander Rocky Fork and David Crockett Birth Place State Park.

## In Memoriam: We Remember

At our 20th anniversary celebration in 2022, we asked our members to share the names of friends and family who have passed away over the past twenty years. Each name brings with it memories. We've added a few names to this list, names of community supporters and legends like Ignacy Fonberg and Mrs. Marion McKinney who passed way within the last few months. This list is in no way comprehensive, and we hope that each name brings a smile to your face and a story to your mind.

For my part, I will never forget making cotton candy in the wind, hail, and rain with David Cleveland during the Town's St. Patrick's Day event in 2022. We were both members of the Jonesborough Kiwanis club and we signed up to do cotton candy duty. Neither of us could have imagined the weather, but that made it all the more memorable. For each

of these names and for all the others who are not listed, we remember you.

Carolyn Moore  
Drane Wilkinson  
Dorothy Wood  
Doris Dean  
Mildred Kozsuch  
Lee Hallberg  
Audrey & Bernard Kaiman  
Pam Dunn  
Elaine Cantrell  
Jim Reel  
David Cleveland  
Beverly Edwards  
George Campbell  
Dr. David Doane  
Ernest McKinney  
Marion McKinney  
George Jaynes  
Baxter & Tobie Bledsoe  
Ann Mooneyhan  
Ignacy Fonberg  
Jeff Dupre  
Reverend Conrad Crow

## Intern Spotlight: Miguel Parrilla

**What interested you about the Chester Inn Museum?** I hope to walk away from the Chester Inn better at historical interpretation.

**What do you hope to learn this summer while volunteering with the Heritage Alliance?** I hope to learn more about Tennessee's first town and it's pre-Civil War history.

**Five years from now, where would you like to be?** Five years from now I would like to be working as a Park Ranger in East Tennessee.

**What is the subject you are interested in researching for the exhibit you're working on?**

I'm researching André Michaux

and I want to make an exhibit around the equipment he would have used on his journey.

Thank you, Miguel!



*Miguel in training for work with Warriors Path State Park*



## From the Director's Desk:



Greetings from the Heritage Alliance and occasional cat rescue. (Don't worry, the friendly warehouse cat has found a new and loving home.) A lot has been going on this summer with the Heritage Alliance. A lot has actually been going on all year. One of my favorite parts of being a historian, is the fact that I am always learning something new. Sometimes that means learning when you got it wrong. Over the past few seasons, cemetery volunteer extraordinaire Gordon Edwards has been using GPR technology in the Old Jonesborough Cemetery. His most recent partnership was with Dr. Robert Jones, owner of the DeVault Tavern and the Tilted Tavern Animal Sanctuary. GPR can tell you a lot about what's underground. One of the things Gordon has been hunting for is the long whispered about mass grave from the cholera epidemic of 1873. Around 35 of Jonesborough's residents perished between mid-July through mid-August of that summer. We know where some of them are buried, but we do not know where a lot of them are buried. The *Herald & Tribune* did a remarkable job of

covering the epidemic, but they never mentioned a mass grave, or really any kind of final resting place for the victims.

Honestly, the Heritage Alliance was inclined to say it was just rumor, a myth. In fact, we even included it in our "mythbusting" tour as potentially busted. However, a few tidbits through time kept Gordon searching. There were some remarks from other papers in the 20th century that there was a mass grave near the "bend" or "trench" of the cemetery. That hunch led him to clear a section of the cemetery right along the back slope. His hunch paid off and the GPR lit up that area in March of this year. There may be up to 15-20 people buried in the grave. Currently, stakes mark the area, but we are working on a temporary marker that will be revealed at our event on August 12th. After that, we will be working with the town on a permanent memorial.

Once the location was re-discovered, we were able to compare it against a photo in our archives from an early 1900s funeral at the Lampson plot. (Photo on page one.) There is a fence in the back of that photo, a fence whose position matches that of the mass grave. We believe it marked off the grave but it was lost to time and then nature as the woods crept up the hill. The full GPR report as written by Dr. Jones will soon be available to the public on our website. We will never be 100% sure, not without excavation, but we have enough evidence to feel 99% sure, and we do

not advocate for excavation. It is time to remember the dead and let them continue to rest. This year marks 150 years since that epidemic. I fully believe the spirits send us messages from time to time. We are honored and sobered to have re-discovered this piece of Jonesborough's history.

In addition to ongoing cemetery projects, the Heritage Alliance is partnering with the Jonesborough Genealogical Society to create a specialty license plate for Historic Jonesborough, Oldest Town in Tennessee. Three potential designs are below. Proceeds from license plate sales will benefit the HA and the JGS. We need your input. Which plate do you like best? Please send your choice and comments to my email at [amazon@heritageall.org](mailto:amazon@heritageall.org). The comment period will be open through August 31st. More information on this project will soon be available on our website.





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