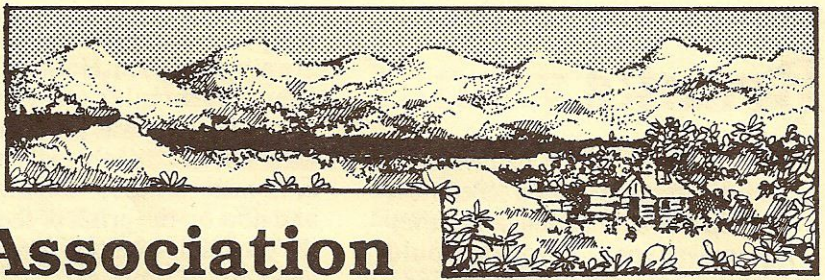


ESTATOE

Quarterly Newsletter

Yancey History Association



VOLUME VIII, NUMBER 2

Preserving Our Appalachian Heritage

AUGUST 1994

Museum/Visitor Center Project Progress Report

The long-awaited beginning work on the Museum/Visitor Center will

soon be visible to residents, thanks to a grant and matching contributions

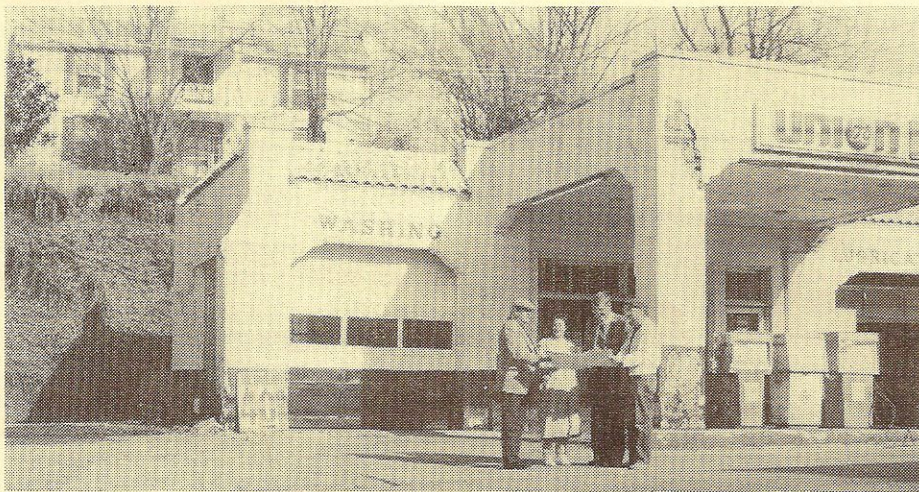
from local government and the Yancey History Association.

A \$25,000 grant from the Asheville-based Janirve Foundation has been secured for the project with matches of \$7,500 each from the county and the town and \$10,293 from the History Association. The YHA funds were raised from the sale of *Images of Yancey* and other projects.

This \$50,000 will enable the project to move forward, with actual renovation work beginning soon on the service station and stabilization efforts getting underway in preparation for restoration of the museum house.

The Chamber of Commerce teamed up with the Yancey History Association in 1990 to purchase the adjoining 1930s service station, which will serve as a visitor information center and

continued on page 3



With the first phase of the Museum/Visitor Center project completed, work is beginning on phase two, which includes restoration of the old service station for a welcome/information office for the Chamber of Commerce and stabilization of the museum. The project has received a matching grant from Janirve Foundation which gave the effort a boost.

The Backside Of Yesterday Tillie Brooks Recounts Stories Of A Lifetime

By Chansé Simpson

Tillie Brooks always knew she could write a book, it just took her a lifetime to figure out exactly what she wanted to say.

In her new non-fiction work, *The Backside Of Yesterday*, Brooks chronicles the people and experiences that have impacted her life here in the Toe River Valley region. The characters she writes about are real, the settings familiar. It is the true story of a life— Arthelia Hilleary Brooks' life.

Brooks first came into Yancey County in the 1940s when she and her husband Arle took up residence in Celo Community. The next decade, as it turned out, was the best

of times and the worst of times for the Brooks family. They had finally begun to realize their dreams, but sadly it was also then that Arle began a multi-year bout with brain cancer. He died in July of 1953. Arle Brooks was only 44.

"I went through 64 letters that he had written me to try and help people know who he really was, what he thought, and what motivated him," she says about the portrayal of her late husband in the book.

Did she capture him accurately?

"I believe I did. I feel like I captured both of us."

After Arle passed away, Brooks initiated her local writing career with
continued on next page



At the Aug. 19 meeting of the Yancey History Association, Tillie Brooks will talk about her life work in the Toe River Valley and the people she came to know.

Brooks

continued from page 1

a regular feature called "People I Meet" in the short-lived *Toe Valley View* newspaper. Brooks would travel throughout the region talking with interesting mountain folks and characters she met along the way. She profiled the lives of dozens of people and immortalized them forever in print.

Her work took all over Yancey and Mitchell Counties, and eventually landed her a daily morning slot on the newly-created WTOE radio station talking about the people she encountered. For five days a week, every morning from 9:00 to 10:00am, she would describe her neighbors and talk at length about their triumphs and tragedies, their kids and grandparents, and their heritaged past.

"WTOE went on the air and I began working with them the very next day on the *Toe Valley View* hour every morning," she explains reflectively. "It was the best thing on the air back then," she adds with a laugh thinking back on the world of the mid-1950s.

A book is a promise.

The Backside Of Yesterday actually had its literary roots dug deep into the ground many years ago as a simple promise to a dedicated nurse

named Lydia Holman. Brooks had always promised Holman that she would eventually tell the nurse's story. Holman was pleased with the idea, but insisted that it not be done until after she died. Brooks waited, and now on the brink of the delivery the book's first edition, she has made good on the promise.

Holman was a veteran of the Spanish-American War, and a woman much different from others typical of era. She was an outspoken, tireless worker for the children of rural mountain communities, yet she was often cast an 'outsider,' and not completely welcomed by everybody. Still she never lost sight of her mission, nor wavered in her in her cause to raise healthy kids.

She arrived on the last Christmas day of the 1800s expecting to stay for only a couple of years. She wound up spending the rest of her life amid the reaches of the Toe Valley. She died in 1960.

Holman traveled all over the mountains visiting people in their homes, and in their communities. She lured doctors from Asheville and other cities to come into the area and stage brief health clinics aimed at prevention, rather than last-minute attempts at cures. In her own way, Brooks contends, Holman's impact on many people's lives was nothing short of profound.

Of course, social change is never without controversy, and Holman experienced that as well. To continue the funding of her programs here in the southern Appalachians, she used photographs she believed to be representative of the hardships of isolated, mountain life to secure financial grants. Proud, yet poor native people did not react favorably to being portrayed in this light of endless poverty.

"This tactic for fund-raising hurt people's pride," Brooks writes in her book, "and it got her in trouble in the early days with (area) newspapers."

Brooks goes on to explain that Holman forbid any of the papers to print anything else about her while she was living. That's when she and Brooks entered into their promised agreement.

"Now, Miss Lydia, it has been over thirty years since your death," Brooks wrote last year at the con-

clusion of the chapter on Holman's career, "but at last, with my best effort, my attempt to keep my promise to tell your story is finished.

"Perhaps in the economy of the universe, in some way that I cannot fathom... Miss Lydia, know that I have kept the faith, that I have completed the assignment."

It has been said that we all have at least one book nestled deep within our souls. At more than 70 years-old, Tillie Brooks has indeed found her book.

Her life is no more special, or ordinary, than most of the rest of us striving to get through the world without the comfort of riches or the luxury of fame. The beauty of her book lies in its rich, detailed account of a particular place in time. It is the story of a life. But it is about *her* life—the most precious of all the gifts we are given.

She will never read her name atop a best-seller's list, nor is she expecting extravagant revenue for her efforts. But through her recollections, she has gained the one thing that nature has instilled within all of us—legacy.

Tillie Brooks' The Backside Of Yesterday will be sold at Hayden Gallery, Needle-Me-This, and Reconciliation House. To order by mail, contact Brooks at (704) 682-9768 or use the order form below.

(This article on Tillie Brooks is a portion of one that appeared in the August 3, 1994 issue of Yancey Common Times Journal. The article and photo are by Chansé Simpson.)

ESTATOEE

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Estatoee (es-to-toe-e) Also spelled
Estootowie in early records. A
Cherokee place name, shortened to
Estatoe/Estatoah, from which the
name Towe or Toe River is derived.

Newsletter Editors:

Lloyd Bailey & Jody Higgins
Program Committee: Lloyd Bailey,
John Doyle, James Byrd

Officers of the Association (1994):

President: Theresa Coletta
Vice-President: Lloyd Bailey

Treasurer: Miladene Laws

Secretary: Jody Higgins

Directors: John Doyle, James Byrd

Steering Committee Chair: John Young

ORDER FORM

The Backside of Yesterday

Arthelia H. Brooks

529-B Green Mountain Drive
Burnsville, North Carolina 28714
(704) 682-9768

Books at \$20 each _____

Delivery fee at \$3 per book _____

TOTAL DUE _____

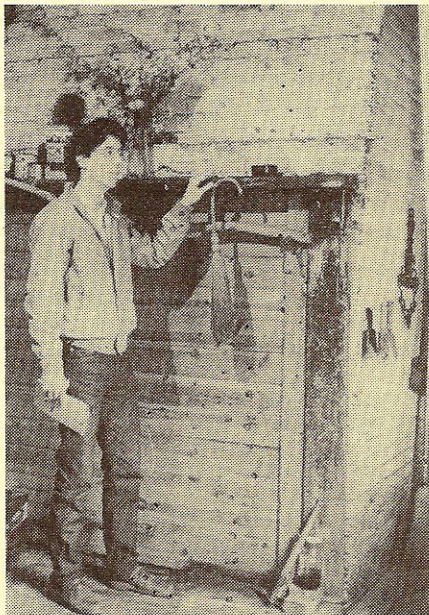
Museum

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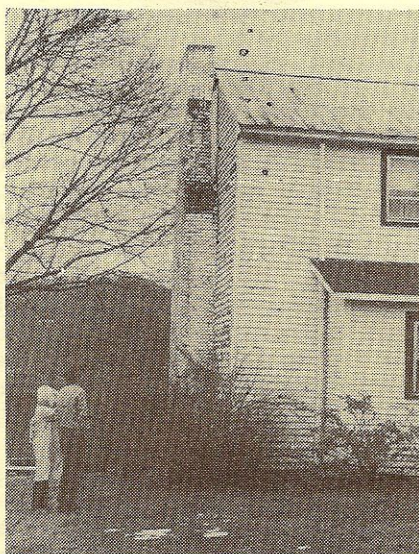
possibly house the Economic Development Commission.

The historic 150-year-old pre-Civil War house, one of the oldest in Burnsville, will be restored to serve as a museum for preserving local history and culture. It will also serve as an educational resource for learning about Yancey's rich past.

Purchased from the heirs of Winnie Lou Ray, the house was acquired



John Horton, Restoration Specialist with the N.C. Dept. of Archives and History, is working closely with the Yancey History Association on the restoration of the museum house. He recently made a site visit to the house to finalize stabilization plans.



through a gift from Mary Louise Wray Conner (daughter of the late Rush Wray of the NuWray Inn) with additional funds coming from the N.C. Legislature and local contributions from industries, businesses and individuals.

The house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the complex has been designated as one of 10 Regional History Sites in the state by the N.C. Dept. of Archives and History.

Total cost of the entire project is estimated at \$650,000 and will be completed in six phases. The first phase has been completed and each remaining phase is estimated at a cost of \$80,000 every two years, with finalization projected for the year 2004. The first phase included purchase of the house, acquisition of the service station property, restoration plans and an archaeological site study by the Dept. of Archives and History, architectural drawings, and pursuing grants and funding.

With receipt of the Janirve grant and the matching funds, the second phase is underway. A joint steering committee made up of two members from each organization and one each from local government has been meeting weekly to finalize plans for the first physical work on renovation of the service station and stabilization of the house.

Steering Committee members from Yancey History Association are John Young and John Doyle, and members from the Chamber are Roger Bard and Wanda Proffitt. Serving on the com-

mittee for the county is Commissioner John Renfro, and from the town, Mayor Mark Bennett.

John Horton, Restoration Specialist with the Western Office of the Dept. of Archives and history, made a site visit to the museum house recently to finalize stabilization plans. He was accompanied on the visit by Yancey History Association President Theresa Coletta and members James Byrd and Mack Ray. Ray will supervise the stabilization work and make regular reports to the Steering Committee.

Included in plans for the Visitor Center, which will be completed first, are offices for the Chamber of Commerce, display areas on business, industry and mining, as well as a meeting room, and the parking area.

The future museum facility will be divided into room that will chronicle county history. The first to be developed and opened will be the Cane River Room, which will feature artifacts excavated from the Cane River Middle School site. The Native American village dates from 1100 to 1400 A.D.

Other rooms planned for the museum will feature exhibits on early pioneer life, and the Civil War era. An outdoor area centered around a well house will focus on early agriculture. Additional exhibits, including those on loan from other museums, will be featured on a rotating basis. An outdoor meeting area is also planned for family reunions and other special events.

Chamber of Commerce Executive
continued on next page



Stabilization work will begin soon on the museum house in preparation for restoration, which will be done in several phases. When completed, the museum will be an important step in preserving Yancey's history and culture.



The museum house was built circa 1850 and is one of the few remaining from that period. It served as headquarters for the Home Guard during the Civil War and often sheltered wounded and weary soldiers. Later, it was the home of former Union Army Captain William M. Moore, who was later a state senator. An attorney, he helped write a new Constitution for North Carolina while in the legislature.

continued

Director Jerry DeLaughter said the Visitor Information Center will provide travelers with information on the area, attractions, events and services, as well as provide information and services for business and industry. DeLaughter said there is not another information center of this type in the mountains. He added that the center will be an asset to the town and county, which serves as the "Gateway to Mount Mitchell." The state park is one

of the North Carolina's top attractions.

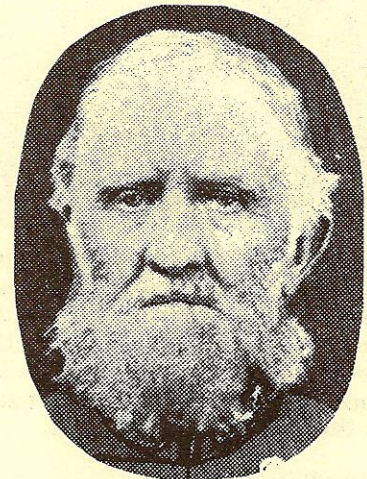
DeLaughter said the work accomplished by the \$50,000 should change the public's perception that the project is standing still. "True, there were setbacks because of the condition of the economy, and budget shortfalls in state government stopped anticipated funding, but a lot that isn't physically visible was accomplished on the project during that time. Things are definitely looking up, and we believe the project is well on its way," DeLaughter said. He added that an additional \$40,000 to \$50,000 will have to be raised to completely finish the lower part of the complex.

John Doyle, a member of the Yancey

History Association board of directors, said, "Everyone involved is very pleased with the way the project is moving forward. A lot has been accomplished over the past several years, but there is still much to be done."

Doyle stressed the importance of the museum for preserving information about early history and the traditional way of life that is quickly vanishing. "Much of the history will be lost if we don't make preservation efforts now. Also, preserving mountain traditions was an important motivation for this project. This has been a true group effort to make something happen that will be invaluable for many generations to come," Doyle said.

The historic site designations and the work that will be getting underway should boost chances for additional grants and funding to assist with local fundraising efforts. The Yancey History Association is currently pursuing a \$50,000 grant from the N.C. Dept. of Cultural Resources as well as other grants from private foundations.



J.W. McElroy

The house that will serve as a county museum was built by J.W. McElroy (1808-1886). At the first meeting of the newly formed county of Yancey (Jan. 1834), he was named Clerk of Superior Court, an office he held until 1846. During the Civil War period, he held the rank of Colonel in the 111th Regiment of the N.C. Militia. On Sept. 19, 1863, Gov. Zeb Vance elevated him to the rank of Brigadier-General. With the task of organizing the Home Guard, headquartered in Burnsville, for defense of Yancey and adjacent counties against Union raids from East Tennessee. He was one of only two officers in the state to hold that rank in the guards.

Family Genealogy & History Inquiries

Send queries to: Yancey History Newsletter, PO Box 1088, Burnsville, NC 28714

Need information about descendents of Aaron Odom (b. 1830 NC) and Martha Laws Odom (b. 1826 NC). Who were Martha's parents? The 1860 Yancey Co. census, Ramseytown, has HH #705, Samuel Odom - 26; HH#706, William Odom -60; and HH#707, Aaron Odom - 30. Was William the father of Samuel and Aaron?

Write: David A. Odom, P.O. Box 1534, Elizabethton, TN 37643.

Who knows more about William Edwards (b. ca 1804), whose wife, Mary Polly Bowman (ca 1813 - 29 Dec. 1883) is buried in Tipton Hill Cemetery? Their children were Jonathan, Bridget, Mary, Sanders, Joseph, and Alzira. Write: Allan H. Whytock, 2728 Tenth St., Lebanon, OR 97355.

Need information on the Casida family

who lived in the Windom community of Yancey County from ca 1881 to 1940 or later. Need death date for my great-grandmother, Mary Ray Casida, who was born ca April 1865. Believe she is buried next to her husband, William Carter Casida, in the Windom Cemetery. Write: Mark Lamborn, 3193 Shelley Dr., Library, PA 15129.

I am doing research on the Ayers family, which includes the Fox, Mitchell, Edwards, Letterman families, to name a few. In 1992, the Ayers cousins formed the Ayers Family Association. The purpose of this association is to bring together all the family who are wanting to preserve our family history and do family research. Our goal is to publish a book on our family, which will include photographs. Write: Gene Hurdt, 210 N. Cherokee St., Jonesborough, Tn 37659.

Bibliography Of Articles About Yancey County

(This listing of articles, publications and books relevant for reading and research on local history was assembled by Lloyd Bailey, 4122 Deepwood Circle, Durham, NC 27707. Future issues of *Estatooe* will contain additional listings.)

Ammons, John. Outlines of History of French Broad Association and Mars Hill College. Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1907. Ammons served as pastor of the Baptist Church in Burnsville and as President of Burnsville Academy. Events relating to both appointments are mentioned, as well as denominational history in general.

Arthur, John Preston. Western North Carolina: A History. Raleigh: Edwards and Broughton, 1914. A respected and original work; Yancey is mentioned in sustained sections at pp. 178-181, 603-605. The former concerns the memories of "Grandma Gardner."

Bailey, Lloyd R. News From Yancey: Articles From Area Newspapers, 1840-1900. Burnsville: Yancey Graphics, 1983. Pp. 83.

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Bailey, Lloyd R. A series of articles in area newspapers (Yancey Journal, Common Times, Mitchell News-Journal), beginning 7/21/1983 and totaling 138 by 1/15/1992.

Battle, Kemp Plummer. Memories of an Old-Time Tar Heel. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1945. Chapter X (pp. 87-95) relates a visit to Burnsville in 1848, when this future president of UNC stayed at Milton Penland's hotel (forerunner of the present Nu-Wray Inn).

Beach, John. "To Kona and Back on the Yancey [Railroad]." In Short and Narrow Rails, 1984. Mr. Beach, of Massillon, Ohio, is preparing a history of the Black Mountain Railway.

Branson's N.C. Business Directory. Lists, by counties, the various local officials (political, business, religious, educational). Series begins in the 1860's. Around 1900, it is succeeded by the North Carolina Year Book.

Broadhurst, Sam, and Lewis J. Hash. The Scrap Mica Resources of North Carolina. N.C. Department of Conservation and Development, Bulletin No. 66 (1953), containing a number of sketches of individual sites and an extensive bibliography

Brown, Henry S. Guide for Geologic Field Trip in Yancey County for Earth Science. Raleigh (?): N.C. Academy of Sciences, 1950.

Bulletin of the North Carolina Board of Health. Contains sections on "Conditions of Jails and County Homes," by counties; "Review of Diseases" by counties; "Mortuary Reports," etc. In 1913, the name was changed to The Health Bulletin.

Canon, William S. "The South Toe Rambler." Trains (Aug., 1974), pp. 36-40. A history of the Yancey Railroad.

Churches of the Mayland Fellowship. Mimeographed and published in 1993; pp. 92, organized around the many individual congregations, with photographs..

Colton, Henry E. Mountain Scenery. Raleigh: W.L. Pomeroy, 1859. See Chapter X: "The Black Mountains"; Chapter XI: "The Roan Mountain"; and Chapter XIII: "Pleasant Country Stopping-Places." In the last of these sections, he describes the hotel of R.B. Penland ("Flat Rock House") at what is now Penland, N.C.

Dawley, Thomas Robinson, Jr. The Child That Toileth Not. New York: Garcia, 1913 (2nd ed.). Advances the thesis that children who worked long hours in the cotton mills (around the turn of the century) were better off than many children at home in rural WNC. To make his point, he visited impoverished families, conducted interviews, and took photographs. Materials about Yancey may be found in Chapters XXVII ("Egypt") and XVII ("Reports of the Families Gone to the Mills").

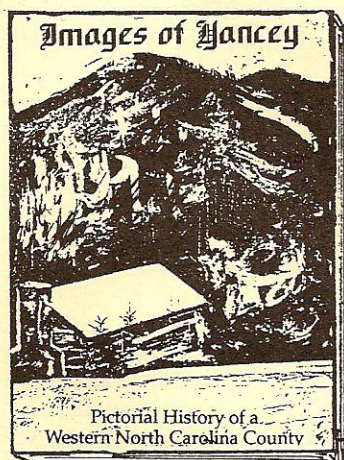
DePriest, Paula Teresa. The Macrolichen Flora of Unaka Mountain, Unicoi County, Tennessee-Yancey County, North Carolina. M.S. Thesis, Univ. of Tenn. (Knoxville), 1983.

Deyton, Jason Basil. "The Toe River Valley to 1865." M.A. Thesis at UNC; published in The North Carolina Historical Review, XXIV, No. 4 (Oct., 1947), pp. 423-466. Although much of the material has been gleaned from the Minutes of the County Court, its reports on conversations with persons who lived during the Civil War Period are irreplaceable.

Draughon, Wallace R. History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in North Carolina (1974). Lists by name a number of converts in Yancey, Mitchell, and Avery counties, beginning as early as 1882.

Duls, Louisa DeSaussure. The Story of Little Switzerland. Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1982. Contains numerous references to Yancey and Burnsville concerning matters of the arts, music, etc. (See Index.)

(Check with your local public library for these books, publications and articles.)



Images of Yancey

Second Printing

Available at:
**Baker's Everything
From A to Z**

on Main Street just off town square

Cost is \$37.50
(Mail orders available at \$40, which covers shipping and handling. Send request along with payment and address to: Yancey History Association, P.O. Box 1088, Burnsville, NC 28714)

Purchase of *Images of Yancey* will automatically enroll you as a member of the Yancey History Association, allowing you to be a part of preserving the past for the future

Brooks To Speak At Aug. YHA Meeting

The summer meeting of the Yancey History Association will take place on Friday, August 19 at 7:30 p.m. The meeting will be held in the sanctuary of Bald Creek United Methodist Church.

The speaker will be Arthelia "Tillie" Brooks, who is well known to many residents of the Toe River Valley as an appointee of the Woman's Society of Christian Service of the Methodist Church. She will also be remembered as a public school teacher, as an employee of the "Toe Valley View" newspaper, from her daily hour-long program on radio station WTOE, and from her many volunteer activities in the area.

Her recently published book, "The Backside of Yesterday," details her experiences and characterizes the many fine and interesting people she came to know in the Toe River Valley.

Future Programs

The final meeting of the Yancey History Association for 1994 will be held Saturday evening, October 15. The topic will be events which led to the integration of the public schools in Yancey County, beginning in 1959 and continuing into the early 1960's.

A future program of the YHA will be on the work of the WPA in the construction of Yancey school buildings in the 1930s during the Great Depression as well as other projects such as the Blue Ridge Parkway. Anyone who worked on these WPA projects, such as Micaville, Bee Log, Clearmont, Burnsville and Bald Creek schools, and is willing to supply information about this should contact Lloyd Bailey, 4122 Deepwood Circle, Durham, NC 27707, or call him at 919-489-8731.

Minutes Of Previous YHA Meeting

The quarterly meeting of the Yancey History Association was held June 17, at the Burnsville Town Hall. The meeting was attended by 30 people, including YHA members and guests.

The meeting was called to order by President Theresa Coletta and minutes from the March 11 meeting were presented by Secretary Jody Higgins and were approved with one addition - that the YHA had approved the use of \$10,293 of the Association's funds to add to funding from the town and county to match a \$25,000 grant from the Janirve Foundation.

Program Chairman Lloyd Bailey introduced guest speaker Tom Rusher, District Attorney for the 24th Judicial District, who spoke on "Public Executions in Yancey County" in the 1800's.

The business meeting followed the program. The president recognized the work of Lloyd Bailey, Jody Higgins and John Doyle in producing the quarterly newsletter. She also thanked Miladene Laws for handling sales of "Images of Yancey." Special recognition was given to Danny Gouge of Gouge Trucking for hauling the second printing of "Images" from the publisher in Missouri, which saved the Association several hundred dollars. James Byrd presented the financial report and the budget for 1994, totaling \$59,408, was presented, reviewed and approved.

The group heard a report by the Joint Steering Committee on the Museum/Visitor Center Project. Chairman John

Young said the restoration of the museum will require more funding because of its historic nature and the work involved and guidelines that must be followed. The service station, which is also a historic structure, will not require as much work or money to restore.

John Doyle reviewed the six phase plan for completing the Museum/Visitor Center complex. Phase One was completed during 1987 to 1994, and included purchase of the museum house, then acquiring the service station property in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce. A restoration and development plan has been completed by the N.C. Dept. of Archives and History, and an archeological site study conducted. The site has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places and designated as a Regional Historic Site by the N.C. Dept. of Archives and History. Other parts of this phase, such as fundraising and the acquiring of grants and state funding were also reviewed.

James Byrd and Lloyd Bailey updated the group on the second printing of "Images of Yancey" and on other publications of interest to the Association members, including Dr. Bailey's forthcoming "Heritage of the Toe River Valley."

Lloyd announced that the program for the August meeting will be presented by Tillie Brooks, and that future programs will cover school integration in Yancey and WPA projects.

Let's Make History In Yancey County

Enclosed is \$5 for a one-year membership to Yancey History Association (Members will receive *Estatocoe*, the quarterly newsletter which contains history & genealogy articles, and information about meetings, publications and projects)

I would like to contribute to making Yancey history come alive with a donation to the museum project. (Includes membership)

\$1000 \$500 \$200 \$100 \$50 \$25 Other _____

I will consider museum project in my will to bequeath real estate, antiques, or money to help Yancey History Association preserve our past for the future.

Name _____ Address _____

Town, State, Zip _____

Mail To: Yancey History Association, PO Box 1088, Burnsville, NC 28714

All Gifts to Yancey History Association are tax deductible. Thank you for your support.

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