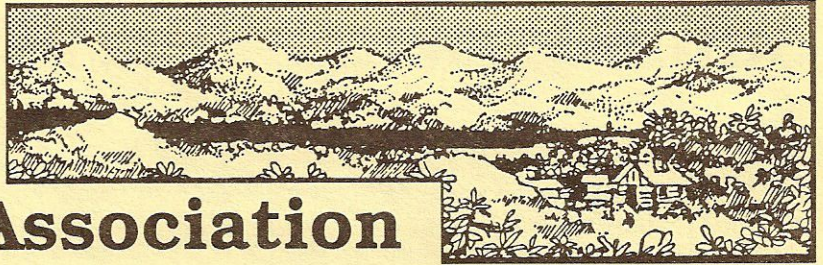


# ESTATOE

Quarterly Newsletter

## Yancey History Association



Volume X, No. 1

Preserving Our Appalachian Heritage

April 1996

### Museum/Visitor Center Update

## Visitor Center Ribbon Cutting, Open House; Restoration Of Museum House Now Underway

Betty Ray McCain, Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, along with representatives from the state Department of Archives and History, state legislators, and local officials joined in the ribbon cutting ceremonies for Yancey's recently completed Visitor Center on March 25.

Secretary McCain also presented the Yancey History Association with a \$35,000 check at a dinner held at the NuWray Inn following the ribbon cutting and open house.

The dinner was part of the celebration organized by the Chamber of Commerce, which will occupy the new Visitor Center.

Also attending the event were: Larry Misenheimer, assistant director of the State Dept. of Archives and History and Ron Holland of the Western Office; State Representative Bob Hunter and Senator Jesse Ledbetter; Martha Peterson of U.S. Congressman Charles Taylor's Asheville office; Commissioners Keith Presnell, Billy Ray Bailey, and John Renfro; county manager Earl Tipton; Burnsville Mayor Charlie Hensley; Clerk of Court Warren Hughes;

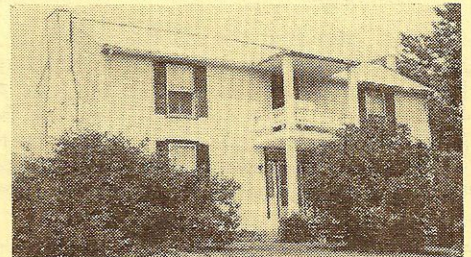
and Chamber of Commerce and Yancey History Association representatives.

At last Monday's ceremony, Chamber president Jerry Hatfield said, "This Visitor Center has been a long time in the planning and we are very proud to be cutting the ribbon today. This building means a lot to the people of Yancey County. A visitor center gives people a warm welcome, and ours is a place where tourists can come to learn about Yancey and the area."

"Tourism is a very clean industry, and is important to a rural area such as ours, and tourists need to know they are welcome here," he said.

The Chamber is very grateful to everyone who made this possible, especially the Yancey History Association, the town, county, the state, the Chamber directors and membership, and the many loyal volunteers who have put in so many long hours on the project," Hatfield concluded.

At the Celebration dinner following the ribbon cutting and open house, the Chamber presented plaques of appreciation to members of the Chamber/History Associa-



With the Visitor Center phase of the project complete, focus is now on the museum phase, with \$30,000 of the latest grant designated for the work. "We are excited that the first phase is completed and we can proceed full steam ahead with the restoration of the museum house," said YHA president Theresa Coletta.

tion Joint Steering Committee which is coordinating the work on the project.

Plaques were presented to Steering Committee members Roger Bard, John Doyle, John Renfro, Wanda Proffitt, and John Young, as well as Commission Chairman Keith Presnell and the late Mayor Mark Bennett. Mayor Bennett gave new life to the project when he and the town board committed \$7,500 to help match a \$25,000 Janirve Foundation grant.

The mayor challenged the county to contribute the same amount, and the History Association completed the match for the grant. Heather Norris Hockaday, Bennett's granddaughter, accepted the plaque on behalf of the late mayor.

Chamber Steering Committee member Roger Bard and Yancey History Association member John Doyle have put in many volunteer hours overseeing the implementation of the plan and the Visitor Center construction. Contractor Tom Jobin was also recognized for his work and for many donated hours of time and effort to the project. Former Chamber president Gerald Presnell was also recognized for his leader-



County Commissioner and Joint Steering Committee member John Renfro accepts a \$35,000 check from Sen. Jesse Ledbetter, Sec. of Cultural Resources Betty Ray McCain, and Rep. Bob Hunter. Also pictured: Chamber President Jerry Hatfield, YHA fundraising coordinator Mack Ray and Steering Committee member John Young.

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Officials attending the ribbon cutting celebration: County Manager Earl Tipton, Commissioner John Renfro, Ron Holland of the Western Office of Archives and History, Asst. Director of N.C. Dept. of Archives and History Larry Misenhimer, Commission Chairman Keith Presnell, Sen. Jesse Ledbetter, Rep. Bob Hunter, Chamber Director Linda Crout (cutting the ribbon), Chamber President Jerry Hatfield, EDC Director Ann Francis, Mayor Charlie Hensley, Clerk of Court Warren Hughes, Sec. of Cultural Resources Betty McCain, and YHA Fundraising Coordinator Mack Ray.

## Visitor Center

*continued from page 1*

ship during the planning stages of the Visitor Center.

Work on the Museum/Visitor Center Complex began in January after Rep. Hunter delivered a \$50,000 grant for the project. The funds came from \$2 million appropriated by the General Assembly for local and regional history projects across the state.

Hunter and Yancey History Association fundraising coordinator Mack Ray worked closely with Secretary McCain to secure the grant for the project. The \$50,000 grant, along with the grant from the Janirve Foundation matched by the town, county and history group provided the funding to complete the Visitor Center phase of the project.

Total cost of the project, which will be completed in phases over the next several years, is estimated at \$650,000. With completion of the Visitor Center, work in now underway to restore the adjoining pre-Civil War home, which will serve as a museum for preserving the county's rich history for future generations.

The project was conceived and planned a number of years ago by the Yancey History Association and was started with local contributions and some initial funding by the state legislature.

The historic McElroy-Ray home was purchased by the History Association with a \$60,000 gift from Mary Louise Wray Connor, daughter of the late Rush Wray. The gift was matched by local and state contri-

butions. The family of Winnie Lou Ray reduced the purchase price of the house to the history group.

When a state budget shortfall cut expected funding from the Dept. of Cultural Resources, the Yancey History Association invited the Chamber of Commerce on board in 1990 to purchase the adjoining gas station property. Since then the Chamber has made payments on the gas station property with local room tax funds collected and distributed by the county to that organization.

The Visitor Center will also house the Yancey County Economic Development Commission in a room in the building that is yet to be completed.

Yancey History Association president Theresa Coletta said that \$30,000 of the latest \$35,000 grant delivered by McCain is designated for restoration work on the museum, with \$5,000 going to the Visitor Center for additional work on that phase of the project.

"We are excited that the first phase, with the opening of the Visitor Center, is completed, and we can proceed full steam ahead with the restoration of the museum house," Coletta said.

McCain, who came to Yancey in August and toured the project, pledged the continued support of the project by the Dept. of Cultural Resources with the help of the state legislature.

The Museum/Visitor Center Complex has been designated by the Dept. of Archives and History as one of 10 Regional History Sites in the state.

## Heritage Vol. I Being Reprinted

Those of you who did not obtain a copy of Lloyd Bailey's outstanding book, *The Heritage of the Toe River Valley*, will now have one last opportunity to own it.

Waisworth Publishing Company and Don Mills, Inc., announces the impending publication of a limited number of copies from a second printing. It will be available at the same cost of the first edition, \$68.00, which includes sales tax, packing, and shipping.

The volume, a copy of which can be seen at the Yancey County Public Library, is of large size (9 X 12 inches) and contains 747 articles (547 pages) of articles on local history and families in Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey Counties, most with a photograph. It is fully indexed by first and family name (the index alone covers nearly 60 pages).

Order with pre-payment of \$68.00 from Lloyd Bailey, 4122 Deep Wood Circle, Durham, NC 27707. Allow approximately twelve (12) weeks for printing and delivery (June 1, 1996). Be sure to include the address to which you wish it shipped.

## Heritage Vol. II

A second volume of *The Heritage of the Toe River Valley* is now nearing completion.

More than 2,000 pages of manuscript have already been received, covering many families and interesting events which were not included in Volume I.

If it has been your intention to send an article about yourself, your family, or some interesting event in local history, now is the time to do so. You must not delay much longer, or the project will be declared "closed" and the material sent to the printer.

Help ensure that your family will not be forgotten and that future generations will know about it. A photograph may be included free with each article (additional ones at \$12.50 each).

Notice will be given in the near future of how to order this important volume.

# When Yancey Was Part Of Buncombe

By Lloyd Bailey

Prior to 1791, our area of Western North Carolina was in the County of Burke. In that year, the County of Buncombe was established, with the boundary coming up Toe River, then up Little Crabtree Creek and along the Black Mountain range.

Thus that part of future Yancey that lay east of Micaville remained in Burke, while that to the west was part of the new county.

Some brief account of happenings in the Buncombe sector may be found in the Minutes of the Buncombe County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, beginning in 1792. Those records continue, with some "lost" volumes, until Yancey was formed from Buncombe and Burke in 1833. (*A microfilm copy may be found in the State Archives as County Record C.013.30001.*)

I have taken the following notes from the Minutes, limiting them to entries which I perceive to pertain to the Toe River Valley. (*Items in brackets are clarifications that I have added, and the numbers at left are for my reference only.*)

**April, 1792:**

The new county's first court jury includes George Baker and Hickman Hensley. Philip Hoodenpyle brings orphans into court. [All three are land owners on Jacks Creek, although Hoodenpyle, one of the initial Justices of the new county and its representative to the House of Commons in 1796, did not live there.]

Tax rate: 1 shilling and 6 pence/poll; 6 pence/100 acres of land.

Constables include John Edwards and Samuel Randolph. [Edwards is the ancestor of a considerable clan in Yancey.]

Jury is chosen to lay off a road from Rimes [Reems] Creek to Robert Hinton's on Lindseys Creek, Cane River; it includes George Baker, Henry Hensley, James Sams, Nathan Dever, and Jacob Higgins. [Henry Hensley may well be the Revolutionary War soldier of this name who settled in Yancey.]

Tax Lister [for what apparently is now the Yancey area] is Philip Hoodenpyle.

**July, 1792:**

Jury list includes Thomas Rhay [Ray, who lived near the present Cane River Baptist Church, is the ancestor of all the Rays in the area].

John Baker is to oversee the road from Hinton's Mill on Caney River to the Burke County line and Turkey Cove [present McDowell Co.].

Jury is to mark out and lay off a road from Austin Choates's [Shoat's] on Ivy River to Hinton's Mill on Caney River; it includes James Sams, Jno. Hinton, George Baker, Thomas Rhea [Ray], John Baker, James Hensley, Henry Hensley, John Edwards.

Bill for divorce: Ruth Edwards vs John Edwards. [Divorces were only granted by the State Assembly, but the Buncombe Court apparently "took the law into its own hands" here.]

**October, 1792:**

**January, 1793:**

Jury list includes Thomas Rhea [Ray].

Hickman Hensley is sworn in as a Justice of the Peace. [Possibly the Revolutionary War soldier of this name.]

George Baker is mentioned as Constable. [In the 1790 National Census, Baker apparently resides on Jacks Creek.]

**April, 1793:**

Jury list for the next two terms includes William Bailey, Charles Rowland, Thomas Rhea [Ray].

Site for a court house is decided upon (up to this time held at the home of William Davidson).

Tax listing areas are to coincide with those of militia companies; William Britton is to list in Capt. Hensley's company [present Yancey?].

**July, 1793:**

Richard Bennett is allowed to erect a grist mill on his land on Bowland's [Bolen's?] Creek, waters of Caney River, at White Rock Shoals.

Jury is to mark out a road from Hinton's Mill [Caney River] to Austin Choate's on Ivey River, including Mark Foster, John Hensley, and John Baker.

**October, 1793:**

**January, 1794:**

Jurors for the road from Capt. Shoat's to William R. Hinton's Mill are ordered to report [for work on the road] in April.

April, 1794:

Thomas Rhea [Ray] is on the grand jury list.

Long jury list for road work from Hinton's Mill on Cane River to Austin Choate's on Ivey.

Tax Listers include Philip Hoodenpyle on Cane River.

**July, 1794:**

Among the Magistrates is Hickman Hensley.

Road jury for Choate's to Hinton's Mill reports that a road can be made by going up Paint Spring Creek and across Paint Spring Gap [the present Paint Gap at the head of Horton Creek]. The men in Capt. Shoat's [militia] company is to work on it.

Charles Rowland is to oversee the road from the Burke County line [McKinney Gap?] to the branch on the east side of Thomas Rhea's [Ray's] house. Part of Capt. [Hickman] Hensley's [militia] company is to work on it. James Ledford is to oversee the road from there to Paint Spring Gap, with the rest of Capt. Hensley's company to work on it.

**October, 1794:**

Captain Hensley's company is to cut out the road according to its former orders.

**January, 1795:**

**April, 1795:**

Philip Hoodenpyle replaces J. Ledford as road overseer; all of Capt. Hensley's company are to work until the road is opened (Jacks Creek is mentioned as part of this company).

Hickman Hensley is to list the taxes for his company.

**July, 1795:**

Thomas Rhea [Ray] is to be allowed 24 shillings for listing property as Constable in Capt. Hensley's company in 1795.

*continued on page 4*

## June Program Salutes 50 Years Of Parkway Playhouse

To help commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Burnsville's Parkway Playhouse, the Yancey History Association will present a program on that topic during the evening of June 22, 1996.

The oldest summer theatre in the state, Parkway Playhouse has survived many changes over the years, but has always stayed in operation with strong local support. The theatre is currently operated by the local board of directors and managing director Bill Dreyer.

Garrett Dixon Bailey, who was involved with the theatre during its early days in the late 1940s, will take part in the YHA program. This is just one of the activities planned for 1996 to celebrate the 50th anniversary.

### ESTATOOE

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Burnsville, NC 28714

Estatoee (es-to-toe-e)

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*

*President:* Theresa Coletta

*Vice-President:* Lloyd Bailey

*Treasurer:* Miladene Laws

*Secretary:* Jody Higgins

*Directors:* John Doyle, James Byrd

*Steering Committee Chair:* John Young

## How Farming In Yancey Has Changed

April History Program Features Extension Director Jim Ray  
And A Look At Early Crops, Tools, And Farming Techniques

Many of the crops, tools, and farming techniques in use today were unknown to the pioneer settlers in the Toe River Valley.

In fact, many of the things upon which we depend for successful agriculture were unknown even one hundred years ago. How, for example, were soils made productive before commercial fertilizers became available?

Ever hear of "Gu-anner"? When were "cover crops" introduced? How did burley tobacco make its appearance, and by what route? Were there other kinds before that? When and how did alfalfa seed first find its way to our area?

Were dwarf fruit trees found in the Garden of Eden, or did they come about as the result of experimentation in more recent times? Did Yancey County once have machinery for carding wool?

These items (and, as they say, "much, much more") will be discussed by Jim Ray, Yancey Agricul-

tural Extension Agent, at the History Association Meeting on April 20.

The meeting will be held in the Annex to the Yancey County Library in Burnsville at 7:30 p.m.

*Good reading, in the meanwhile, is Lawrence King's article in Images of Yancey, at pp. 123-128; and Cornelius Cathey, Agriculture in North Carolina Before The Civil War.*



Extension Director Jim Ray

## Buncombe

*continued from page 3*

**January, 1796:**

The county seat is initially designated as "Morristown" [see F.A. Sondley, A History of Buncombe County, p. 638].

**April, 1796:**

George Baker resigns as Constable on Caney River and is replaced by Redman McMahan.

Philip Hoodenpyle is to list taxes in Capt. Hensley's company.

**END OF BOOK I**

Continued in a future issue

## Let's Make History In Yancey County

Enclosed is \$5 for a one-year membership to Yancey History Association (Members will receive Estatoee, 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, P.O. Box 1088, Burnsville, NC 28714

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

Yancey History Association

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