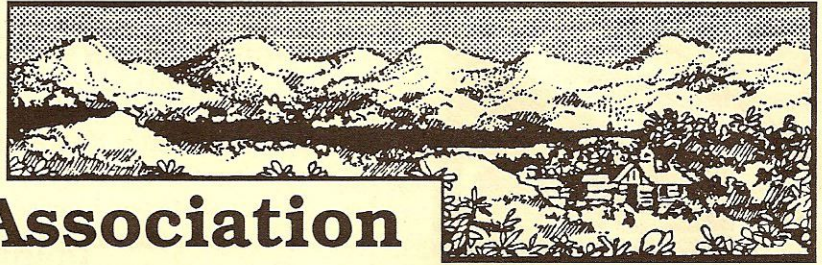


ESTATOE

Quarterly Newsletter

Yancey History Association



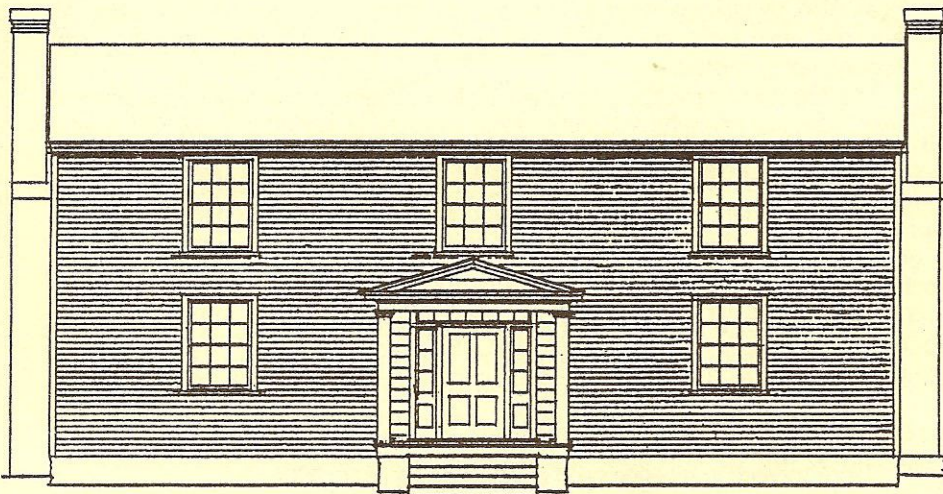
Volume XI, No. 1

Preserving Our Appalachian Heritage

March 1997

1997 Calendar of Events

- April 12..... Planting Day at the Museum
April 26..... Annual Membership Meeting
& Program "Frankie Silver's Song"
May 17..... Museum Benefit Dinner
May 24..... Museum Open House
June 14..... Museum Open House
June 21..... Membership Meeting
& Program "Hanging Newspaper"
Aug. 1 & 2... Museum Open House
Aug. 30..... Museum Grand Opening Celebration
& Membership Meeting
Oct. 4..... Museum Open House
Oct. 18..... Membership Meeting
& Program (to be announced)

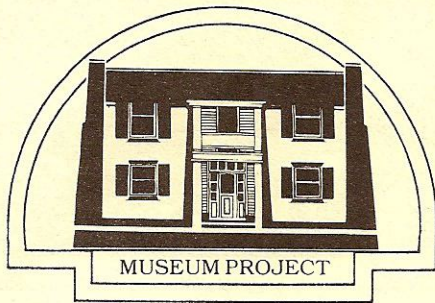


The McElroy/Ray House
Facade - Reconstructed

Frankie Silver's Song

Local tradition of long standing is that Frances Stewart, wife of the murdered Charles Silver and a resident of the present Mitchell County, composed a long and sorrowful poem which she recited from the gallows before being hanged in Morgantown, NC, on July 12, 1833. The entire story of the murder, dismemberment of the body, and its incineration in the household fireplace, is related (among other places) in Muriel Sheppard's well known volume *Cabins In The Laurel*. (1935 Edition, pp 25 - 39), with the poem itself quoted on pp. 35 - 37. The same story, with some of the original documents reproduced, may be found in *Common Times: Written and Pictorial History of Yancey County*. (Yancey Graphics, 1981, pp. 17-21)

Many details of the "traditional" version, and even its central conclusion, have been challenged by Perry Deane Young in two articles (nos. 56 and 57) in *The Heritage of The Toe River Valley*. (recently edited by Lloyd Bailey). Young's basis for concluding that Frankie committed justifiable homicide (manslaughter) is documented in the Letter Books of NC Governors Stokes and Swain, as well as the files of the State Supreme Court. Now Mr. Young comes to examine the traditional story of the song's origin, concluding that Frankie had nothing to do with its authorship. Those who desire to hear details of this interesting investigation, reversing conclusions that have long been taken for granted, should attend the next meeting of the Yancey County History Association, to be held in the Annex to the County Library in Burnsville on Saturday, April 26, at 7:30 p.m. Perry Deane Young, currently a resident of Chapel Hill, NC, is the grandson of Thomas and Virginia (Dellinger) Young of Yancey County.



Museum Report

Let's make 1997 the year of the Yancey County History Museum! Building on the efforts of the steering committee we will make this a reality. We're sure you noticed that most of the History Associations activities this year are centered at the Museum. The details of these activities will be discussed at our April 26th Meeting.

There is one event, however, that precedes the April meeting. April 12th is scheduled as Planting Day at the Museum. We have received a challenge gift from Memorial Mission Hospital of \$1,500.00. According to Hospital administrator, Barbara Gordosky, they will provide the plants for the new parking area if we supply the people power.

John Young is working with a landscape architect to develop a beautification plan. Once the plan is complete, hopefully by Thursday the 10th, we will be ready to dig. We would like to prepare in advance as much of the area as possible to insure that all the plants are planted on Saturday.

We hope all available shovel toting volunteers will call the Association office for digging details or turn out for the Big Plant on Saturday from 10:00 until done.

We all owe a big thank-you to our president, John Young, for solving our parking needs and to Barbara Gordosky for her interest in our community. Also a very big thank you to: Mack Ray, Dr. Cort, Dr. Johnson and the entire staff of the Pediatric Care Center. Their combined efforts have solved the parking, child safety, and traffic problems on Academy Street. Let's thank them all by making their efforts beautiful.

Minutes of October History Association Meeting

There was discussion among the YHA officers present at the meeting about the oral agreement already made with Memorial Mission Hospital, Dr. Carolyn Cort, local pediatrics physician who has offices on Academy Street adjacent to the parking area under construction for the Museum, and Mack Ray. This organization and individuals have requested rental of seven parking spaces near Dr. Cort's office building. The rental charges paid to Yancey History Association will finance the present renovation and parking area work, and will be used for future expenses incurred when the Museum is open to the public.

Guest speaker for the October meeting

of Yancey History Association was Janice McKinney, Technology (Computer) Coordinator for Yancey County Schools. After introducing Mrs. McKinney, Dr. Bailey turned the program over to her. The very interesting program put together by Mrs. McKinney was about the five rock school buildings in different area of Yancey County (Burnsville, Micaville, Clearmont, Bald Creek and Bee Log) which were constructed by Work Progress Administration (WPA) workers in the Great Depression days of the 1930s.

Mrs. McKinney brought her projector and slides she had made during visits in the past to the five schools. Before her

Continued on page 4

From the desk of the Executive Director

I think I've been shot from a cannon and I wouldn't have it any other way. The past six months, or should I say the first six months, of this position have been exciting and stimulating. My thanks to the Board of Directors and the membership for affording me the opportunity to serve the History Association. The years ahead are filled with the promise of discovery and shared fulfillment. So let's get started.

I have always found that questions lead to answers and answers create solutions. My first two questions are simple. How can I best serve this organization? and, How can this organization help me to serve it best.

Established organizations have their own strengths, though they may require a fresh perspective to bring them into focus. The Yancey History Association is blessed with a core of dedicated individuals, each with their own strengths and interest of historical preservation.

Reviewing our collective strengths and weaknesses leads us to the answer of both these important questions. I can best serve the History Association by coordinating the skills and interests of the members to complete our common goal. Also, by utilizing my skills to make our efforts cohesive and obtainable. My administrative skills are strong and varied, I am an administrator who loves history, not an historian.

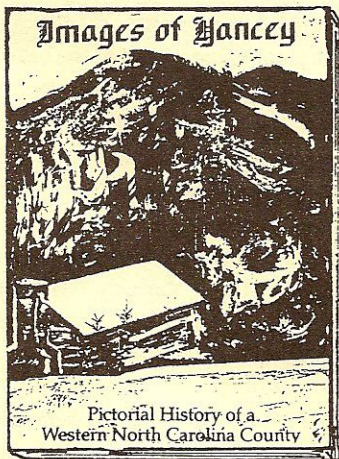
The Association members can help me serve them best by making me aware of their individual interests and skills. Most importantly, I need to know the level of energy and time commitment that you are willing to donate to our common goals.

These two answers have lead me to the solution as presented in the Proposed Stabilization Plan. The plan looks at who we serve and the need for that service. The plan then presents a brief outline and corresponding time-table. It is my feeling that once this plan is put into action, it will provide the stability needed for us to grow and meet the exhilarating challenges ahead.

The guidance and support I have received from the Board of Directors has been outstanding. I now need the same from the membership. This is a small step and a simple solution. Our direction is more important than speed. With our direction set, the momentum of our mission will carry us to our goal with astounding speed.

I look forward to meeting each of you. See you April 26th.

Sincerely,
Jim Priesmeyer



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

Heritage Volume I Is Ready!

Those of you who did not obtain a copy of Lloyd Bailey's outstanding book, *The Heritage of the Toe River Valley* now have one last opportunity to own it. Walsworth Publishing Company and Don Mills, Inc., announces that a limited number of copies of a reprint are now ready for shipment. It is 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. Be sure to include the address to which you wish it shipped.

Proposed Plan for Organizational Coordination and Stabilization

The Community we serve is Yancey County and the surrounding region. Town and County Governments are seeking our help in preserving and presenting a clear picture of local heritage to our citizens and many visitors. The school system will use this picture to build self image and confidence in our youth. Seasonal residents have requested a picture to use as a guide to the heritage and traditions that originally drew them to Yancey County.

Due to our geographic location, Yancey County has had, according to its 1990 U.S. Census Report, nearly unchanged growth during the prior 100 years. Therefore this area is a living history of rural North Carolina. Though Yancey County and Burnsville, with its charming town square, depicts an era gone by, statistics shows we are poised on the brink of rapid growth. This rapid growth will bring irreversible change to our community. According to French Broad Electric Membership Corporation power connections during the past 20 years increased by more than 80% above the stable population base. These new connections are to seasonal / retirement homes. History has shown that these homes will become full-time residences.

The history of our organization began with the established need to preserve and protect our heritage. Faced with needed, but rapid, growth we have made every effort to fulfill this task. The blessings that have propelled us toward our goal have also strained our organization to its limits.

The schedule we propose has four levels each with a time-table of six months. Level One, which is nearly complete, will allow the Executive Director to review all operations and procedures. The Director will then make recommendations and obtain board approval for an organizational stabilization plan.

Level Two will include adoption of the organizational stabilization plan by the membership at our annual meeting in April. The plan will clarify our mission and make needed adjustments to our by-laws and operational procedures. The plan also provides for the formation of six committees: Membership, Newsletter and Programs, Grants and Endowments, Fund-raising sales, Fund-raising events, and Museum restoration and start-up. The Living History area of the Museum will be opened for limited events building new interest and support for our mission.

Level Three will expand the committees formed, providing the coordination required to move forward with our newly defined mission. Each committee will set a specific schedule for completion of obtainable goals, and create an outline for future goals. The renewed growth and new found stability that the plan provides will allow us to move forward in coordinating fund-raising and other activities with area non-profit groups. The development of these activities will supply operational funding.

Level Four will give us the opportunity to evaluate our progress and make adjustments. We will open the Living History area of our Museum to the public May through October. It will also be available for student tours and programs year round. All programs and Association activities will be centered at our new facility.

At the conclusion of this schedule we will have the knowledge and resources needed to move forward with the completion of our Museum and an expansion of the educational programs.

Minutes continued from page 2

presentation of the various slides, Dr. Bailey explained why these schools were constructed by WPA workers, saying that there was a need for replacement of the two-story wooden school buildings, as they presented fire and other hazards to the students and teachers in Yancey County. He stated, however, that replacement of the old buildings by more modern rock buildings was not the only reason for the construction. Using WPA workers to build the new buildings provided income for 400 Yancey County families during this time of depressed economy.

The Annex room was darkened for presentation of slides. With the first slide she showed, a trip back in time began for some members of Yancey History Association. Some had been students or a teacher in one or another of the five school buildings, the images of which were reflected on the Annex Room wall. All through the presentation, Mrs. McKinney gave a running commentary on things she had learned from various residents of the communities in which the school buildings were constructed. She mentioned Arnie Pate from Bee Log, whose father was one of the WPA workers who helped to build the Bee Log School, as being a small boy at the time this school was constructed. Mrs. McKinney also told of the wealth of information supplied by Harold Butner, whose boyhood home had been in sight of the Burnsville School, and he was able

to watch the construction as a boy.

Since Mrs. McKinney's program was friendly and informal, YHA members were all welcomed to give comments about what they knew of the school buildings. Mrs. James Proffitt mentioned that she had been a teacher at the Burnsville school when she retired from the profession. Both Mr. and Mrs. Proffitt made comments on the Bald Creek school building construction. Mr. Proffitt grew up in the Bald Creek community, and later became one of the owners of Proffitt's Store near the school. The Proffitts have resided in the Bald Creek Community for many years.

As the slide of the Micaville school building was shown, Mrs. McKinney pointed out how cleverly a WPA worker had, in placing the rocks where the words "Micaville High School" were, supposedly engraved above the entrance of the building, added a muted "WPA" formed by smaller rocks in the lower left of this space above the front steps of the building, not noticeable unless one knew who the builders were.

Mrs. McKinney had also learned from those who are descendants of the WPA workers at Micaville that the letters for "Micaville High School" had been formed by placing pieces of water hose of the correct diameter and length in the wet concrete and removing the hose when the concrete became firm, and were not really engraved.

When Janice's program came to an end, she was given a standing ovation for her

interesting and informative presentation which has great value as part of the history of Yancey County. At that time, everyone took a refreshment break to partake of the "finger food" and hot spiced or cold cider prepared by the YHA Secretary, Norma Westall.

After this period of "food and fellowship" the Yancey History Association's October, 1996 meeting was officially adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

*Norma Hall Westall, Secretary
Yancey History Association*

ESTATOOEE

*Published Quarterly by the
Yancey History Association*

P.O. Box 1088
Burnsville, NC 28714
Estatooee (es-to-toe-e)

Estootowie in early records. A Cherokee place name, shortened to **Estatooe/Estatoah**, from which the name **Towe** or **Toe River** is derived.

Newsletter Editors:

Lloyd Bailey, Jim Priesmeyer
Program Committee: Lloyd Bailey,
John Doyle, James Byrd
Officers of the Association

President: John Young

Vice-President: Lloyd Bailey

Treasurer: Miladene Laws

Secretary: Norma Westall

Directors: John Doyle, James Byrd

Steering Committee Members: John Young,
John Doyle

Executive Director: Jim Priesmeyer

Let's Make History In Yancey County

Enclosed is \$5 for a one-year membership to Yancey History Association (Members will receive *Estatooee*, 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

P.O. Box 1088
Burnsville, NC 28714