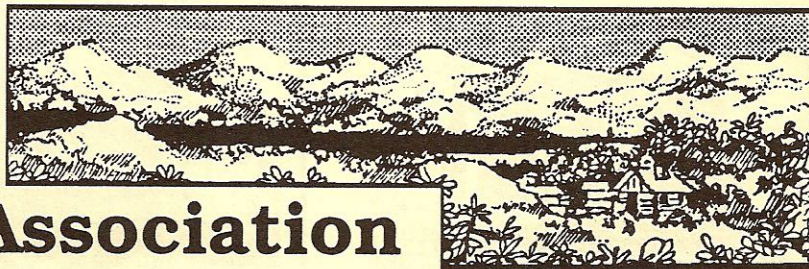


ESTATOE

Quarterly Newsletter

Yancey History Association



Volume XII, No. 3

Preserving Our Appalachian Heritage

August 1997

The McElroy / Ray House and Visitor Center Project

Major Contributors

Mary Louise Wray Conner in memory of Rush T. Wray	60,000.00
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources	94,700.00
The Cannon Foundation	25,000.00
The Janirve Foundation	25,000.00
The John Wesley and Anna Hodgkin Hanes Foundation	20,000.00
The Town of Burnsville	12,500.00
Yancey County Government	35,320.00
Yancey History Association	36,000.00
Individuals and Businesses	39,198.00
Total to date	\$347,718.00

\$2,500.00 Contributors

Theresa McClellan - Memorial Mission Hospital - Mack & Dorothy Ray - John & Denise Young

\$1,000.00 Contributors

David & Carolyn Cort - Ray Vance Miller - Pollard's Drug Store - Mary & Lee Roy Ray
Dr. & Mrs. W.A.Y. Sargent - Neva Renaldo - Clifford & Pat Sheffey - Young McQueen Grading

\$500.00 Contributors

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In memory of Winnie Lou Ray - Sterling Smith - Alma Sullivan - Dr. & Mrs. Melvin Webb

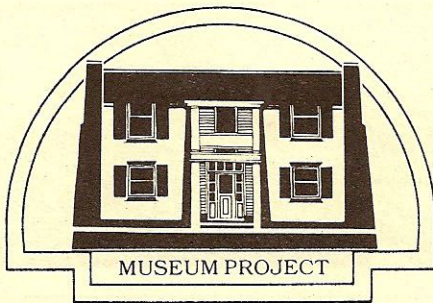
\$250.00 Contributors

Austen & Rebecca Hollady - Mountain Air Country Club - Virginia & Joseph Sasek - Serendipity Frames

\$100.00 Contributors

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George Sullivan - In memory of Julia Tappan - Leon & Suzanne Taylor - Dorothy Verry - Henrietta Walker
Robert & Nelda Wilson - Julia Wood - Earl & Betty Ann Young

Thank you for your continued support.



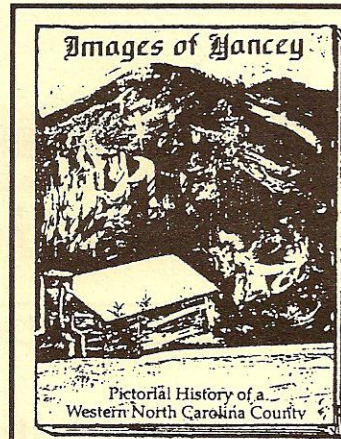
Museum Report

Everyone will be excited to know the new bathroom facility next to the Visitor Center is now complete. Perhaps those most excited were the facility's patrons during the Crafts Fair. The Town of Burnsville and contractor Gary Adkins should be commended for a job well done. Thanks should also be given to the Chamber of Commerce for their care and maintenance of this asset to Museum and Visitor Center complex.

The installation of the poplar flooring is complete in the Living History area. The scaffold for the now complete cedar shingle roof was removed and the Museum was open during the Crafts Fair. Unfortunately the front page article, with picture, in the Times Journal was preempted by the news of the Blue Ridge Hardware fire. Still, about fifty people came by for a visit. Many of whom were former residents and or friends of Winnie Lou Ray.

The Museum will be open to members and contributors August 30th (see details in adjoining article) and will be open to the general public on October 4th, during Olde Time Day.

Construction of the stairway connecting the Visitor Center to the Museum is on hold pending governmental arm wrestling. A meeting of all parties involved is scheduled and hopefully a quick solution will be found.



Images of Hancey

Cost is \$37.50

Available at:

- Baker's Everything from A to Z
on Main Street just off town square
- CraftPride Gallery
3961 Highway 80 South
Burnsville, NC

Posters and four card postcard sets are available at both locations.

- Shipping available upon request -

Help Wanted / Needed:

All available persons to paint walls and ceiling of the "Living History" room of the Museum. Tom Jobin, our contractor, has assured us that all carpentry and needed prep work will be complete by August 22. Painting will begin at 9:00 AM Saturday August 23. Experience helpful, but not required. Please call Jim at 682-3671 for details.

From the desk of the Executive Director

While working on a history project with Hope Bailey I gained an understanding of just how limited a perspective the members of the History Association have of my position. I have enjoyed working with the Board and the Steering Committee, but I have had few occasions to receive this valuable perspective. As the old saying goes "we are often oblivious of that which is obvious to us". As Hope' Bailey suggested I'd like to share a brief description of my current duties.

When I was offered this position, last September, I was told that funding was in place for one year at twenty hours per week. My foremost responsibility would be to keep the Museum Project moving forward. This would include: coordination and supervision of the Museum restoration, grant writing and fund-raising, management of funds raised and the development of a plan to open the "Living History" area.

Other job priorities include: develop and institute a stabilization and growth plan for the Association, compile/prepare/file all required Federal, State and grant reports or audits, produce the Estatoee and find continued funding for the position should I choose to accept it.

I am always eager to help a good cause and enjoy a good challenge. The year is nearly up and all but one goal has been achieved.

Volunteer Highlight

I would like to thank an individual who has donated more than one thousand hours to the Visitor Center / Museum project. Offering a keen eye for visual detail this person is largely responsible for the transformation of an old homestead into a landmark. With willingness and dedication he has produced art work for fund-raising, attended conferences, forums and endless meetings always with the single goal of making sure that what is done is done right.

Join me in thanking John Doyle for a job very well done.

Sincerely;
Jim Priesmeyer

THE McELROY FAMILY OF YANCEY COUNTY

by Lloyd Bailey

According to family tradition (and the book The Scotch-Irish McElroys in America, by J.W. McElroy, 1901), the Yancey family is descended from James McElroy and wife Sarah McCune (or McHugh), of County Down, Ireland. They left Belfast, sailed on the ship named George and Ann, and entered the country at Philadelphia. They possibly resided in Bucks County for a while, then in Cumberland County for some twenty five years. Travel to the South was precarious because of the French and Indian War, but ultimately the family journeyed to Campbell County, VA. James and Sarah had five sons (the older two married in PA, the younger ones in VA): 1) John, 2) Archibald (whose second wife was a Thompson), 3) Hugh (married Esther Irvine, whose parents had come from Ireland with the McElroys), 4) Samuel (who married Mary Irvine), and 5) James (who married Margaret Irvine). All these Irvines were daughters of the Rev. John Irvine.

Archibald, the son who reportedly fostered the Yancey line, was born in 1730, and died at the Battle of Kings Mountain on Oct. 7, 1780. He had four sons: 1) John, 2) William, 3) James, and 4) Archibald, Jr. (born 1770).

John, the oldest son of Archibald, was a soldier in the American Revolution and was killed at the battle of Guilford Court House, March 15, 1781. His widow, then residing near Danville, VA, moved to the vicinity of Pickens, SC, taking her only child, John, Jr. (ancestor of the Yancey clan). There, she married a Mr. Howard.

A John McElroy, presumably the John, Jr. (above) is mentioned in the minutes of the Burke County Court for Oct, 1794: his land, on Turkey Cock Gap, is to be sold by the sheriff. Presumably, he is also the John McElroy of the 1820 Buncombe census (the only entry of this family name in either Buncombe or Burke Counties), living in the vicinity of Cane River (present Yancey County).

The stage is now set for a certain reference. The Rev. Conaro Drayton Smith (Methodist) states that, in March of 1832, he came to Caney River to clerk in the store of Smith and McElroy, from which, in one year alone, 86,000 pounds of ginseng were shipped to Philadelphia. (This would be John McElroy and Bacchus J. Smith, the latter who owned one of the earliest hotels on the Burnsville town square. For the full account by C.D. Smith, see Lloyd Bailey, History of the Methodist Church in the Toe River Valley, pp. 327 - 332.)

This John McElroy (whose middle initial apparently was "J"), born Jan. 21, 1777, was appointed Clerk and Master of the Court of Equity when Yancey County's first court met in January of 1834. He held the office through 1837, and perhaps for some time thereafter. According to Nancy Anderson Gardner (interviewed by J.P. Arthur for his book, Western North Carolina, A History, when she was 98 years old and a resident of Burnsville, in 1913: see p. 179), this John McElroy was among the early settlers in Yancey: "He married Miss

Jamison and lived in Bald Creek." It is presumably because of him that the present Possum Trot area was once called McElroy Creek. The death of his wife, on July 26, 1846, was reported in the Asheville Highland Messenger (reproduced in Lloyd Bailey, News From Yancey, p. 9; unfortunately, in my footnote there, I confused him with his son, John W.). He is there referred to as "Major," presumably his rank in the county's militia company. In the 1850 census, at age 75, he lives near Cane River (no. 957), with daughters Margaret, Elizabeth, and Lois, and granddaughter Minerva J. Billingsley. In 1860, he resides with his son John W., is aged 83, "born in Virginia." He must have died before 1870, since I have not found him in that census.

John J. McElroy and Elizabeth Jamison (Jamerson, born Aug. 7, 1780) had at least the following children:

1) Nancy, born Nov. 4, 1800, who married Ephraim Clayton of Buncombe County, a building contractor. This would be why, when public buildings in the city of Burnsville were in need of repair in 1858, he was given the job. (See my 1984 article in the Yancey Journal about such repairs.)

2) James Jamison (4/10/1811 - 1888), who married Margaret Sophronia Weaver (b. 1819), in 1841 and had children: a) John W. {1842 - 1926, CSA}; b) Jesse Howard {1845 - 1863, CSA}; c) Mary {b. 1848}; d) Jacob {b. 1850}; e) Nancy S ("Nannie"); f) James Horace {b. 1856}; and g) Walter {1859 - 1865}. A granddaughter, Dale McElroy Bratten, aged in her 80s, resides in Forest City, AK, and has gathered some information on the family.

3) Margaret, born 4/12/1817, who lives with her father in 1850 and with her niece (Mrs. W.W. Proffitt) in 1860.

4) Elizabeth, born 3/5/1814, living with her father in 1850, who married a Deaver.

5) Lois A., born 4/19/1824, living with her father in 1850, who married a Deaver.

6) Sarah, born 4/5/1805. Is she the daughter who married a Mr. Billingsley and living in TN by 1850? If so, she reportedly died prematurely, leaving daughters Minerva J. and Elizabeth Ann, and the father brought them to live with their McElroy grandparents. Minerva, aged 17, lives with her grandfather in the 1850 census. She married William W. Proffitt of Yancey County and is shown in the 1860 census (Bald Creek, no. 44) and the 1870 census (Cane River, no. 167). One of the Proffitt daughters, Althea, married (1st) the Rev. Goodson Hampton (photo: History of the Methodist Church, p. 172; many descendants in Yancey County; see REV. G.M.F. HAMP-TON in Vol. I); Althea married (2nd) Robert Vance McElroy (her first cousin once-removed). The other Billingsley daughter, Elizabeth Ann, married (1st) James Madison ("Long Jimmy") Proffitt, and (2nd) Capt. Riley Neal (Neill) of Bald Creek (see 1860 Yancey census, Bald Creek, no. 857; Old Buncombe County Heritage, Vol. II, p. 297 (no. 456) and p. 327 (no. 519).

7) Mary ("Polly"), born 1/20/1813, married an Anderson.

8) Jane C., born 3/10/1820, married a Deaver.

9) John Wesley McElroy, born 4/7/1808 and died 2/8/1886. Although commonly referred to as "J.W." and "John W." by current residents of Yancey, he apparently was known by his middle name in his days of residency here. He is the one who, apparently, built the "McElroy house" which still stands and which is now being restored and will become the history museum for the county. He married Catherine Poteet, born 12/3/1810, whose death on 10/30/1855 was noted in the Asheville News of Nov. 8 (for the text, see News From Yancey, p. 24). An eye-witness account of her death has been preserved in a letter from a neighbor (Mrs. Stephen D. Adams). It reads, in part; "Nothing new or strange has taken place since I last wrote, except the death of Mrs. McElroy. She died last Tuesday about dark, after an illness of six weeks. It was a solemn scene to see her taking leave of her family. They all took it very hard." She (and some other members of the family) were buried in a small family cemetery nearby, which was (in the early decades of the present century) behind the house of Fred Proffitt (whose wife was a descendant of the McElroy family). Daughter Mary Vance Proffitt could remember that, as a child, she wanted to play in the little cemetery, which was surrounded by a picket fence and had cherry trees in it. Her parents forbade it, since they feared that the faded old stones would be damaged. Later, her father had the graves removed to the Academy Cemetery, where the old large stones now stand in the lower row at the left edge. One of them reads, "In memory of Mrs. Catherine McElroy, consort of J.W. McElroy, born 12/3/1810, and departed this life 10/30/1855, (full?) of faith: her dying words were...I know that my Redeemer liveth!" Another stone is that of son W.P. McElroy, who died on Jan. 7, 1854, aged two years and nine months. The final stone in the group has been broken just below the inscription and the remainder apparently thrown away. Perhaps some reader of this article will know the identity of the person buried beneath it. In any case, it apparently is not the husband, John Wesley, since he (according to the W.P.A. Cemetery Survey) is buried in Graham County, in a marked grave at the Robbinsville Cemetery.

At the first meeting of the court for the newly formed county of Yancey (Jan. 1834). John W. McElroy was named Clerk of the Superior Court, an office which he continued to hold until 1846 when he was replaced by G. Garland. He was an ardent Methodist, serving as a Steward for the Burnsville Circuit, and making contributions to its support. The memoirs of the Rev. David Sullins, assigned to the Circuit as a mere youth in 1850, contain an interesting account of his first encounter with McElroy, who was on his way to Charleston, SC. to purchase goods for his store in Burns-

ville. (For the text, see History of the Methodist Church, pp. 343-345: in 1853, see News From Yancey, p. 16.) He told Sullins (when the two met on horseback near Mars Hill), "Go right to my house and feel at home."

When the citizens of Yancey, in 1851, decided to found an academy (high school) for the education of young men and women from the surrounding area, it is not surprising that J.W. McElroy was named to the Board of Trustees. Advertisement for the school, placed in Asheville newspapers (copies in News From Yancey, pp. 16-22) reveal that he was Steward of the "Female Department," since young ladies would be expected to board at his house where, for \$1.25 per week, "everything necessary for comfort will be furnished." He is described as "Col. McElroy," a rank which he then held in the militia.

During the Civil War period, documents reveal that he held the rank of Colonel in the 111th Regiment of the N.C. Militia. On 9/19/1863, Governor Zeb Vance (whose brother had married McElroy's daughter) elevated him to the rank of Brigadier-General, with headquarters in Burnsville, with the task of organizing the Home Guards for the defense of the adjacent counties against Union raids from East Tennessee. He was one of the only two officers in the State to hold that rank in the Guards.

During the War, several skirmishes took place around Burnsville, one of them a substantial struggle between a group of about 75 Confederate deserters and Union sympathizers led by Montreval Ray, and a company of the Home Guard from Mars Hill under the command of Col. Palmer. This was in April of 1864. (See News From Yancey, p. 41.) This may have been the occasion when, tradition has it, several soldiers from each side were wounded and carried to McElroy house, where blood flowed out onto the floors. (A recent boarder in the house confessed to me that, on a dark and dreary day, he saw the ghosts of men in blue and gray, wandering about the house!)

Several letters from him to Governor Zeb Vance, giving details of life in Yancey during the period of the War, have been published in The Papers of Zebulon Baird Vance, Vol. I (Frontis W. Johnston, ed.; Raleigh: State Dept. of Archives and History, 1963), pp. 96, 393, 445. In the first of these, dated 1861, he lists his address as Jacks Creek, which agrees with the family's location in the 1860 census (no. 605, Day Book). However, in 1850, they resided in Burnsville (no. 3). In 1870, he lives with S.D. Poor in the town of Burnsville (no. 10). John Wesley and Catherine Poteet McElroy had the following children:

1) John Smith 2/28/1835 - 6/3/1919, who married Mary Josephine Carter, 12/1/1838 - 5/?/1922, in 1856 (daughter of James and Myra). He was born in Yancey County, was the first person from the County who was licensed to practice law, served as Solicitor, and attained the rank of Colonel in the Confederate Army (previously Captain of Yancey's Co. B., 16th Infantry), and was wounded in the face at Chancellorsville. A contemporary said of him, "No braver soldier or more chivalric gentleman graded the Sixteenth with command

than Colonel McElroy. He was universally trusted and esteemed by the men." In the 1860 census, he lives in Burnsville (no. 2), but after the War he moved to the Middle Fork of Ivy in Madison County and served as State Senator, 1874. Obituaries for him and his wife may be found in issues of the N.C. Christian Advocate, 7/17/1919 and 5/25/1922 (reproduced in History of the Methodist Church, pp. 226, 228). Colonel McElroy and his wife were initially buried near their home, but were later moved to West Memorial Cemetery in Weaverville. They had the following children: a) (Judge) Pender Augustus, who married Clara Hardwicke (the widow of their son, Dr. J.L. McElroy, now resides in Marshall, NC); b) Mira Catherine ("Kate"), who married Jack E. Smith; c) Minnie Adelaide, who married (Dr.) William Latta Reagan of Weaverville; and d) Josephine Vivian, who was not married and who remained at home until it was torn down for a new road.

2) James Greenlee, born about 1840, enrolled in N.C. Regiment 29, Co. H; appointed Assistant Quartermaster of the Regiment in 1863. His wife was named Maria. He apparently was named for James Greenlee, of McDowell County, an early settler in the Cane River area of Yancey.

3) Nicholas Woodfin, born 1845, and apparently named for the attorney in Asheville with whom his brother (John S.) studied law. He married Samantha Deaver. A granddaughter, Miss Kitty Sue McElroy, lived into her 90s of age and lived in Weaverville, NC, daughter of James O. McElroy. (See Old Buncombe County Heritage, I, entries 339 and 381 for N.W. McElroy, Jr.) N.W. is buried at Deaver Cemetery, Mars Hill, NC.

4) Harriet V., born about 1833 and died in 1887. She married Robert Brank Vance (brother of Governor Zeb Vance), 1828 - 11/28/1899, on 5/13/1851. A sketch of his life may be found in Samuel Ashe, Biographical History of N.C., pp. 469-476. He enrolled in the 29th N.C. Regiment, and ultimately attained the rank of Brigadier-General; served six terms in the U.S. House of Representatives (1875 - 1885); was Assistant Commissioner of Patents during President Cleveland's administration; Grand Master of Masons in N.C.; and ardent Methodist, and a highly respected man, being elected to General Conference several times. This couple had six children.

5) Mary E. (1838? - 1892), married (1st) J.G. Murray in 1858, and (2nd) W.H. Malone in 1866. (For newspaper notices, see News From Yancey, pp. 31, 60.)

6) Margaret Adelaide, born about 1843, who was not married.

7) Dorcas Catherine, born about 1847, who married Osborne Deaver (his first name may have been Samuel). They lived in Madison County.

8) Sarah J., born about 1849, who married Wade Hampton.

9) W. Poteet, who is buried in Burnsville's Academy Cemetery, with the inscription: "Died Jan. 4, 1854, aged 2 years, 9 months."

10) A child who died at a young age, born around 1850; likely buried at the Academy Cemetery in Burnsville, tombstone broken.

11) Robert Vance ("Bob"), 1853 - 2/27/1922; buried in Academy Cemetery. Married Althea Proffitt, widow of the Rev. Goodson Hampton. (She was a descendant of John J. and Elizabeth Jamison McElroy.) He apparently lived in Graham County at one time, which would explain why his father died and was buried there.

[This article, with photo, will appear in Heritage of the Toe River Valley, Volume II].

About this article:

Dr. Lloyd Bailey has written countless articles based upon his extensive research. Once again Lloyd has produced an excellent "family trail" that will lead us to a better understanding of those who passed before us.

With the opening of the first area of the McElroy / Ray House on the horizon, the Yancey History Association is turning full attention to the families that have occupied the home over the years.

This article, and the others that will follow, will help produce the clearest possible picture of the people who lived in this home. With this picture we will be able to more accurately interpret the time and events that surrounded them.

We ask that you read these articles with the thought in mind that we are searching for information that you may have. Information about the McElroy family, a close friend of the family, a comrade in arms or any person or occurrence that would have effected the McElroy family and the times in which they lived.

No one can change history, but anyone can change our understanding of history by sharing a new piece of verifiable information.

Museum Open House Saturday, August 30th

All History Association members and Museum/Visitor Center contributors are cordially invited to drop by and inspect the progress. The doors will be open from 4:00 until 8:00 PM. Refreshments will be served and the Executive Director will be available to answer any questions you may have. At 7:00 a presentation will be made outlining the programs and services that the Museum will make available to the public in 1998. At 7:30 the History Association will hold a brief meeting, all are invited to attend.

Dear Contributor:

We have now past the half way point of projected funding requirements for the Museum and Visitor Center Project. When the project began, nearly ten years ago, a funding goal was set at \$650,000. Despite the woes and problematic cash flow, the History Association and the Joint Steering Committee have kept the project on-track and within budget.

We are currently putting the finishing touches on Phase Three (1996-98), completion of the "Living History Room and Kitchen, of this six phase project. In addition to completing this phase ahead of schedule we have also completed several other major components of the overall project.

This past spring we found that the old tin roof scheduled for replacement in Phase four (1998-2000) required more repairs than justifiable. The handsome new roof gives the Museum a landmark appearance and will allow us to begin the acquisition process. Last fall arrangements made with Memorial Missions Pediatric Care Center allowed us to complete the parking area scheduled for Phase Five (2000-2002). Finally, the stairway connecting the Visitor Center to the Museum, also scheduled for Phase Five, should be completed before year end.

As we turn this corner and head down the home stretch we must appeal to you once again and ask for your financial support. Current funding shortages have brought progress to a standstill. We need your financial support at this crucial turning point. Please consider increasing your donation to the next level of support. Matching or increasing your previous donation will enable us to solicit matching grants thus giving your dollars the greatest possible impact.

Show your support for the Yancey County Museum of History today.

Thank You

Membership Drive Update

1996 Membership Total....51

1997 Membership Total....91

A complete list of current members will appear in our next and final 97 issue of *Estatoee*. Encourage a friend to join and help us reach our goal to double our membership in 1997.

ESTATOE

*Published Quarterly by the
Yancey History Association*

P.O. Box 1088

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, Jim Priesmeyer

Program Committee: Lloyd Bailey,

John Doyle, James Byrd

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Secretary: Norma Westall

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Steering Committee Members: John Young,

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Let's Make History In Yancey County

MEMBER APPLICATION

Contributions Categories

\$ _____ I pledge to increase my contribution to the next level of support.

\$ _____ Sponsor (\$50.00) Donor (\$25.00) Member (\$10.00)

\$ _____ Any contribution large or small is welcome.

_____ I am interested in contributing items for use and display in the Museum.

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

Yancey History Association

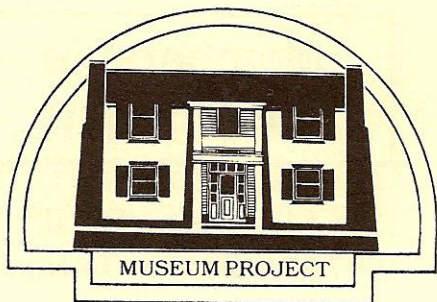
P.O. Box 1088

Burnsville, NC 28714

Name _____

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Yancey History Association

Post Office Box 1088
Burnsville, NC 28714

"Preserving Our Mountain Heritage"

You are invited to drop by the
Museum and inspect the progress
made possible by your generous
contribution and support!

Saturday, August 30th

See details within