

# ESTATOEE

Quarterly Newsletter

## Yancey History Association



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Preserving Our Appalachian Heritage

March 1999

### Museum to Open

The Yancey History Association is proud to announce the first phase opening of the Rush Wray Museum of Yancey County History. The Museum will be located within the Historic McElroy House. The McElroy House, circa 1840, is on the National Register of Historic Places and was used by Brigadier General J.W. McElroy as the N.C. Home Guard Headquarters for Western North Carolina during the Civil War. The home is being fully restored to it's original state under the careful supervision of the North Carolina Dept. of Archives and History. The stately home sits upon a hill, just off the picturesque town square, overlooking Burnsville. Combined with the recently completed Visitor Center, formerly a 1930's service Station, the Museum Complex has been designated as a Regional Historic Site by the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources.

The Museum will open the "Living History" area on April 10th, the anniversary of the 1864 "Battle of Burnsville", with men from the 58th North Carolina Troops Company I on hand to guard the house. The two room "Living History" area consists of the kitchen and the family dining/activity room. The kitchen will depict pre-Civil War rural southern lifestyle and features a "time wall" with newspapers dating back to the the 1870's. The dining/activity room will host the "Living History" Demonstrations and the series of Interpretive Historic One Act Presentations scheduled for this year. Visitors will also experience a restoration in progress as they follow the self-guided tour. The Museum will be open every Saturday, 1:00 to 7:00 pm, thru mid October with a different traditional craft or historic demonstrator each week. The demonstrations and programs have been made possible through a matching grant from the Community Foundation of Western N. C.

The Opening Celebration for the Museum on May 15th will feature the first two exhibit areas of the Museum; "Our people, our heritage, our pride" the settlement of Yancey County and Burnsville, N.C. and the Revolving Exhibit room. Opening exhibits will feature; The Pisgah Village, Cane River archeological site, circa A.D. 1400, The Civil War and the Home Guard, The McElroy House the history of a home and the families that gave it life. The permanent display cases for the exhibits are made possible by a Rural Tourism Development Grant from the North Carolina Dept. of Commerce. The Opening Celebration will also feature storytelling and traditional music.

### 1999 Membership Drive

If you have found a gold membership renewal form with your newsletter your annual membership has either expired or will expire before the next Estatoee mailing. Please take a moment to renew your membership today. **LIMITED OFFER:** Until May 15th any paid member can sponsor unlimited new members for just \$5.00 per membership. This is the perfect way to share the news of the new Museum with a friend or loved one.

### History Association Annual Meeting

The Yancey History Association will meet on Saturday, March 20th 7:00 PM at the Yancey Library Annex. The meeting's agenda will include the annual report and budget, as well as, the election of officers. All members are encouraged to attend.

Refreshments and the Program will follow the business meeting. The Program will be the premier of the new presentation "My Family Hat Tree" that has been developed through a grant made possible by the Community Foundation of Western N.C. As always, the general public is invited to attend this free Program.

"My Family Hat Tree" is designed to encourage young people to take an interest in the roots of their ancestry. This summer it will be presented at the new Yancey County Museum and throughout the Regional Library system. The Program will be made available to all area schools. Any interested educators are encouraged to attend and to offer suggestions.

### Up Coming Events

There will be a book signing for the new book by Charles F. Price on Saturday, March 27th at the Library Annex from 3-5 PM. Mr. Price's new book "Freedom's Altar" follows "Hiwassee" and will be presented, in part, as a Readers Theater presentation at the Museum this September.

The next YHA meeting will be held on April 24th with Lowell Presnell as the featured speaker. Mr. Presnell will talk about his just released book MINES, MINERS and MINERALS of the Western North Carolina Mountain Empire.

# 1999 Event Schedule for The McElroy House

Home of the Rush Wray Museum of Yancey County History

## Living History Demonstrations

Saturday's April 10th through October 10th, 1 - 7 PM.

Demonstrations will include ; Apple Butter Making, Basket Making, Bee Keeping, Black Smithery, Candle Making, Coil Built Clay Jugs, Chair Caning, Family Tree Climbing, Gun Smithery, Nineteenth Century Photography, Quilting, Rug Hooking, Spinning and Weaving and Wood carving. Demonstrations will change each week. Call the Museum for details (828) 682-3671

## Highlight Events

April 10th **The Museum will open** on the one hundred and thirty-fifth anniversary of the "Battle of Burnsville". The story of the battle will be told at 2, 4 & 6 PM. Reenactors from the 58th North Carolina Troops Company I will be on hand to give a general overview of life on the Home Front during the Civil War.

May 15th, **The Open House Celebration** will begin at the adjacent Visitor Center with a ceremony of recognition to the many supporters of the Museum/Visitor Center Project. Entertainment will follow featuring the traditional acoustic sounds of the B R Boys and the artful storytelling and banjo playing of Sheila Adams.

## Interpretive Historic One Act Presentations

Saturday performances at 8:00 pm and Sundays at 2:00 pm

May 29th and 30th "NANCE DUDE".

This poignant play, set in the mid to late 1800's, is based on a historical character as seen by Western N C playwright and storyteller, Gary Carden . The dramatic one Act is a one woman tour de force featuring Elizabeth Westall.

June 26th and 27th " A FINAL FAREWELL ".

An interpretive historical one act presentation. The play, set in May of 1865, finds John Wesley McElroy preparing to make his final departure from the home that he built in the early 1840's. Faced with possible retribution for his command as Brigadier General of the N C Home Guard, during a war that he personally opposed, McElroy reflects back on the happy times that included his family and his roll as a prominent founder of Yancey County .

September 11th and 12th "FREEDOM'S ALTER".

A readers theater presentation from the just released book, of the same name, by Charles F. Price. "Freedom's Alter" follows the critically acclaimed "Hiwassee" as the second book of a trilogy . This segment of the ongoing story is set during the Civil War reconstruction period. Mr. Price is a native Western North Carolinian who now makes his home in Yancey County.

October 9th and 10th "FOND FAREWELL"

Written as a companion piece to "A Final Farewell" William Martin Moore was the second notable owner of the McElroy House. He served as a Captain in the Union Army and later as a State Senator during the period of Reconstruction. Moore's character will come to life sharing the story of his colorful life on the last day he spent in the house May 1899.

There is no set Admission charge - Donations will be requested and greatly appreciated.

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**Special note:** As you can see the Yancey History Association is presenting a wide range of programs and events this year. Opening a new Museum is an expensive venture. Community financial support will determine what the public will see when doors are opened. Please consider making a tax deductible contribution.