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THE LINCOLN COUNTY HISTORIAN

A Lightning Flash of Inspiration Created the LCHA, and the Thunder Rolls On

To quote Hamlet, “The play’s the thing.” In 1955 Lincolnton, it was the *only* thing for the fledgling Lincoln County Historical Association. “Thunder Over Carolina,” the drama of the events of the Battle of Ramsour’s Mill was a community effort.

The Historical Association was actually formed in 1954, when a number of members from the county’s various civic organizations began talking about a need to collect and preserve Lincoln County history. The Association was chartered on March 28, 1955.

It being the 175th anniversary of the County’s historic conflict between Whigs and Tories, the primary order of business at the first board meeting was to produce a drama to commemorate the event.

According to meeting minutes, the board dedicated most of their first meetings to the specifics of the project including ticket prices, and

performance dates. Charles Loveland of Shelby was chosen as general manager for a payment of \$100 plus 10% of the profits. Loveland wrote the script, based primarily on the Wallace Reinhardt account of the battle, and the production was staged on the banks of Clark’s Creek at the original site of the battle. The audience sat on benches. There was no amplification.

The lead actors were Walter and Doris Weddington as Mr. and Mrs. Christian Reinhardt. Mose Stamey played Fesso, the black servant. Other performers were a “who’s who” of locals.

“I was about 7 years old at the time, so I was too young to remember the significance,” says Marty Eaddy, now a Lincolnton City Councilman. “I remember a three-sided cabin with no roof, the costumes, the excitement, and the gunfire. I got to wear a costume.” Eaddy says that he was too young to do anything, so they

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The Lincoln County Historian is published six times a year by the Lincoln County Historical Association for LCHA members and contributors.

Story submissions and ideas for upcoming issues are welcomed and encouraged.

Past issues of The Historian are posted on our website.

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Lincoln Co. Historical Association

Lincoln Co. Museum of History

403 East Main St., Suite 302

Lincolnton, NC 28092

(704) 748.9090

LincolnCountyHistoryNC@
gmail.com

LincolnCountyHistory.com

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Letters to the Association

From A. Little

“Through a series of deeds and probates and multiple DNA tests, I’ve finally proven that Valentine Cline of Lincoln County and Valentine Little of Sullivan County, Tennessee, are one and the same man.

“We had a group of five males who were proven by yDNA to be related to the four Littles who came to Sullivan County from Wythe County, Virginia, in 1774. I brought the other four over to Ancestry DNA in order to get more documentation and see if we could break through to their past.

“While doing a search on Ancestry DNA, I had a couple of hits out of Lincoln County and traced them back to two children of Valentine Cline. Then I ran searches from the other four members plus two others that also gave me access to their data. As of now we have 45 matches between the group to eight of Valentine Cline’s children.

“I had already found in Valentine Little’s last deed he sold before leaving Sullivan where it said he was Valentine Little of Lincoln County, NC, and that deed was proved by Frederick Shell who was son of Arnold Shell who owned the property adjoining Valentine’s to the east. Two years later to the month in Lincoln County, Valentine Little proved a deed for Frederick Shell for property near Lincolnton. Then two years later Frederick Shell sold the same property to Valentine Cline. About six years later Valentine Cline died and in his probate he left that same property to his daughter, Eve. Also in research I found that both men had voids in their histories, but combined they fit like a glove. I was convinced at that point they were the same but it was only circumstantial evidence. But you combine the new DNA data and the deed work and I feel it’s proven. It only took 13 years to chase this unicorn down.”

Why the name change, we wonder?

From Mike Ottinger

“Can you tell me if there is a record of the Stubbs Family? I’m specifically looking for Seth W. Stubbs or Elbridge Stubbs.”

Seth Witherell Stubbs established the Stubbs Machine Shop and Foundry (no photos found) near the depot in Lincolnton in 1852. He made machines of all kinds and in the foundry manufactured kitchen ware, pots and ovens, molasses mills and other castings.

According to a 1852 article in The North Carolinian (Fayetteville), Asa George and Seth Stubbs of Lincolnton were securing a patent for an invention of a revolving table for cutting felloes, which are the outer part of a wagon wheel to which the spokes are attached. It is said that Stubbs made the first steam engine in North Carolina, and he could make anything from a kitchen gadget to a locomotive. There is a community in Catawba County named Stubbs in his honor.

Most communities would begin their search for a tower clock in Philadelphia or Boston, but Stubbs made the clock for Lincoln County. He placed it in the tower of the courthouse about 1856 and kept it in accurate running order as long as he lived. (See the sidebar at right.)

When Stubbs grew old, he turned the business over to his son, Elbridge Stubbs, who operated the foundry and machine shop during the 1870s and 1880s. His company made brass and iron castings, steam engines, saw mills of several kinds,

mill irons, gears, and mining pumps. They manufactured turbine water wheels, bark mills, and other tanning machinery; leather rolling machines, cane mills, corn and cob mills, threshers, plows and other agricultural implements.

About 100 yards from the machine shop was his sawmill. The sawmill had a capacity of 5000 feet of lumber per day, or one million and a half feet per year. The lathe machine turned out about 5,000 lathes per day, and a shingle machine was said to have turned out a like number of shingles.

In 1884, Stubbs patented his turbine water wheel, which he invented around 1880.



The Missing Clock Mystery

In the postcard above, you can clearly see the 4-faced tower clock in the spire of the former courthouse. In the photo at right, taken during demolition exactly 100 years ago, the clock has been removed. The location of Seth Stubbs' missing clock remains a mystery for now.

On a related note, in a Lincoln County News article dated April 7, 1921, the writer comments that the city is abuzz about a local story handed down about a quart of brandy that was placed in the northeast corner of the 1853 courthouse during construction. The speculation at the time was whether or not the liquid had evaporated, or how long it would keep.

“Perhaps this will be cleared up when the old building is torn down, which is to be very soon,” he wrote. “and great crowds will perhaps be in town from the east, west, south and north to keep a weather eye for a bottle or jug of wet goods.

“If it was really placed there in the years gone it will be found by someone, and the question has been raised as to who will get it; who can lawfully take charge of and drink, or dispose of this liquor. A court of investigation may have to sit since prohibition has invaded the nation since the booze was stored there. Who does it belong to? And will it cause a smile when found?” Source: Newspapers.com“

Thank you, Historian Sponsors!

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Yoga on Main in Lincolnton
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Businesses and individuals help keep the presses running on our newsletter, The Historian. A one-year newsletter sponsorship of \$100 supports this outreach to our community. Benefits include:

- recognition in our newsletter for six issues (one year)
- membership in the LCHA
- exclusive invitations to special events

If you appreciate our newsletter, become a sponsor. Your generous contribution is tax deductible.





LCHA Updates

Purchase “Jean Laffite Revealed”

“Jean Laffite Revealed, Unraveling One of America’s Longest-running Mysteries” by Ashley Oliphant and Beth Yarbrough, is available on Amazon.com, JeanLaffiteRevealed.com (signed), and in limited supply at the LCHA office on the third floor of the Lincoln Cultural Center, 403 East Main Street.

Washington and Lee Trip Planned

In related news the authors, along with Carole Howell of the LCHA, are traveling in early June to the Chemistry and Biochemistry Department of Washington and Lee University in Lexington, VA. The aim is to use their specialized equipment to examine and reveal faded writing (possibly a signature) discovered on the bottom corner of a document found in Lorenzo Ferrer’s house. The artifact was donated to the LCHA by Bette Morris.

Pleasant Retreat Academy Update

If you’ve been keeping up with local news, you’ll know that the Lincoln County Commissioners voted unanimously to approve signing over ownership of Pleasant Retreat to Preservation North Carolina (PNC). PNC establishes protective covenants on historic properties such as Ingleside and Pleasant Retreat in preparation for sale to new owners.



Concerned local groups, including the LCHA, the Historic Properties Commission, the UDC, Lincoln Lodge 137, and others are already meeting to transfer Pleasant Retreat from PNC to local, non-profit man-

agement. Through private and public partnerships, the short term goal will be to use \$20,000 budgeted by the Lincolnton City Council to repair windows and add guttering for moisture control. The long-term goal is to preserve the structure and garden and to open it for public use in ways that will make it self-sustainable long into the future.

Your ideas and participation are welcome. Contact the LCHA if you’d like to be a part of it.

Thank You, GoodWood!

Thanks to the generosity and hard work of Jane and Brian Rollins, owners of GoodWood Pizzeria and Bakery, the LCHA received a generous donation that goes a long way toward continuing our mission. Thank you, GoodWood, for choosing to support the LCHA!

Lowes Comes Through! Thank You!

Ask and you shall receive! Thanks to Lowes of Lincolnton and manager Snehal Pandya, we have received a generous gift of four heavy-duty shelves for our archives room.

Recent Acquisitions

2021.001: 1922 Lincolnton High School Pine Burr annual. Donor: Matt Boles

2021.003: Theatre program, “Prelude to Victory” produced in 1982 by Lincoln Little Theatre and written by Barrie Howard. Donor: Edward Little

2021.004: Lincolnton High School Pine Burr Annuals from 1922-1926. Donor: Edward Little

2021.005: Ephemera from 1998. Alpha Delta Kappa, Alpha Xi Chapter of Lincolnton. Donor: Doris Little

2021.006: Original handwritten land deed dated 1779 for 119 acres to James White of the county of Tryon on the North Fork of Long Creek. LCHA Files

John J. Hovis and wife S.E. Hovis, estate quit claim to Rachel E. White. Land in Gaston County 1898 certified by J. Kiser, JP. Original with stamp. LCHA Files

2021.007: Expired passport dated 1935. Carried by Amy E. Robinson of King’s Mountain, NC, with a foreign address in Nagoya, Japan. Includes photo. In case of death contact is James F. Weir Kings Mountain, NC. LCHA Files

2021.008: Original script with production notes, “Pre-



lude to Victory”; two copies of the play program. Donor: Barrie Howard

2021.009: Lincoln Times News “Progress Editions” dated 1959 and 1963. Donor: Monica Trotsenko

2021.011: Eight photos related to the war bond drive at the steps of the courthouse, possibly 1944.

A group shot of the first Committee for Economic Development organization, the forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce. Donor: Bill Henderson

New and Renewed Memberships

Gaynell Beacham

Katherine Birke in memory of Sarah Huss Lantz

Robert Bisanar

Doug Bynum

Gail and Sid Carpenter

Jean Cherry

George W. Clark

Cathy L. Correll

Cathy and Anthony Davis

Shelly Roper Early

David and Linda Edward

Wilson and Claire Farrell

Kristie L. Fredell

John Hurt

Matthew Jacobs

Bobby Kelly

Kelly Kinard

Lee and Brenda Killian

Debra Lail

Victoria Lawing

James F. Love, III

Marie Michael

Elizabeth Mize

Georgia Moffitt

Don and Lessy Pendleton

Spurgeon Roberts

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Donald Stamey

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Matthew Jacobs

Victoria Lawing

Upcoming Events

June 10

Annual LCHA Membership Meeting, Lincoln Cultural Center Reception Room, 6: 30 p.m.

June 5

Annual SAR-DAR wreath-laying ceremony at the mass grave near Battleground Elementary School. 10 a.m. Bring a lawn chair.

June 4 & 5

Ghost Walk with the cast of “Thunder Over Carolina.” Tickets available on Eventbrite and at the event

June 17-19

“Thunder Over Carolina” Historical drama based on the Battle of Ramsour’s Mill, Lincoln County’s Revolutionary War battle. Evenings at the new Woodmill Winery Ampitheater. Tickets available on Eventbrite.

June 19

“Jean Laffite Revealed” Historical Walking Tours at 4 and 7 p.m. \$5. Tickets on Eventbrite. Links for tickets on our Facebook and at LincolnCountyHistory.com.



The Thunder Rolls – continued from page 1

sat him down in the corral. His described his role as that of a “prop.” His brother, Johnny, also participated.

“There was just so much excitement about it, and just about everyone we knew was in it,” says Eaddy. “I wish I could have been older so I could have appreciated the significance at the time.”

Beginning in January of 1956, the Association expanded their performance of the previous year by drawing in the Lincolnton Little Theatre, the National Guard, the Pilot Club, Jaycees, and Lion’s Club.

Karen Johnson Bolick, who was a few years older than Eaddy, played “Little Jean,” a speaking part, in both the 1955 and 1956 productions.

“I remember that the Weddington’s son, David, was a brat, and he kept picking on me,” says Bolick. “I told him I was going to beat him up during the performance, and I did. Everyone remarked how realistic it was when he went crying to his mother.

“We had such a grand time, all of us together,” she says. “Gladys Childs was the driver of the entire thing, I think. She played a large part in organizing the support to do the play. She was a big supporter of the arts, and an example to us all.”

David Rhyne, retired Lincoln County teacher, had a speaking part. “I don’t remember what I said. It was something like, ‘Here they come!’”

Fast forward to 2017, when another group of local thespians met to revive and update “Thunder” with a revised script by Darrell King and lots of historical research and revisions to make it more factual.

“The play is an historic drama,” says Roy Lightfoot, who has been with the project since its inception. “We had to take some creative license, for instance, we couldn’t use horses as the first charge. We have taken a small bit of history, added to it, and taken some away.”

For these folks, “the play’s the thing” takes on a different meaning. They will participate as part of the SAR and DAR wreath-laying ceremony at the mass grave on June 5, with the Ghost Walk on the evenings of June 4 and 5 at the battlefield.

They have gone on to organize as a non-profit organization. They created a short film, “The White Paper,” in 2020, and “The Encampment,” a taste of the people and experience of that June morning. “This year’s production has a revamped script, with new actors as well as familiar faces in new roles,” said Lightfoot. “Also

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Charles W. Loveland	NARRATOR
Doris Weddington	MRS. REINHARDT, <i>Aunt Betsy</i>
Walter Weddington	CHRISTIAN REINHARDT, <i>Her Husband</i>
David Weddington	MICHAEL
David Alton Rhyne	JOHN <i>The Reinhardt Children</i>
John Reece Henry	CHRISTIAN
Mose Stamey	FESSO, <i>The Reinhardt's Colored Servant</i>
Fred Harrill	JACOB RAMSOUR, <i>"Millwright Jake"</i>
Mrs. Levy Ross	MRS. RAMSOUR, <i>His Wife</i>
John Floyd	ADAM REEP, <i>Whig Scout and Patriot</i>
Joe Bondurant	COLONEL THOMAS POLK, <i>Another Patriot</i>
Kally Dackis	CAROL, <i>Pioner Girl</i>
Eric Johnson	JIM, <i>Young American Patriot</i>
James E. Reinhardt	KURT, <i>of British Birth</i>

WHIGS

Earl Helms	MOORE
Roy Dean Stroupe	CAPTAIN JOHNSTON
Fred Harrill	GENERAL RUTHERFORD
Joe Bondurant	DICKSON
Herman Holland	COLONEL LOCKE
Clarence Lewis	GEORGE
Brad Arrington	CAPTAIN FALLS
Dean Stroupe	MESSENGER
Harold Starr	McDOWELL

TORIES

Spencer Shelton, Jr.	WARLICK
Ed Story	MIND STRAIGHTENER
Frank Gaffney	WYCOFF
Earl Helms	MAJOR WELSH
Heath Reinhardt	LIEUTENANT HESTER
Bobby Myers	PICKET
Bobby Cope	RUNNER
George Reece	MESSENGER

SUPPORTING PERSONNEL

David Self	GUN EXPERT
CABIN BUILDERS:	
Clarence Lewis	ZEKE
Brad Arrington	ZEB
Jean Abernathy	MATTIE
Barbara Stamey	LOUISA
Jacob Rhyne	1st STRANGER
Heath Reinhardt	2nd STRANGER
Karen Johnson	LITTLE JEAN, <i>Small Girl</i>
QUILTING LADIES:	
Frances Fair	MRS. CARPENTER
Mrs. R. G. Johnson	MRS. RHYNE
Mrs. Mose Stamey	MRS. RUDISILL
Rosemary Dellinger	MRS. FALLS
Linda Primm	MRS. WARLICK
Charlene Ottinger and Mrs. Jacob Rhyne	
Mrs. James V. Caliendo	PROPS MANAGER

BUY A SOUVENIR PROGRAM BOOKLET
28 PAGES, BEAUTIFULLY ILLUSTRATED – 50c
Contains: The story of the play, a story of the Battle of Ramsour’s Mill, large photographs, the feature players, the production heads, and other features. A beautiful Souvenir of Thunder Over Carolina.

brand new is the play’s location, Woodmill Winery, presently building an outdoor ampitheater.”

In many ways, “Thunder” is still an event that takes a community to produce, and includes volunteers, set builders, costumers, and lots of community support.

“This is our local history,” says Lightfoot. “I want to see this story continue for years if not generations to come.”

Prelude to Victory: New Play, Same Excitement



In 1982, folks from the Lincoln County Historical Association reached out to the Lincoln Theatre Guild to produce “Thunder Over Carolina” for the first time in almost 30 years. The result was an entirely different production, with original music, which once again became a community effort.

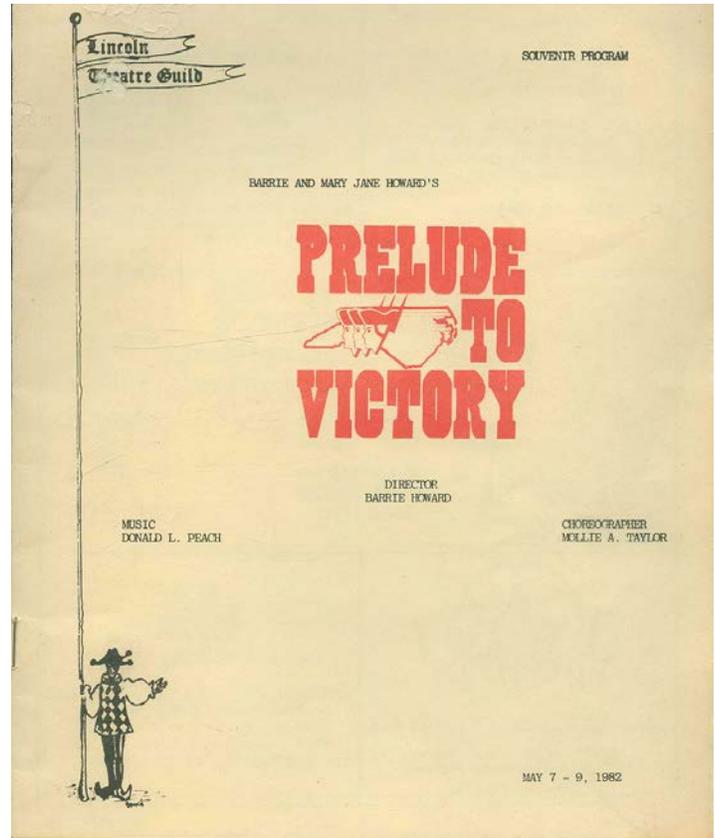
“The idea was to do a reprise of “Thunder,” says Barrie Howard, Sr., who was on the LTG board at the time and now lives in Winston-Salem. “We found the old script, but it wasn’t a very good play, and horribly racist. “We discussed writing a new script, so with help from my wife, Mary Jane, who was president of the Arts Council at the time, we started from scratch and wrote ‘Prelude to Victory.’”

The focal point was two brothers over the course of five years before, during, and after the battle. “We took a little poetic license, but it was historically accurate from any written report I could find,” says Howard.

“I’m a musician, so I wrote three songs for it,” says Howard. “Don Peach was the high school band director at the time, so the Lincolnton High School band became the orchestra. Molly Taylor, who owned a local dance studio, was interested in doing the choreography, which included Hessians doing close order drill on the stage. We borrowed some working muzzle loaders from a local college, and made a lot of fake ones.

“Overall, there were some 60 people in the cast, mostly shooting fake guns,” says Howard. “We gave about three performances at the Citizen’s Center, and that was the last anyone has said about it until now.”

Howard has generously shared a copy of the original script for the Association’s archives.



With musket shot, The Lincoln Theatre Guild exploded onto the Citizen’s Center stage with Prelude to Victory in 1982. Just a few of the very large cast are pictured here. In the photo on the left is “The Wedding Party.” Left to right on the first row are Jennifer Holland, Cale Watts, and Holly Howell; second row are Heidi Heglar, Lorrie Rumph, Margo Doggett, and Cindy Cantrell; third row: Kevin Houser Jeff Lyons, John Baker, and Ronnie Kirby. In the photo on the right are “The Neighbors.” Left to right seated are Jill Rudisill, Mary Russell, and Katrina Sugg. Standing are Vash Rumph, Tom Howard, Clyde Garver, Ed Hatley, and Lee Howard.



LINCOLN COUNTY
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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closed for renovation.



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