

THE GIBSONVILLE MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

VOL. 5 NO. 2 ~ WINTER 2014

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Deleno Flynn, *President*

Jerry S. Nix, *Vice-President*

Sandra Moulton, *Secretary*

Susan Ezekiel, CPA, *Treasurer*

Jim Ezekiel, *Nominations*

Tina Barber, *Projects*

Carol Moore, *Grants*

Howard Hendricks, *Curator*

Sean Dowell, *Publications*

Lethe Yow Walters, *Docents*

Edna Jo Hackett

Elise "Tootie" Burke

Craig York, *Photography*

Mike Dupree, *Town Representative*

Another Notable Donation of the Long & Davidson Families

The Long and Davidson families have a history of leadership and support in the Gibsonville community. During their lives, Vincent and Eleanor (Davidson) Long continued this tradition. Mr. Vincent Long was active in the community in his roles at Engineered Plastics, Inc., the Rotary Club, the Chamber of Commerce, and the United Way -- to name a few. Mrs. Eleanor (Davidson) Long was active with the United Methodist Women and was a lover and supporter of the Arts. She advocated education and served as a mentor to others, especially those needing assistance to reach their potential and "fully bloom."

The Gibsonville Museum and Historical Society, Inc. (GMHSI) is pleased to be the recipient of an extraordinary, charitable contribution from the Long Family. We are appreciative of the great contributions the Long and Davidson families have made in Gibsonville's past (see page three for a detailed history on these families) and appreciative of their generosity now. Their contribution to GMHSI will enable the museum to reach untold generations now and in the future.

Early Education in Gibsonville: Colonial Period to 1921

By Howard Hendricks

Part I. Settlement: Since the closing of the Gibsonville School in 2006, interest in its fate has grown in the town, especially among former students. From its inception the Museum has collected archival materials and artifacts through the generous donations of the former students that are related to the School or to their attendance there. In the past few years the move to preserve the building has been very strong and the hope persists that the structure might yet be preserved through some manner of adaptive re-use.

Many people know that Gibsonville School was erected in 1923. The decades that the school was in operation comprise a valuable part of the history and growth of the community. Some of our older

IN THIS ISSUE

- Long / Davidson Contributions and Family History
- Early Education in Gibsonville
- Pack 265 Tiger Club Visit to the Museum
- Fall Festival Raffle
- Membership Matters
- Thank You Notes
- Changing of the Guard

Early Education in Gibsonville: Colonial Period to 1921

(Continued from Page One)

residents may remember, or have some knowledge of, a former school structure on or near the same site that was known as the Green School which served the local school district until the construction of Gibsonville School in 1923. But when it comes to a general understanding about how education developed in this area that's about it - and that takes us back only to 1904. What happened before that? How were the children of the town and the surrounding area educated prior to 1904? What led to the construction of Gibsonville School? What follows will be a series of articles on the development of education in Gibsonville.

Unfortunately, the answer to these questions is as murky as our knowledge of the early history of the town itself. One reason is that the practice of keeping accurate records in the past, particularly during the colonial era, was often a haphazard process. In the case of early education there wasn't always a supervising agency that oversaw the operations and records of schools such as they were. It was left to the local communities, teachers, or churches in the early stages, with inconsistent result. However, there are a few specifics to be gleaned about early education in Gibsonville.

Development in Gibsonville followed the general pattern that occurred in North Carolina from early church schools, to subscription schools, public schools, academies, and high schools. Along with the developments in the level of education came the increasing organization of the educational system from local committees, to districts, leading eventually to a state-controlled institution. In addition, the amount of schooling grew from early 2 month or 4 month sessions to annual sessions and from non-compulsory to mandatory attendance by 1913.

It is important to note that education in colonial and early nineteenth century America was much different than now. This area was a largely rural agrarian society of small communities, so student population

was probably very small. There were no age or skill-related subjects as there were no formal grades like today. The principal focus was to provide enough education in the beginning to produce functioning adults, so the "3 R's" were a principal part of the curriculum. It should be understood, too, that the emphasis was for white males to attend school, so education for women was an exception, and in the South, the education of slaves was illegal.

How does this apply specifically to Gibsonville? First, the town did not exist officially until 1871. It is apparent that a small agricultural community arose here, but before the railroad was developed in the 1850's the community remained very small. Because of the sparse population density, early settlements in the 1760's and after to this area most likely did not have designated schools. Most children were either not schooled at all or were "home schooled" to use a modern phrase. The lack of education in North Carolina was a serious matter; it was reported after 1812 that entire communities could neither read nor write. If there was a church nearby, children may have attended a school sponsored by the church. A good reason for this is that ministers were often the best educated people in the communities. For example, in Guilford County the first known school was established in 1767 by a Presbyterian minister, David Caldwell. Tuition was \$10-\$12 dollars per year. As more denominations arrived in the area, undoubtedly more schools could be found. In what was to become the Gibsonville area Friedens Lutheran Church is the known location of an early school associated with church. Other churches that conceivably had their own schools would have been Cedar Creek Church, the predecessor of Bethel Presbyterian Church, in what was to become Gibsonville, and further south at Springwood Presbyterian Church.

From such a humble legacy begins the trail leading to the building of Gibsonville School.

This is the first in a series of articles. In our next subscription will be information on "old field" schools and the development of public education in Gibsonville.

Davidson Family History in Gibsonville

1887: Mr. Berry Davidson built the original sections of Minneola Mill as well as the first Methodist Protestant church in town limits. Both are still located in downtown Gibsonville. Minneola Mill stands prominently across from our downtown and this church is located at the corner of NC 61 and North Wharton Street.

1893: Mr. Davidson sold the Minneola Mill to Cone textiles and built Haiwatha Mill.

1905: Mr. Davidson sold the Haiwatha Mill to the Holts and the facility was renamed Gem Cotton Mill.

1907-1913: Mr. Berry Davidson was the elected Mayor of Gibsonville. Berry Davidson was Mayor of Gibsonville until 1913 when he lost this position to his son, D.M.Davidson. D.M.Davidson ultimately became the longest serving mayor in the history of the town.

1947: Start of Engineered Plastics (EPI) by the Davidson family.

Early Education in Gibsonville: Colonial Period to 1921

By Tina Barber

On November 4, 2014 the Tiger Cubs from Pack 265 visited the museum to fulfill the requirements for their Go See It for the Making My Family Special Achievement. Cubs gathered and while waiting they participated in a Scavenger Hunt. Their mission was to use a modern photo to find the historical photo hanging in the museum. They did a pretty good job though Wade's Jewelers was the tricky one. After finding all the pictures, Cubs had a chance to explain what history was. They did a great job saying that history was old and what happened in the past. The next activity was to acquaint them with mill village life. We discussed what made up a mill village. More discussion on mill village life with outhouses, common wells, and kerosene lamps led into a demonstration of the amount of light a kerosene lamp really puts off. The topic of mill workers getting paid in script was dealt with in terms the Cubs could understand. Candy. Each cub received an envelope that had either 50 or 75 cents in "script" or \$1 or \$1.25 in quarters. They really understood that getting paid in script wasn't as good as getting paid in cash. And they got to use their money to buy candy from either the company store or the general store. The evening ended by playing some games that would have been popular around the 1900's by children. The Cubs split up into groups to play three games: checkers, Happy Family (a card game similar to Go Fish), and dominoes. All in all it was a great evening for the ones that attended. Even the parents got involved with helping out, matching the pictures up, and playing the games.

Fall Festival Raffle

By Deleno Flynn

Congratulations to Mattie Bales of 404 Westfield Lane, Gibsonville. Shown here with Deleno Flynn receiving her winnings from the 50 / 50 Raffle that the Museum held at the Fall Festival on Main Street on October 11, 2014. The Raffle was a fundraiser for the Museum and ticket sales generated \$340. Half of the proceeds went to Ms. Bales and half to the Museum. The Fall festival was a great success for the Museum. There was excellent turnout for the event and a steady flow of visitors to the Museum.



Membership Matters

By Sandra Moulton

As of publication of this newsletter, the GMHSI is pleased to announce annual memberships as follows: 26 individual members (includes four couples), seven family memberships (includes five couples), two organization memberships—Art & Literature Club of Gibsonville and the Friend O' Rose Garden Club of Gibsonville, as well as eight bronze memberships (\$100) and two sponsorships (\$250). We would like to thank these members for their support and encourage others to follow their example.

Thank You Notes

By Carol Moore

The GMHSI is the proud recipient of a grant from Duke Energy Volunteer Retiree Chapter Number 2. We extend a hearty "thank you" to this group and look forward to forging a permanent relationship of volunteer service with the chapter's members. We would also like to thank both Food Lion of Stoney Creek (at 6307 Burlington Road) and the Friend O'Rose Garden Club of Gibsonville for donations to the Museum.

Changing of the Guard

By Sean Dowell

Repeat readers of this newsletter will notice changes to the Gibsonville Museum & Historical Society Board of Directors. As with all volunteer organizations, personnel change over time. In the last year, we have seen the welcome additions of Craig York and Lethe Yow Walters. At the same time, we are soon to see the departure of Susan Ezekiel. We would like to thank Mrs. Ezekiel for the time and talents she brought to our organization. Her contributions are not soon to be forgotten. We would also like to welcome Mr. York and Mrs. Walters to the Board. Mr. York's professional photography skills and Mrs. Walter's work with GMHSI docents (in conjunction with Edna Jo Hackett) are welcome additions to our team.

About the Gibsonville Museum and Historical Society, Inc: The GMHSI is a member funded, non-profit organization created to promote public knowledge of local, state, and national history (with an emphasis on the history of Gibsonville). The GMHSI has regional related historical artifacts as well as revolving exhibits at the Gibsonville Museum. The Museum is located at 219 East Main Street in downtown Gibsonville and is open on the third Saturday of each month from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM. For information on membership, the Museum, donations, or otherwise, please email info@gmhsi.org.

Gibsonville Museum and Historical Society Inc.

P. O. Box 283
Gibsonville, NC 27249

