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# UNION COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## *Update!*

### *From the President*

Spring has sprung and things are going on at the historical society.

We're getting ready to open the *Mountain Life Museum*, and Carol Duckworth and Evelyn Payne are working on the Mock House furnishings. Evelyn has some draperies ready. Carol has donated a "Hoosier" cabinet from her antique shop to go with the restored refrigerator and stove. It has been decided to furnish the house as it would have been in the 1940's when electricity first became available. Suggestions and donations are always welcome.

The farmstead at the *Mountain Life Museum* would be complete if only we had an old log barn. Don Barnes located one and the owners were going to donate it, but the contractor didn't get it in time. The land was sold, and the new owners decided against donating it. Does anyone know about an old log barn anywhere in the county? The farmstead now has the John Payne cabin (dwelling), Gray cabin (smokehouse), Duncan-Gillespie cabin (blacksmith shop), Byers-Sullivan cabin (corn crib), and hog pen complete with feed trough.

As soon as we get another bid on the elevator, construction will start.

That will certainly be a blessing to people with mobility problems, as well as being appreciated by musicians and people who have to carry equipment up and down the stairs.

Two new exhibit rooms are in progress. This has been made possible by moving many artifacts to the *Mountain Life Museum* where they can be displayed in a natural setting. The military exhibit has been moved to the Linda Parsons room and the Gray room will now house a Union County sports and recreation exhibit. Keep in mind that we are looking for artifacts that represent sports and all recreation in the county. This includes all recreational activities such as fishing, hunting, games, and sports.

We are also working on an exhibit room that is dedicated to music in Union County. We need pictures, recordings, instruments, and stories, about any of the musical history of the county, including gospel and all other music in the county.

Speaking of music, everyone should be aware that the gospel music convention planned by the historical society has been postponed in order to complete our music room exhibit and insure that our musical facts are historically correct. It will be presented in May of 2009. Any persons with knowledge of past sing-

ing conventions, especially pictures and people, please bring it to the old courthouse. We can scan pictures and documents in just a few minutes while you wait.

Thanks to all members for your concern in preserving the history of our county.

*Sam Ensley*

## Membership!

### "A Bit About Membership"

We have recently been involved in a membership drive, recruiting new members and renewing other memberships. Why? Because your membership is the "life-blood" of our existence.

As you know our purpose is to preserve, display, and interpret the history of Union County, to encourage the preservation of historic structures, and also to generate interest in the county's heritage. Please keep your membership current and help us achieve these goals--check your address label to see what your membership status is!

"Ask not what the society can do for you--ask what you can do for the society. 'If we lose our history we lose our identity.'"

**Call into 706.745.5493 with your credit card and renew.**

## Lectures

The *Saturday Night Lectures* continue on the 2nd Saturday of each month at 7:00 p.m. On May 10th Bud Akins will speak on the history of *Sports in Union County*.

## Coming Up!

### Beginning May 2nd

#### Friday Night Concerts

7:00 p.m. - Court Room. The series will continue every Friday night into October. The season will begin with the *Jeff Bauman Family*.

### May 23rd

#### North Georgia Chamber Orchestra/Symphony

7:00 p.m. - Court Room, *Wonderful!*

### May 24th

#### Memorial Day

The Memorial Day Parade will begin at 10:00 a.m. The Historical Society will participate with a **special float**. The parade will end with a Memorial Service at the Union County War Memorial at 11:00 a.m.

There will be a special exhibit of the **Ford Military Collection** and other military exhibits in the Courthouse all day. Also our **new and expanded Military room** will be open as well as a new local sports room will also be open.

Saturday evening in the court room there will be a **Patriotic Music Concert**, 7:00 p.m. *Join us!*

#### Save your photos for posterity!

All day during the Memorial Day Events on the 24th bring your historic photos by the Courthouse. We will scan them in for the Society and print you a copy. We will be able to enhance your original if you would like us to do so.

## August 30, 31

### Mountain Marketplace Quilt Show

We are looking for old-hand sewn quilts to display Labor Day weekend at the Mock House. If you are interested, please contact the Society's office.

## Past Events!

### Bats in the Belfry



A recent spring activity was the removal of bat guano from the Courthouse's attic, again. In past removals, the guano has been several feet deep. Each year in the spring hundreds of bats return to the Courthouse. This year, cracks in the attic were completely sealed (we hope!) Bat houses were erected for the bats. Thanks to our volunteers, the BRMEMC and a county crew.

## Union County Court House

*The following is reprinted in its entirety*

### The Atlanta Constitution, Jan 10, 1899;

"FIGHT FOR A COURTHOUSE.

THE CONTEST BETWEEN BLAIRSVILLE AND FAIRVIEW.

The Special Tax Levied --  
The Injunction:

Prayed For and the Recent Election. Blairsville, Ga., January 9.-(Special)-

The grand jury at the last April term of court recommended the building of a new courthouse in this

(Union) county on the idea that the old one was unsafe and unfit. [Anecdotal evidence suggests the 2<sup>nd</sup> Courthouse had burned.] The county commissioners, acting on this recommendation, proceeded and let a contract to W. B. McGinty, of Athens, Ga. for the sum of \$11,590. The old building was torn down and the new begun, the foundation of which is completed, and about all the material necessary on the ground. This done, the county commissioners began to provide ways and means to pay the contractor.

An election for a bond issue for the sum of \$12,000 was voted on and defeated. Then a special levy of \$2 on the \$100 of taxable property in the county was made for the purpose of raising the money to pay the contractor. To the collection of this special tax A. H. Dyer and others, represented by V. M. Waldroup, of Union, and H. H. Perry, of Gainesville, asked Judge J. J. Kimsey for an injunction restraining the tax collector from collecting it, and that the new contract for building the new courthouse be declared void and illegal. Judge Kimsey refused the injunction.

The commissioners are represented by W. E. Candler, of Blairsville; W. A. Charters, of Dahlonega, and Senator Joe Underwood, of Cleveland. The case is now in the supreme court, and has been argued once, and by order of that court is again to be argued. In the meantime, the legislature, through Representa-

tive Walker, was asked to abolish the board of commissioners. The house passed the bill and Senator Greene, of the fortieth district, held it up in the senate.

A petition signed by two-thirds of the poll taxpayers of the county asked the ordinary to order an election of the question of removal of the county site from Blairsville to Fairview, a place in name only, being two and a half miles west of Blairsville in the woods. The election was ordered for December 30th and was held, resulting in a majority of 17 votes in favor of Fairview, but failing to get the necessary two-thirds of the votes cast by about 200.

It was the most exciting election ever held in the county, and under all circumstances has passed off remarkably well. If the supreme court affirms the decision of Judge Kimsey, the fight is ended, as the tax to pay for the new house is now about all collected and in the county treasury. If Judge Kimsey is reversed, no one can tell when the end of the fight will come. There are many wounds left in the county, but it is hoped they will heal under the soothing of old father time.

Blairsville is an old time town, begun in 1837. It is the home of Judge C. J. Wellborn, Colonel W. E. Candler, Colonel T. J. Haralson, J. A. Butt, E. W. Butt, Dr. F. J. Erwin, and many others, and their descendants. It was the birthplace and boyhood home of Judge H. M. Reid, [Chief Justice of the Georgia Su-

preme Court] of Atlanta; Colonel C. M. Reid, of Palmetto; Hon. Tom Lyons, of Cartersville, as well as many other prominent Georgians. **The place is noted for its good water, the sobriety of its inhabitants, and its pretty women, and the business judgment of its merchants, not a failure ever having occurred in the town since the war."**

[Anecdotal evidence also states that that a possible location of the County seat was Bunker Hill or towards Bunker Hill, on the Old Blue Ridge Highway].

## Why

Why the move? The mostly likely reason was the prospect of a railroad line. Before and after this time several railroad ventures were incorporated by Union County citizens to bring a railroad through Union County. Most never got off the ground, but one venture started a tunnel in Rabun County to bring a line through the mountains. The abandoned tunnel still exists.

The *Marietta and North Georgia Railroad* arrived in Fannin County in summer 1886. The town of Blue Ridge was incorporated in 1887 on the rail line. In 1895, Blue Ridge became the new County Seat. Morganton had been the County Seat.

Moving the County Seat to a more accessible site could have been an enticement for a rail line spur to be built into Union County (just as land and tax incentives are used today.) *Build it and they will come!*

## Genealogy

### RECENT DONATIONS TO OUR GENEALOGY LIBRARY AND PHOTO COLLECTIONS

The book, *Micajah Clark Dyer's Flying Machine* contains the story of Dyer's invention, along with dozens of pictures and illustrations of the man, the place, and times that will inform those visiting the exhibit, now on display at the museum, added information about this historical event. The book was donated by Dyer's great, great granddaughter, Sylvia Dyer Turnage.

*The Conley Chronicles, With*

*Allied Families* compiled by Jean Conley Hubbard was donated to the Historical Society by Dale Elliott. This is one of the most used books by researchers in our genealogical library, due to the large Conley family plus the many allied families included in the book. Those families include the Bracketts, Chapmans, Cobbs, Corns, Dotsons, Hoods, Kinkaid's, Lance, Lewis, McBees, Mauneys, Myers, Newtons, Odoms, Owenbys, Parks, Poteetes, and Teagues. All these families have added much history to our county and many descendants of these families continue to live in our area today and are outstanding citizens of our community.

Many thanks to Bill Boemanns, who graciously donated photos of this old empty courthouse he made for a class project when he was in high school in 1981, when Ted Oliver was his teacher and director of the project. The photos show fireplaces that had fallen in, the one courtroom bench had fallen down the steps, ceilings falling in.....you get the picture. Seeing these "before" photos surely makes one appreciate the "journey" of restoration to the great building that it is today.

**A big thank you to all of you for  
these donations to collections.**

**Union County  
Historical Society  
PO Box 35  
Blairsville GA 30514**

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