

# Mecklenburg Messenger

## Summary of Activities

from the Board of Directors

### Archives Progress Report

We have now assembled most of our materials in our new place. The process of organizing books, exchange quarterlies and family files is well underway and cataloging will begin soon. An additional donation of books has been received from Antonia Moore. Announcement of our Archives has been placed on our website and we will begin limited access in the middle of October. The first of our orientation sessions for volunteers will be on Thursday, October 20 at 10:00 am.

### Open House

The OMGS Archives Committee will host an Open House on Sunday, October 16 from 2:00 to 4:00 at the Archives; EE207 at the Merchandise Mart, 2500 E. Independence Boulevard. Directions: park in large lot off of Briarcreek Road, walk to Main Entrance of Independence Hall where you'll be directed to the Archives. Come see what we have to show you! Call 704 372-9499 for additional information.

### Nominees for Office

At the September meeting the Nominating Committee named the following proposed slate of officers for the 2006 year: Ronald Touchstone, president; Ray Case, first vice president; Pinny Cook-Yancey, second vice president; Mary Utting, recording secretary; Scot Treadwell, treasurer; Sandra Howie, corresponding secretary; Lynn Bancroft, membership secretary; Ellen Poteet and Diane Richter, for two-year term as directors'; Jane Rezac and Tom Innes, completing second year of term as directors; and Ted Lucas, past president.

Election of officers will be held at the October membership meeting, and installation of new officers will take place in December.

### Notes on September Meeting

by Mary Utting

Among some of Mecklenburg County's most historic relics are the works of early stonemasons named Bigham. James Patterson, retired University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill professor of English and folklore, has such an

### OMGS Meetings

The October 2005 meeting of OMGS will be held on Wednesday, 12 October 2005 at the **Ray Hall Community Center, Aldersgate**, 3800 Shamrock Drive, Charlotte. Remember the "social hour" begins at 7pm with the meeting following at 7:30pm. We will have Bruce Baker, and his topic is "The Questionable Joys of Publishing." In November we will have Wlter Klein, and his topic is Masonic Records. Don't miss these great programs!

The Hopewell Branch will meet October 8 at 10am. Our speaker will be Tim Berly, who will be talking about the SAR. In November we hope to tour Lincoln County burial grounds. Come out and join us.

admiration for these craftsmen that he writing a book about them, a work about half-done.

In his research, he has learned that seven carvers in this area signed receipts for stone, according to records in the North Carolina Archives. These were all members of this Bigham family or connected to them in some way. The first to appear in the area was Samuel Bigham, Sr., who came in 1766. His brother, William, Sr., followed him from Pennsylvania, where he evidently had been working at stonemasonry as well. William's son, William, Jr., and Samuel, Jr., joined the family craft as did Samuel's grandson, Hugh. James Sloane, who married into the family, apparently learned the trade from the brothers; William McKinley also learned from them.

On early gravestones carved by Bighams, a distinctive signature (a dot over a diamond after the period in yrs.) can be found, thus identifying their work. Later, it is only their characteristic techniques and designs that set their work apart. Patterson believes that they probably did other work in addition to gravestones, but these are the only remaining items that can be identified.

They used different types of stone, showing their ability was not restricted to the soapstone that they used in this area. For example, Samuel did some work in Tennessee with other material. William had used slate and red sandstone in northern days.

The Bigham work in stone goes back to the 1730s in Pennsylvania, and Patterson believes that William probably learned this skill Ireland, although there is no record of his work there.

By the 1780s, their style began to change as Samuel and the younger Bighams developed simpler designs than William had employed. Patterson showed slides with examples. The gravestones had a high profile in the center with lower shoulders, relief lettering that was clean, elegant, and spacious. Apparently they worked in teams, because more than one often signed the receipts that remain.

Sloane set up a separate workshop and, in respect for his teachers, developed a somewhat different style; the Bighams showed a similar respect and never copied his designs.

Patterson noted their use of doves as symbols, something that appears to be a Scots-Irish custom; the Germans and others do not use this. Other Bigham stones show a winged face looking upward or an elegant stag. In eastern North Carolina, some gravestones designs are of European origin, but the Bighams' designs are authentic American folk art, quite different from the crude, plain stones in many country cemeteries of that era.

Their designs show up in Statesville, and Patterson said that there are even more of them in the Steele Creek area. There is one stone by Samuel 250 miles away in South Carolina, so they did work in many areas.

Patterson has great respect for these simple, hard-working craftsmen. He said they had a hard life, not the idealized version of 18th century pioneers that 19th and even 20th century writers depicted. In Pennsylvania, they encountered Indian attacks in the west. Samuel built a fortress house, which he had to abandon, losing the money he had spent on it.

In North Carolina, there was the threat of Cherokees, and during the American Revolution, British soldiers living off the land took their cattle for food. They also brought smallpox to the area, setting off an epidemic that killed many residents. Many children died young. Courts and church courts dispensed a kind of justice often based on slander and rumor rather than facts. The war itself was a civil war, as those loyal to the Crown fought beside the British.

Patterson believes these men who produced something lasting with their hands deserve to be remembered more than wealthy land speculators who took advantage of others to make their fortunes. The tragedy is that one day the only

record of these special gravestones may be photographs.

Much deterioration is due to natural weathering from rain, wind, ice and the like, but some may now be acid rain. Lawn mowers have severely damaged many, so Patterson suggests that gravel needs to be placed around these old stones to protect them. He says that they should only be cleaned as little as possible and then with pure water and a soft toothbrush when absolutely necessary. He believes we need to preserve them as long as possible.

## **Hopewell District News**

by Tina Brown

The next meeting of the Hopewell Branch of the Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society will be Oct. 8th at 10:00AM. As usual we will meet at Hopewell Church in the Wayland Sunday School Room. I will not be there but Jeff Lowrance will take over for me. I will be attending the Cemetery Workshop at Sugaw Creek Church. Our speaker will be Tim Berly, who will tell us about the Sons of The American Revolution. Just as the DAR is a female organization, the SAR is a group of male descendants of the Patriots of the Revolution. Tim will tell us about what the SAR does and how to join.

Hopefully our November meeting will be a tour with Darrell Harkey touring the burying grounds of Lincoln County but as yet I have not got confirmation from him.

Our December meeting will be our Christmas Lunch, don't forget! Please pray for Jeff & Vickie.

## **New From the Carolina Room**

by Jane Johnson

8/29 to 9/21/2005

ImaginOn, a library and theatre for children and teens, is the newest building in the PLCMC family. Although this collection has nothing to do with genealogy, it will be a nice place to stop and view the wonderful opportunities available to youth in our area.

It is located a block from Main Library and is worth a quick tour. If you bring family with you when you visit the Carolina Room, please note the Children's Department is no longer in the same building with the Carolina Room. It reopens in ImaginOn on October 8<sup>th</sup>. For more information, please go to <http://www.imaginon.org/>.

To view the Public Library's catalog for a complete list of holdings, go to <http://www.plcmc.lib.nc.us/catalog/default.asp>

Below are new titles of interest to genealogists in the Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room, Main Library, 310 N. Tryon St., Charlotte, NC.

*In the Footsteps of Daniel Boone*  
*Walking by Faith, The Diary of Angelina Grimke, 1828-1835* (lived in Charleston, SC)  
*A Southern Tragedy, In Crimson and Yellow*  
*Before Rosa: The Unsung Contributions of Sarah Mae Fleming* (video)  
*Blue Ridge Heritage, An Information History of Three Generations*

## Book Reviews

by Ellen Poteet

*Nivens Family of York County, SC* A number of families in old Mecklenburg County found themselves in South Carolina after the boundary line was run in 1772. For this reason, it is well not to disregard South Carolina resources in the colonial period simply because "my family was in North Carolina, not South Carolina." A new book by Larry O. Nichols, Sr. and Douglas P. Sigmon, *History of the Nivens Family of York County, South Carolina and Their Descendants* may be worth your while to examine. Many of the surnames in this compilation are Mecklenburg surnames as well: Adams, Adkins/Atkins, Armstrong, Baker, Bain, Bennett, Boyd, Brown, Campbell, Collier, Cooper, Crain, Davis, Edwards, Ferrell, Harper, Harris, Jackson, Johnson, Jones, Kimbrell, Martin, McCoy, Miller Moore, Nichols, Price, Robinson, Smith, Taylor, Thomas, Turner, White, Williams, Wilson, Wisner, Wood, and Wyatt. This book, tracing all possible descendants of the Nivens family of York County, SC, may be ordered from Larry O. Nichols, Sr., 12 Angel Wing Court, Taylors, SC 29687 or from Douglas P. Sigmon, P. O. Box 57, Bat Cave, NC 28710. It is 700+ pages, indexed, with a map of York County. The price is \$30.00, including shipping and handling.

New Book about Huck's Defeat The British Capt. Huck, a particularly vile man, was sent into the midst of the independent-minded Scots-Irish Presbyterians who lived in the Catawba River area of Mecklenburg County, NC, and York District, SC, in the summer of 1780 to break up the rebellious settlements. His murderous raids of pillage and carnage through the region inflamed the inhabitants. Led by Col. William Bratton, they ambushed Huck's men at dawn on 12 July 1780 at James Williamson's plantation in South Carolina. Huck was killed and his army of several hundred

was completely defeated. It was the first British setback since the fall of Charleston.

*The Day It Rained Militia: Huck's Defeat and the Revolution in the South Carolina Backcountry, May-July 1780* is the full story recently published by Michael C. Scoggins of the York County, SC, Culture & Heritage Museums. It is available for \$34.99 plus tax at the York County Museum, Barnes & Noble, Books-a-Million, Borders, Waldenbooks and Amazon.com. A roster of the known participants in Huck's defeat may be found at <http://yorkcounty.org/images/Historic%20Brattonsville/Roster.pdf>. It lists names of the patriot militia from York and Chester Districts, SC, and Mecklenburg County, NC, along with names of British Provincial Soldiers, Tory militia, the patriots captured by Huck the day before the battle, and three slaves who were also involved in the battle.

## Upcoming Events

October 8, 10am – 2pm, High Point Public Library, there will be a "GenFest One." There will be a "Ask-the-Experts" Panel, vendors, SWAP Table, and Door Prizes. For more information write PO Box 2530, High Point NC 27261-2530, or email [ncroom@highpointnc.gov](mailto:ncroom@highpointnc.gov)

Friday & Saturday, November 11 & 12, 2005, at Briar Creek Country Club, Raleigh, NC – Annual Fall Meeting and Workshop "Finding Your Military Ancestors" sponsored by the North Carolina Genealogical Society. Information: <http://www.ncgenealogy.org> or [ncgs@ncgenealogy.org](mailto:ncgs@ncgenealogy.org).

Introduction to Genealogy, University City Regional Library. <<http://www.plcmc.org/libLoc/branchUniversity.asp>> 11/14/2005, 7 - 8:30pm Registration begins 10/31/2005. Call (704) 595-9589

## Want to Join OMGS?

It's easy to join. Annual dues are \$20 for an individual membership, \$25 for a family membership, \$40 for a sustaining membership, or you can pay \$225 for a lifetime membership. Make a check or money order payable to Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society and send it along with your name, address, phone number, email address, and names you are researching to OMGS, P.O. Box 32453, Charlotte, NC, 28232-2453. Our email address is [omgs1775@yahoo.com](mailto:omgs1775@yahoo.com) and our website is <http://www.rootsweb.com/~ncomgs/>

Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society  
P.O. Box 32453  
Charlotte, NC 28232-2453

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**DATED MATERIAL INSIDE**

**OMGS Publications for Sale**

<i>Mecklenburg County, NC Cemeteries, Volume 1: North Mecklenburg</i>	\$32.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC Cemeteries, Volume 2: South Mecklenburg</i>	\$32.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC Cemeteries, Volume 3: East Mecklenburg</i>	\$37.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC Cemeteries, Volume 4: West Mecklenburg</i>	\$37.50 PPD
<i>1800 Census, Mecklenburg County, NC</i>	\$15.00 PPD
<i>1850 Census Abstract, Mecklenburg County, NC (Includes separate index)</i>	\$17.50 PPD
<i>Index to 1850 Census</i>	\$ 5.00 PPD
<i>OMGS Surname Index, 2000 Edition</i>	\$8.00 PPD
OMGS Quarterlies: 1983-2003	\$21.50 PPD (4/year) \$8.50 PPD (single) \$2.00 PPD (index)
<i>Cabarrus Revolutionary Patriot Roll, by Cabarrus Gen. Soc.</i>	\$19.00 PPD
<i>My Hometown Pineville, by Joe Howard Griffin, Sr.</i>	\$30.00 PPD
<i>The Presbyterian Gathering at Clear Creek, by Russell Martin Kerr</i>	\$27.50 PPD
<i>The Spirit of a Proud People, by Lois Moore Yandle</i>	\$40.00 PPD
<i>They Married Confederate Officers: The Intimate Story of Anna Morrison, Wife of Stonewall Jackson, and Her Five Sisters, by Kathy N. Herran</i>	\$24.95 PPD

**Books by Herman W. Ferguson**

<i>Mecklenburg County, NC—Minutes of the Court of common Pleas &amp; Quarter Sessions</i>			
<i>Vol. I, 1780-1800</i>	\$30.00 PPD	<i>Vol. V, 1841 - 1850</i>	\$27.50 PPD
<i>Vol. II, 1801-1820</i>	\$32.50 PPD	<i>Vol. VI, 1851-1860</i>	\$28.50 PPD
<i>Vol. III, 1821-1830</i>	\$27.50 PPD	<i>Vol. VII, 1861-1868</i>	\$28.50 PPD
<i>Vol. IV, 1831 - 1840</i>	\$25.00 PPD		
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC: Genealogical Deed Abstracts Books 10-14</i>			\$27.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC- Abstracts of Deed Books 15-23 1794-1830</i>			\$35.00 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC: Will abstracts, 1791-1868, Books A-J/Tax Lists 1797-1799, 1806-1807</i>			
			(transcribed by Ralph B. & Herman W. Ferguson) \$32.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg County, NC: A Petition, 1792; Tax Lists 1797-1799, 1806-1808, 1810-1811, 1815, 1823-1824</i>			
			(transcribed by Ralph B. & Herman W. Ferguson) \$27.50 PPD
<i>Mecklenburg &amp; Cabarrus Counties, NC: Decedents for Whom Loose Estate Papers are Extant</i>			\$16.50 PPD

North Carolina residents please include 7.5% sales tax. Send name, address, order, and payment to

Olde Mecklenburg Genealogical Society  
P.O. Box 32453  
Charlotte, NC 28232-2453