

The Dispatch

APEX HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the Apex Historical Society was held on Thursday, March 15, at the Maynard Pearson House. Twenty-nine members attended the meeting. The meeting was conducted by Molly Weston in the absence of President, John Pearson.

After reports were presented, nominations and election of new board members took place. The new board is as follows:

- President: Judy Miles
- Vice-President: John Pearson
- Treasurer: Marion Smith
- Secretary: Mary Petersen
- Mary Sue Lane
- Jan Brooks
- Shirley Fiorentino
- Diane Long
- Mack Thorp

Thanks to all the new board members, and special thanks to retiring board members, Buddy Holland, Molly Weston, and Ann Yeaman.

Highlights of the past year include:

- Tours of the Maynard Pearson House for Cub and Scout troops
- Presentations to Brownies by Debbie Douglass
- Ice Cream Social
- Garden Tour and Plant Sale
- Fall Picnic
- World War II Program presented by Molly Weston at the Jones Building
- Christmas Home Tour

The Dispatch will continue to have Hope Blackford and Steve Hennessey as editors and will welcome Betty Coleman and Jacque Burgess to handle circulation

We are still in need of a membership chairperson.

Please call Judy Miles or any other Board member if you would like to volunteer for this position.

The new president, Judy Miles, spoke briefly and said she would like to include the Soup and Pie Supper in this coming year's activities in addition to those which took place last year.

Thanks were given to all who helped in the activities this year and in the running of the society. All are looking forward to an even busier and better year in 2007.

CHRISTMAS HOME TOUR

A very chilly Sunday afternoon was not enough to dampen the holiday spirit that was created for those who attended our 2006 Christmas Home Tour. Because of a shortage of historic homes available for this tour, organizers included the caboose and the Apex Cemetery to give us a full picture of Apex history, both past and present.

Special thanks to the organizers, Diane Long and Margaret Francis, and to the Douglass family who provided their beautiful home for all of us to visit and enjoy the spirit of Christmas. The Maynard-Pearson Home was also beautifully decorated. The combination of the Christmas decorations, fine food and drink, and the outstanding "Sweet Shoppe" made this a refreshing stop. Hope Blackford and Mary Sue & Pete Lane did a great job there.

All of the volunteers deserve thanks for organizing, decorating, making food, running the Sweet Shoppe, and welcoming our many guests. A true example of dedication was that shown by Buddy Holland and Margaret Francis who spent the afternoon guiding guests through Apex Cemetery in this day of very inclement weather.

The Apex Christmas Home Tour is a highlight of our year. Thanks to the many volunteers who made this year's tour so warm and welcoming. We look forward to our 2007 tour. Hopefully, there will be more homes to add to our program so this year's tour can be the best ever.

THE SWEET SHOPPE

The Sweet Shoppe was a success at the 2005 AHS Home Tour. We raised \$170.25 from the candy sales as well as sales of whistles, cookbooks, etc. Hope Blackford would not have been able to do this without the help of all the members who provided candy to sell. She especially wants to thank Mrs. Stephen Hennessey, her daughter, Mary, and LaVerne Seagroves for helping out that day by packaging and selling the candy.

WAY TO GO AHS!

APEX PRESENT AND FUTURE RESIDENTS

LEARN ABOUT OUR PAST

November was an important month for sharing Apex history from two different periods and to two different audiences.

On November 1, Molly Weston organized a program in which World War II veterans, Roy Cooke, Nolan Cooke, and Bill Goodwin took part in a panel to discuss their experiences in the military during World War II. The presentations were very interesting, and they brought World War II close to home with these personal accounts of our residents. After the panel discussion, Jim Andrews related his experiences as a pilot, and Charles Hobby related his uncle's (LeRoy Hobby's) experiences as a Marine. All of us in the audience that night thoroughly enjoyed the presentations and reminiscences by our World War II veterans.

As World War II recedes farther into history (it ended sixty two years ago), it is more and more difficult to get veterans to share their primary source experiences with us. Thanks to Molly Weston and all

who participated for giving us such an informative and interesting evening.

Just eleven nights later, Molly led a group of Cub Scouts through the Maynard-Pearson home. These cub scouts, most of whom were born in an era when cell phones, email, personal computers, and instant messaging are part of their everyday lives, were transported into the "distant" past (more distant for them than for many of us) of antique irons (how did they heat them without electricity?), manual sewing machines (same question), and an assortment of hair ornaments in Rogers' parlor that defied their imaginations.

One of our charges as the Apex Historical Society is to make connections between our past and our future so we won't forget what makes Apex the way it is today.

Thanks again, Molly, for your great presentation to our "Apex leaders of tomorrow".

Other members are doing their job in this area as well:

On March 8, Debbie Douglass spoke with the Teen Girl Scouts Troop #7842 for their "Heritage Hunt" Interest Patch Program. She spoke on both the opportunities that exist for those with an interest in History, and about the history of Apex.

For those already interested in History, she focused on the importance of volunteering in organizations such as the Apex Historical Society and how the volunteers are the backbone of so many successful programs.

She also presented a brief history of Apex during the early 1900s. This featured a slide show of various historical buildings in downtown Apex, homes in the area, and the significance of the town and the people of that time period.

Let's hope that this example of volunteerism influences some of these Girl Scouts to take up the challenge and help us all to develop an appreciation of our town's past and the of the role they can have in its future.

DVDS OF MOLLY WESTON'S APEX BUILDINGS AND PERSONALITIES"

Henry Brown has videotapes and DVDs of Molly Weston' sprogram from last spring, Apex Buildings and Personalities. They are available for sale at the price of \$5.00 each. Henry' s phone number is 372-9063 if you are interested. This was a wonderful program with an enthusiastic response from the audience.

MAKING APEX HISTORY

By Stephen Hennessey

Often times history is seen as something that "happened long ago by kings and queens or presidents and politicians". We seldom think of ourselves as makers of history but, in fact, we are. We all remember October 2006, when we had our Apex chemical fire. Some of us were affected more by it than others, but we all have our stories of our experiences.

I would like to write an article for *The Dispatch* that goes beyond restating what has already been said in the News and Observer and by assorted reporters in various media. In order to do this, I need your help.

My wife, Eleanor, and I had experiences that were new for us; we were telephoned after midnight by one of our neighbors, told of the fire, and told to turn on the television. The neighbors were leaving for Cary when they called.

After listening to the television news, we packed ourselves off to Olive Chapel School with a few hundred others where we spent the next six hours or more first in the cafeteria and then the gymnasium. Aid workers did their best to make us comfortable, but lying on a Red Cross cot with a few hundred others in the gym talking to each others or on cell phones, with bright lights shining in our faces and covered by small, thin blankets, was far from comfortable. In any event, we were safe, and people were looking after us. We were only kept from our home until Friday evening. Others did not fare as well.

Despite the inconvenience and discomfort, we had it easy compared to many of you. We never actually saw the fire and live almost on the boundary of "evacuation and non-evacuation". But what about you? Those who live in downtown Apex were very close to the fire and must have stories to tell of their evacuation. We'd love to hear them.

This is a plea to all of you to contribute your part to an article on Apex History in the Making. The more contributors, the more comprehensive the article.

If you're willing to help, please send your article to me, Steve Hennessey, at spennessey@bellsouth.net. Don't worry about spelling or grammar is that is a concern to you. I will make any necessary changes to make the best article possible.

Thanks in advance.

NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome our new members:

- Loren and Matty Wallace
- Victoria and Holly Morgan
- William R. Mills and Susan Seymour Mills

NEW ITEMS AT THE MAYNARD-PEARSON HOUSE

- New curtains in the sunroom
- More photos of the Maynard Pearson House have been professionally framed
- Buddy Holland has donated a new vacuum cleaner to be used at the House.

APEX HISTORY

Starting with this issue, I will be providing some history of Apex. If a member wishes to make a request for something that may be in the Elizabeth Reid Murray collection at the Olivia Raney Library, I will try to locate that information and print it in a future issue of *The Dispatch*. Please direct all inquiries to me at <FluffyHope@nc.rr.com> or the Society's mailing address. I have permission from Ms. Murray to reprint anything in her files in the Apex Historical Society's newsletter. Also, if this is something you are **not** interested in seeing in your newsletter, please notify either me or one of the Board members. Thanks! In this issue, I am reprinting the research performed by Elizabeth Reid Murray and published in *Wake, Capital County of North Carolina* (Raleigh, N.C.: Capital County Pub. Co., 1983.).

New Town: Apex.—Farther along the Chatham railway, the company established a depot called Apex, supposedly so named because its location, at 504 feet above sea level, was the highest point of the terrain along the line at the time. Riding along in the vicinity of that depot in 1870, a *Sentinel* writer made the following general comment: "On the route of the road, we observed a number of saw mills

and a quantity of lumber on the road at large. At the *Apex Depot* we observed a large lot of fine lumber for the Richard market."³⁰

The future town of Apex consisted at the time of little more than the depot itself, although businesses were developing around the area formerly referred to as "Log Pond." A year later, August 23, 1871,

the Apex post office was established. Daniel Mann, first postmaster, probably handed out the mail from the Mann grocery store across Salem Street from the railroad station. He estimated at the time that one hundred families lived within three miles of his store. According to Branson's business directory for 1872, the owners of the largest farms in the immediate area were Green H. Alford, Aley Holland, M. A. Jones, J. A. Norris, Laud Stinson, and Charlotte Utley, Dr. Judd Thompson, physician, listed his address as Apex. Cary's A. F. Page and John McC. Ellington expanded their partnership to open Apex branches of their sash, door, and blind business as well as their lumber supply and contracting and building services. Other nearby manufacturers listed in the 1872 directory included A. N. Betts, who had a turpentine distillery and a country store; and Gray Jones, longtime area resident and manufacturer of wagons and wheels. Among area businesses were also the Hudson and Thompson steam saw mill; general stores owned by J. D. Lewis, H. C. Olive, and A. F. Thompson; and the grocery stores of S. S. Bradley, J. A. Norris, E. Y. Penny, and [no first name given] Mann. H. C. Olive and G. W. Atkinson established the Atkinson Plug Tobacco Company which continued in operation into the 1880s.³¹

Early churches in Apex were Apex First Baptist, organized in 1869 by area Negroes as Union Chapel Baptist; Christian Home United Church of Christ, the cornerstone for which indicates organization in 1869; Apex United Methodist, founded in 1870; and Apex Baptist Church, formed in 1873 as Apex Missionary Baptist. An Apex Masonic chapter was chartered in 1875 but lasted only a few years.³²

Two couples, Sallie and John McC. Ellington and Nancy and Hilliard Bell, owned a considerable portion of the square mile of land that was soon incorporated as the town of Apex. As early as 1867 they had pooled their property and divided it into two portions, which they then subdivided and began selling in smaller parcels. In addition to the Chatham Rail Company, early purchasers of these and other lots in the developing town included W. R. Eatmon, Henry C. Olive, W. H. Harward, Q. I. Hudson, Rev. A. N. Betts, Guilford Lewis, G. W. Atkinson, W. F. Utley, Jesse R. Penny, W. S. Mann, Dr. A. J. Thompson, J. R. Upchurch, and P. C. Ferrell. Gray Jones, Rev. Patrick W. Dowd, and a Mr. Horton were also owners of land in the immediate vicinity. Some of these early purchasers built homes and became residents. In February 1873 they secured a charter incorporating the town of Apex and setting the municipal limits at a half mile in each direction from the center of the warehouse the Chatham Railroad had built west of its track. The town lines were run "with the four cardinal points of the compass." Named mayor was H. C. Olive. The first commissioners were A. N. Betts, W. O. Ellington, Q. I. Hudson, and John McC. Ellington, W. F. Utley, a Confederate veteran who had lost a leg in battle, was designated town marshal.³³

Forty-five and fifty-foot-wide streets were planned, and a few were partially surveyed in the early years. The street names reveal some information about the identities and locations of some of the earliest residents. For example, properties owned by G. W. Atkinson and Rev. A. N. Betts flanked the north end of the thoroughfare originally called Atkinson-and-Betts Street; Dr. A. J. Thompson built north of Thompson Street, the residence

later occupied by the marshal, W. F. Utley; Ferrell Street (subsequently renamed Mason Street) bordered property bought by a somewhat later resident. P. C. Ferrell, No. 1 and No. 2 streets later acquired the names Williams and Moore streets. The origins of others of the first street names are obvious directional names, including Chatham Street, leading west toward Chatham County; Salem Street, point north toward Salem Baptist Church and an early election precinct called Salem; and Center Street, partially bisecting the original square mile and

passing close to the center point specified in the charter. Nearby Culvert Street was listed in an early (1878) survey as Culbreth Street; but its location near an actual culvert (under the Chatham railroad tracks), noted in numerous early town deeds, suggests that the surveyor misspelled the name. Elm street presumably acquired that appellation from the considerable number of elm trees along at least part of its length. By the close of the 1870s Apex acquired a population of 228.³⁴

³⁰ The name Apex was used at least as early as May 1870; see *Sentinel* (d), May 7, 1870. Concerning origin of name, see Carl P. Holleman, Jr., *Pluck, Perseverance and Paint*, 3-4; see also Amis, *Historical Raleigh* (1913), 213.

³¹ "Wonderful Growth of Apex," unsigned article in *Apex Journal* (Apex, N.C.), Spet. 15, 1911, explaining derivation from popular deer stand at log-filled pond; U.S. Post Office Department, Records film; see Wake Deed Book 100:591; contract and location report filed by Mann, 1871 (photocopy in author's collection, also reproduced in Holleman, Jr., *Pluck*, between 44, 45; Branson, *N. C. Business Directory, 1872*, passim; H. C Olive advertisement, *Sentinel* (d), July 23, 1873; *Raleigh City Directory, 1880-1881*, 203; Carl Holleman, "It Told for Apex", *Western Wake Herald*, Apr. 5, 1979, nothing that business was on "Factory Hill" and that its bell was still owned by the First Baptist Church. See photograph of "Old Saunders Store" at intersection of Salem and Saunders sts., believed to have housed Mann store and original post office, in Holleman, Jr., *Pluck*, between 44, 45; see also post office contract and town charter, loc. cit.

³² Holleman, Jr., *Pluck*, 24-29, 112-116; United Methodist Church, *N.C. Conference Historical Directory*, 93; Grill, *Early Methodist Meeting Houses*, 122-123, citing a 1952 history of Apex Methodist Church by Mrs. R. M. Beasley; *Biblical Recorder*, Nov. 5, 1873; Wake Deed Book 40:592; Raleigh Baptist Association, *1980 Annual*, 80; Masons of N.C., *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge*, No. 349.

The Apex Masonic Lodge was rechartered in 1910. Loc. Cit. See above, chap. 14 at n. 135 re. H. W. Norris's boys' school.

³³ "Wonderful Growth of Apex," *Apex Journal*, Sept. 15, 1911; Wake Deed Book 26:173, and abstracts of deeds lent by Carl P. Holleman and Carl P. Holleman, Jr. [partial list: Book 26:477, 555, Book 27:34, Book 29:417, Book 28:724, Book 30:465, Book 33:649, 721, 350, 129, Book 34:335, 813, Book 35:1, 267, 16, 159, 401, Book 37:9, Book 38:468, Book 40:462; *N.C. Private Laws, 01873*, c 52, ratified Feb. 28, 1873; charter reproduced in Holleman, Jr., *Pluck*, between 44, 45; *ibid.*, 79.

Gray Jones's property is denoted as "G. Jones" on Bevers, map of Wake, 1871, at the intersection near "Apex" (denoting railroad station); this is the community referred to as Jones' or Jones's Crossroads during the Apr. 1865 occupation by Union forces. See above, chap. 13 at nn. 133, 135. The name "Whiteheads," near Jones's denotes one John Whitehead who in 1863 sold 3½ acres to the railroad, in the expressed hope that the local depot (to be called "Curve-ridge Station") would be established near his home. Wake Deed Book 24:160-161.

The act of incorporation erroneously lists Hudson's initials as Q. Q. The site of the warehouse was a lot near that on which the 1914 depot (converted into a public library), or between that building and Center St. The town limits were redefined and slightly enlarged in 1911 when the definition of the center was moved about 100 feet east and the limits described as follows: 2690 feet (instead of a half mile of 2,640) in each direction "from a point marking the point where the center line of Center Street crosses the center

line of the main track of the Seaboard Air Line Railway and shall run with the four cardinal points of the compass." *N.C. Private Laws, 1911*, c. 160, s. 2. See also Wake Book of Maps, 1911, p. 6. The first regular annexation occurred by town ordinance in 1960, when the two areas, each ¼ mile by 5,380 feet, were annexed to the southern and western limits amounting to slightly over half a square mile in area. Apex, Board of Commissioners of the Town of Apex, Minutes, July 6, 1959, Mar. 31, May 2, 1960

³⁴ Apex street survey, June 20, 1878, in Wake Deed Book 54:327; Wake Court Minutes, Feb. 1849:163; Holleman abstracts, research notes; Holleman, Jr., *Pluck*, 79 (see also maps on end papers); Tenth Census (1880), 285; table 30, which includes Apex among the "unincorporated [sic] places [having reports] returned separately by the enumerators."

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