

Alleghany Historical-Genealogical Society, Inc.



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Bulletin No. 94

Local Girl, Stacy Hawks, Lends Her Talents to AH-GS

AHGS has a summer intern! Stacy Hawks will be working with us this season in many different capacities. In addition to helping to organize the Society's office, she will be working on our upcoming book project.



Stacy Hawks

Stacy is from Alleghany County. She studied the history of the county for her senior project. Stacy was a member of Friends of the Library from 2004-2005 and volunteered at Books N' Friends Bookstore from 2002-2006. At Books N' Friends, she was regularly around rare and historical books. She also worked at the Alleghany County Public Library and there she did a lot of organizational and inventory work. Stacy also worked for Alleghany County Public Schools as a substitute teacher from 2005-2006.

Stacy is currently attending Brevard College and is a member of the History Past Times Club. She also volunteers at Transylvania County Public Library's bookstore. She is pursuing a Bachelor of

Continued on page 4- Summer Intern



The Crouse House in Sparta's Crouse Park is undergoing a face-lift. When completed, the familiar landmark will have new (yellow, of course) siding, a new green metal roof and improvements inside, as well. For more views of the progress, go to: www.townofsparta.org or stop by and see for yourself. The work is being done by contractor, Travis Osborne, from Piney Creek.

The Two Room Cabin on Nathan's Creek

by J. M. Sturgill of Sparta
born 1926 in Sparta, North Carolina

I was born in Alleghany County in 1926, but most of my first ten years were spent at Nathan's Creek in Ashe County. My parents were Paul and Della Sturgill. My grandparents, Josh and Sally Sturgill, owned a small farm and a two-room cabin, a log bar, a granary and a springhouse.

The main part of the cabin had a large fireplace. It was the living room and bedroom. The kitchen had another large fireplace and bed. It was attached to the main cabin by a covered breezeway. To go to the kitchen, you had to go outside to a large porch and then into the kitchen.

I spent a lot of my early years with my grandparents. There were times when my father would come back to Sparta in Alleghany County to work at the sawmills. Since the cabin

Continued on page 3- J.M. Sturgill

Message from the President

Dear Members,

The AHGS is having a busy summer.

- We are in the process of building a new book for the sesquicentennial (150 year anniversary) of Alleghany County. This book will feature stories of businesses in Alleghany from 1859-2009. We will try to get basic histories of any business, preferably from the business owner, manager, or their descendents and hope to add stories from employees, patrons, or anyone who has interesting memories, anecdotes, or photographs.

Please try to contribute (time, photos, or your own stories) to the book. You can contact the head of the book committee, Patty Wingler (e-mail: swbhannc@earthlink.net) or Irene Wagner (phone:372-4214).

- We have a new, college intern this summer. Stacy Hawks' story is outlined in this issue.
- We will have a booth at the Blue Ridge Mountain Arts and Crafts Fair, July 27 & 28, (Crouse House) to sell books and give out information on the Society. We will also have booths at Brinegar Day on August 11, and the Mountain Heritage Festival, September 22 (Downtown Sparta).

- The new memorial cookbooks are available. This is a great collection of recipes, photos and memories, honoring friends and family that have passed away.

Proceeds of "Recipes That Raised Us," go to the Library Building Fund. The proposed Library will provide 3000 sq. ft. of space for the Historical Society data, computers, and exhibits. Cookbooks are \$20 each or \$15 each for 3 or more, and are on sale at the Library, Books 'n Friends bookstore, and the new Society website: www.ahgs.org

- As I mentioned above, we have a new home for our website. The new address is ahgs.org. The site looks the same, but now features a message board that visitors, after registering, can access to leave questions, information and messages for each other. If you have ideas for other new features, let us know.

If you would like to volunteer for any of these projects, let us know. See you at the next meeting!

Jeff Halsey

July 22, 2007

What the heck is a "chain"?

From Rebecca Moon's Cheek Family Website at <http://www.moonzstuff.com/Cheek/index.html>

The "chain" is a unit of measurement that was invented in the early 1600's by an English mathematician named Edmund Gunter. One chain equals 66 feet. This number may seem odd, but Gunter chose it because it was equal to one-tenth of a furlong, which was a common measurement used by English farmers and landowners. The furlong (220 yards or 660 feet) was the standard length of a furrow in a ploughed field ("furrow long" = furlong). It was supposedly the distance that a horse could pull a plough before needing to rest. An acre is one square furlong. The furlong and acre were so important in agriculture that the English government redefined the ancient Roman mile, which contained 5,000 feet,* to 8 furlongs, or 5,280 feet.

If you look at old measuring systems, they are usually based on units of 2 or 3, or multiples of 2 or

3, like 4, 8, and 12. This makes a lot of sense. People really do not think in decimals -- if you don't believe me, try cutting a pie into 10 equal pieces! Systems of measurement based on 2 and 3 have great advantages over decimals in everyday life because they are intuitive. They do not depend on standardized measuring devices, literacy, or even any knowledge of arithmetic. All you have to do is divide things into halves and thirds. There are good reasons why baked goods are traditionally sold by the dozen, why we have 12 hours in a day (not 10) and 4 quarts in a gallon (not 5).

Decimals, however, are clearly superior for mathematical calculations. Gunter, a mathematician, certainly realized this, which is why he created a decimal system to improve the science of surveying (100 "links" = 1 chain = 1/10 furlong).

Although Gunter's chain has gone the way of the horse-drawn plough, we Americans have obstinately stuck to our oddball acres and miles, thumb-

Family History - Absalom and Agnes Maynard Smith

Our family's background goes back to the very first settlers in Alleghany County. Absalom and Agnes (Maynard) Smith, born in the 1700's and died in the 1800's.

Agnes was the daughter of a well-to-do VA. farmer who had hired an indentured servant to work on his farm. Absalom was originally from Europe, and had come to America to VA., to be free. In his country, they used to put people in jail if they couldn't pay their debts.

Absalom and Agnes fell deeply in love, and knew that her Father would never agree to their marriage. So they took their belongings, a horse, and her black slave, and in the night left for NC. They had a difficult journey. One time the Indians chased them, and the forded a river. Agnes rode the horse, Absalom could swim, but the black man couldn't, so he held on to the tail of the horse, and they managed to make it to the shore safely. They were married somewhere along the way, and stopped their journey at what is now Roaring Gap, NC. Until they could build a cabin, they stayed in a VERY large hollowed-out log. It was too cold to try to cut timber and build a home. As soon as they could, they did.

These hardy people survived and had children who are my ancestors. They were hard-working, thrifty, and resourceful. They were originally buried not far from the former home of Kathleen Smith, but when the High Meadows Golf Course was built, their remains were moved to the Antioch United Meth. Church Cemetery, which is across the Hwy. 21S. from the Golf Course, Restaurant and Motel. Louise and the late J.D. Smith's home is farther back from where the late Kathleen Smith used to live. J.D. Smith and Kathleen are also descendents of Absalom and Agnes Smith.

My grandfather, Rev. James Ralph Smith, married Vertie Ellen (McCann) Smith July 4, 1900. They had 2 daughters:

1. RUBY Alverta Smith Zugelder, who is buried with her husband, Milton Arthur Zugelder, in Florida. Their 3 daughters have homes in FL.

2. My Mother, Julia VERA Smith Swisher, who married Paul Wesley Swisher, June 25, 1931, in Palisade, COLORADO; and I was born April 13, 1932, there. My sister, Cynthia Ellen Swisher McMillan, was born in Grand Junction, CO., in the hospital.

We moved back to Roaring Gap, NC. 4 years after my Grandma's death, for the health of my parents, in

1948. A home was built on almost 10 acres near where the Old State Fish Hatchery was, that had never been sold when my Grandparents moved to Nebraska, to preach in 1909. I always called my Grandpa "Papa" and my Father "Daddy". Papa's farm was sold to someone in 1909. My Grandmas was Postmistress in their home. I don't know how long she served in that capacity.

At that time, Roaring Gap was called Laurel Branch, NC., and later when the lake was built, it was called Bullhead Lake. Then the Roaring Gap Club named it Lake Louise. The lake was built years after my Grandparents sold their farm, right over the location of their farm. My Grandmother's parents, William Lewis McCann and Cynthia Spurlin McCann, owned and managed a Country Store where Victor Magialetti has his Nursery & Landscaping business.

This was before 1909. Their home was burned and they built around the store, living there. Grandma had an older brother, Coy McCann, who married Jensei Ava Thompson, July 25, 1903. They had several children. When the lake was being built, Jensei was afraid that the dam would break and the family would drown, so Uncle Coy had it moved across Hwy. 21, up on higher ground. It is now owned by the Motsingers, who have a Christmas Tree Farm. I hope they never destroy our "Old McCann Homeplace." It holds sweet memories for me.

Pauline Swisher Meals
P.O. Box 1844
Sparta, NC 28675

*Cont'd from page 1 - **Summer Intern***

Arts in History with an emphasis in secondary education.

Stacy is a 2005 graduate of Wilkes Community College, where she was on the Dean's List in Fall 2004 and Spring 2005. She was also on the Dean's List at Brevard College in Fall 2006. At Wilkes Community College, Stacy earned an Associates of Arts Degree, Pre-Major in History.

Stacy's computer skills, love of books and writing, interest in photography, and curiosity about events that affect the community will all be assets while she works on the book project.

was close to Nathan's Creek School, I was able to attend school there from the first through the third grade. There were times when my parents lived in a small house nearby. Therefore, both places were home to me.

There are so many memories about the old home place, it is hard to know where to start or stop. Memories of the special cabin, the old log barn, the granary and springhouse are but a few.

The spring was on the side of a large hill. Water ran from the spring to the springhouse in a wooden trough. There, we could catch the water in buckets and carry them to the house. The overflow filled a long, wooden reservoir inside the springhouse. This is where the milk, butter, sauerkraut and other foods were kept cool. This part of the building was fairly large and was built so that animals could not get to the food.

My father was the oldest of four sons. He had four sisters. All of them lived in Ashe County most of the time. As the years passed, I had many aunts, uncles and cousins to visit, when I had the chance to return from Sparta. My grandfather died when I was fourteen years old. My grandmother sold the farm and moved to Sparta in the mid 1940s.

About 1960, my wife Lorraine and I took our daughters to the old home place. We used a four-wheel drive Jeep to go in. It was sad to see everything in ruins. I also took one of my co-workers, Howard Brown, with us. Earlier, a picture of the cabin had been featured on a one-cent postal card, and I had one of the cards with me. We used a Polaroid camera to capture the background.

Using the postal card and the Polaroid camera, Howard made me a beautiful twenty-four by thirty-six inch oil painting of the old home place. It hangs over the fireplace at our home in Sparta.

On that last visit to the old home place, I made my way inside. There was no floor. On one of the outside exit doors was a long wooden button hung on a nail. I carefully removed it and I still have it today. We now have another,

well restored log cabin on our property in Sparta. That button hangs on the cabin's screen door. This cabin is part of another story that began over one hundred years ago.

I lived with my grandparents in their log cabin for part of my early life. This experience has always given me a great appreciation for that part of our heritage



Burris Andrews Cabin restored and moved to Sparta

In 1976, my wife Lorraine and I were fortunate to be able to purchase a restored, one-room log cabin. It has a fireplace and an upstairs loft. At one time, it was the home of Burris Andrews and his wife Lucy. Mr. Andrews was a Civil War veteran, born on May 3rd, 1844, in Alleghany County. At that time, Alleghany was part of Ashe County. Mrs. Andrews was born in 1856, near the town of Independence in Grayson County, Virginia.

Mr. Andrews purchased the cabin in 1907. It was moved to a lot on the outskirts of Sparta, North Carolina. The cabin was dismantled log by log, and the fireplace stone by stone. It was moved from Bullhead Mountain near the Blue Ridge Parkway about 1970. The one room is all that remained at the time it was moved and restored. It is now located on a beautiful wooded lot, surrounded by large native trees that include oak, maple, hickory and spruce, as well as an abundance of mountain laurel, rhododendron and wild azaleas.

The craftsmanship of the early settlers is shown in the amazing dovetail joints that lock every log at every corner.

The logs, which are yellow poplar, are up to eighteen inches wide. They had been split and hand hewed. For years, the outside was covered with lapboard siding. The logs are still in very good condition.

On the same tract of land stands an old log smokehouse, where they would smoke their meat by building a fire on the earthen floor. To add to the homestead setting is a smaller, one-room log cabin that has a fireplace. The combination of the three buildings gives a true picture of how an old pioneer homestead would have looked more than a century ago.

Mr. Andrews lived to be eighty-six years old, and Mrs. Andrews lived to be ninety-one. Their family included ten children: the youngest born in 1903 and the oldest one in 1875. Also, they had forty-two grandchildren and forty-three great-grandchildren. Reliable information was furnished us by two of the grandchildren, Mrs. Grace Sevik of Bedford, Oregon, and Mrs. Elsie Joines of Sparta, North Carolina.



Burris Andrews and wife, Lucy Jane Dougherty Andrews

The above picture is an enlargement of a snapshot taken in 1925. This log cabin was the living room of the house and acreage they purchased about 1907. At that time, a dining room, kitchen and two porches had been added to the cabin. The entire structure was covered with wide clapboard siding painted white. It had large fireplaces in the living room and kitchen which were built of stone. There was a good spring, a spring house and a barn. Also a creek running through the place. It was located at the foot of Bull Head on the fringe of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Sparta was their mailing address. The Andrews sold this home about 1925.

Contributed by Grace Andrews Sevcik, Medford, Oregon.

Books For Sale From Ashe County Historical Society

C/O ASHE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY P.O. BOX 939 JEFFERSON, N.C. 28640	caromwil@skybest.com
Ashe Historical Soc. Books For Sale.....	Purchased at..... Ashe Library Shipped in NC..... Out-of-State
1830 Ashe County Census	\$31.95.....\$34.95..... 33.00
1880 Ashe County Census.....	31.95..... 34.95..... 33.00
5th & 7th Battalion NC Cavalry & 6th NC Cavalry	26.75..... 29.75..... 28.00
Ashe County Cemetery Records	63.90..... 69.90..... 66.00
Ashe County Marriage Records 1800-1900.....	31.95..... 34.95..... 33.00
Banks Crossing.....	21.40..... 24.40..... 23.00
Chalice and the Covenant.....	21.40..... 24.40..... 23.00
Chasm.....	16.50..... 20.05..... 19.00
Factual History of Early Ashe County	53.25..... 56.25..... 53.00
Heritage of Ashe County Vol. 1.....	85.20..... 91.20..... 86.00
Heritage of Ashe County Vol. 2.....	85.20..... 91.20..... 86.00
History of New River Baptist Association	10.65..... 13.65..... 13.00
Images of America: Ashe County.....	21.29..... 23.79..... 22.49
Images of America: Ashe County Revisited	21.29..... 23.79..... 22.49
Mountain Union Baptist Assoc. Obituaries (1960-94).....	21.30..... 24.30..... 23.00
Mountain Arts.....	5.33..... 6.33..... 6.00
Original Mountain Union Baptist Assoc. Obituaries (1961-94)	21.30..... 24.30..... 23.00
Primitive Baptist Assoc. Minute Obituaries (1855-1995).....	15.98..... 18.98..... 18.00
Rambling Through Ashe	21.30..... 24.30..... 23.00
Fletcher's History of Ashe County	47.93

Items For Sale

The following items are available for sale, directly from the Society or may be purchased at the Alleghany County Public Library or the Alleghany County Chamber of Commerce:

HISTORY OF ALLEGHANY COUNTY, NC 1859-1976 - This 272-page book, which had been out of print for many years, was re-published by the Society in August 1999. It was originally published in 1976 during the Nation's Bicentennial. This book is not indexed. The book may be purchased from the Society for \$45, plus \$3 for shipping & handling, plus (for NC residents only) \$3.04 tax.

ALLEGHANY COUNTY HERITAGE - This 555-page book was published by the Society in October 1983 and is broken down into three sections: county, township, and community histories; over 700 family histories; and a 13-page pictorial heritage. This book is completely indexed. The book may be purchased from the Society for \$48, plus \$3 s&h, plus (for NC residents only) \$3.24 tax.

ALLEGHANY COUNTY CEMETERIES THROUGH 1986 - This 261-page book was published in October 1988 and contains burial data from nearly 300 family, church and community burial plots through 1986. The names are in alphabetical order with a code showing the location of the cemetery. The book may be purchased from the Society for \$15, plus \$2.75 s&h, plus (for NC residents only) \$1.01 tax.

ALLEGHANY ARCHITECTURE: A PICTORIAL SURVEY - This 101-page book was originally published in 1983 by the Alleghany County Historical Properties Commission. The book was re-published in May 2004 by the Alleghany Historical-Genealogical Society. Jean Sizemore was the principal investigator and photos were taken by Brant Burgiss and Tammy Blevins. The communities covered are: Cherry Lane, Cranberry, Gap Civil, Glade Creek, Glade Valley, Piney Creek, Prathers Creek, Roaring Gap, Sparta, and Whitehead. Although architecture is the principal focus of the book, it contains much information useful to the family historian. This book is not indexed. The book may be purchased from the Society for \$30.00, plus \$3.00 s&h, plus (for NC residents only) \$2.03 tax.

ALLEGHANY COUNTY, NC MARRIAGES: 1849-1900 - This 354-page book was published in 1996 by local resident George Henry Latham. These marriage records are arranged alphabetically by the groom's surname, typically showing for each marriage the day, month, and year it took place; the groom's name, age, residence and the names of his parents; and the bride's name, age, residence and the names of her parents. An index of brides is also included. The book may be purchased for \$30.50 plus \$5 s&h from Heritage Books Inc., 1540-E Pointer Ridge Pl., Bowie, MD 20716. Their phone number is 1-800-398-7709. Their website is <http://www.heritagebooks.com>.

ALLEGHANY COUNTY COURTHOUSE ORNAMENT - This attractive, gold-colored metal ornament depicts the county courthouse, which was re-built following the fire of 1933. Profits from the sale of this ornament fund various activities of the Society. The ornament is available from the Society for \$11.21 plus (for NC residents only) \$0.76 tax; no shipping & handling is charged for this light item.

MARY'S MEMORIES - This 74-page book was published by Mary Lyon Harless in 2000 on the occasion of her 100th birthday. The book is a collection of stories and reminiscences about her long life in Alleghany County. It contains many photographs as well as illustrations by Arzetta Mimbs. The first printing quickly sold out and Mrs. Harless permitted the Society to re-publish the book. The book may be purchased from the Society for \$8.00, plus \$1.50 s&h and (for NC residents only) \$0.54 tax.

FOOT PRINTS ON THE SANDS OF TIME - This 75-page book, subtitled "A History of Southwestern Virginia and Northwestern North Carolina," was first published in Sparta, NC in 1900 by Dr. Aras B. Cox. Dr. Cox was a physician and Methodist preacher who was born in Floyd Co., VA and later lived in Alleghany and Ashe Counties, NC. The book consists of historical and biographical sketches of the following counties: Carroll, Floyd and Grayson, VA; and Alleghany, Ashe, Surry, Watauga and Wilkes, NC. One chapter recounts the Battle of King's Mountain. Our Society reprinted this book in 2002, and it now includes an every-name index. The book may be purchased from the Society for \$15.00, plus \$2.00 s&h and (for NC residents only) \$1.01 tax.

1938 VIDEO OF SPARTA, NORTH CAROLINA - This 20-minute VHS tape, mostly in black and white (but some scenes in color), was filmed by Ben Reeves in downtown Sparta, at the Roaring Gap Fish Hatchery, and at the Alleghany Co. Agricultural Fair. Identified persons include Edwin Duncan, Alton Thompson, Glenn Nichols, Coy Richardson, Eltie Richardson, Preachers R. L. Berry and Howard Ford, Troy Irwin, Will Reeves, Virginia Reeves and son Bennie, C. R. Roe, F. H. Jackson, Floyd Crouse, Guy Duncan, Dr. Thompson, Duke Bledsoe, R. L. Doughton, Walter Irwin, Kyle Nichols, Lester Waddell, Jay Hardin, Sam Brown, Porter Collins, Rufus Doughton, and Ross and Earl Richardson. The tape begins with Ben Reeves' trip to the 1939 Worlds Fair in New York, which makes an interesting contrast with 1938 Sparta. The tape includes a musical background. This VHS tape may be purchased from the Society for \$10.00, plus \$1.50 s&h and (for NC residents only) \$0.68 tax.

NEW - PREORDER RECIPES THAT RAISED US - This 230 page book is a memorial cookbook featuring favorite recipes of friends and family who have passed away. Proceeds from this book go to the building project of the Alleghany County Public Library. These books may be purchased from the Society for \$20, plus \$3.00 s&h, plus (for NC residents only) \$1.35 tax or (3) books for \$45.00, plus \$7.00 s&h, plus (for NC residents only) \$3.04 tax.

For items ordered from the Society, send your check, payable to Alleghany Historical-Genealogical Society, to the following address: Alleghany Historical-Genealogical Society, P.O.Box 817, Sparta, NC 28675.

Note:

If you have interesting photos, old-timey family stories, local historical information (*or even a good tall tale*), consider letting us print it in this newsletter. Questions about the newsletter can be addressed to: jeff@imagingspecialists.net or call 336-372-3002. Website: Contact Gary Felts: ahgs@ls.net

Membership Form

Please enroll me as a member of the Alleghany Historical-Genealogical Society, Inc. in the classification below:

New Renewal

Individual \$10.00 annually

Business, Institutional or professional \$20.00 annually

Sustaining \$ 50.00 annually

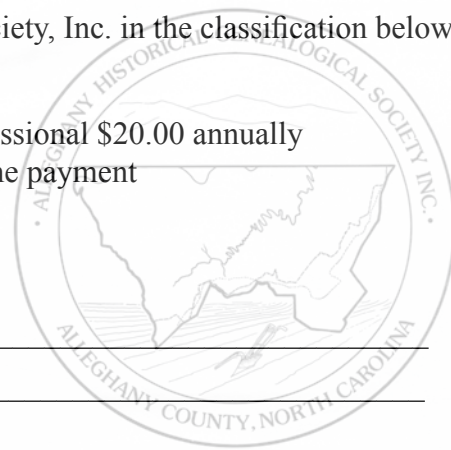
LIFE MEMBER \$100.00 in one payment

Enclosed is a check or money order for membership.

Please send membership card to:

Name- _____

Address- _____

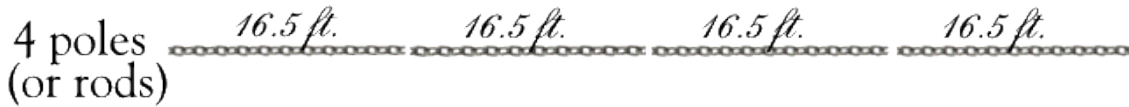
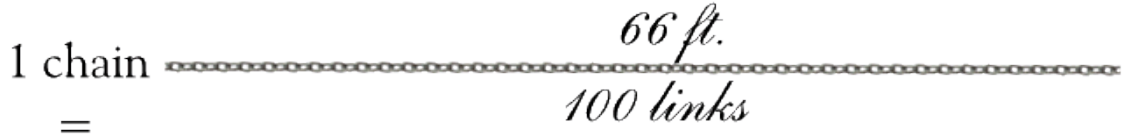


Continued from page 2- **What the Heck is a "Chain" ?**

ing our noses at the entire metric world. So in very real sense, the chain is still with us.

To convert measurements of all sorts, visit www.onlineconversion.com

*To be completely accurate, the Roman mile contained 5,000 Roman feet, which were a bit shorter than English feet -- about 11.5 inches as we measure them. The Romans defined the mile as the distance covered by an army marching 1,000 paces. The word "mile" comes from the Latin milia passum, meaning 1,000 paces.



10 chains = 1 furlong

10 square chains = 1 acre



80 chains = 5,280 feet = 1 mile



This newsletter is published quarterly by the Allegheny Historical-Geological Society, Inc. P.O. Box 817, Sparta, North Carolina, 28675 Web: www.ahgs.net/~ahgs/ email: ahgs@ahgs.net