



DAVIDSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

We don't just talk about Davidson's past... We are working to preserve it.

Winter 2015

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The Settlers of Mecklenburg

It is quite common for Americans to trace their family heritage back to Ireland or Scotland. Indeed, many of America's early settlers arrived on ships from Glasgow, Dublin, Belfast, and Londonderry. The first settlers of Mecklenburg County, including George Davidson, the father of Davidson College's namesake William Lee Davidson, were no exception. In fact, Mecklenburg County was settled almost exclusively by a group of immigrants known as the Scots-Irish, a subtle combination of both heritages.

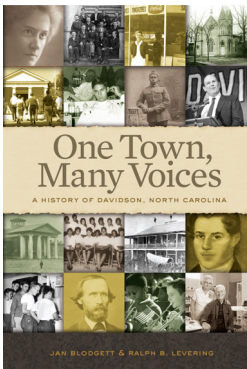
In the early 17th century, the English King James I confiscated 3.8 million acres of land from Irish lords Tyrone and Tyrconnell and sold those parcels of land to Scots at cheap prices. Many of these Scottish settlers stayed in Ireland for a few generations but found that the native Irish Catholics were hostile towards Scottish Presbyterians, whom they saw as proxies of the English government sent to Anglicize Ireland.

This constant clash with the native Irish, the promise of economic opportunity, and the Jacobite Rebellions in the Scottish Highlands, made the New World an attractive destination for the Scots-Irish. North Carolina was particularly attractive to the Scots-Irish due to the Highland-esque Appalachian Mountains, as well as the Appalachian Piedmont's fertile soil. Mecklenburg County, seated in the Piedmont region, became a popular destination for the farming class.

Religion was another major motivating factor for the Scots-Irish to leave. In 17th and early 18th Century Ireland, only Anglicans were allowed to hold public office and Presbyterian churches could be closed by the English government. This religious tension did not go away once the Scots-Irish arrived in Mecklenburg County. Scots-Irish families frequently clashed with English settlers, who were primarily Anglican. Tension grew so high that Anglican minister Charles Woodmason called the Scots-Irish Presbyterians in North Carolina, "certainly the worst Vermin on Earth." One Scots-Irish immigrant who was very familiar with the Anglican-Presbyterian tension was Alexander Craighead, who settled in Mecklenburg County in the 1750s. Craighead was a Presbyterian minister who led "The Covenant-



James I, oil on canvas by Daniel Mytens, 1621; National Portrait Gallery, London



Available at :
Main Steet Books,
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Proceeds benefit DHS

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DHS Events

All programs are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.
Please note dates, times and locations for each event.

The Queen Anne's Revenge: Davidson College Examines her Artifacts with 3D x-ray vision
Sunday, January 25, 4:00 pm
Davidson College, Dana Building, Room 146
(next to Davidson College Presbyterian Church)

The Queen Anne's Revenge, flagship of Blackbeard the pirate, sank in Beaufort Inlet in 1718. Since its rediscovery in 1996, conservators have recovered thousands of concretions—preservative coverings around objects in the wreckage formed from metal oxidation, accumulation of sedimentation and living organisms over time. In the past, to view these items non-destructively, concretions have been viewed with traditional 2D x-ray film imaging, offering a limited view and flat details.

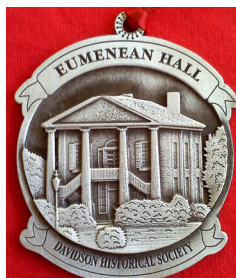


Utilizing a new digital 3D x-ray imaging system, Davidson College's Dr. Dan Boye and Ryan Kozolowski (class of 2016), are able to offer a more striking view of the objects. Artifacts examined include a surveyor's chain, silver coins, a boltrope, and a crimped musket barrel. We hope that you can join us!



Did you miss out on purchasing your DHS Holiday Ornaments? The DHS is no longer producing new ornaments, but you can still purchase the five pewter ornaments at Main Street Books.

They make great gifts!



Tour of Langtree Plantation
Members Only
Sunday, March 15, 4:00 pm
554 Langtree Road, Mt Mourne

Built circa 1858 by James Franklin Houston, a grandson of Capt. James Houston, the home was purchased by Dr. Henry Y. Mott in 1880. As a Confederate soldier on his way home to Lincolnnton at the end of the Civil War, Mott rode past the majestic, two-story house with stately columns in a grove of oak trees and promised himself that he would someday own the home. He kept that promise, and the home remained in the Mott family until the 1970's. The home was recently purchased and renovated by the Langtree Group and is now available as a venue for weddings, meetings and special events.

Rick Howard, longtime area resident and CEO of the Langtree Group, will lead us on tour of this historic home.



Langtree Plantation Tour is for current 2015 DHS members only.

Want to be more involved with the DHS?

We are seeking volunteers to serve on committees and to help with individual projects. Please complete the contact information on the enclosed Membership & Volunteer form or email us at DavidsonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com

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ers," a radical sect of Presbyterianism. Originating in Scotland, The Covenanters claimed that the English monarchy had forfeited their God-given right to rule due to their embrace of Anglicanism.

Given their conflicts with the Irish, English, American Anglicans, and Native Americans, the Scots-Irish settled in the quiet backwoods of North Carolina to achieve peace of mind, and were willing to fight in order to achieve it. It became well-known, even by the English monarchy, that Scots-Irish colonists in Mecklenburg County were exceptionally rebellious. In 1775, a delegation of Scots-Irish representatives signed the Mecklenburg Resolves, which some have claimed amount to



Depiction of the Battle of Kings Mountain
Image courtesy of North Carolina Office of Archives and History

America's first declaration of independence. The Royal Governor of North Carolina, Josiah Martin, referred to the Resolves as, "the horrid and treasonable publications that the inflammatory spirits of this continent have yet produced." Many Scots-Irish communities were compelled to support the Resolves' ideology and joined various militias and the Continental Army. The support of the Scots-Irish turned out to be a crucial advantage as the militias of North Carolina and Virginia, made up primarily of Scots-Irish soldiers and commanders, decisively won the Battle of Kings Mountain, a victory that Theodore Roosevelt claimed was "the turning point in the Revolution."

References

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Written by John Soper, Davidson College class of 2016. John is a Political Science major and contributed this article while studying this semester at the University of Edinburgh.

NC State Tax Credits to End

Some of you may be aware that the popular N.C. State Historic Preservation Tax Credit program is set to sunset at the end of this year 2014. According to a North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) press release, the scheduled sunset will affect all three statewide tax credits: 1) Income-Producing properties, 2) Residential Properties, and 3) the historic mill tax credits. This summer, the current N.C. State Legislature declined to renew the credits, allowing for the sunset. The rehab tax credits have been in place in North Carolina since 1998, and have encouraged more than \$1.36 billion of private investment in North Carolina's historic resources.

Several residents in the Davidson Historic District have taken advantage of the historic residential tax credits over the

past few years, including two property owners on North Main Street, Jeff and Autumn Michael and Cami Meador and Dave Sitton. "But for the tax credits," Mrs. Michael said, "I'm not sure that we would have been able to rehab our 1920's house to the degree that we did. The tax credit program has been a tremendous asset to North Carolina property owners and historic district residents like ourselves." Davidson Historical Society is disappointed to see these tax credits disappear, and will keep members abreast of any efforts to advocate for a new or renewed credit.

For more information, please visit the NC State Historic Preservation Office's website at: <http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/TaxCredits>. See pictures of some local preservation projects, coming soon on the DHS website: www.DavidsonHistoricalSociety.org.

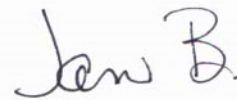
A Note from the President

When a community loses its memory, its members no longer know one another. How can they know one another if they have forgotten or have never learned one another's stories? If they do not know one another's stories, how can they know whether or not to trust one another? People who do not trust one another do not help one another, and moreover they fear one another.

Wendell Berry, "The Work of Local Culture" What Are People For? 157

When I think of the work of the Davidson Historical Society, I think of Wendell Berry's words and of the individuals who have given of their time and talent to make the sharing and preserving of our local stories possible. As the town of Davidson grows and as we lose our older generations, the legacy of these stories becomes more and more important.

I want to take this moment to thank all those who have served on the DHS board from its earliest days to the current members. From organizer and inaugural president Taylor Blackwell and first program chair Lou Glasgow through the indefatigable Rupert Barber, their spirit lives on in the commitment of current board members. In particular, I want to thank Dave Malushizky, Wendy Reading and Margaret Kuras who have recently rolled off the board (with, if I am counting correctly, a combined 20 years of service) for all their contributions to date. Being on the board is not the only way to contribute, we are developing more active committees and special projects. Indeed, some former board members are keeping engaged with local history on committees. We invite you to consider joining them to deepen our work in sharing and preserving the stories that forge links across our communities.



Jan Blodgett



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HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

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The Davidson Historical Society

was founded in 1991 by a group of concerned citizens led by Taylor and Irene Blackwell. Over the years DHS has presented programs by outstanding local and regional personalities on varying topics, toured historically significant sites in the area, and financed projects which promote the history of the area.