

CCHA Highlights of 2023

The Chatham County Historical Association had a wonderful year thanks to all our volunteers who do so much!

Chatham County Historical Museum

Our museum was open and staffed every Wednesday through Friday from 11-4 and noon to 4:30 on First Sundays. It takes about ten volunteers to staff the Museum on a rotating basis. The Museum received about 2,934 visitors throughout the year, which was an increase of about 700 visitors in 2023!

In October, The Chatham Historical Museum sponsored local historical walking tours in the first annual "Spirits of Pittsboro's Past" fundraiser. The sold-out event, held over two evenings, guided a total of eighty participants on a walk-through of historic Pittsboro, encountering historical figures who shared their fascinating experiences of life in the town in its earlier years. The tour unveiled tales from restless spirits and local legends at nine different sites and finished at a reception at the oldest building in Pittsboro, the Patrick St Lawrence house, hosted by owners Ray and Janet Carney. Attendees experienced a perfect blend of history and legend making it a "hauntingly" successful event!

Fourth Grade Field Trip

Every fourth-grade student in Chatham County has an opportunity to visit our museum and the historic courthouse to learn about civics, government, and Chatham County history. About 885 students and adults participated in field trips in 2023. We received positive feedback from both teachers and parent chaperones! We are so glad to work with Chatham County School System to make this educational opportunity available.

Collections

CCHA expresses gratitude to those who donated documents and artifacts during 2023! These donations have added to the record and understanding of Chatham's history.

We want to thank the Questers, a "non-profit organization dedicated to the study, conservation, and preservation of historical objects," who have helped with the organization of our collection. Objects that have been donated to CCHA include a biographical book, photographs, written records, Pittsboro High School Reunion memorabilia, Pittsboro's Methiesen Clinic items, print and digital photographs, videos and home movies, powder horns, fossils, newspaper articles, Bicentennial plates, a bronze Bicentennial medallion, Siler City's Farmers Alliance materials, and so much more.

Cemetery Project

For more than thirty years, CCHA volunteers have contributed thousands of hours of volunteer time to identify, photograph, and document more than 600 Chatham County cemeteries containing more than 36,000 burials. In 2023, five not-previously-reported cemeteries were visited, documented and hundreds of grave markers were photographed, and additions were made to our database on CemeteryCensus.com. Our volunteers also researched and documented cemeteries on property to be developed and assisted with the cleanup of two old family cemeteries – the Willcox cemetery in Gulf and the Andrew Headen cemetery in Hickory Mountain Township.

Preservation

Members of the CCHA Preservation Committee have been very busy this past year.

- Commented on 40 development proposals (subdivisions, rezonings, cell tower and commercial construction, etc.) as a member of Chatham County's Technical Review Committee.
- Commented on five development proposals (subdivisions, rezonings) as a member of the Town of Pittsboro, Review Committee,
- Commented on 20 development proposals (subdivisions, rezonings, cell tower and other commercial construction) as a member of the Siler City Review Committee.
- Developed an expanded set of guidelines for developers highlighting the need to identify and preserve cemeteries and burial sites.
- Provided suggestions to Chatham County for better protection of cultural resources as part of the County's Unified Development Ordinance initiative.
- Provided comments and/or historical information on over 30 projects involving historic structures or cemeteries including the Merry Oaks Baptist Church (Moncure), McRae Hotel (Gulf), Kelvin School (Pittsboro), Flynt House (west of Pittsboro), Andrews Store Road Cabins, Willcox Cemetery (Gulf), Lucas Cemetery (Pittsboro), Staunton Memorial CME Church (Pittsboro), and Brantely-Rowe Cemetery (off Pittsboro-Goldston Road).

CCHA Online

The Chatham County Historical Museum's Facebook page continues to gain followers (now over 7,500) and to share daily posts about various aspects of Chatham County history as well as to collect information from followers.

Our CCHA website (<https://chathamhistory.org>) provides access to information about our organization's projects and events, as well as resources for Chatham County researchers. Fifteen new articles were added to our online research archive in 2023, thanks to volunteers committed to saving and sharing Chatham's unique and fascinating history.