

Chatham Artist Profiles

from the Chatham 250th Project
updated 19 Jan 2024



Apprentices, Laborers, Artisans. Musicians, Storytellers, Cooks, Master Craftsmen. Our artists came to Chatham County from different lands, in different times, to live and to work. They created a community and others joined or grew up here. Singers, Painters, Printers, Jewelers. Actors, Educators, Dancers, Sculptors. Instrument Makers and Book Designers.

Some continue the traditions of their ancestors' homeland. Others utilize emerging technology. Still more combine elements of both or work together to transform the old or the different into entirely new, harmonious creations. Together, the decorative, culinary, literary, visual, and performing arts reflect and define the unique flavor that is Chatham.

The following Chatham County artist profiles are just the briefest introduction to our dynamic, creative community—a sampling from various historical eras, genders, races/ethnicities, geographic locations, and artistic disciplines.

The artist profiles are organized as follows:

PAST

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PAST



Charlie Daniels

Musician, Singer, Band, Songwriter

As a teenager Charlie Daniels moved to the small town of Gulf in Chatham County and played rock & roll. He began his career playing bluegrass music with the Misty Mountain Boys. After moving to Nashville, he made a name for himself as a songwriter, session musician and producer, and recorded his solo album. Two years later he formed the Charlie Daniels Band. From his Dove Award-winning gospel albums to his genre-defining Southern rock anthems and his CMA Award-winning country hits, few artists have left a more indelible mark on America's musical landscape than Charlie Daniels. He received numerous accolades, including the Pioneer Award, the BMI Icon award, a star on the Music City Walk of Fame, inductions into Cheyenne Frontier Days Hall of Fame, the Grand Ole Opry, the Musicians Hall of Fame, and the Country Music Hall of Fame. Charlie supported the military, underprivileged children, and others in need.

Learn more about Charlie Daniels on [his website](#), on the [National Fiddler Hall of Fame website](#), and at [AllMusic](#).



Mildred Council (Mama Dip)

Restaurant Owner, Author, Cook, Mentor, and Philanthropist

Born in Chatham County, Mildred Council was the youngest of 7 children and first learned to cook by watching her family use the "dump cooking" method of cooking by taste. While working as a family cook, and later at Carolina Coffee Shop, she honed her craft, developing the recipes her restaurant would become so famous for and turning out some of the best country cooking in town. In 1976, Mildred Council opened Mama Dip's Restaurant, using the childhood nickname given to her by her siblings (her height and long arms allowed her to "dip" into the bottom of the rain barrel). She initially had \$40 to buy food to make breakfast and \$24 to make change. The first morning, she made enough money to buy ingredients for lunch, and then used the lunch profits to buy ingredients for dinner, and Dip's Kitchen was born. The name Mama Dip went on to become a brand, gracing cookbooks and a line of food products. In 1999, *Mama Dip's Kitchen* was published by UNC Press and sold a quarter million copies. Mrs. Council founded an annual community dinner that brings people together of different religions, cultures, and races. Her work attracted the attention of President George W. Bush, who invited her to the White House, and President Barack Obama, with whom she exchanged letters.

Learn more about [Mama Dip](#) on her [restaurant website](#).





Nicholas Fox

Potter

One of North Carolina's renowned potters, Nicholas Fox, was born in Chatham County in 1797. His father, Jacob Fox, came to North Carolina from Bucks County, Pennsylvania on the Great Wagon Road and may have been a potter. Their homestead was located in southwestern Chatham County on the Randolph County line, an area rich in clay used in creating stoneware.

Nicholas Fox created utilitarian pieces and is famous for his salt-glazed handled jugs. The jugs had incised lines encircling them and were stamped with "N FOX" and masonic symbols. His son, Himer Fox, was also famous for making stoneware. Nicholas Fox died in 1858 and is buried in a private family cemetery near Brushy Creek. His work can be found in museums throughout the Piedmont including the Ackland Art Museum, the North Carolina Pottery Center, the Mint Museum, and the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.

(Image is courtesy of the North Carolina Pottery Center, Seagrove, NC. Photograph by Jason Dowdle, Snow Camp, NC.)

See pottery by Nicholas Fox on the [Chatham County Historical Association website](#).



Doris Betts

Author

Born in Statesville in 1932, Doris June (Waugh) Betts became a celebrated author of six novels and three collections of short stories. She won numerous awards including the Southern Book Award, the N.C. Award for Literature, the John Passos Prize, the American Academy of Arts and Letters Medal for Merit, and was a three-time winner of the Sir Walter Raleigh Award for Fiction. Religion was woven into most of her work. "The Ugliest Pilgrim," a short story about a young girl with an ugly facial scar who looks to a faith-healer for help, was made into a film titled *Violet*. It won an Academy Award in 1981. Later an off-Broadway production won the NY Drama Critics Award.

A beloved teacher of fiction writing at UNC-Chapel Hill for 32 years, she was given the University's highest honor in 1999. Ms. Betts died in her Pittsboro home in 2012.

Learn more about Doris Betts on the [North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame Website](#) and on the [Chatham County Historical Association website](#).





Annie Lutterloh Bynum

Painter

Annie Lutterloh Bynum was born on her family's 1,500-acre plantation north of Pittsboro in 1883. After her father died in 1893, she and her mother moved to Pittsboro to live with an aunt and uncle on Hillsboro Street. Later in 1901, she attended Greensboro Female College where she majored in Piano. After marrying Henry Bynum in 1903, she and her husband lived in Wilmington for a time. They came back to Pittsboro where her husband became supervisor at the cotton mill and later ran his family's farm. After her husband's death in 1930, Annie Bynum began teaching piano and voice lessons. It wasn't until she was in her seventies that she began painting. She was self-taught and she painted over 30 paintings of 1895 Pittsboro from memory, as well paintings of Pittsboro homes and churches. She lived to be 101 years old and died in 1984.

Learn more about Annie Lutterloh Bynum on the [Chatham County Historical Association website](#).





Tod Edwards

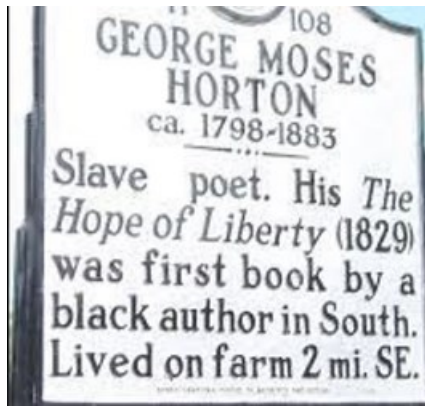
Jeweler, Photographer

Tod Edwards, an African-American man, was born in 1875 in Bynum, NC. In 1895, he moved his family to Siler City where he opened a barber shop. During off hours, he tinkered with watches and clocks, and created tools from umbrella ribs and corset stays. By 1905, he had given up barbering, and built and opened Edwards Jewelry Store on Chatham Street in the all-white section of the Siler City business district.

Tod Edwards became a very successful watchmaker and jeweler. He added a photography studio in the back of his store and his wife, Ella Cotten Edwards, managed the fine china section. The Edwards raised six children, all of whom attended college. After Tod's death in 1951, Ella and Tod, Jr. ran the store for another 10 years. Tod and Ella are buried in the Corinth AME Zion Church Cemetery in Siler City.

Learn more about Tod Edwards on the [North Carolina Digital Collections website](#) and the [Chatham County Historical Association website](#).



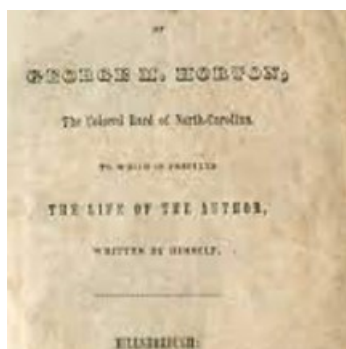


George Moses Horton

Poet

Born into slavery on the William Horton plantation in 1798, George Moses Horton became known for his poetry. As a young person, he taught himself to read the Bible and began to compose poems in his head. When he was 20, he carried produce to the kitchens at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He became popular with the students, and he would create and sell love poems to them for their sweethearts. A novelist and professor's wife, Caroline Lee Hentz, encouraged him to write. His first poem, "Liberty and Slavery," was published in 1829. *The Hope of Liberty* was his first book, and it was the first book published by a black man in the south. He had hoped to purchase his freedom, but the proceeds were not enough. George Moses Horton spent his last years in Philadelphia and died around 1880.

Learn more about George Moses Horton on the [Documenting the American South website](#) and on the [NC Markers website](#).





Tommy Edwards

Musician, Songwriter

Tommy was born in Siler City and learned to play guitar at a young age. He was drawn to the sounds of the banjo and bluegrass music, and in 1971 he co-founded the Bluegrass Experience. The next year the group won the World's Championship Bluegrass Band title at the Union Grove fiddlers' convention and Tommy twice took home the top prize for "World Championship Bluegrass Guitar." The band played outside the US, recorded four albums, played weekly at Cat's Cradle in Carrboro for nine years, and marked their 50th year together in 2021! Tommy had five solo projects and hosted the "Bluegrass Saturday Night" radio show. For more than 30 years he taught and coached in Chatham County and Randolph County schools. He and his wife, Cindy, ran an antiques store in Pittsboro for over 25 years and were experts on North Carolina pottery. On May 21, 2021, Mr. Edwards was awarded The Order of the Long Leaf Pine by Governor Roy Cooper. This is the highest honor a citizen can receive, recognizing exemplary service to the State of North Carolina and the community that is above and beyond the call of duty and which has made a significant impact and strengthened North Carolina. Sadly, Mr. Edwards passed away on May 22, 2021, and will be greatly missed.

Learn more about Tommy Edwards on the [Pinecone website](#), the [Life103.1FM website](#), the [Our State website](#), and at [Bluegrass Today](#).



Joyce Kachergis

Book Designer

Born in Omaha, NB in 1925, Joyce attended Stephens College and briefly worked for Hallmark. To study graphic design, she attended the Art Institute in Chicago where she received her BFA and met artist George Joseph Kachergis. They married in 1946 and moved to Chapel Hill in 1949 where he was a professor in Studio Art. In 1962 she began working as a book designer at UNC Press. They moved to Chatham County in 1969. After her husband's death and a short stint at Stanford University Press, Joyce returned to Pittsboro, founding Kachergis Book Design with her daughter, Anne, in 1980.

An early adopter of computer technology for book design and typesetting, her award-winning books included scholarly works as well as novels, monographs, textbooks, field guides, coffee table picture books, children's books, cookbooks, annual reports, poetry volumes, and more. Her work received awards from the Leipzig International Book Design Exhibition and the American Institute of Graphic Arts, among others. At the time of her death in 2018, Kachergis Book Design had designed more than 2400 books. Anne continues the business in Pittsboro today.

Learn more about Joyce on her [website](#) or read her [obituary](#) by the News & Observer.

Current



Mark Hewitt

Potter

Born in England, Mark is the son and grandson of directors of Spode, the fine china manufacturer. While at Bristol University Mark decided to become a studio potter. This decision led to an apprenticeship in Connecticut, where Mark met his wife, Carol. In 1983 they moved to Pittsboro, built a large wood kiln, and began making the distinctive functional pots for which he is known using local clays. This contemporary style has attracted a sizable following. Mark's work has been featured in numerous publications including the Smithsonian magazine, the cover of American Craft magazine, and he has written extensively in the ceramic press. Mark has exhibited in London, New York, and Tokyo, as well as throughout the US and was featured extensively in the PBS TV series, "Craft in America." He is well-represented in museum and private collections including the Smithsonian and National Arboretum, and he has received numerous awards.

Learn more about Mark Hewitt on his [website](#).



Chatham Rabbits

Musicians, Singers, Songwriters

Sarah and Austin McCombie met in 2013 when Sarah was a member of folk group “South Carolina Broadcasters,” and they were the opening act for “Mandolin Orange.” A year later their love for folk music brought them together. They have been playing music since they were children, and after pursuing other careers they quit their day jobs and turned their focus back to music, forming their duo, Chatham Rabbits (inspired by a century-old string band of the same name that was sponsored by the old Bynum mill). Sarah plays on clawhammer banjo, Austin plays on guitar, and both are on vocals as they play folk music that’s rooted in the old-time string band traditions. They have released their first album and are working on a second. When they aren't on the road, the couple enjoys spending time on their farm and with their dog and cat, named Ruby and Biscuit.

Learn more about Chatham Rabbits on their [website](#) and the [Robust Records website](#)

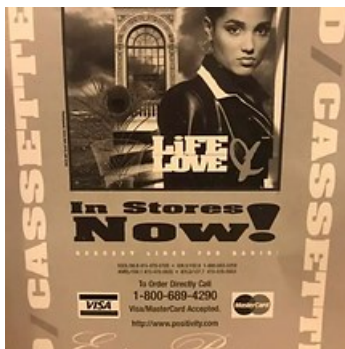


Erica Berry

Musician, Youth Instructor for Dance, Music, and Voice, Mentor, Business Owner

Erica Berry grew up in Berkeley, California and always loved music and art. In high school she was accepted into the Young Musicians Program at UC Berkeley and became a classically trained musician. She then went on to graduate Law School and had a top-10 R&B hit in the U.K. While pregnant with their second child they moved to North Carolina and she founded Jammin Baby, LLC. where she teaches a culturally diverse curriculum of music, dance, and voice to youth from toddlers to age 15 or so. Erica created the drama program at Woods Charter and taught drama there for four years. She is also a mentor in the NAACP Act-So program which she competed in as a singer back when she was in high school and made it to the finals.

Learn more about Erica Berry on the [Chatham Arts Council website](#) and on the [Jammin' Baby website](#).





Clyde Jones

Folk Artist

Clyde Jones was born in Chatham County on April Fool's Day and lives in Bynum, in a home that is painted with whimsical animals and has a herd of critters in the yard. Clyde has become a folk-art legend. He starts with log remnants and with a few swipes of his saw, a hammer, nails, and perhaps a coat or two of paint, a "critter" is born. His first chainsaw critter in 1982 was a pig. Clyde and his critters have travelled the world. There's one that sits on the Great Wall of China, and one is living in Taiwan. They have been to Africa, the Philippines, Peru, on display at the Smithsonian Institution, and in the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore. He made a star appearance in New York City and has been featured in several documentaries. In 1982 he also began creating large, textured folk-art paintings. His pieces are not for sale. Clyde donates them and gives them to folks he takes a liking to. The Chatham Arts Council honors Clyde with an annual event for children called ClydeFEST.

Learn more about Clyde Jones on the [Chatham Arts Council website](#) and on the [Carrboro website](#).





Siglinda Scarpa

Sculptor, Potter, Artist

Siglinda Scarpa grew up in Novara, Italy during World War II. Her family had to flee after her father, who was head of the Italian Aviation Acrobatic Air Squad, left the army when Mussolini came into power, and his negative writings got the attention of the Gestapo who came looking for him. Her father and his companions hid and saved many Jews from being taken to concentration camps. While in the mountains Siglinda became interested in art. She went on to have her own ceramics school but left for New York in 1985 where she would manage a studio. After a few years of busy city life, she wanted a place where she and her two cats could feel safe, and she could build a pottery studio. After visiting Chatham County, Siglinda found the perfect property, complete with a goat! She built her kiln, studio, and gallery on the property and as a renowned sculptor, has held many exhibitions with her work, which ranges from delicate sculptures to vessels to heavy clay cooking pots. Siglinda later founded the Goathouse Refuge no-kill cat sanctuary, a 501-c3 dedicated to providing cage-free care for cats regardless of age, medical issues or disposition until a permanent loving adoptive home can be found. All proceeds from pottery sales benefit the cats.

Learn more about Siglinda Scarpa on her [website](#) and on the [Goathouse Refuge website](#).





Mike Wiley

Actor, Playwright, Teaching Artist

Mike Wiley received his MFA from UNC at Chapel Hill and served as the 2010 & 2014 Lehman Brady Visiting Joint Chair Professor in Documentary Studies and American Studies at Duke University and UNC. He is acclaimed for his one-man plays highlighting key events and figures in African-American history. Notable works chronicle the stories of Emmett Till, Jackie Robinson, Henry "Box" Brown, and include an adaptation of Tim Tyson's memoir, *Blood Done Sign My Name*. The independent film adaptation of the Emmett Till play, *Dar He*, features Wiley portraying more than 30 characters and has garnered major film and acting awards at festivals across the country as well as in Europe and Australia. His ensemble production of *The Parchman Hour* celebrates the bravery and determination of the Freedom Riders in 1961 and has been produced by Playmakers Repertory Company as well as the Guthrie Theater, among others. As a teaching artist, he has presented documentary theatre to students for more than 15 years in educational residencies funded through grant programs of the North Carolina Arts Council.

Learn more about Mike Wiley on [his website](#).





Diali Cissokho

Korist, Percussionist, Vocalist, Composer, Teaching Artist

Originally from Mbour, Senegal, Diali Cissokho comes from a long line of musicians and griots—traditional storytellers, historians, singers. He took up the kora, a 21-stringed traditional African instrument beginning at age 5. His grandfather was a famed kris Lalo Keba Drame in the 1960s. He relocated to Chatham County with his wife, a Pittsboro native, in 2009. He formed the band Kaira Ba with local musicians creating a unique blend of West African and Southern musical traditions. He also is a teaching artist exploring the griot tradition along with West African musical traditions and especially percussion in school performances and residencies.

Learn more about Diali Cissokho on the [Chatham Magazine website](#) and at [Kairaba Music](#).



Jenna Oldham

Dancer, Choreographer

Jenna Oldham, a 2007 Northwood High graduate, is Founder and Artistic Director of 7 Dance Centre in Pittsboro. She attended East Carolina University, graduating with top honors in Dance Performance. She has performed with noted choreographers and her own choreography has been featured at the American College Dance Festival. In addition to teaching, she is a guest choreographer for many studios and an adjudicator for national dance competitions. Her studio offers classes in Ballet, Jazz, Contemporary, Tap, Clog, Hip-Hop Acrobatics and more.

Learn more about Jenna Oldham on the [7 Dance Centre website](#).





Shakori Hills GrassRoots Festival of Music & Dance

Music, Dance, and Art

The Shakori Hills GrassRoots Festival of Music & Dance is a biannual music and dance festival held the first Thursday through Sunday in May and October in Pittsboro, NC. The 4-day festival takes place on a 75-acre farmstead and is a collaboration between the Shakori Hills Community Arts Center (a non-profit) and the GrassRoots Festival Organization, providing a family-friendly celebration of music, dance, art, and education. Each festival draws fifty or more bands, and many genres of music are represented. The farmstead has two large outdoor stages, one large, covered dance tent, the Front Porch Stage for music workshops, a Cabaret Tent, and The Outpost which is specifically programmed with teenagers in mind. Band and instrument (mandolin, guitar, fiddle) contests are held with the best band winning a slot on a Sunday stage. Music starts around 11:00 a.m. and goes on late into the evening. Saturday evening is capped by a popular drum circle. In addition to the music, the festival has music and dance workshops, a sustainability fair, kids' activities, and food and craft vending with local food trucks and artisans.

Learn more about the Shakori Hills Festival on their [website](#).



Emerging



Sisters Voices

Girls Choral Ensemble

Sisters Voices is a choral community of girls, from 2nd–8th grade, performing in multiple ensembles. Sisters Voices was founded in 2008 with a group of 17 singers by artistic director Leandra Merea Strobe. Strobe, who studied flute and choral music, is a graduate of Meredith College and attended graduate school at Yale and Indiana University. She has taught pre-K through 12th grade music and taught at the Governor's School–West for ten summers. Singers come from Chatham, Orange, Durham, Wake, and Alamance counties. Ensembles rehearse September through May. They typically present two main concerts each year in addition to local community performances. The organization also offers several summer camp opportunities.

Learn more about Sisters Voices on their [website](#).



Sarah Shook

Singer-Songwriter, Musician

Pittsboro's Sarah Shook taught herself piano at 9 years old and in high school taught herself acoustic guitar. In her early 20's she performed regularly at City Tap and in 2013 started a new band called Sarah Shook & the Disarmers. Their style has been characterized as "country-punk and twang, with shades of outlaw country". They released their first album "Sidelong" in 2015, which found regional and national success, was named one of the 2015's top 50 Essential Albums by Saving Country Music, was number 2 on Indy Week's top 25 best albums of 2015, and Rolling Stone listed Sarah Shook & the band among "10 New Country Artists to know". In 2016 BuzzFeed Community listed her as one of five women country artists who are impacting music. The band signed with Chicago's Bloodshot Records in 2017, went on tour, and released a second album in 2018.

Learn more about Sarah Shook on [her band's website](#) and on the [bandcamp website](#).



Pittsboro Youth Theater

Theater Arts

Tammy Matthews and Craig Witter co-founded the Center for the Arts, Pittsboro, and Sweet Bee Theater in 2017. They wanted to bring a public live-performance theater to Pittsboro. The Pittsboro Youth Theater, which had been a traveling troupe since 2012, now had a home. They have cast hundreds of children and adults in upwards of 50 plays. A Christmas Carol, Annie, Mary Poppins, and Charlie and the Chocolate Factory are a few of their productions.

This award-winning program's mission is to teach theater arts and produce family plays for area children and adults. They offer two full theater seasons and a summer program each year which are aligned with the Chatham County School System's semester and summer school schedule. They have never turned away a child who wanted to participate.

The Pittsboro Youth Theater is located in the heart of Pittsboro at 18 East Salisbury Street. Learn more about The Pittsboro Youth Theater on their [website](#).





Adapted from the online project sponsored by Chatham 250 in 2021.

Non-working links have been deleted.

19 Jan 2024

To discover more about Chatham's rich heritage, as well as the vibrant artists at work in Chatham County today, visit

- [Chatham County Historical Association](#)
- [Chatham Arts Council](#)
- [Chatham Artists Guild](#)
- [NC Arts Incubator](#)
- [Chatham County Convention & Visitors Bureau](#)
- [Main Street Pittsboro Welcome Center](#)
- [Arts Education programs of the Chatham County Schools](#)
- Local galleries, fairs, and festivals