Dear Members,

Under a bright blue sky, with humidity rising, about 55 people gathered for the Ribbon Cutting ceremony for the Matthews Heritage Trail for Crestdale community. This 1.5 mile walking trail is the culmination of over 10 years of planning by the Town of Matthews. Beginning in 2011, when a report was undertaken to study Crestdale, a recommendation emerged that a heritage trail be designed and installed in the neighborhood. Using a variety of financial resources, the Town committed to implementing this project, and in early 2020 approached the museum to see if we could provide the necessary history and graphics to make the trail a reality. As Barbara Taylor, director, had spent over a year doing research resulting in a major exhibit on Crestdale, the museum was a good fit to provide the legwork. Throughout 2020, when the museum was closed, Taylor used the time to continue her research, interviewing additional residents who shared their stories, memories and photos. In early 2021 the project was approaching completion when we realized the photo said to be of Ablow Weddington Stewart was unfortunately not of her. Interviews with Ablow’s remaining living child led to this realization. Fortunately, another family member could provide us with a photo of Ablow, who gave 2 acres of land on which to build the Rosenwald School. Finally the signage was produced, led by Dawa, Inc., who was contracted by the town. Early in June the signs were installed, as was necessary crossing signage on Monroe Road. On August 12, 2021, the Trail was officially dedicated. Corey King, Director of Parks and Recreation, who headed the project welcomed the guests, followed by comments from Becky Willard, President of the Matthews Historical Foundation, and Barbara Taylor, Director of the Museum. Also speaking were Town Manager Hazen Blodgett and Mayor John Higdon. What began as an idea 10 years ago, is now a reality and a public reminder that our history is all around.

Becky Hayes-Willard

Introducing Carol Cullis

I grew up in New Jersey, before heading off to Bethany College in West Virginia where I met my future husband, Ted. Ted worked at US Steel in Accounting before going to work for Burroughs working in computers. He transferred to Charlotte in 1977, to set up the computers for the then Charlotte Memorial, now Carolina Medical Center.

We chose to make our home in Matthews on Reverdy Lane. In the 70s, Highway 51 was a narrow 2-lane road, with small farms between Providence Road and downtown Matthews. Our three children were assigned to East Mecklenburg High School. There was one traffic light between us and East Mecklenburg, and it was a blinker! Things have certainly changed as Matthews has grown, but it still somehow maintains the small town feel that appealed to us when we moved here.

Volunteering was my way of contributing to the community and I joined the newly formed Matthews Historical Foundation. A job opportunity came my way, and for 20 years I was in marketing for a national CPA review course, but that did not impact my dedication to the MHF. Both Ted and I have served on the Foundation Board at different times. I have served on the board as Secretary for many years. We have loved living in Matthews all these years. It is a wonderful place to call home!

Carol Cullis
From the Director:

It has been a busy quarter for the museum. We planned several children’s programs for Saturday mornings and we had good attendance. A big thank you to Katherina Arcos for handling all the activities. We are hoping to have her back next year!

On September 9 we will welcome a new class of docents to participate in our training program. Among those who have volunteered are a former librarian, and a resident with long term family ties to Matthews. I am planning on updating some of the material in the Docent Training Manual, as well as extending the training to include information on Tank Town. On September 16 we invite all docents, experienced and new, to do a training on our new exhibit It’s About Time: An Exhibit on Clocks and Watches. It will be the first time in months where we will gather together, though I am scheduling a morning and afternoon training session to reduce the numbers at any one time.

Adrienne Burney, Outreach Coordinator with the State Archives visited on August 5 to work with me on the Dr. Massey papers. We decided to segregate the letters from the rest of the documents, thinking they were the most important items to have scanned by Digital NC. She will return with the documents in early September after they have been scanned. Any other important items in the collection such as Massey family photos will be transported to complete the collection. The museum also has some early deeds and we are considering if they should be scanned as well.

Just as we thought we were turning the corner with Covid, it seems to be going the wrong way again. We have once again asked our visitors to wear masks. However, people do seem eager to get out, and our numbers are showing a slow increase. In April we had 82 in the museum; in May it increased to 127. June’s attendance was 131, and in July we had 156! It is slow but steady progress, which we hope continues to grow with people remaining safe.

Barbara E. Taylor

New Items for the Collection

The Collections Committee of Paula Lester, Leslie Kessler, Carol Cullis and Barbara Taylor periodically meet to consider accepting items for the collection. Most recently we accepted an exceptional group of pottery, three matching swirlware pitchers made by Burlon B. Craig, master potter, his son Donald and grandson Dwayne for a fundraiser in Charlotte. These generational pitchers are very rare, only 100 having been signed and numbered. They were offered to the collection by Jo Shuford, whose husband collected North Carolina pottery. With plans for the Outen Pottery on the horizon, we felt it imperative to accept these important pieces of North Carolina pottery.

Other items of interest include: a brochure for Lake Haven Ranch located in Matthews around 1960, run by Dan and Avery Hood; several pamphlets from the Happy Times Club; and 71 photos documenting the Roseland Cemetery cleanup, and historic stones taken by June White. Also accepted is a History of the First Baptist Church donated by former Baptist minister Frank Norwood. This will be a great addition to our library. Joe Brandenburg, docent, donated the Game of Rook, first patented in 1910. He used to play this game as a child. And finally, we added a piece of the Red Ribbon from the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the Crestdale Heritage Tour along with a Heritage Brochure.
Docent Elinor Minshew’s lifelong journey found her following many professional paths before ending up in Matthews, NC. She began her professional career on the city desk of the Florida-Times Union in Jacksonville, FL. Following a move to Atlanta, GA, she worked with Atlanta’s professional soccer club as director of community and player relations.

While working with an Atlanta public relations firm, Elinor launched the inaugural Children’s Miracle Network Telethon for two Atlanta children’s hospitals. She also planned and executed the placement of a multi-storied giant inflatable of King Kong on the Empire State Building and developed a plan for the Ford Motor Company that became Zoo Atlanta. During this time she also served on the board of the Atlanta Urban League.

Following a move to Savannah she established her own public relations firm. One of her clients, the Savannah Economic Development Authority, offered her the position as vice president. This position involved both national and international travel to convince corporations to relocate to the Savannah area. During this time she also represented Savannah’s mayor at a conference of American and Japanese Mayors in Yokohama, Japan: a true adventure, as it was the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, a war in which her father had served in the Pacific conflict.

A career move lead her to the American Cancer Society where she served as director of Marketing and Communications for 42 counties in GA and SC. Elinor was also lead trainer for staff and volunteers in NC, SC and GA. She often says it was the best job ever.

Moving to North Carolina to be closer to her two adult children, Elinor finally had the time to volunteer. Wanting to know more about the area, she found the Matthews Heritage Museum through Volunteer Match. It has truly been a rewarding choice. Getting to know the town and the people associated with the museum has made her feel part of a wonderful community. She also volunteers with the American Red Cross and serves in several capacities with the charity.

It’s About Time: An Exhibit of Clocks and Watches

For over 5000 years man has realized the need to tell time, whether by hour, day, month or year. Early time pieces such as the sun dial only worked if the sun was out. That’s why mechanical devices – such as water clocks, candle clocks and hourglasses – were developed. Then, in the 17th century, pendulum clocks were developed, which were far more accurate than any preceding timekeeping devices. The Great Western Railway in England led the way in 1840 creating “railway time” that was gradually taken up by other railway companies over the subsequent few years. Timetables were standardized to Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), and by 1855 time signals were being transmitted telegraphically from Greenwich across the British railway network. However, it was not until 1880 that the role of GMT as a unified standard time for the whole country was established in legislation in the United States.

Today highly accurate timekeeping instruments set the beat for most of our electronic devices. Nearly all computers, for example, contain a quartz-crystal clock to regulate their operation. We may not always realize it, but precision timing underpins many features of our daily lives. Mobile phones, financial transactions, the Internet, electric power and global navigation satellite systems all rely on time and frequency standards. So integral have these time-based technologies become to our day-to-day lives that we recognize our dependency on them only when they fail to work.

We will have a variety of watches on display from Bulova, Swatch, Seiko and a myriad of others. Examples of dive watches, wooden watches, and men’s and woman’s watches will also be represented. Check out our “character” watches including Mickey Mouse, Cinderella, Snow White, M & M’s, Goofy and Hop-a-long Cassidy! We will have a variety of shelf and mantle clocks. This exhibit will be on display from September 18 to January 22, 2022.

(Above: Seth Thomas Clock, c. 1880)
Loss of a Dear Friend

On August 1, 2021 we lost a dear friend of the Foundation and Museum, Caldwell Russell. Born on August 22, 1932, in Matthews, he was the son of the late Eliza Conder Russell Jacobs and grandson of the late William Walton Conder, Sr. and Eva Hargett Conder.

After graduating from the old Matthews High School in its last graduating class in 1950, he attended Western Carolina Teachers College.

His employment began in Washington, D.C. and after several years he was transferred to Eastern's facility in Charlotte, NC, and later to its Miami, Florida facility, from which he retired as a reservationist instructor. Following retirement he returned to North Carolina and was employed for several years with the Charlotte Mecklenburg School System in the Finance Department. He was a member of Matthews United Methodist Church. Caldwell loved to share his knowledge of history, and participated for years in the Matthews Woman’s Club teas. He was a true southern gentlemen and will be greatly missed.

Barbara E. Taylor, Director

Restoration of Roseland Cemetery

Located at the back of a large tract of land owned by the Renfrow family, Roseland African American Cemetery was one that time had forgotten. Surrounded by neighborhoods and bordered by Monroe Road, it was overgrown and unkept.

Originally known as Roseville Cemetery, we believe it was the primary burial ground for members of the Roseville AME Zion Church, located on Ames Street in Matthews. The first known burial was in 1916. Burials ended in 1957 with an estimated 75 graves in the cemetery. Over time, the name Roseville changed to Roseland. Family members of the deceased maintained the cemetery until the late 1970s.

In the late 1990s, the Matthews Historical Foundation became interested in the cemetery. Located on private property, plans to begin clean-up was challenging. The property was listed for sale, with added zoning restrictions stating the cemetery would be cleaned-up and maintained by the buyer. In 2012 it was placed on the Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Properties List as a local historic landmark.

In 2017 the property was purchased by Taft Development who promised to care for the cemetery. Taft worked closely with Hoke Thompson and Paula Lester from the Historical Foundation to make this cemetery reclamation possible. Thompson and volunteers came together every Saturday during February and March 2021, working diligently to clean up the cemetery. Taft provided dumpsters and extra topsoil to fill gravesite depressions, and installed the fence around the cemetery perimeter. Today, Roseland has come full circle. You can visit the cemetery at 10315 Monroe Road behind The Address Galleria Apartments.

Paula Lester
Board Historian