

# Highlands Historical Society

Spring 2008

To preserve and promote the rich heritage of Highlands

Highlands, N. C.

## DOCTOR MARY E. LAPHAM

Mary E. Lapham was the daughter of a Northfield, Michigan banker. After working with her father in the family bank for ten years, she came for a visit to Highlands in 1893 at the age of 32. It seems that she liked what she found. She stayed for four years.

In 1897, the last year of her visit, Miss Lapham, not yet Dr. Lapham, bought 15 acres on Satulah Mountain from Margaretta Ravenel. The property is located high on the mountain near the southern end of the present Satulah Road with a spectacular view of the mountains to the west.

Miss Lapham quickly moved forward with construction of a home on this site. Some sources say that a small farm house was standing on the property and Miss Lapham had this renovated and enlarged. Another source says that the house was constructed completely by master carpenter Marion Wright and finished in July, 1898. In any event, the product was a gracious home which she named "Castle-far-away", known today simply as "Faraway." The new home provided ample room for the owner and her guests as well as for elaborate entertaining.

During her four year visit to Highlands Miss Lapham became aware of the need for medical care in a small town, and this inspired her to a new career. Having acquired her future Highlands home, she left to attend Women's Medical College in Philadelphia where she graduated in 1901. She then journeyed to Vienna and Switzerland for advanced study.

After this training, Miss Lapham, now Dr. Lapham, returned to Highlands to begin a general medical practice and later to establish a sanitarium for the treatment of tuberculosis. Taking up residence at Faraway, she was joined by two friends, Mrs. Edith Bloomer Dou-

gall, a widow from Windsor, Canada, and Miss Carolyn Barker from Flint, Michigan. The three companions maintained an active social life with lavish parties at their Satulah home. They enjoyed playing a grand piano as well as a player piano at Faraway, and they listened to Wagnerian operas on their Victrola. Their transportation was a stylish carriage driven by Love Henry as their liveried coachman, and then later a limousine with Sam Baty as their chauffeur. When Mrs. Dougall adopted Valerie Ashton, the daughter of a recently deceased English mining engineer, life at Faraway became even more lively.

While she apparently had a fun-loving side, Dr. Mary Lapham also felt a genuine concern for the ill.

She maintained an active practice, visiting patients on horseback and later in her horse-drawn carriage with driver. A two-story addition was made to the north elevation of her Satulah Mountain home and used as an office and dispensary. Patients were also housed in this wing, although they were not allowed to enter the residence. A 1904 news item in the local newspaper reported:

"Miss Margaret Neely, daughter of W. S. Neely, of Clear Creek, a cripple, who had not walked for five years, was operated upon a few months ago by Dr. Mary E.

Lapham. She was in town a few days ago, and walked as well as any one."

Dr. Lapham's specialty was pneumotherapy, the Swiss method of treatment for tuberculosis which she learned during her schooling there. With this therapy, an affected lung was collapsed and cured by extended rest. Dr. Lapham is credited with being one of three physicians



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### President's Letter

I want to welcome each of you to our 2008 season and tell you something about what we have planned this year for the Highlands Historical Society. Your number has now risen to over 200, and you, our members, are the most important part of our organization.

First, we will be publishing a newsletter which we plan to send to our members periodically throughout the year. This first issue features an article about Dr. Mary Lapham, the Highlands doctor whose work in treating tuberculosis won her wide acclaim 100 years ago. Last year we received a donation of one of the "tent cottages" which she used in her sanitorium located on the present site of the Rec Park. We have restored that cottage and placed it in our Historic Village. Our first event of this season was the ribbon-cutting ceremony when the cottage was opened to the public on May 25.

Other events will include the traditional "Walk in the Park" and the very popular "Historic Homes Tour." Information about both of these events appears in this issue. The Christmas Show House, which also has received many favorable comments in past years, will be held again this year on the same weekend as the Highlands Christmas Parade (Saturday and Sunday, December 6 and 7). The house, a beautiful Joe Webb cabin, will be colorfully decorated for the season.

Among the things about which we are most proud is our museum and archives. Our archivist, Ran Shaffner, with assistance from other volunteers, has devoted countless unpaid hours to the accumulation and organization of an exceptional display of artifacts and documents from early Highlands. These are open to the public free of charge.

We also want you to know about our long-range strategic plan. A committee has been working for several months putting together this important document, which we intend to guide us through the next several years. You will hear more about this as we move forward in the process.

Finally, I want to thank our new board member, Jim Green, for his initiative in producing this first newsletter. We look forward to more editions.

We hope all of you will come to our events this season and also drop by the Museum for a look. We are open Fridays and Saturdays from 10 am to 4 pm through the end of October.

Walter Wingfield, President

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Memorial Day–Oct. 31: Museum and Archives (Fridays & Saturdays)
- May 25: Official Opening of Bug Hill Cottage
- June 20-22: Walk in the Park
- June 25: CLE Lecture on Early Highlanders
- August 9: Tour of Historic Homes
- December 6-7: Christmas Show House

### OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

- Walter Wingfield , President
- Elaine Whitehurst , Vice President
- Carolyn Patton , Secretary
- Leila Chapman , Treasurer
- Jim Green, Newsletter Editor
- Martha Betz Mozelle Edwards Eric NeSmith
- Alan Marsh John Schiffli Ed Talley Ronnie Waller
- Archivist and Ex Officio Director, Ran Shaffner

### MUSEUM, ARCHIVES, & PRINCE HOUSE

Almost every aspect of Highlands history is on display at the Historical Museum. Exhibits include information about the founders and the founding of the town, schools, churches, health care, sports, theatre, art, and music as well as early maps of the region. Many of the more than 200 photographs of early Highlands were taken by master photographers Henry Scadin and George Masa, to whom an entire room is dedicated. Genealogies of many Highlands families are also on record. For those interested in research, the Archives have been computerized for easy access to over 2,000 documents, and newspapers on microfilm extend back to 1884. The public is invited to visit the Museum and Archives at the Highlands Historic Village, 524 North Main Street, Fridays and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. through the end of October, or by appointment.

The Historic Village also includes a living history museum, known as the House-Boynton-Trapier-Wright House, or more commonly referred to as the Prince House. It is the oldest existing house in the town, built by millwright Arthur House in 1877. The Historical Society purchased the house in 2000 and filled it with locally donated furnishings representative of the various stages of Highlands history. It is open to the public as a window into the lives of early native Highlanders. Hours are the same as for the Museum and Archives.

## BUG HILL COTTAGE OPENS

A ribbon was cut, and the restored 100-year-old “Bug Hill Cottage” was opened to the public at the Historical Society Sunday, May 25. Mayor Don Mullen cut the ribbon, and Helen Regnery appeared in the role of Dr. Mary Lapham to tell those assembled about the life of Dr. Lapham and her establishing the Highlands Tuberculosis Sanitarium, known locally as “Bug Hill.”

The cottage was one of 60 that Dr. Lapham had erected for her sanitarium, which was located on the present site of the Rec Park. The doctor believed that the clean fresh air of Highlands was an important aid to the treatment of tuberculosis, and the cottages had open sides covered only by canvas, which could be raised to provide ample ventilation. Patients came from throughout the South to be treated.

When the main building of the sanitarium was de-

### WALK IN THE PARK

In celebration of this year’s opening of The Bascom, the ninth annual “Walk in the Park” will feature seven of the many visual and performing artists who have favored Highlands with their presence in the past. Dean Zuch will portray violinist Professor Louis Zoellner; Becky Schilling will represent writer and artist Louise Bascom Barratt; Hunter Coleman is cast as photographer Henry Scadin; Wiley Sloan will portray architect and director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Huger Elliott; Jennifer Royce will introduce artist Polly Knipp Hill; Josh Diamond will play the role of theatre director Fred Allen; and Lee Lyons will portray sculptor and painter Almetta Brooks.

The performance will be conducted Friday and Saturday, June 20 and 21 at Memorial Park, and Sunday June 22 at the Performing Arts Center on Chestnut Street. On Friday and Saturday shuttles will run from the Community Center from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. Sunday’s performance begins at 4:00 p.m. Admission is \$15.00 with students admitted free. Tickets are available at Cyrano’s Bookshop or may be purchased at the performance.



stroyed by fire in 1918, the facility was closed and 25 of the cottages were moved to the Durgin family property on Chestnut Street. This cottage was donated to the Historical Society by Barbara Davis and restored by Tom Chambers Builders. It is one of the few remaining today and is one of three historic structures on the Historical Society grounds.

The program closed with the audience singing songs appropriate to the Memorial Day weekend led by Stell Huie and accompanied by Angie Jenkins playing an antique pump organ. The cottage will now be open to visitors on the same schedule as the Historical Museum and Prince House, Fridays and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. until the end of October.

### TOUR OF HISTORIC HOMES

Highlands Historical Society will once again host Highlands Annual Tour of Historic Homes. This year’s event will feature six cabins of the “Clemson Colony,” an early Highlands Community that consists of cabins originally belonging to professors of Clemson University. The colony is located along the south shore of Mirror Lake on Cullasaja Drive. Two of the historic homes featured are excellent examples of Joe Webb construction.

A general admission ticket of \$40 will include a tour of all 6 homes and refreshments. The tour will run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 9. Shuttles will leave from the Recreation Park with the last shuttle leaving at 2:45 p.m.

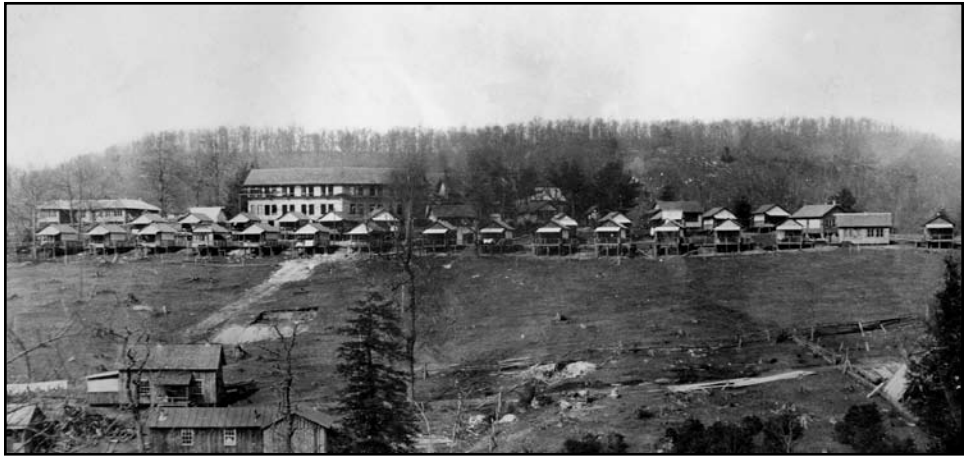
Tickets for the event may be purchased at Country Club Properties, Highlander Newspaper, Cyrano’s Bookshop, Macon Bank, Highlands Country Club, or the Recreation Park on the day of the tour. Funds raised by this event will go to the support of the Historic Village.

**DOCTOR MARY LAPHAM** From page 1

who introduced the method to the United States. Dr. Lapham was a nationally recognized authority and was elected president of the American Thoracic Society, an exceptional honor for a woman in the early 1900s.

Dr. Lapham believed that clean fresh air was an important aid to the treatment of lung disorders and that the Highlands environment was well suited to this purpose. In 1908 she bought a three-story house with substantial grounds on North Fourth Street, where the Highlands

Recreational Park is now located, next to the Highlands Historic Village. The house was enlarged by the addition of two wings, and sixty open-sided, one-room structures, which she called "tent cottages," were added to the property.



There was no electrical or water system in Highlands at the time. The sanitarium had its own electric generating plant, and water was pumped from a nearby spring to a tank in the top story of the main building. This became the Highlands Tuberculosis Sanitarium, which Dr. Lapham called "the San" but the locals dubbed "Bug Hill." It was a little world to itself.

Patients came from throughout the South, sometimes brought by ambulance from the train station in Walhalla, to be cured in Highlands. S. T. Kelsey, co-founder of the town, had grandly promoted Highlands as "the Most PERFECT CLIMATIC SANITARIUM in the World." Dr. Lapham went a long way toward making him an honest man.

Dr. Lapham was also active in civic and business affairs. She became Town Health Officer in 1915, and she held the telephone and telegraph franchise for the town. She was also an investor in Highlands real estate.

In 1911 she bought the 79 acre William Webb tract which included a portion of the southwestern slopes of Satulah Mountain. A stable was constructed in the northeast corner of this property not far from where the present Old Walhalla Road is now joined by Warren

Road. The surrounding acreage provided pasture for the horses that were stabled there when not needed near the house. A home for the liveryman was also built near or as part of the stable. The well which provided water for the stable and liveryman's house is still in existence near the pond which was constructed later by the Walter Wattles family.

Dr. Lapham followed a practice of conveying her real estate assets to her two companions. In 1907 she deeded

the house and 15 acres to Carolyn Barker who conveyed it in turn to Edith Dougall in the following year. In 1911, shortly after acquiring the 79 acre Webb tract, Dr. Lapham also conveyed that property to Miss Barker. There

is no evidence that any compensation was paid to Dr. Lapham by the two women.

When World War I began, Dr. Lapham gave up her practice in Highlands to head a Red Cross mission to war-torn Europe. She devoted herself to the care of refugees and children in Czechoslovakia where she worked with Dr. Alice Masaryk, the daughter of the first president of that country. Dr. Lapham is said to have become a close friend of the future president.

On a cold winter night in 1918, while Dr. Lapham was still in Europe, a worker in Highlands attempting to thaw frozen pipes with a torch set fire to the main sanitarium building. With two feet of snow on the ground and only six patients in the building, the few patients were bundled up and rolled down the slippery hill to the laundry. The burned building was not replaced, and the sanitarium was closed.

Dr. Lapham returned to Highlands after the war, but her activities in Europe had weakened her health, and she did not resume her medical career. She enjoyed her beloved "Faraway" home for another nine years before moving to Florida in 1926 where she died in 1936 at the age of 75.