

Highlands Historical Society

Winter 2014

To preserve and promote the rich heritage of Highlands

Highlands, N. C.

BUILDING HIGHLANDS

On entering the Bryson property on Fifth Street, the first thing to catch my attention was the huge Copper Beech tree standing in the front yard. How appropriate for a family that has endured through the decades as part of Highlands — making it better as it grew and time passed.

Edna Phillips Bryson (Mrs. Neville Bryson) has been in Highlands all her life. Her dad was James Roy Phillips. He was a builder who may have even constructed the house you live in today.. Edna is a true “local.” She was born here and remembers much about her childhood when this place called Highlands was full of poor people. As she said, “I would never want to go back to those days”

Edna’s granddaddy, Jule Phillips, came here from Virginia through Franklin in 1882. He married Mary Ellen Wright, James Wright’s daughter, who was born and raised near Shortoff Mountain. He bought a large piece of land at the west end of Shortoff Mountain near Big Creek. He was the builder of the Presbyterian Church and the Masonic Lodge on Main Street. Mary was part of the Wright family,

a self sufficient, close knit group who raised their own food—from cows and pigs to the crops. They hardly had to leave home for anything but coffee.

The Wright girls used to walk to Shortoff Baptist Church—about a two-mile walk from home. Much of the land around Buck Creek Road and Cole Mountain was Wright Land.

Jule and Mary Ellen were the parents of James Roy, called Roy Phillips. Roy married Octia and settled down in Highlands.

Their children were Edna, Evelyn, Mary, and Jim, who was also in construction. After World War II three of them moved to Manassas, Virginia, leaving Edna behind. Now, sadly all three are deceased leaving Edna to carry on the traditions.

James Roy Phillips did a lot of building up in Highlands. He came along in a time when there were not nearly enough houses for people, and he filled this need starting in 1939. He built the Miltimore House where Larry and Cherie Brannen now live, the house

on the Cashiers Road where Nancy Anderson now lives, the first house on the land where the Shaffners now live before it burned, and the Bensel House

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Jule and Mary Ellen Wright Phillips



Neville and Edna Phillips Bryson in 1946

A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

As our 2014 season is winding down I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you . . . to so many wonderful people in our community.

This year the H.H.S. was very fortunate to be the recipient of 4 grants from Mountain Findings, Cullasaja Women’s Outreach, Azalea Garden Club, and the Highlands Women’s Club. For those of you who have and love old houses, you know the joys and the expense of maintaining them. With the help of Mountain Findings and C.W.O. last year, we were able to install much needed gutters and do an extensive upgrade to the drainage system at the Prince House. This year’s grants will go towards restoring, repairing, replacing boards, and painting of the Prince House. Many of the old poplar boards will need to be replaced and all the windows will need to be removed and repaired. The Wild Azalea Club’s grant will be used to improve the grounds and particularly the bank at the H.H.S.

I hope you were able to come by and see the new exhibit that the Laurel Garden Club’s Land Stewards put together about the Botanical History of the Highlands Plateau. It is an amazing exhibit about our Highlands Plateau. There is also a DVD available, and it would make a wonderful gift or addition to your library.

The Dahlia Festival was a great success this year. The entire board thanks all the wonderful friends, merchants, and guests who so generously volunteered their time, their gifts, their financial support, and their participation. Because of you, this year’s event was the best ever! The patron party was held at the Highlands Country Club and was enjoyed by all who came. So much so, it will be held there again next year, so make sure to attend. And the Saturday Dahlia exhibits were great fun as always. Thank you to all who entered and donated flowers and to those who won ribbons too!

The H.H.S. 12-member board is a working board. We depend on our advisory board, our fantastic docents, and community volunteers. Their dedication and generous nature is amazing and is what makes Highlands such a very special place to live in and why we want to preserve our history.

In closing, I want to thank you for the opportunity to serve the H.H.S. Please remember us with your membership and donations. They are so very important and help us to keep the H.H.S. Prince House and Museum for all to enjoy.

Ann Sullivan

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- Ann Sullivan, President
- Bill Edwards, Vice President
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RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

We hope you will renew now.
 Family \$50 • Individual \$35 • Sustainer \$100
 Business \$250 • Promoter \$500 • Preserver \$1,000
 Protector \$2,500 • Highlander \$5,000
 And we hope you will add a donation, as many of you have done so generously in the past.
 To join or renew membership by check or credit card, visit highlandshistory@nctv.com.
 Highlands Historical Society
 P. O. Box 670
 Highlands, NC 28741-0670

THE KELSEY KIDS ENJOY A PIONEER LUNCH



(Front, moving clockwise) Jordan Schroeder, Abby Vanderwiele, Dillon Schmitt, Jessica Thompson, Nolan Billingsley, Charlie Warren, Sue Potts (adult), Nathan Thompson, Linda David (adult), Mary Kathryn Warren, Olivia Thompson, Ava Schmitt, and Reese Schmitt.

DAHLIAS BENEFIT OUR HISTORY

After spending many years in Highlands, it never ceases to amaze people who witness the generosity of our citizens and businesses to our special place. The businesses do whatever they can to enhance the activities of our historical society. We are all so grateful that those who came before us got the idea to found this wonderful place.

The Dahlia festival this year was a fun and well attended event. Dahlias have traditionally done very well here and have been grown in the Highlands area throughout history. Years ago the Highlands Historical Society members decided to celebrate this reality by giving our citizens a chance to display those flowers to the community. Thanks to the creativity and enormous energy of Judy Taylor, Raya McArthur, Kitty Moore, Linda and Bill Edwards this year a patron party was held as a fund raiser for HHS. This party raised the funds we need to enhance the Prince House and the historical documents.

Without our fabulous photographer this event would never come to light. Thank you Helen Moore!

Wiley Sloan keeps everyone informed by writing encouraging articles for the Laurel Magazine. Readers of the Laurel enjoy Wiley's cheerful articles a great deal.

One of the society members, Bill Edwards, had the brilliant idea of presenting a loaded wheelbarrow for raffle. All were amazed at the quality and quantity of donations for that wheelbarrow. Sally Caffery, a real friend of HHS, walked the streets of Highlands to request donations of goods for the raffle. On one side of Main Street she solicited gifts from Park on Main, Reeves, Kilwin's, Highlands Kids, Appalachian Harvest,

Stone Lantern, Mountain Fresh and Highlands Hiker; crossing the street she was gifted by Wit's End, Juliana's, Spice & Tea Exchange, J. McLaughlins, Main Street Inn, Silver Eagle, Mountaintop Wine, Elevation for Women, Dutchman's, Lulu Bleu, Sports Page, The Christmas Shop, Rosewood, The Bascom, and Bear Mountain Outfitters. Sally and others even went off Main Street to CK Swan, Sky Valley Golf Club and Paws on the Mountain, Animal Wellness Hospital, August Produce, Pescados, Highlands Lawn and Garden, Highlands Smokehouse, Mirror Lake Antiques, and Bryson's. There were other donations from "Friends of HHS" who also gave generously.

We also thank some wonderful patrons who clearly love our dahlias and our history:

Nancy Nichols gave \$2500 in memory of Ruth Leonard which was especially appreciated. HHS

is thankful for these people: Virginia and Mike Campbell, Linda and James McMahan, Diane and Ray McPhail, Peggy Woodruff, Martin Andreas, Susan Duncan, Jimmy Evans, Joan and Clark Johnson, Brenda and Stewart Manning, Karon and Emmett Moore, Jack Sawyer and Bill Torres, Carolyn and Rhett Tanner, Dee and Gary Carnes, The Dunlap Cogswell Foundation, Sieglinde and John Gillfillan, Carol and Stiles Kellett, Cecile McCaull, Kitty and Pat Moore, Ann and Claude Sullivan and Judy and Tom Taylor.

All you dahlia growers and display people are the BEST!! May your garden increase in beauty with every passing year!

**Save the date of September 12th
for next year's Dahlia Festival.**



The Dazzling Dahlia Festival

KELSEY KIDS DISCOVER HIGHLANDS HISTORY

Kelsey Kids was a success this year because the Kids became involved and were excited with each day's activity. It is a day camp held one week of each year (June 15–19, 2015) ages 8–early 12 year olds. We meet in the Museum, Monday–Friday, 9am–3pm. Our purpose is to experience a portion of early Highlands history and know some of what it was like to live here in the late 1800s and early 1900s. We visit Foxfire, go hiking, make butter from fresh cow's milk, eat a "real" pioneer lunch, learn about Highlands flora and fauna, experience mountain streams while looking for and learning about salamanders. Quilting was a necessity, and this past June the kids had a great teacher in Marietta Crosby for beginning this art. They learned about the founders of Highlands and many of the important people who came to establish the town we know as HIGHLANDS.

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where Macon Bank now stands. At the Highlands Country Club he built the Warren House, also the Hagar's and Shepherd's houses. At Wildcat he built the Coolidge, Lanier, Therrell, Rainer, and Ruggles houses.

In the meantime, Walter Bryson started acquiring property in the downtown area, where he also ran a taxi service and an auto service department where the Old Edwards Inn complex now stands.

He bought the northwest corner of Main and Fourth Street in 1959 from Gulf Oil. Two buildings had to be moved from that corner to a lot across the street to make room for the gas pumps. The buildings were moved using rolling logs under them, which were then pulled by horses. Those buildings now house Schmitt Building contractors. The building on the corner was the Chevrolet dealership owned by Walter Bryson and a partner. The Sossomon building behind it was Reeves warehouse/storage facility.

Edna met and married Walter Bryson's son, Neville, in 1946. She left Highlands for a short time to attend school in Brevard. Brevard College was a Methodist school, and that is why she changed from Baptist to Methodist. She and Neville married in the Methodist Church. For years they lived near his parents, whose house was behind what is now the WHLC Radio Station. A small house in front of that one was where they moved as soon as they moved out of his parents' house up the hill. The Brysons

owned a good deal of property out toward Buck Creek Road and on both sides of the Cashiers Road. Neville and Edna bought the property on Fifth Street and built their home there in 1955, nearly 60 years ago. She never wants to move again. "Just send in a dump truck and take it all away when I am gone," she told her sons.

Edna and Neville had three boys: Jim, Mike, and Ned (Neddy). Edna still is sad about the loss of Ned when he was only 52 years old. Many Highlanders



The Phillips Home near Shortoff

remember Ned as being kind and personable. He had many friends who still speak fondly of him. Ned moved back to Highlands after he served in Vietnam in 1970. He and his brothers opened Brysons Grocery Store in the long narrow building that the Doc Mitchell Family had built on Highway 28. Now we see the smiling faces

of Mike Bryson as he builds and moves and hauls all over town and of Jim, who is the brother most associated with Brysons Grocery. He is always happy to speak to his loyal customers.



Bryson's Gulf Station at 4th and Main

Through the years the Bryson Family has made countless contributions to the town of Highlands. Their family through the years has had foresight and knowledge of what Highlanders needed as the town grew and flourished. We all need to realize how vital this family has been and still is to our community. Most of us are here in the good times, but the Wrights, Phillips, and Brysons have withstood many downtimes in their determination to stick around and make a difference.