

# Highlands Historical Society

Spring 2015

To preserve and promote the rich heritage of Highlands

Highlands, N. C.

## TRAILS AND TRIBULATIONS

In the early days of Highlands when it was a mere dot on the map and few hardy souls lived here, transportation was a real challenge. Most visitors and citizens had to rely on mules, ox carts, horses, and often their own two feet to get around. Trails were blazed between town and the various homesteads. Later on trails that were often used were widened and became roads—dirt, rutted, muddy roads.

Building roads and trails in the mountains without bulldozers and dump trucks was a daunting task. Nowadays we travel those same roads, but they have been widened and paved. Electric, telephone, and cable lines have been strung along the shoulders, and often we can pick up our cell phones and call ahead to home or to a restaurant to order ahead. Those who hiked the trails to town to go to work did not have fancy Nike shoes to make the travel more comfortable. But still they came.

Families still living in Highlands can remember one particular person, Hazel McCall, who walked up every day from Blue Valley along the gnat ridge trail, two miles along Glen Falls, to work for Col. Frederick Altstaetter's family. Times were hard and work hard to get, so those with jobs did little or no complaining.

One of the original founders of our town helped build a trail from town to Whiteside Mountain. Samuel Kelsey was so keen on the idea of making the



*The Muddy Road to the Rogers House*

mountain more accessible that he spent 300 hours laboring on this trail. According to Ran Shaffner's book *Heart of the Blue Ridge*, Mr. Kelsey tried to sell subscriptions to finance this task in 1881. Pessimists called this the "Road to Nowhere." The trail started at the end of 5th Street, went through Bear Pen Gap, and through primeval forests that included the enormous and beautiful chestnut trees now extinct. By July 10, 1885, the first wagon traveled to the top of Whiteside Mountain. It had taken 500 man hours between



*Kelsey's "Road to Nowhere"*

1881 and 1885. The trail was named for Kelsey to honor his hard work and dedication. Now a hiker can go on the Kelsey Trail from its original start, but by the time you get to Sherwood Forest Road the trail ends. The rest of the trail is within private land.

André Michaux followed Cherokee hunting trails from the headwaters of the Keowee and Chattooga rivers along Norton Mill Creek through Cashiers and onto "the Plateau on the Blue Ridge Divide." Walking was difficult since there were no

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### A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

We are so excited at the Highlands Historical Society to kick off our 2015 season with many new and some familiar happenings! The museum and Prince House will be open to the public from 10 AM– 4 PM on Fridays and Saturdays and by appointment this year starting Memorial Day weekend through October.

There are some new exhibits this year and special events planned. Check our Event Calendar on our website at [www.highlandshistory.com](http://www.highlandshistory.com) for updates and also in the local newspapers. Private tours can be arranged by emailing us at [highlandshistory@nctv.com](mailto:highlandshistory@nctv.com) or calling our office at 828-787-1050.

We are hard at work landscaping our grounds to make your visits more enjoyable. We also want to thank all of our members and contributors, without whom our endeavors would not be possible. We wish to offer a very special Thank You to those organizations that have provided grants to maintain our facilities, buildings, and grounds in a manner of which our community can be proud.

Come visit us often this season. We look forward to seeing you!

With gratitude and appreciation, Brian McClellan

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- Glenda Bell, Vice President
- Linda David, Corresponding Secretary
- Bill Edwards, Recording Secretary
- Linda Clark, Treasurer
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- Associate Archivists, Sue Potts and Carolyn Patton
- Assistant Archivist, Anne Sellers
- Glenda Bell, Newsletter Editor

#### 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](mailto:highlandshistory@nctv.com).

Highlands Historical Society

P. O. Box 670, Highlands, NC 28741-0670

### HHS is thankful for the support of our members since June 1, 2014, as follows:

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## KELSEY KIDS, JUNE 15-19, 2015



*Ready for the hike . . .*



*Making butter from fresh cow's milk....delicious!*

Kelsey Kids will once again gather to learn about the history and experiences of the early lives of Highlands's people beginning in 1875. Led by experienced and knowledgeable citizens of the town of Highlands, this promises to be an enriching summer experience. We will visit Foxfire, take a hike, make discoveries, experience music from a dulcimer and guitar, have a pioneer lunch, and make discoveries in the museum and other activities. You will receive a list of activities for the week before camp begins.

Ages 8 to 11 who are interested in learning about Highlands's history and can attend for the 5 days are welcome at NO CHARGE. Lunch is included. Each day camp begins at 9 AM until 3 PM Monday through Friday at the Historic Village Museum on the Cashiers Road.

Applications are available from the website: [www.highlandshistory.com](http://www.highlandshistory.com) and at the Museum. Linda David will be glad to email an application and answer any questions to anyone who desires one. Her email address is [lindawd@hcgexpress.net](mailto:lindawd@hcgexpress.net).

**SAVE THE DATE: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2015**  
**DAHLIA FESTIVAL PATRON PARTY, HUDSON HOUSE, HIGHLANDS COUNTRY CLUB**

The Patron party for the Dazzling Dahlia Festival is September 10th at HCC at the Hudson House. The festival is September 12th. Flowers can be brought Friday evening to the Rec Park from 5-7, Saturday from 8-10:30. Judging will be at 11:00. The flower show opens to the public at 1:00 p.m. There will be refreshments at the Highlands Historical Museum from 1-4, where costumed docents will give guided tours of the Prince House.

### Thanks to our Docents

Oh behalf of the Board of Directors of the Highlands Historical Society, I would like to give a sincere thanks to everyone who participated in Docent services at the Museum and Prince House this past season.

Thanks go out to Nathalie Sato, Anne Sellers, Pat Griffin, Geraldine Crowe, J. Jay Joannides, Sue Sheehan, Mary Berry, Luther Turner, Jane Tracy, Mercedes Heller, Kitty Moore, Cindy Propst, and Ran Shaffner.

It was a wonderful season with many visitors to the facility and multiple visits from many people. There were a number of visits by people in town for family reunions, and some people came more than once to show the museum to family members and friends.

On a special note, we lost Nathalie Sato this year as she has gone on before us to her resting place. She served faithfully for many years as a docent and assistant archivist for HHS. Nathalie is missed by all of us.

Thank you, Michael Thompson

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bridges over the rivers and creeks, and he called the trails the “untamed wild.” Michaux was not on the plateau long, but according to Shaffner he found the rare plant *Shortia galacifolia* (Oconee Bells) and was amazed by the botanical mecca that was this area.

Another trail that most Highlanders have at least heard of is the Satulah Mountain Trail. When horses were available at Crane Stables, many riders went to the top to view the area surrounding Highlands. The summit of Satulah is well worth the one-and-a-half mile hike to the top. Commanding a 360-degree vista, one can see Chimney Top in Cashiers, Fodderstack (both Big and Little), the blue mountains of South Carolina near Clemson, Rabun Bald (second tallest mountain in Georgia), and the sweep of mountains west of Dillard. The trail was first made available to the public when Prioleau Ravenel built a road to the top in 1890. The Highlands Improvement



*Ravenel’s Road to Satulah Summit*

Society raised \$500 to preserve the summit from developers. The 32 acre park at the top was dedicated to public use in perpetuity. There is a stone structure at the top that the improvement society built for visitors to spend the night safely.

Part of Satulah Mountain was the site of the original road to Walhalla, S.C. Since Walhalla was the end of the train line for those traveling from the coast of South Carolina, other transportation was necessary

to get to Highlands. Hence the road from Walhalla to Highlands, which Jim Green describes, was narrow and curvy.

Many of our trails are public because of the generosity of landowners who donated their property for our use. The Highlands Biological Station has acres of trails through their garden, access to the Rhododendron Trail which begins at Lower Lake Road, and the Sunset Rock trail. The Sargent family donated the land around the garden itself, and the Ravenel family gave the overlook at the top of Sunset to the town in 1914. The walks are easy enough for family, and much can be learned from the hikes. Sunset Rock overlooks the town of Highlands.

In recent years the Highlands Greenway has not only preserved old trails for walking in Highlands but has forged new ones. The Frank Cook family on



*The Greenway Trail on Big Bear Pen*

Big Bear Pen Mountain set aside 25 acres for protection and donated it for public use. Now Greenway volunteers have cleared paths along Big Bear Pen and built a path to connect to the old Kelsey Trail. Behind the Recreation Center the Greenway Trail continues and can take a hiker to Mirror Lake, to the Bascom, and to Oak Street. The trails are well maintained and are a walk through history.

It has not been too many years since Highlanders packed a picnic on Saturday afternoon and walked one of the many trails to a perfect summit to lay out sandwiches, fried chicken, and wine to share. Watching the sun set and the moon rise was the highlight of the day. Finding the perfect trail and walking it with friends is the ideal way to see and appreciate Highlands.