



# Highlands Historical Society



Winter 2022

To preserve and promote the rich heritage of Highlands

Highlands, N.C.

## THE CIRCUS COMES TO TOWN



Circus elephants on parade down Main Street

By the early 1920s Highlands was growing and prospering, and residents and visitors alike were delighted to find that opportunities for recreation and entertainment were becoming more widely available. One might not expect that a traveling circus would make the trek up the mountain but that's exactly what happened when the Mighty Haag Circus came to town in 1923, delighting folks young and old with the sight of elephants parading down the streets of Highlands. It continued to visit town occasionally through the 1930s.

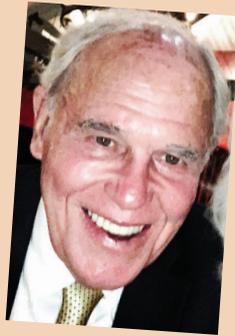
The story is told that one year as the elephants walked up the mountain one elephant made a run for it and was lost in the woods for a bit. It was soon found, and the journey continued.

Those early images of elephants on Main Street are so indelible in our history that even now we remember them with great fondness and a bit of fanfare. Most recently, the Historical Society's annual Dahlia Festival featured an enchanting display recreating the historic event. For a moment elephants were once again on Main Street.



Recent Dahlia Festival commemoration of the event

### President's Letter March 2022



Highlands Historical Society is looking forward to a successful 2022.

As the new president, I am mindful of the dedication and leadership required of the original founders to purchase the Prince House and move the library to create our museum. Also, for the energy and leadership to revamp the exhibits in the museum last year after a lost year in 2020 because of covid. I am very thankful to be joined with a board of dedicated individuals giving their time and energy to Highlands Historical Society's success.

We are excited as we plan for this year. A new exhibit, History of Highlands Cultural Gems, will be fantastic and will be another reason to visit the museum this year. Also plans are to bring back the Kelsey Kids Camp summer session for 2022. Last year our annual fund raiser, Big Hats, Bow Ties, was a great success and we plan on that event to be a must attend, fun outing this year. The Dahlia Feasible, sponsored by HHS, continues to grow and has become a key event to kick off the Fall Season in Highlands. We are fortunate to have in place a fantastic docent and archivist, two key positions. This year we plan on additional cost with deferred maintenance on the Prince House that is close to being 150 years old.

As a non-profit we are dependent on your generous contributions that has sustained our organization over the years and are thankful for your support.



### OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

- Harry McDonald, President
- Kim Daugherty, Vice President
- Sherry Holt, Treasurer
- Susan Clarkson, Secretary
- Phil Potts, Tammy Lowe, Dennis DeWolf
- Dollie Swanson, Kevin FitzPatrick,
- Carlton Cole, Tracy Foor,
- Mike Thompson,
- Oliver Young, Anna Wilson.
- Obie Oakley, Exofacial
- Lance Hardin, Archivist
- Ran Shaffner, Archivist Emeritus
- Bill Lands, Art Director

### RENEW 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 <https://highlandshistory.com>.

Highlands Historical Society  
 P.O. Box 670, Highlands, NC 28741

**WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!**



### Our New Archivist

According to incoming president, Harry McDonald, HHS won the lottery when **Lance Hardin** signed on as its Archivist.

Lance's personality has allowed him to develop his passion in a number of fields. Professionally, he is a retired Big 4 tax consultant. He and his wife have hiked over 1,200 miles of the Appalachian Trail and his love of history led him to receive his Master of Arts degree from Appalachian State University.

A Highlands resident, Lance is already benefitting HHS through his detailed research of Highlands History.

**Welcome Lance.**

## Big Hats, Bow Ties, Big Hit



Scenes from Big Hats & Bow Ties Event

On a bright sunny August Sunday afternoon, the weather up on Kettle Rock Mountain couldn't have been more accommodating. One-hundred and forty supporters of the Historical Society gathered in all their finery of Big Hats and Bow Ties to enjoy the wonderful views.

Thanks to the generosity of George Lanier for the use of his hilltop grounds, the 2021 event was very beneficial to the Historical Society in the furtherance of their mission of Promoting and Preserving the Rich Heritage of Highlands. Thanks also to the generous sponsors for, once again, helping make the event a success.

## Kelsey Kids Camp Returns



Hike Up Satula

The Kelsey Kids Program is set to return after missing two years because of covid. Former director, Tammy Lowe, a board member and educator, will again head up the program. Because of its popularity, there will have two sessions, one for 8-10-year-old and a second session for 11-13. In today's environment with chil-



Plant Study

dren spending so much time on their devices it will be refreshing to have the campers learn how the children at the turn of the century lived. Also, the camp will explore Highlands history and actually visit many of the historical locations. The dates for the camp will be announced this Spring.

# Historic Appalachian Trail Meeting Held In Highlands



Historic King's Inn circa 1934

HHS Archivist, Lance Hardin, learned recently of a meeting that took place in Highland in 1934 and the role our little town played in developing the iconic Appalachian Trail! The two leading figures at this meeting were Benton MacKaye and Myron Avery, both Harvard educated and each with equally strong,

but opposing, visions for what this “footpath” was to become. Both came to Highlands for a meeting of the Southern Appalachian Trail Conference. Over 160 attendees gathered at the luxurious King’s Inn, and planned activities included a group hike to Whiteside Mountain. The pressing issue was how to accommodate development of both the Appalachian Trail and scenic auto routes such as the Skyline Drive and Blue Ridge Parkway. Previous controversy had concerned the route of the trail in North Carolina, with one alternative from Mt. Mitchell through Highlands, and the other more westerly along the North Carolina-Tennessee border. Interesting to note that the person credited with selecting the final route was none other than Harlan Kelsey, the son of town co-founder Samuel Kelsey!

## Native Plant Exhibit Upgraded

The Landscape Committee of HHS was busy over the winter enhancing the appearance of the Native Plant Exhibit. Made up of five individual gardens dotting the grounds around the campus, this exhibit features only native plants.

With financial assistance from the Wild Azalea Garden club, the plan was to border each of the gardens in river rock to give a unified appearance thereby tying them into composite exhibit.

With over fifty varieties, these plants are beginning to burst forth with the warm weather. Be sure to check out this unique exhibit.



Newly Installed River Rock Border