

The Chapel Hill Historical Society

Spring 2025

NEWSLETTER



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Note From the President

The Chapel Hill Historical Society membership year is at an end. The Board of Directors hopes we have provided some interesting information regarding the area we call home. We continue to deal with somewhat cramped space in the Midway Center, simply because we are bursting with lots of interesting stuff! Our reference library takes up all of the walls of our space! In case you didn't already know, the society is a contributing member of the DigitalNC project ((<http://bit.ly/44Gyo9p>). You may view maps, photos, and many items of local significance (photos, local high school yearbooks, maps, items of interest, etc) that are presently in our collections.

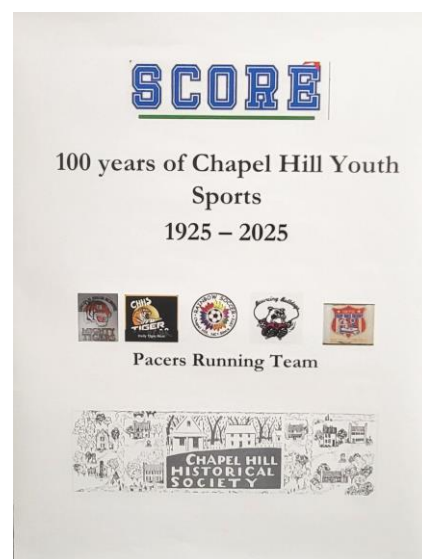
We are currently adding a collection of donated materials that document the activities of a munitions plant that was located in Carrboro, at the present site of the ArtsCenter. This collection was donated by the daughter of the gentleman who was a manager at the plant during WWII (1942-1945). This plant was operated mostly by local women, because many of the men were overseas fighting. A program on this topic was presented at the ArtsCenter on May 10th by Society President Richard Ellington

We are also working on programs for the upcoming Fall/Spring term. One of these events will be our annual *Community Treasures* in November. We have just received a grant from the local Strowd Roses Foundation to help fund this year's event. We are now accepting nominations for this annual honor. A letter sent to P.O. Box #9032, Chapel Hill 27515, or other methods of communication to the society committee with details of your nomination, is all that is needed to nominate an individual. Your participation as a Society member is why we are still here. We believe that we are the oldest historical society in North Carolina. We were founded in 1966 by a distinguished group of Chapel Hill citizens who knew there was much in this community that needed to be preserved. We continue to pursue that goal. Please renew your membership or make a donation to continue to support our efforts to preserve and interpret the community's history. We depend on you and your support. We look forward to a new year starting in September.

Richard Ellington, Society President

SCORE: 100 Years of Chapel Hill Youth Sports, 1925-2025

Two new “Score” exhibits - “Youth Sports in Orange County History,” and “100 Years of Chapel Hill Youth Sports 1925-2025,” opened on April 10 at the Orange County Historical Museum in Hillsborough. These exhibits highlight the story of youth sports, and how these sports have changed over time in Orange County. Visitors can learn about 11 core sports that young people in Orange County and Chapel Hill have participated in over the years, both as members of school teams and as members of teams sponsored by local sports clubs.



This includes high school sports such as baseball, basketball, and tennis, as well as figure skating, archery, ice hockey, and many others. The exhibits tell the important story of how social changes, like integration and the inclusion of women’s sports, have influenced local sports activities. You may recognize the names of local athletes who displayed outstanding sportsmanship and citizenship and went on to demonstrate leadership in many fields – from professional sports to state government!



Franklin Street Then and Now: Self Guided Tours



Under the leadership of our vice president, Joe Petrizzi, we've been developing a self-guided walking tour focused on the 100 block of East Franklin Street. This project brings local history to life by placing QR codes on buildings along the block, allowing visitors to learn about each location's past and the many businesses and organizations that have called it home.

To make this history more accessible, we're creating a brochure with addresses and QR codes, [which will be available on our website](#) and at the Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Center. We're also partnering with the Downtown Partnership to encourage participating businesses to display the QR code for their building in their windows, turning a simple stroll down Franklin Street into an interactive journey through time.

Franklin Street isn't just a thoroughfare. Chapel Hill's iconic main drag is also a living record of the people, places, and moments that have shaped Chapel Hill for more than two centuries. Thanks to support from the North Carolina Humanities grant, we've launched the "Franklin Street Then and Now" website, featuring a detailed timeline of businesses and landmarks dating back to 1793. So far, the timeline covers up to 1938, with more chapters still being uncovered. You can explore this growing archive at <https://www.franklinstreetthenandnow.org/> and discover the hidden stories waiting right outside your door.

[Click here to view a video of Joe Petrizzi speaking about the walking tour.](#)

Our Recent Programs

March 22, 2025 – Maps as Storytellers. A presentation by Fowota Mortoo, PhD student in geography at the University of North Carolina. She has created a 12-square-foot map of the UNC campus layered with images of the people who built the buildings, focusing on four Black Chapel Hill families - Barbee, Blacknell, Jones, and Johnson. Mortoo saw an opportunity to unsettle traditional mapping practices while highlighting the stories of the Black individuals who helped design and construct the University's buildings, rock walls, and brick pathways. Ms. Mortoo is joined by Dr. Kathryn Wall, co-director of public history at the Marian Cheek Jackson Center, who shares resources on www.fromtherockwall.org and discusses community efforts to honor Black builders and masons with a physical monument. You can view a recording of this presentation at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKNLlssmhe8>

May 10, 2025 - Carrboro Goes to War! A presentation by Richard Ellington, President of the Chapel Hill Historical Society. Did you know that Carrboro had its own group of “Rosie (and Robert) the Riveters” who contributed to the WWII effort by making munitions for the US Navy? Well, they did. A cotton mill that once sat on the current ArtsCenter location was transformed into a munitions factory in Carrboro. Starting in early 1942, that factory made anti-aircraft ammo for use by the US Navy against the Axis forces of Germany and Japan. Richard explained how this happened in the small town of Carrboro. You will see where the workers came from and how well they performed. This is a story that made the munitions’ workers proud of their efforts. There are LOTS of photos showing places and people that are long gone from Carrboro! You can view his presentation [here](#).

Community Treasures Nominations



We are seeking nominations for our Community Treasures awards. These awards recognize long-time residents of Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Orange County whose kind hearts and good deeds have made our communities better places for all. A list of past awardees can be found on the historical society's website ([click here](#)) and includes active volunteers, dedicated professionals, committed public servants, and individuals who work quietly behind the scenes to better our community and the lives of our residents. Awardees are recognized in a ceremony, with a proclamation in their honor presented by town and county officials. To be eligible, nominees should:

- Have been a long-time resident of the Chapel Hill/Carrboro/Orange County communities.
- Been involved in local community service for at least 20 years.
- Be at least 75 years of age.

Nominations must be received by August 15 2025. Please submit any nominations, with a brief supporting description for the nomination, and contact information for the nominee, to the Chapel Hill Historical Society at: chhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

We are pleased to report that [Strowd Roses, Inc.](#), a private charitable foundation established in 2001 to fund local nonprofits and projects that improve the quality of life for residents of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, has awarded the Chapel Hill Historical Society a grant to cover the costs of this year's Community Treasures event, to be held at the **Seymour Center in Chapel Hill on November 15, 2025, from 2 to 4 PM.**

News in Brief

Hillsborough Preservation Fair - The Chapel Hill Historical Society had a booth at the Hillsborough Preservation Fair, held at the Hillsborough Visitors' Center on May 31. We demonstrated techniques for cleaning and preserving old newspapers and books, and offered a variety of our publications for sale. The most enjoyable part of the event was interacting with the fairgoers, and hearing their stories about growing up and living in the area! Thanks to the Visitors' Center for hosting this event - we hope to participate in similar events in the future.



Juneteenth - The Historical Society participated in the Juneteenth event held by the Orange County Department on Aging at the Seymour Center on June 18. Speakers Delores Clark, Sandra Theard, and William Gattis discussed the importance of celebrating the holiday for Chapel Hill's Black community, and highlighted the contributions of community members. The Historical Society was able to provide Sandra Theard with information on her ancestor, Morris Hogan, who established the Morris Grove Elementary School. You can read more about Morris Hogan and his accomplishments at <https://mges.chccs.org/our-school/history>. Many thanks to Rachel Whitney, Seymour Center Programs and Operations Manager, and our board member Samantha Pell, Seymour Center Volunteer Coordinator, for organizing this event!

George Moses Horton Featured in UNC Arts and Humanities Post - UNC Arts and Humanities recently posted an article about Chapel Hill poet George Moses Horton, his life, poetry, and struggle for freedom. Congratulations to our board member Sarah Carrier, North Carolina Subject Librarian at the Wilson Library, who contributed to this article!

Local History Program for Shared Learning - This fall the Historical Society will be presenting a series of presentations on the history of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Orange County for the [Shared Learning Association of Chapel Hill](#), "an unaffiliated, non-profit, continuing education association of adult lifelong learners who enjoy sharing their knowledge in congenial groups." Classes will begin in September and run until December. The program is oriented toward persons who are new to the area, as well as retirees who wish to expand their knowledge of the area and its history.

Board of Directors

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Richard Ellington, President
Joe Petrizzi, Vice-President
Catie Atkinson, Secretary
Thomas Jepsen, Treasurer

Board Members

Sarah Carrier
Danita Mason-Hogans
Marsha Jepsen
Samantha Pell
Susan Worley

Contact Us:

Business Office:

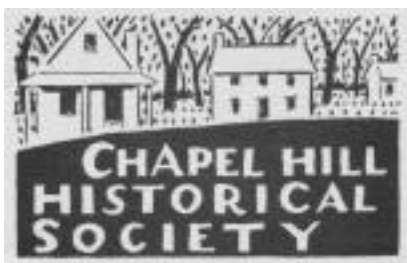
109 N. Graham St., Suite 104 (Midway Center) Chapel Hill, NC 27516
Phone: 919-929-1793

Collections & Reference Materials:

Our reading room at the Midway Center is available by appointment. Some materials are in storage.
Please contact us for access to the reading room or materials in storage.

Mailing Address:

The Chapel Hill Historical Society



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Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Email: chhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

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