

# Highlands Historical Society

Winter 2017

To preserve and promote the rich heritage of Highlands

Highlands, N. C.

## NATIONAL REGISTER PLAQUE DEDICATION FOR THE ELIZABETH WRIGHT PRINCE HOUSE

The dedication of the National Register plaque for the Elizabeth Wright Prince House on September 14th was attended by citizens of Highlands, former and current HHS board members, and members of the Wright family.

Placed on the National Register of Historic Places on April 17, 2017, the Prince House is known as the oldest house in Highlands. Its significance, however, was recognized by the National Park Service for the historic period from 1935-67. That's when Elizabeth Wright Prince transformed and maintained it as a boarding house. It is important because her small operation served a different type of clientele from the wealthy seasonal residents that had frequented the town since its founding in 1875.

After the building of the Gorge Road from Franklin and the creation of Lake Sequoyah with its hydroelectric power in the late 1920s, the seasonal appeal of the town of Highlands expanded to include all levels of society. Some visitors attracted to the resort town sought a less formal lodging than what the larger commercially oriented inns, hotels, and motels provided. Included among these were small business owners and salaried workers who serviced the vacationers and tourists as well as former or prospective residents, relatives, and friends. Possessing no home of their own, they preferred a familiar domestic setting. To meet this

demand for informality in the early 1930s, Highlands opened its private homes, converting them to low-key, small-scale boarding houses and cottages. For the homeowners this provided much needed income to assure their survival in such an isolated community during the Great Depression.

With its National Register listing, the Prince Boarding House is now formally recognized as associated with this type of lodging, which made a significant contribution to the town's development as a popular tourist resort. In the bimillennial year



*From left: Obie Oakley, current president of HHS; Isabel Chambers, first president of HHS and the Realtor who alerted the society to the possibility of purchasing the Prince House; Linda Wright David (behind Isabel Chambers), portraying her cousin Elizabeth Wright Prince; Les Bryson and Alice Bryson Davis, children of Amelia Wright Bryson, who was born in the Elizabeth Wright Prince House in 1916; and Ran Shaffner, author of the National Register nomination – in front of the Prince House dedication on Sept. 14th.*

of 2000 the house became home to the newly re-activated Highlands Historical Society. Its boards and members have devoted more than a decade to restoring the house within preservation standards as a living history museum for the people of Highlands.

Members of the Wright family who attended the dedication ceremony were Maxie Wright Duke; Linda Wright David, who portrayed her cousin Elizabeth Wright Prince during the Open House; and Les Bryson and Alice Bryson Davis, direct descendants of

Amelia Wright Bryson who was born in the Elizabeth Wright Prince House in 1916. Some members of the Wright family not in attendance were Jeanne Wright and Sandra Wright Schwarzfager of Cashiers, Charles and James Bryson of Franklin, and Ephraim and Ruby Crow Prince of Aiken, S.C.

## A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

When reporting on activities of an organization, for the president, it is always a good thing to have positive activities to pass along. Believe me, I have no shortage of achievements to include.

Picking up from my letter in May when I announced that the Prince House is now included in the National Register of Historic Properties, I can safely say that 2017 has been an outstanding year.

When I consider what makes me consider it outstanding, I look at several criteria. First, does it further our mission; next does it benefit the community; and finally, have we been good stewards of funds entrusted us by our donors. I believe the following all meet the standards:

- An outstanding Dazzling Dahlias flower show
- Replacing and repairing damaged areas of the Old Jail
- Re-sealing and striping the Museum parking area
- Increasing our “open times” to four days a week
- Another successful Kelsey Kids Camp
- Updating the HHS rack brochure
- Establishing an aggressive Historic Village promotion campaign
- Conducting a successful Prince House Dedication Ceremony

In closing, I’d like to thank the hard-working members of the board and our many loyal and generous contributors.

It is an honor to serve as your president.

Regards / Osborne Oakley

## OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

- Osborne “Obie” Oakley, President
- Bill Edwards, Vice President
- Brian McClellan, Recording Secretary
- Glenda Bell, Corresponding Secretary
- Linda Clark, Treasurer
- Tommy Chambers, Sally Caffery, Linda David, Mary Ann Hardman, Fran Leftwich, Eric Nielsen, Bob Trevathan, and Judy Taylor.
- Ran Shaffner, Archivist and Ex Officio Director
- Carolyn Patton, Associate Archivist
- Fran Leftwich, Newsletter Editor



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 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

**WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!**



Jim Askew's Collarette

## THE SEVENTH ANNUAL DAZZLING DAHLIA FESTIVAL

The Seventh Annual Dazzling Dahlia Festival on September 16th was a welcome bright spot after Hurricane Irma left the plateau a mess of downed power lines and trees. Our beauty did not disappoint: there was a gorgeous array of dahlias in spite of Irma's wind. There were huge dinner plates, small balls, and even some orchid-shaped dahlias. Colors ranged from deep, intense burgundies to the palest white and multi colors that looked almost like feathers.

Thirty-seven exhibitors entered 205 blooms, which were judged by a panel; ribbons were awarded in seventeen categories. There were two special categories, "Best of Irma" and "Worst of Irma" that garnered several very interesting entries. Best of Show was awarded to Jim Askew for his absolutely flawless Collarette. A tall stately beauty with red petals and a yellow center; the judges called it "elegant eye candy." Jim's Best of Show winner will be featured on next year's posters. Highlands Historical Society is excited to announce that starting next year there will be a trophy awarded the Best of Show winner. The trophy



will then be passed to each year's Best of Show winner.

The highlight of the show was the very interesting talk that acclaimed landscape architect Mary Palmer Dargan gave on dahlias and landscape design for our mountain gardens. An explanation on how dahlias came to be grown on the plateau was fascinating. Detailed information was given on how to plan, construct, and even maintain your garden. She placed particular emphasis on giving us plant names that thrive in our environment. An excellent slide presentation was given featuring area gardens in various stages of development. Everyone who attended learned something!

The eighth annual Dazzling Dahlia Festival will be held next year on Saturday, September 8th. Mark your calendars to bring your flowers, or come enjoy the flowers and the speaker, or come and purchase a beautiful arrangement for your home. All the money raised by the Dahlia Festival goes to support the Highlands Historical Society, the Prince House, and the Kelsey Kids Camp.

## MRS. EDNA BRYSON PRESENTED HER HUSBAND'S NORMANDY UNIFORM TO THE HIGHLANDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY — WEDNESDAY, 9/27/2017

Walter Neville Bryson was born on June 27, 1925, on Chestnut Street in Highlands, NC, to Walter Allen Bryson and Ruth Young Bryson. They moved to the Shortoff Community (Hwy. 64 E) around 1930, and Mozelle, Neville, and Billy grew up there. They all attended school in Highlands.

Neville turned 18 in June of 1943 and was drafted into the Army in September (World War II). He reported to Camp Croft in Spartanburg, SC, and from there to Fort Belvoir, VA for basic training. After basic training he was sent to Fort Devens, MA, and from there to Camp Kilmer, NJ, for deployment. After a very short stay he sailed on the *Queen Mary* to England.

After various camps in England he was transported across the English Channel and landed on Omaha Beach six days after the invasion had begun on June 6, 1944. Then the fighting began. He was placed in anti-aircraft battalions and remained there as they fought their way toward Belgium and the Rhine River. Cold weather began and lasted all winter.

The troops began their trek toward the Rhine River. Winter was bitter cold, and they were in the area of Bastogne, Belgium. Around the middle of December, the Germans began to attack to break up the Allied Forces lines. The Americans were in the



process of retreating. All the trucks, tanks, and everything that could roll had already begun the retreat. Anti-aircraft guns and rifles were all that were left. Fortunately, two armies came and beat the Germans back. Neville and the troops that were with him survived, but a large number did not in what became known as the "Battle of the Bulge." The Germans were on their last legs. The battle was over about the middle of January. The push toward the Rhine River continued, and on May 7, 1945, the Germans surrendered.

Neville was moved back toward the coast and was scheduled to go to the Pacific, but thankfully the war in the Pacific was over before he was called. While waiting for orders on what to do next, he and a buddy decided to go to Scotland. (It was allowed). When they returned to the base, it was all cleaned out, and the troops had been sent home. It did not take the two of them but a short time to make connections to get back to the good old USA. They were put on a faster ship and got back about a week after the others. Neville was discharged from Fort Bragg, NC, on February 5, 1946, and came back to Highlands on February 7, 1946, all safe and sound!

The uniform and medals will be available soon for display at the Museum.

## The Vittles of Summer 2017

What, exactly, is a "vittle"? According to Webster's *New World Dictionary*, a "vittle" is a colloquialism for victual, meaning "food."

To the many hundreds of Highlanders who participated in the Highlands Historical Society's four fund raising events over the summer, a "vittle" meant good food, great libations, a bit of history, and a really fun time! Our season kicked off with its first event, "Big Hats, Bow Ties and Brunch," held on Kettle Rock at the home of Ann (former HHS president) and Claude Sullivan. Flapjacks & Bloody Mary's, along with festive attire and grand views, recreated the same party that Annie Linn had on Kettle Rock years ago!

Our second event was held in the historic Howell stone barn, located at the home of Frances and Obie Oakley (current HHS president) in Highlands Country Club. Barbeque and all the "fixins" were served by romantic candlelight in a setting like no other on our plateau!

Thanks to Art and Angela Williams and OEI, forty lucky persons, enjoyed a locally sourced "Appalachian Dinner" served in the beautifully renovated "Inn At Half Mile Farm." In addition to the fabulous food prepared by

Chef Huerta, guests were treated to a history of the farm, presented by HHS's archivist, Ran Shaffner.

Our finale, held at HHS Historic Village as our Patron Party for the Dahlia Festival on Thursday night, September 14th, was titled, "Denim, Dulcimers and Dedication." We partied under a tent, munched on Bryson's fried chicken, and sipped great wine and beer, while enjoying Les Scott and his dulcimer group.

It was a great fund-raising season for the HHS. We thank all of you who participated! Please keep in mind that all of these events sold out. Thank You, Thank You! Our committee is hard at work getting our schedule for next year. It will be posted on our website, and you can sign up for any of our events there.

It's rumored that two of these events might be repeated!!!! And just to tease you all, we might have a little "Hollywood" in Highlands next year!

"Vittles Of Summer 2018" hopes to offer you good food and fun while learning more about the history of Highlands.

See you next year.

—Judy Taylor, Vittles Chair 2017

## Kelsey Kids Camp

Eleven children ranging from ages 8-12 years attended Kelsey Kids Camp June 12-16, 2017. It was a busy week with activities from visiting Foxfire and Barbara Smith's home off Cheney Lane to touring the grounds. This home was built by Henry Marion Wright in the 1920s for his mother. He was a self-taught botanist and knew all the flora of our region. Jack Calloway came with his shiny black shoes complete with taps on toe and heel to teach about clogging, mountain music, and square dancing. There was a hike on the Kelsey Trail and a visit to Jennifer Schmitt's farm in Scaly Mountain, NC, to learn about the animals on her farm and make butter. The kids also planted dahlia bulbs. They hiked Satulah and learned this is where Samuel T. Kelsey and C. C. Hutchinson layed out the town in 1875. They also visited Sue Blair's Horse Farm on Buck Creek Road and learned how to care for horses.

On the last day, the kids had a

visit by Dr. Mary Lapham, portrayed by Linda David's granddaughter, Olivia Thompson. Then they visited the open-air cottage of Dr. Mary Lapham's 1908 sanatorium tent that sat on Bug Hill. They were treated to a delicious Pioneer Lunch, including sauerkraut, honey, butter, chow-chow, applesauce, green beans (formerly called "leather britches"), potatoes, squash casserole, ham, corn bread, homemade biscuits, and desserts.

The kids toured the Elizabeth Wright Prince House, which was newly listed on the National Historic Register. What a week it was! A big thank you is extended to those volunteers who gave of their time and abilities to make the camp successful. As this is Linda W. David's last year as director of Kelsey Kids Camp, the Board would like to extend a heartfelt "thank you" for her dedication over the years to make Kelsey Kids Camp a fun and worthwhile program.



*Left to right: First Row: Cayden Pierson, Luci Gragg, Paolo McRae, Stephen Pierson, Claire Worley. Second Row: Chloe Billingsley, Jessica Thompson, Maddie Jolly, Brady Jolly, James Moore. Third Row: Olivia Thompson, John Hayes Shaheen, Linda David.*