From the Corner of Elm and Friendly

Shelley Crisp, Executive Director, North Carolina Humanities Council

JIM LEACH, the new chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, has stated the need for “bridging cultures” and “an ethic of thoughtfulness”:

In a political setting that is bordering on a civility crisis at home and a civilization crisis abroad...how we lead or fail to lead will be directly related to how well we come to understand and respect other peoples and other societies. It will also depend on how we come to understand ourselves — our own history, values, and diversity of experiences.

The North Carolina Humanities Council offers a comparable imperative and envisions people who explore their personal and collective stories asking fundamental questions about identity, work, and culture; learning to value others’ stories and perspectives; and transforming their lives and communities through new reflections and new visions.

North Carolina is a state of extremes and paradoxes, a dynamic state with both major growing pains and the resilience of a diverse and sustaining culture. Settled originally by English, German, Scots, Irish, African, Swiss, and Spanish, it is currently the third fastest-growing state in the country, attracting retirees, international immigrants such as the Hmongs and the Ukrainians, and a four-fold increase in its Latino population since the 2000 census. In homes across the state, 264 languages other than English are spoken. North Carolina has the largest American Indian population east of the Mississippi. Linguistically, to quote sociolinguist Walt Wolfram, North Carolina is “one of the most — if not the most — divergent dialect states in the Union.” Its geography ranges from one of the largest stretches of undeveloped seashore in the country to the highest peaks east of the Mississippi.

North Carolina is home to some of the finest colleges and universities with over 110 accredited schools, and the Research Triangle Park has arguably the highest per capita of Ph.D.s in the United States. The I-85/I-40 corridor attracts record numbers of what has been newly labeled the creative class. On the other hand, the workforce is in a crisis of transition with the textile, tobacco, furniture, and banking industries challenged by job displacement, global outsourcing, and economic troubles.

What can the Humanities Council offer North Carolinians as they struggle with the tension between tradition and transition? “A crisis occurs,” argued the Humanities Council’s founders, “when the conceptual tools of one culture are inappropriate for the building of a new culture whose conceptual tools are, of course, largely non-existent.” The founders proposed “that the expertise of scholars, drawing on the wisdom of the humanities, be brought to bear.” Since then, regardless of the challenge, the Humanities Council has provided resources for scholars and communities to explore their identities and historical legacies and to find the language and paradigms that give a sense of personal continuity. Peruse the stories in this issue of North Carolina Conversations to find evidence that public humanities programs serve to identify and bridge the history of these many unique cultures.

As one participant in a Humanities Council-funded project reflected, “I never knew this history was everywhere around me. You have pulled back the veil.” In a state that established the first state art museum and the first state symphony, where Babe Ruth hit his first professional home run near the largest military base in North America, North Carolina offers ample opportunity for bridging cultures among remarkable people — past, present, and future.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2    | John Tyler Caldwell Award for the Humanities  
*• 2009 Caldwell Laureate Marsha White Warren* |
| 8    | Crossroads  
*• Twilight of a Neighborhood* |
| 18   | Road Scholars  
*• A Conversation with Road Scholar Katherine Mellen Charron* |
| 20   | Let’s Talk About It  
*• One Scholar’s Process by Joe Gomez* |
| 22   | Linda Flowers Literary Award  
*• 2009 Recipient Katey Schultz*  
*Amplitude* |
| 28   | Teachers Institute  
*• Teaching North Carolina’s American Indian History*  
*• 2009 Fall Teachers Institute Seminar: “The Segregated South through Autobiography”* |
| 32   | Museum on Main Street  
*• “Every time they are sung, they sound new” by Beverly Patterson* |
| 36   | From the Field  
*• NC Roadwork Takes Hold in Eastern North Carolina* |
| 40   | North Carolina Humanities Council  
*• News from the Council*  
*• NEH Chairman Jim Leach Visits North Carolina* |
| 44   | Thanks to 2009 Council Donors |
| 46   | The Last Word  
*• Quilting History by Heather Williams* |
| 49   | Events and Deadlines |
Caldwell Award

North Carolina Humanities Council Celebrates Marsha White Warren as the 2009 Caldwell Laureate

ON FRIDAY, October 16, at 7 p.m. at the William and Ida Friday Center for Continuing Education in Chapel Hill, Marsha White Warren accepted the North Carolina Humanities Council’s highest honor, the John Tyler Caldwell Award for the Humanities. Warren received the award for her life of advocacy for the public humanities across North Carolina.

At the Caldwell celebration, North Carolina Humanities Council member Reginald F. Hildebrand, associate professor of African American Studies & History at UNC Chapel Hill, delivered the annual Caldwell Lecture in the Humanities, “W.E.B. Du Bois, the Humanities, and the Pursuit of Freedom.”

Other participants in the evening’s program, which featured song and dramatic readings, included 1992 Caldwell Laureate Doris W. Betts, a fiction writer and former chair of the creative writing program at UNC Chapel Hill; Dreamweaver, curator of the Plum Tree Gallery in Goldsboro and founder of the nonprofit Grandpa’s Children; Jaki Shelton Green, 2009 Piedmont Poet Laureate and recipient of the North Carolina Award for Literature; NC Representative David Price of the fourth congressional district; Shelby Stephenson, poet, musician, and professor of English at UNC Pembroke; and 2007 Caldwell Laureate Emily Herring Wilson, an author and North Carolina Award for Literature recipient. Wilson presented writer Katey Schultz with the Humanities Council’s 2009 Linda Flowers Literary Award. Townsend Ludington, Humanities Council chair and Boshamer Distinguished Professor Emeritus of American Studies and English at UNC Chapel Hill, presided over the program, which culminated in a stirring first person interpretation of Harriet “Moses” Tubman by renowned storyteller Joyce Grear.

A charter member of the North Carolina Writers’ Network in 1985, Warren was the executive director from 1987 to 1996. She served as executive director of The Paul Green Foundation from 1991 to 2005 and is currently its literary executor. Warren sits on the boards of the North Carolina Freedom Monument and the Weymouth Center for the Arts & Humanities. With Sam Ragan, Warren developed the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame and currently serves on its administrative team.

In 1999, Warren received a Doctor of Humane Letters from St. Andrews

Just like John Caldwell, Marsha with boundless energy gets things done in the world in the service of humanistic ideals. It seems like the Caldwell Award was created just for her. It will be a happy day in North Carolina when she receives it.

~ Laurence Avery
Presbyterian College. With Emily Herring Wilson, Warren co-organized the North Carolina Women Writers’ Conference in 1992. Warren’s numerous awards include the Sam Ragan Award for Contributions to the Fine Arts in North Carolina and the R. Hunt Parker Memorial Award for Lifetime Contributions to Literature from the North Carolina Literary & Historical Association.

The Raleigh News and Observer named Warren “Tar Heel of the Week” in 1991. Under her leadership, the North Carolina Writers’ Network received the 1992 Governor’s Business Award in the Arts and Humanities from the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources and the 1995 Indies Arts Award from the Independent Weekly.

The North Carolina Poetry Society honored Warren for her many contributions to the literary community. In 2006, the Society dedicated its annual anthology, Pinesong, to Warren, saying that “no one else we know of has achieved so much for so many with such grace and genuine love of people.”

Warren was associate editor of North Carolina’s 400 Years: Signs Along the Way; consulting editor of Weymouth: An Anthology of Poetry; and editor of the Collected Poems of Sam Ragan: Poet Laureate of North Carolina. She was assistant editor of Carolina Spring and directed the project Word & Witness: 100 Years of North Carolina Poetry.

Laurence Avery, longtime president and current trustee of The Paul Green Foundation, states, “Just like John Caldwell, Marsha with boundless energy gets things done in the world in the service of humanistic ideals. It seems like the Caldwell Award was created just for her. It will be a happy day in North Carolina when she receives it.”

C A L D W E L L  L A U R E A T E S

THE JOHN TYLER CALDWELL AWARD FOR THE HUMANITIES, the Council’s highest honor, has been presented annually since its inauguration in 1990. Named for its first recipient, the late John Tyler Caldwell, former chancellor of North Carolina State University from 1959–1975 and a founding member of the Council, the award pays tribute to individuals whose life and work illuminate one or more of the multiple dimensions of human life where the humanities come into play: civic, personal, intellectual, and moral.

1990 - John Tyler Caldwell
1991 - John Hope Franklin
1992 - Doris Waugh Betts
1993 - Samuel Talmadge Ragan
1994 - Anne Firor Scott
1995 - John Marsden Ehle
1996 - William W. Finlator
1997 - Charles Bishop Kuralt
1998 - Dorothy Spruill Redford
1999 - William C. Friday
2000 - Thomas J. Lassiter, Jr.
2001 - Houston Gwynne (H.G.) Jones
2002 - Reynolds Price
2003 - Wilma Dykeman & Hugh Morton
2004 - Mary Duke Biddle Trent Semans
2005 - Louis D. Rubin, Jr.
2006 - Benjamin Eagles Fountain, Jr.
2007 - Emily Herring Wilson
2008 - Walt Wolfram
2009 - Marsha White Warren

†deceased

David and Marsha Warren at the Caldwell Award reception. Photo by Mario Gallucci.
IN 1961, my husband Dave and I, having driven 3,000 miles across the country, pulled into North Carolina in a 1960 Volkswagen Bug with a three-month-old baby lying free to move around unattached in a car bed — remember those wonderful car beds that conveniently just hooked right over the back seat?

I was twenty-two and Dave had just finished his Navy duty in San Francisco, so, along with our baby, Douglas Grant, we were moving to Durham for Dave to enter Duke Law School. I was to be the breadwinner by teaching school — thirty-seven first graders with no aide, and no water in the room — at George Watts Elementary School.

It must have been a foreshadowing of my literary work to come, and I was to learn it thirty years later, from the author herself, that my principal, Mrs. Pritchard, a serious no-nonsense tall and strong woman, was the person upon whom Frances Gray Patton had created her protagonist for the famous Good Morning, Miss Dove.

Dave and I knew no one in North Carolina except his parents who had moved, four years before from Ohio, to live in what was then the small city of Charlotte! Being new people in the state in 1961 from the North with a name like Warren wasn’t exactly popular and referring to the Chief Justice, they’d ask — “You Earl’s kids?” And to show you just how new we were in the state — on my first day of teaching I asked the children what they’d done over the summer vacation. One child said, “We went to Nags Head.” And I replied, “Oh, I like to go to the mountains, too.”

The next year — 1962 — George Watts School enrolled the first two African American children, and they were placed in my first-grade class. They were a girl Constance and a boy Robin. Their stories would make you sad — such a struggle for these little children, and, for so many reasons, I dedicate this evening to Constance and to Robin — they would be fifty-three now, and I wish I knew where they were and that they’re all right.

And I further dedicate the evening to the memory of Paul Green who had the courage to have the black writer Richard Wright in his home here in Chapel Hill in 1941, at the shock and disdain of others, as they worked on [the dramatic version of] Native Son. It was the same Paul Green, who at the age of three in Harnett County, became best pals with the black tenant farmer’s little son Rassie on his family’s cotton and tobacco farm. And Paul said in his adult years that what he learned from that child informed the rest of his writing life as he strove to show that the Negro’s hopes were the same as white folks’, that their voices were real and true and needed to be heard, and in 1927, Paul Green won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama with his play about a young African American man who believed that education was the key to freedom.

It’s been twenty-two years now since the Writers’ Network’s cardboard box of files first came to my house office. Along with the box was a computer that puffed out second-hand smoke whenever I turned it on, and there was also a, now extinct, daisy wheel printer.

I’m here tonight because of others. When I became the director of the Writers’ Network, I was young and inexperienced, a first-grade teacher out of her field trying to be an arts administrator. And I need to tell you that each project started and ended with the participation of my husband Dave, because I would not have been able to do the work without his constant encouragement, willing spirit,
and, for moving filing cabinets and boxes of books, his strong muscles. But he would tell me all the time that he was the one who benefited because he much preferred being around my colleagues, the writers, far better than his own, the lawyers!

It was when I began writing grant applications to the North Carolina Arts Council, in the 80s, that I learned the lessons and the wisdom of diversity and inclusiveness.

How many people of color do you have in your organization?

How many on staff?

How many people of color do you serve in your programming?

What accommodations are you making for people with physical challenges?

Thanks to the Arts Council, for showing us how and why to be inclusive. And special thanks to them for that grant many years ago to build a ramp at White Cross School so my board member Marty Silverthorne could get in the building to attend meetings!

When we discovered at the Writers’ Network that there were only eleven black writers on our database, we approached the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and they funded the Black Writers Identification Program. By the end of the project we had 350 writers identified in North Carolina — some we knew who only had that one hand-written poem in the pocket of her apron that she was anxious to share. And the next year, we went back to ZSR with a program to identify the Native American voices in our state, and they funded that one, too. You may not know that North Carolina has more Native Americans than any state east of the Mississippi — with our eight tribes including Halawi-Saponi like Dreamweaver — a Woodland Indian.

Because of The Paul Green Foundation and the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, we [at the Writers’ Network] were able to develop writing programs in prisons, shelters, retirement homes, and hospital settings. We had five programs going simultaneously in Central Prison including one for Death Row prisoners. All participants at the prison were complimentary members of the Network, and one of our most troubled members worked with his Network instructor right up until the time he was executed. Thanks sincerely to the Green and Biddle Foundations for continuing to provide grants each year for projects that enrich the lives of so many.

Special recognition and thanks to the Department of Cultural Resources and then-secretary Betty Ray McCain for granting funds for the establishment of the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame in 1996.

And throughout my tenure with these organizations and still today, for me with Weymouth Center programs, always and always the North Carolina Humanities Council provides financial and invaluable hands-on support from the dedicated and bright staff for numerous programs to numerous organizations.

The point is that these foundations and agencies don’t just provide funding. They offer opportunities for organizations to mature in their understanding of the importance of reaching out — to serve all the people. All of them.

Individuals and corporations are also vital to the well-being of nonprofits. I remember the time when we had no money to do the newsletter, I went over to visit Frank Daniels, and the News & Observer sponsored the Network News [the newsletter of the Writers’ Network] for three years — then Frank handed us off to Rolfe Neill at the Charlotte Observer for three years and then we were handed off to the Winston-Salem Journal.

With each poem we recite, each child we teach, each ramp we install, each audience we build, each person we empower to tell their story, we keep the planet from becoming a desert with our language and literature....

And now, I’ve embarked on a new journey with extraordinary North Carolinians to build a monument to freedom in our state capital that honors the African American experience and their struggle for freedom. And, as you would expect, this project...
is funded generously, again by all these foundations and agencies I’ve mentioned: the North Carolina Humanities Council, ZSR, Green and Biddle Foundations, Arts Council, and the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources.

It seems this freedom journey began for me when, as a high school girl in Dayton, Ohio, in the early 50s, I was named president of the Y-Teens and, together with another officer, a black girl named Beverly, we would be sent that summer to an Ohio college campus for leadership training. “How about if we have a picnic along the way,” said my mother, who would drive Beverly and me to the college to stay for the week. And, as a sheltered girl, I didn’t figure it out until years later that my mother was worried that Beverly might not be served in a restaurant along the route.

I wouldn’t really understand until 1963 when my husband Dave, with two-year-old Doug on his shoulders, and I walked in a silent march down the middle of Franklin Street in Chapel Hill as we pointed our fingers toward restaurants that would not serve blacks.

This summer in Southern Pines, the Weymouth Center for the Arts & Humanities, on whose board I serve, offered a writing camp for children. Knowing that there would be kids whose families couldn’t afford the $30 tuition, scholarships were made available. Listen to excerpts from the poems of these two little girls — listen to their clarion call, their claim of the human spirit.

I have a memory of my Grandma.
She taught me how to read.
We practiced every day.
My name is Destiny Sumon Griffin.
It means I believe in being a writer one day.

My Name by Antoinette McGee
Antoinette means beautiful, wonderful and thoughtful.
It is like the sky. It is like when I talk to my daddy.
It is the memory of my Grandpa Georgie who taught me how to be honest and how to joke; when he taught me how to be brave and to face my fears.
My name is Antoinette McGee. It means if I want something, I will go for it.
If I can’t get it, I will keep trying.

Veronique Vienne, in The Art of Doing Nothing, writes, “Apparently one of our functions on this earth is to be gardeners — unwilling caretakers of a fragile ecosystem. We may be detrimental to the environment in other ways, but when we empty our lungs, we help make the grass grow greener. With our breath, we keep the planet from becoming a desert.”

The metaphor is resounding. With each poem we recite, each child we teach, each ramp we install, each audience we build, each person we empower to tell their story, we keep the planet from becoming a desert with our language and literature; our art and culture, our humanities, our human experience and our absolutely vital requirement for freedom.

I can’t imagine any state I’d rather have pulled into in 1961 in my Volkswagen Bug than North Carolina.
Honoring Leadership
Doris Waugh Betts

LOGIC TELLS US that every day we all have twenty-four hours to use — until logic runs head-on into how Marsha White Warren makes the most of her time. She seems to squeeze out forty-eight hours per day at least.

You might even say that it can be a benevolent mistake to admit Marsha to the ground floor of any form of good works, as soon projects will be humming.

She was a charter member of the North Carolina Writers’ Network and two years later was starting her nine-year stint as its executive director. Naturally she served on the national board of writer groups.

Just let her leadership ability inside a door and it will soon fix that door and blow out the walls. Arouse her love of poetry and she’s soon editing collections, honoring poet laureate Sam Ragan, spearheading the North Carolina Women Writers’ Conference, promoting the state’s Literary Hall of Fame, and advising book publishers. Touch her passion for social justice and for two decades she’ll be working against the death penalty, helping women prisoners write down their hard stories, working to assure that our capitol’s statuary will include a freedom monument to our African American citizens and their slave ancestors, and generally keeping alive the humane ideals of Paul Green.

In all these and many other areas of service, [Marsha] is rarely featured in the Page One photograph. She is more likely to be the one back in the office licking stamps, stuffing envelopes, and bending the ears of supporters and donors so they can become the public face of her heartfelt causes.

When some of the state’s women writers were having their portraits made for the [first North Carolina Women Writers’] Conference, hers was the living room converted to an artist’s studio. Some of the many boards on which she serves have also eaten meals that she prepared during long meetings. With her education degree from Miami University and her experience as a public and private school teacher, she has fostered education within prisons and helped bring history to life onstage at outdoor theater.

The arts, the humanities, and the quality of life in our state are stronger and better because of Marsha Warren. She honors us by letting us honor her leadership.

1992 Caldwell Laureate Doris Betts addresses the audience before presenting the Caldwell Award to Marsha Warren. Photo by Mario Gallucci.

The humanities are explorations of, and meditations on, the struggles and triumphs of being human, of being alive, of making a living, of seeking fulfillment and freedom. They are not trivial or impractical. They plumb our very essence.

DRIVING DOWN South French Broad Avenue in Asheville, travelers will see a sign that reads “Know our Past, Grow our Future.” This message is strikingly relevant to many Asheville neighborhoods, but perhaps particularly to the predominantly African American “East End.”

“Twilight of a Neighborhood: Asheville’s East End, 1970,” a multi-faceted public humanities project organized around Andrea Clark’s powerful photographs, explores the community’s life before and after the impact of urban renewal there. The discussions and interviews of the “Twilight of a Neighborhood” project revealed a wide array of viewpoints that often contradicted each other and signaled that the history of urban renewal is complex and shaded. Among the factors that shaped responses were race, age, gender, and class. The project has helped energize an emerging movement of concerned Asheville citizens who believe that their culture and history will shape how they live in the present and define the future.

Asheville was one of many cities across the United States that participated in urban renewal, part of a national effort during the 1950s through the 1970s to improve so-called blighted areas of cities. In theory, urban renewal would enhance the landscape of cities and provide displaced residents model housing. In practice, however, many rich and vibrant communities of color were flattened throughout the United States. Replacing these neighborhoods were wide roadways, highways, and new multi-story buildings. Residents, some of whom were homeowners, were either relegated to substandard public housing or forced to relocate elsewhere.

Some scholars suggest that as many as 1,600 African American neighborhoods were destroyed by urban renewal during three decades of public policy. Most African American neighborhoods in Asheville, many of which were over one hundred years old, were affected.

One of the most significant outcomes of the programming was how relevant the East End experience was for residents of other neighborhoods. Urban renewal in Asheville took place over a broad cross section of the city and in a relatively short period of time. As a result, urban renewal was a continuous experience for Asheville’s African American community for almost thirty years. Beginning with the Hill Street neighborhood in 1957 as the Cross-Town Expressway was built and moving on to Southside, Stumptown, Burton Street, and East End, the fabric of each of these historic predominantly African American communities was torn.

Mindy Fullilove, professor of clinical psychiatry and public health at Columbia University, defines this process as “root shock” in her groundbreaking Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America and What We Can Do About It. Root shock, according to Fullilove, is “the traumatic stress reaction to the loss of some or all of one’s emotional ecosystem.” This devastation of social networks, Fullilove explains, “is a profound...upheaval that destroys the working model of the world that had existed in the individual’s head”; it is
a rupturing of individual and communal identity.

What was heard as people looked at photographs, attended programs, and voiced their experience was a profound sense of loss and an understanding of what the cost of urban progress meant for them.

Southside resident Robert Hardy poetically describes his own experience: “But the Land!...The community breakdown: family displacement and the loss of businesses, neighbors, continuity, sanguinity, customs, cultures, and social norms.” Perhaps a tangible symbol of this process was the change of the name of Valley Street to South Charlotte Street after a relative of one of Asheville’s largest slave owners, Charlotte Patton.

“Twilight of a Neighborhood” has alerted all of Asheville to the personal stories of how people experienced the past. Andrea Clark’s photographs capture the full spectrum of community life in Asheville’s East End in 1970. The images portray a neighborhood with bustling business and street life, gardens where people grew their own food, and sidewalks on which children played under the watchful eyes of elders. This neighborhood was home to Stephens-Lee High School, the only African American public high school in western North Carolina. To those who lived there, East End was not a blighted or slum area, even though at the same time poor housing conditions characterized many of the structures. City housing codes were not enforced and officials did not address damage from storms and sewage.

This project raises, and I think answers, the question: what is the value of local public history to community residents? Clearly, for scores of people who attended the events, the value was enormous.

~ Sarah M. Judson, UNC Asheville, Project Scholar
Today, the dispossession of neighborhoods continues to resonate with most of those who were displaced. Many residents interviewed for this project discussed the painful severing of neighborhood ties and the disorientation that arises from not really knowing that a place is yours.

However, it is not accurate to say that all residents, including African Americans, responded with acute pain. As one project interviewee observed, “[I]t’s easy to get misty-eyed about...all the great collegiality and social networks...in these poor neighborhoods but a lot of people that lived [there]...were happy to get out of them...the point is it was mixed.”

For some, urban renewal promised to rebuild cities and create positive changes in areas that looked as if they needed help. That there could be different understandings of the outcome of urban renewal illustrates how multi-dimensional this process really was. One of the key administrators of urban renewal during the 1970s was David Jones, executive director of the Asheville Housing Authority (AHA). Recently, he told Urban News that his job was “removing all substandard housing conditions to make a more livable environment for people who cannot do for themselves.” He continued, “People say the next thing they knew was that they looked up and they saw the bulldozers, but that’s not true. All of these urban renewal projects were pretty complicated.”

In the same vein, Ken Michalove, Asheville’s city manager in the 1970s, recalls that “the urban renewal projects, the Opportunity Corporation, and the Model Cities Program helped make Asheville a livable community and helped make us...a top city in United States to live in.” The issue is perhaps not what policies were implemented, but the ways in which they were implemented.

Ed Sheary, director of the Buncombe County Public Library, places in sharp relief the power of Clark’s photographs to force personal reassessment of this period. He writes, “I am a 54-year-old white male Asheville native, who well remembers the East End and watched it being demolished in the name of ‘urban renewal.’ I did not question the wisdom of tearing down and replacing substandard housing [until viewing]...Andrea Clark’s photographs...[then] I saw the loss of neighborhood and all the human connections that entails.”

Right now, many residents from all over Asheville want to reclaim this history. There are efforts directed at renaming South Charlotte Street, creating a walking tour of the East End, and working to affect decisions about another road set to divide Burton Street. While the consequences of urban renewal may be difficult to dismantle, a renewed interest in this subject is sparking citizen engagement in determining the future.
About “Twilight of a Neighborhood: Asheville’s East End, 1970”

Harlan Joel Gradin

“How do you begin to frame the impact of displacement of a raucous, ‘living-out-loud’ neighborhood with all its color, tragedy, and comedy,” asks Wanda Henry Coleman, a resident of the historically African American East End community in Asheville.

IN 2008, Buncombe County Public Libraries and partners, the Center for Diversity Education, and the Stephens-Lee Alumni Association, received planning, mini-, and large grants from the North Carolina Humanities Council for the project “Twilight of a Neighborhood: Asheville’s East End, 1970,” which was fueled by the passion and vision of photographer Andrea Clark and project director Karen Loughmiller. Project team members included photographer Rob Amberg, Stephens-Lee High School alumna Pat Griffin, Sarah M. Judson of the University of North Carolina Asheville, public historian and director of UNC Asheville’s Center for Diversity Education Deborah Miles, archivist Betsy Murray, community historian Henry Robinson, and Buncombe County Public Library Director Ed Sheary. The project utilized Clark’s extraordinary photographs from 1970 to examine in depth the history and consequences of urban renewal. While the initial geographic focus was East End, the project grew beyond those parameters as participants shared stories about urban renewal disruptions across Asheville’s African American communities. A culminating weekend of related events included a host of community partners including UNC Asheville, the YMI Cultural Center, the Urban News, A-B Technical Community College, and others.

The East End had been a vibrant black community since the 1880s, although African American presence there dates back to the earliest times of slavery in western North Carolina. The neighborhood flourished through the first half of the twentieth century, perhaps even as the practices of urban renewal began in the city in the 1950s. By 1978, urban renewal had razed this once strong family of neighbors.

Fortunately, by 1970 Andrea Clark had taken intimate portraits of local life before the neighborhood disappeared. Few knew of this collection of photographs, until “Twilight of a Neighborhood.” Project activities included an exhibit, expansion of recent research and gathering of oral histories, story-sharing sessions, book discussions, and public forums, as well as related programs including a class at UNC Asheville and the current examination of revitalization in Asheville.

The separation inflicted by urban renewal still haunts many people.

~ Johnnie Robinson Grant, East End Resident

Today, there is serious discussion of urban revitalization in Asheville that likely will include many more voices than in the mid-1970s. One important result of “Twilight,” Loughmiller observes, is the ongoing partnership that emerged from participants’ “struggles...[in] learning to work together.” She continues, “Projects that allow collaborative experiences to happen can empower people in a very real way and give momentum to the effort to reclaim control of our lives and our communities. In today’s world, what could be more important?”

A core notion of “Twilight of a Neighborhood” is “root shock,” a term developed by urban scholar and psychiatrist Mindy Fullilove, the keynote speaker at the project’s conclusion in February 2009. In a recent note to project participants, Fullilove quoted the European urban visionary Michel Cantal-Dupart, who wrote that “the cities of the future are cities that have a past and they must lean on that past to find the way to break barriers and to create the means of sustaining our children one hundred years from now.” The exciting, organic, and intentional group of citizens who now have practice voicing their history in the most public way are reclaiming their past to define their future; they plan to sustain their children one hundred years from now.
Andrea Clark, Photographer: The Family of Man/These Were My Roots

Karen Loughmiller, West Asheville Branch Library

**ANDREA CLARK’S** East End photographs are stunning. They hold your attention. You look at one, walk away, come back to look again. And again. “What was she thinking about?” you wonder. In an interview with documentary photographer and friend Rob Amberg, Clark mused, “I was really thinking about the family of man...about that photograph that transcends you.” Yes. You see that.

But wonderful as the images are, it was Andrea Clark herself who insured that the questions they evoke in our minds were discussed publicly. Clark saw from the first that the East End photographs offered a way into the true story of her new community and its collision with urban renewal. More than three decades later, Clark envisioned that a full accounting of community history on the issue of urban renewal was essential to reckoning with the past which might lead to reconciliation and healing for people and the city. Tirelessly encouraging participation, Clark was the mighty heart of the “Twilight of a Neighborhood” Project.

Although her father was from Asheville, Clark was born and raised in Cambridge, Massachusetts. After studying nursing for a short time, Clark went to photography school. She says, “I was young, footloose, and curious about the Civil Rights Movement in the South. And I wanted to reconnect with my father and his family. In 1968 I took a Pullman porter to Asheville, and moved in with my family on Valley Street.”

For Clark, her new home “was like a little hamlet,” and although “Valley Street was one of the poorer sections of town...I loved the spirit of the community. Folks were sweet and friendly...I felt very comfortable here...and when you walked up Beaucatcher Mountain at night with the beautiful view of the city lights, you were standing in a black neighborhood.”

“I took my camera everywhere with me,” she told Amberg. “I always received a warm reception — I think it shows in the faces in the photographs. I learned about my father’s family. I found a sanctuary here and kept coming back. I felt these were my roots.” As Rob Amberg puts it, “Andrea Clark is all about community.”
Life in East End, Asheville, c. 1950–70

You know, we were very close. It’s like, they talk about the village, it takes a village to raise a child. Well, that’s what we had. That was one of the things that was so joyful.

~ Bennie Lake

East End was a community, a neighborhood, self-contained... It had hair-dressers. There were grocery stores, funeral parlors, cab stands. Eagle Street had doctors’ and lawyers’ offices, dentists’ offices, churches. You had theaters. We had swimming pools. You had barbershops and the Dew Drop Inn. Miss McQueen’s restaurant was across from YMI. Roland’s Jewelry and Chisholm’s sold everything.

~ Ralph Bowen

There was a time when every black person who wanted to make a living could make a living. There were eateries all up and down Eagle Street, up on the mountain. There were clubs everywhere.

~ Talven “Sugarbody” Thompson

During the 1950s, East End was a place where everybody knew everybody and every child was reared, mentored, disciplined, protected, and taught—not only by their parents but by neighbors as well. There was a partnership between the local church and the home.

~ Dr. Charles Moseley, Mt. Zion Church

My mom told me, “Let me tell you something. If somebody comes to you, they need a place to stay, bring them in. They need food, feed them. If they need clothes, put clothes on their back. Don’t deny it.”

~ Jene Blake

Southside/East Riverside: Lost — In the Name of Progress

Priscilla Ndiaye, Former Resident and Researcher of Southside Neighborhood

BY THE TIME of urban renewal, Southside was the city’s premier black business district, surrounded by a large residential neighborhood. At over four hundred acres, the urban renewal project here was the largest in the southeastern United States. The scale of the devastation here was unmatched.

“In the East Riverside area,” said the [late] Reverend Wesley Grant, “We have lost more than 1,100 homes, six beauty parlors, five barber shops, five filling stations, fourteen grocery stores, three laundromats, eight apartment houses, seven churches, three shoe shops, two cabinet shops, two auto body shops, one hotel, five funeral homes, one hospital, and three doctor’s offices.” The Reverend Grant’s church still stands on Choctaw Street.

Multiple perspectives, lack of knowledge, much confusion, and discouraged and bitter individuals are all entwined as spiders in a web: any way you touch it, it trembles.

One perspective on this transformation sees families uprooted, relocated, and scattered; a community destroyed; a vibrant entrepreneurial business world shut down; and history fragmented, altered, and lost. A very different perspective sees economic benefits for the whole city and better living conditions for neighborhood residents.

Asheville’s history was being made while Asheville’s African American history was lost — in the name of progress. In 2008, for the first time an effort was made to collect this history through discussions and interviews [funded] by the YMI [Cultural Center] and the “Twilight of a Neighborhood” project.
The Patton Family

Henry Robinson, Community Historian

ASHEVILLE’S EAST END was the probable site of dwellings of the Patton family’s slaves prior to the Civil War. And here newly-freed African Americans came together during Reconstruction to build an enduring community that would provide social, commercial, religious, and educational opportunities in a segregated society.

The map shows the Patton family home and the location of the Eagle Hotel which they owned (staffed first with slaves and later with freed African Americans) and a group of African American homes on Valley Street constructed to house black laborers and their families. These homes became the nucleus of the East End community.

What Is Your Role In the Future?

Peggy Weaver, Asheville High School Media Specialist

IN OCTOBER OF 2008, my colleague at Asheville High School, Charles Metcalf, brought his classes to see the “Twilight of a Neighborhood” exhibit. Metcalf, a civics teacher who grew up in Asheville, remembers many of the places in [Andrea] Clark’s photographs. He says, “I really enjoyed the exhibit. It fit perfectly into our classroom discussions of eminent domain.”

That same day, the Asheville Citizen-Times reported developments in the plans of the NC Department of Transportation to connect I-26 to I-240 around Asheville. One proposed route would take out several houses in Asheville’s Burton Street neighborhood, where at least one of Metcalf’s students lives. Clark’s photographs made a memorable impression on these students.
The trauma of urban renewal here, amplified by the short time span, insured keen memories of the era, but the subject is not easy to talk about. People on all sides of the process remember what they thought was happening, or what they were trying to do, what they heard first and how things were changed later, what neighborhoods were like and the damage they suffered, what they had and what they lost, what they set out to do and what they accomplished.

Most of all, they remember how they felt.

~ Karen Loughmiller, Buncombe County Public Librarian, West Asheville Branch
How Does One Begin to Tell the Story?

Wanda Henry Coleman, Former East End Resident and First Director of the YMI Cultural Center

How do you begin to frame the impact of displacement of a raucous, “living-out-loud” neighborhood with all its color, tragedy, and comedy? When did we forfeit our safe havens, our ports in storm, and become, by default or absence, participants in the destruction of or radically negative altering of what should have been dear to us? We have to think about how and why this happened and account for ourselves.

AFRICAN AMERICANS helped create what we know today as home. The labors of women and men helped build our land while the lives they led helped create the mountain culture. Other urban communities in South Carolina and elsewhere have hosted archaeology projects to document these footprints of early builders and have gained economically, with increased tourism, from the treasures they discovered.

A likely [archeological] site is the heart of old East End. By 1811, enslaved people, owned by James Patton, worked at the Eagle Hotel and lived within a short walk behind the current Public Works Building. Further investigation would reveal the nature of the relationship of the enslaved with other founders of what became Asheville. Quality of life issues also need substantiation. What did people who were owned by other people eat? What did they do with the little time they had to themselves? Where specifically did they live? Many questions can be addressed through expertly directed mapping and excavation of selected sites in the city.

What lies beneath our feet in downtown Asheville is an important way to document the presence and contributions of African Americans in North Carolina’s mountains. The doorpost of a home or a cup held for drinking adds layers of connection and meaning to the past.

We must not lose this opportunity to restore a voice about how our history was made and who made it. The knowledge we gain will inform how we live and will enrich the culture we make in the future.
Recovery comes through reclaiming history, restoring esteem, and redefining how one participates in weaving the future. DeWayne Barton, co-founder of Asheville Green Opportunity Corps, is one young leader in the Burton Street neighborhood trying to address more recent problems, such as drugs and violence, that have emerged with community decline resulting from urban renewal. Seeing the history of urban renewal from a new generation’s point of view, he writes of transforming the present by listening to the stories of his elders.

**THE THREATS:** Eager NASCAR drivers looking for dope boys with the checkered flag. And race walkers, picturing their favorite drug medal around their neck — leaving behind small, clear plastic bags, empty lighters, and forty-ounce bottles. The ice cream truck of violence rolls through slowly, daily bell sounds of twenty-twins and forty-fives. I’ve seen this self-destructive pattern before in DC and Virginia — drugs, bulldozers, developers — not knowing the I-26 expansion was behind Burton Street’s crack curtain.

**THE RESPONSE:** Listening to the warning cries of ancestors from elders who remember land-grabs of the past. We are helping to bring together a team and creating a vision of the future we want, sweating, praying, and dreaming again, maintaining our consistency, saying goodbye to comfort zones.

The stimulus begins with us. In our attempt to restore a community that supports sustainability, we will need to include everyone. Low wealth communities will sit at the table as equals. By creating our own sustainable plan for the neighborhood, we’re protecting our community from the double-edged sword of development. We’re creating community programming for seniors and youth. We’re creating greenspace and backyard gardens. We envision a community business incubator and a community school, encouraging neighbors to join in.
A Conversation with Road Scholar
Katherine Mellen Charron

Katherine Mellen Charron is an assistant professor in the history department at North Carolina State University. She received an M.A. in Afro-American Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Ph.D. in U.S. History at Yale University. Charron is author of the newly released Freedom’s Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark. She offers two “Road Scholars” presentations, one on Clark and the other on the American slave and Union soldier William Henry Singleton. Here Charron speaks to the Humanities Council’s Donovan McKnight about Clark, an educator who used literacy and citizenship training programs to confront the disenfranchisement of black Americans.

McKnight: What did Septima Clark bring to her students?

Charron: She brought insider knowledge on how to organize Southern black communities and how to devise adult education programs that would both allow people to register to vote, because at this time all the Southern states had literacy tests that people had to pass, but also would allow people to use the education they gained to act as citizens once they left the voting booth.

…[If people] wanted something done in their community, they would have to do it themselves….So how [do] you use political literacy, practical literacy, economic literacy to bring these things to be in various communities across the South?

McKnight: What is the relationship between Clark and the larger Civil Rights Movement?

Charron: Our narratives [now] of the Civil Rights Movement…begin in 1954 with Brown [v. Board of Education] and end in 1965 with the Voting Rights Act or if they go beyond 1965, they end with the death of Dr. King…. When you look at someone like Septima Clark and the women she trained and what they did in their communities with that training, you get a different chronology for the Civil Rights Movement.

Civil rights activism was visible prior to 1954; it was visible during the New Deal, it was visible during World War I, [and] it was visible during World War II. What changed are the parameters and the way you had to fight that movement because of the rise of the Cold War…. [A] lot of the… interracial radicalism that was going on in the South in the 30s had to change or was eclipsed by the rise of the Cold War and the Communist threat…. it forced black activists to support American foreign policy…. It forced them to play the movement out in the 50s and 60s within different parameters. And you have

Katherine Mellen Charron. Photo by Mario Galucci.
student involvement...to an unprecedented degree, although there were students involved earlier too.

There is emerging this consensus now that there is this long Civil Rights Movement...or freedom struggle that has been going on. And when you de-emphasize Brown and when you look at other constituencies, whether it’s labor, people like Septima Clark who were educators, [or] women [who served in other capacities], then you get a different kind of trajectory and a different narrative. I think we need to define the successes and failure of the Civil Rights Movement beyond legislative victory at the national level.

When we look at these Citizenship Education classrooms...it was also a place for women to exercise their leadership in the movement, make decisions about what would happen and what people would do in communities, reconcile conflicts within the community.

McKnight: As a Road Scholar, you travel to communities around the state. What is it that you want an audience to take away from your talks about Septima Clark?

Charron: I think one thing is a realization of women’s centrality to the Civil Rights Movement and its successes and the work that they did. Valuing women’s work in the movement, gaining a new appreciation for it. But also an overall sense that the view we have of the Civil Rights Movement, we need to rethink that. And what I find interesting when I talk to people from different communities is how they remember it. A lot of times, people in the audience lived through this and when we get into the questions and answers, it’s always interesting what people say about their memories of it. It’s always great to hear how people remember it.

McKnight: So that leads to my next question: Why is Septima Clark’s struggle and achievement significant in the contemporary world?

Charron: We’ve still got the same old problems don’t we? In 1969, Septima wrote an article calling out the problems as she saw them...[including] health care...[the] environment...a military system that takes people of color because they have no other place to go....We need to be creative in terms of how we address and adapt the lessons of the past in useful ways to what we face today. Which is different from the past but also, strangely similar.

How to Sponsor a Road Scholars Program

AN APPLICATION TO APPLY for a “Road Scholars” program can be found at www.nchumanities.org. Questions about applying for a program or becoming a Road Scholar should be directed to Carolyn Allen at (336) 256-0140 or callen@nchumanities.org.
Although lacking Morrison’s lecturing abilities, I recognize the necessity of using this means to provide information to an audience, but this method only encompasses about 15% of my approach to teaching. Rather, during a forty-year plus university career and a decade of participation in the “Let’s Talk About It” programs, I have come to value sessions of carefully considered discussions in which I try to be a catalyst for students and “Let’s Talk About It” participants. My task, to quote Joseph Conrad, is “to make you see” — and, somewhat selfishly, to gain new perspectives myself from these discussions, as we all weave together patterns of insights and observations, privileging those...
views that explain the most in the simplest manner.

My particular method of “teaching” a book or film might be described as follows: over-preparation that then gets boiled down to a projected “ideal” lesson plan, which is then sloppily written on yellow legal paper. These pages, held together with a paper clip, are placed on the podium or desk in the class or meeting room, and then largely ignored. This material may be necessary to check facts or to read a quotation, but, if we are having a meaningful discussion in which I honor the comments of the group, I must dismiss the “ideal” outline and go with the flow of the discussion.

For the most part, this was the procedure at a recent “Let’s Talk About It” Chapel Hill Public Library discussion of Fred Chappell’s *I Am One of You Forever*, a book which, perhaps more than any other, best exemplifies the North Carolina Humanities Council’s tagline: “Many Stories, One People.” Indeed, this novel is about the joy and art of storytelling and is structured, in part, through the telling of individual tales that could stand alone, but that also subtly interrelate with each other. It is of limited value to tell an audience this information; rather the participants at this particular “Let’s Talk About It” session came to this insight themselves by discussing how, despite a lack of chronological structure or even definitive endings for many of the narratives, *I Am One of You Forever* uses other means of organization — repetition, variations, allusions, metaphors. A participant, for instance, pointed out that the wrapping of pullet eggs in colored foil to replace pilfered candy in one chapter was linked to the replacing of individually wrapped sticks of gum with a laxative in another. Much like a coin tossed in a lake, such observations have a rippling effect, and soon the class began working together to illustrate how Chappell fuses together North Carolina landscape with mythic description, realism with the fantastic, humor with tragedy, and human suffering with transcendence. Because this is a novel about the power of storytelling, I also spontaneously incorporated personal stories that some people might call needless digressions, but which I thought appropriate to a novel that asks its readers to join with its characters in acknowledging their own humanity and in realizing that we are all linked via stories, that somehow we are all “one of you forever.”

The downside of my approach to teaching is that significant aspects sometimes get diminished or even left out. In this particular discussion, we probably did not do justice to the range of Chappell’s rich language, and some of the novel’s multiple dimensions were only fleetingly suggested. Still, for ninety minutes, a dozen or so of us shared a bond: we worked together to articulate the treasures of this wonderful novel, and that, for me, is the very essence of “Let’s Talk About It” programs.

You can savor a book alone, but it’s not the same thing as talking about it with a group. It’s the shared experience, the community. It’s bringing people together using the vehicle of a story.

~ “Let’s Talk About It” Participant Evelyn Daniel

How to Sponsor a Let’s Talk About It Program

**AN APPLICATION TO APPLY** for a “Let’s Talk About It” book, poetry, or film library discussion series may be found at www.nchumanities.org. Questions about applying for or planning a program may be directed to Carolyn Allen at (336) 256-0140 or callen@nchumanities.org.
THAT TIME? We hiked along Pinch Ridge to the apex and climbed the radio tower at dusk. Ben didn’t know the way, even though these mountains belonged to him as much as they belonged to me. Two creeks south along the ridge, his mom’s trailer squatted on a cinderblock foundation — a Carolina Country doublewide the color of spent Levi’s and just about as worn. I lived with my parents at the base of Pinch Ridge. A stone-faced house with a white porch and fancy roof; something the Baptists might have cornered in on if it weren’t for the fact of property and bloodlines.

Ben’s mom worked nights at the sewing factory and he started junior year at the high school the same year I was supposed to graduate. He worked evenings bagging groceries at Hughes Market where it was my job to unlock the tobacco case anytime somebody wanted a pack of Camels. A month before, Ben’s kid brother overdosed on crystal and he missed a week of pay. The paper ran the story. Everyone in town said Patrick convulsed for hours in the ER, rattling the hospital bed like the rapture. “Some trouble, that kid,” my old geometry teacher said to his wife the day after the obituary ran. He stood at the checkout counter, talking as if nobody cared. “Hush now,” his wife said, touching his forearm. “Think of the mother.”

Two hours uphill and another half mile along the ridge, we came to a mowed patch of mountaintop and heavy fencing around the radio tower. “Don’t you want to climb it?” I said, shoving Ben a step toward the guard fence. The radio tower loomed a hundred feet above us. He shoved me back and that’s when I curled my fingertips around his belt buckle and pulled him in for a kiss.

Ben pushed me off of him. “Why’d you do that?”

“Shut up,” I said, reaching for him again. It was our first kiss and I was sick of waiting. He kissed me back this time, mouth sweet and salty as ketchup. I liked his soft cheeks and pointy Adam’s apple, earlobes like little shrimp tails just waiting to be sucked. He mashed my breasts around and I leaned my back into the fence. He wasn’t very good.

“Why don’t we climb it?” I said.

“Have you done it before?”

“Once,” I lied.

“What about the barbed wire?” said Ben.

I took off my pack and unzipped it, pulling out a hacksaw and some muscle-handled pliers I shoved in at the last minute. “Man’s job,” I said, smirking. He picked up the tools like he knew what he was doing and I suppose he did. He never mentioned his dad. Ben’s hands were big as a grown man’s: thick veins, knuckles as wide as chestnuts with perfect, tan skin stretched overttop.

“Lillis, you’re too much, you know,” he said and went to work, but I saw the corners of his mouth holding back a smile.

Hacking through the barbed wire was a cinch. And we both knew about climbing chain-link fences. But taking hold of that first rung of the safety ladder at about eye level was another matter.

“Ladies first.” Ben gestured.
“Fine,” I said. “But I need a lift.” My heart dropped to my stomach and I could have punched him. How could I be so brave and so chicken-scratch at the same time?

Ben put his hands on my waist. I wanted to stop right there with all his strength wrapped around me; just keep that energy for my own and use it someday. I stretched to reach for the ladder, then made a little jump. Ben was strong enough to lift me at least four feet and before I knew it the toes of my boots hooked over the first rung of the ladder. I pawed my hands above my head for a higher grasp and pulled my body in close.

“Come on, now. Get going before I change my mind and leave you up there,” said Ben.

I shimmied up a few feet and waited for him. The ladder shook as he muscled his way up, his arms and shoulders doing all the work until he got high enough to catch the ladder with his boots. He climbed a few rungs until we faced each other on opposite sides of the ladder, breathless. I felt too scared to look up or down, but I knew I didn’t want Ben to see me all locked up.

“Race you to the top?” I asked. I didn’t mean it.

“Fool’s chicken!” he said. “This is where we take it slow, Lillis. One step at a time. Just stay above me so we’re not on the same rung. And don’t look down, you hear?”

Ben talked more to himself than to me but I felt glad for it. I’d never climbed higher than the jumping rock at Hazel Hole and that topped out at twenty feet. My skin felt tingly and magnetic from being so close to Ben or some sort of radio wave buzz. The higher I climbed, the heavier I felt. I heard Ben moving a few feet below me, slow and steady.

About two-thirds of the way up Ben hollered to stop. He climbed a few more rungs and put us face-to-face, our bodies pressed so tight into the ladder I could feel his stomach arching into mine. We breathed together and there was nowhere to look but straight into him.

“You ok?” he said, barely a whisper.

“Yeah, I’m ok.” My heart skipped around like a squirrel across hardtop. Our fingers wrapped end-to-end
around the sides of the ladder, knotted fists as tight as rope.

“Almost there,” Ben said. We leaned into each other and I felt the ladder dig into my ribcage. The world up there smelled like ice. Fresh and piercing. My muscles shook from fatigue. I concentrated on the buttons on Ben’s shirt, my face pressed right into his chest. He loosened his grip and stretched his arm across my back to the other side of the ladder, holding me steady. Then he kissed me like he meant it and I liked it better that way — me being trapped, him doing all the work. If I could have crawled inside of him and never looked back, I would have.

When we reached the top, the view wasn’t all that different. Just more sky, less home. People’s porch lights looked tiny as a firefly’s flash. I pointed in the direction of Ben’s place. “We could see it right about there if this ladder went a little higher,” I said.

“How’d you get to know so much?” he asked.

“That’s only the beginning,” I said. I liked him. How he could tease without being mean. I wondered if he’d take me tubing down the North Toe where it flows into the Nolichucky. Or if he’d meet me gaze-for-gaze if we ever got to do it.

“Do you think he’s alone?” Ben asked. He pointed to the cemetery where his brother had been buried. “I mean, do you think if you’re that young and you beat everybody in your own family to Heaven, that you get there and you’re all alone?”

I inhaled a short breath. His mom was at work when Patrick died. Ben was home studying for Social Studies when he got the call. He drove straight to the factory to get her but she wanted to finish her shift. If she could just finish her shift.

“Or maybe he’s just watching us from right there in the church graveyard,” Ben said.

“Maybe,” I said.

“Last time I went the wind had messed up his flowers. They were all crooked. I set them right, though.”

“We could drive there later, if you want to. We could check the flowers.”

He turned to look at me and it felt as though the tower shifted, but my perspective was all wonky. We could have been two flags at the end of a pole hanging loose against the ropes. Ben shook his head. “No, I don’t want to go. Not now…” There was nothing behind him but sky, a lemony hue from the last rays of sunset.

Back on the ground, we felt high. I whooped and yowled toward the lights of town, just six miles below us down Sweetwater Road. Ben sprinted a few laps around the fence, slapping his thighs and cantering like a show horse. Breathless, he snuck up behind me and covered my eyes. His palms smelled like rust and sweat from the ladder, metallic and clammy from the rush.

“How many do you think there are?” he asked, then opened his palms so I could see.

“How many what?”

“How many peaks?” he said. His heart pounded from the run and I thought then how all that blood coursed through his body, his chest fanning up and down, up and down. How even breathing and going to school in the morning was just about the bravest thing anybody could do after something as twisted-shin-screwy as your own brother dying like that. He let out a long breath and rested his chin on top of my head, squeezed his arms around me even tighter.

I studied the view, row after row of purple mountains, their soft, round peaks silhouetted against a deepening slate sky. It was never quite pitch black with the feldspar mine running nonstop, but it came pretty close. “I don’t know,” I said. “I never thought about it. How many do you think there are?”

“More than we can see, Lillis. There’s always more than we can see.”
Presentation of the 2009 Linda Flowers Literary Award

Emily Herring Wilson

Caldwell Laureate and author Emily Herring Wilson presented Katey Schultz with the Linda Flowers Literary Award 2009 for her short story “Amplitude.” Linda Flowers, author of *Thrown Away: Failures of Progress in Eastern North Carolina*, believed that the humanities are “equipment for living.”

IT IS A PRIVILEGE to say a few words about Linda Flowers and to present the ninth [annual] Linda Flowers Award to the winner, Katey Schultz.

Tom Lambeth and Valeria Lee first introduced me to Linda Flowers [at a reunion of the Z. Smith Reynolds Advisory Panel]. Anyone who ever met Linda will never forget her.

How many of you met Linda Flowers? Great. That makes me feel so good. We must remember her and pass along our remembrances to others. Marsha Warren and Doris Betts and others here tonight remember Linda reading at the 1992 NC Women Writers’ Conference, held in Winston-Salem. Afterwards, she came to my house to spend the night; and the next morning I heard her up early, and when I went into the kitchen, she was sitting at the table, and she looked up and said, “Tell me what they said about me again.” I told her again that after she had read, Doris Betts and Valeria Lee, the designated respondents, praised her to the skies. (One of Linda’s favorite books was *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* by James Agee, about tenant farmers, like her own family.) I am sorry that I never told her often enough how great she was, and we must be faithful now to keep her name alive.

The North Carolina Humanities Council does this in awarding this prize for the best submission on a theme that reflects Linda’s passionate regard for North Carolina people who were poor. I want to read a paragraph from her great book, which I believe is a classic, *Thrown Away: Failures of Progress in Eastern North Carolina*.

You don’t see them much anymore. Not in Rocky Mount and Goldsboro, Wilson, Smithfield and Clinton; in Faison, yes, in little towns like that, sometimes. Especially if on a Saturday you buy groceries at one of the less-than-grand supermarkets, your clothes, when you have to have them, at the dry-goods store. They stay out of shopping malls, away from the stores dazzling as operating rooms. At Christmas time, everybody sees them (but tries not to); they stumble along, slower than other people, more uncertain, as if they’re not quite sure where they are. As for the men, you can spot them without too much trouble. At the tractor places, the filling stations where they go to pass the time of day, the run-down ones; they’re driving battered pickup trucks and looking out across the land, poking along at forty and forty-five. But they’re not as common as they used to be, these old farmers in faded overalls, in khaki shirts, washed thin and almost white, brogans, hats usually: dusty as a March field. And the women, the country women of my childhood are as scarce now almost as her’s teeth.

Oh, but they were something! The beauty they’d had as girls wrung out of them, and in its place another: faces composed, purposeful as iron… But these were proud people. Thrown away they may be, but it won’t do to count them out.

Now I want to ask this year’s winner of the Linda Flowers Award, Katey Schultz, to come forward.

Katey, your prize story, “Amplitude,” which, by the way, is a word Linda would like and use the way you did, recognizes, I think, Linda’s voice, and answers in yours. It’s a story about two young people, the young girl leading the way (Linda would like that) for them to climb up a radio tower, and not letting on that it’s the first time she’s ever done it (Linda would like that too). When they finally get to the top, it looks the way, pretty much, that it looks from the bottom. Linda would like that. And then there’s a last sentence that Linda would agree with:

“There’s always more than we can see.”

Katey is from Bakersville, in the western part of the state, Linda was from Faison, in the east, and the landscape is different; but they look at the world in the same way, seeing more than we can see.

Congratulations.
Katey Schultz

KATEY SCHULTZ writes from her home in Bakersville, North Carolina. In 2010, she will serve as the spring semester Writer-in-Residence at Interlochen Academy in Michigan. Schultz is the author of *Lost Crossings: A Contemplative Look at Western North Carolina’s Historic Swinging Footbridges* and editor of *Dots on a Map: A Collection of Small Town Stories*. A graduate of the Pacific University M.F.A. in Writing program, her fiction, nonfiction, and poetry have appeared in *Perigee, M Review, Oregon Quarterly, Cadillac Cicatrix, The Nature Conservancy Newsletter, Southern Arts Journal, Writers’ Dojo*, and more. Fiction from Schultz is forthcoming in *Cold Flashes: An Anthology of Alaska Short-Shorts*. Her essays about art and the creative process appear regularly in national magazines. She edits in various capacities for *Silk Road, Main Street Rag*, and *Memoir (and)*.

“That a writer like me,” Schultz says, “trying to make a living from my words, can be considered for such a prize…and then be awarded so generously, is a really affirming feeling.” She explains that North Carolina, particularly western North Carolina, exerts a special “pull” for her and believes that it is the writer’s duty “to live in an engaged, aware way in the communities in which she finds herself. The more deeply engaged, the more deeply imagined her writing can become and the more likely she is to write in a manner which best serves, reflects, and gives back to the community she invests in.”

Previous Recipients

KAREN GILCHRIST 2001
JOSEPH BATHANTI 2002
HEATHER ROSS MILLER 2003
BARBARA PRESNELL 2004
KERMIT TURNER 2005
KATHY WATTS 2006
SUSAN WEINBERG VOGEL 2007
KRISTIN HEMMY 2008

2009 Selection Committee

This year’s distinguished Linda Flowers Literary Award selection committee included

• Philip Gerard, chair of the Department of Creative Writing Program at the University of North Carolina Wilmington and author of *Cape Fear Rising*;

• Glenis Redmond, a new member of the North Carolina Humanities Council and a poet whose work has appeared in several journals, including the *Asheville Poetry Review*;

• Sandra Govan, professor emerita, Department of English, University of North Carolina Charlotte and a former member of the Humanities Council;

• Lynn Salsi, an award-winning author, teacher, playwright, historian, and Humanities Council Road Scholar.
Linda Flowers Literary Award

Description

THE NORTH CAROLINA HUMANITIES COUNCIL invites original entries of fiction, nonfiction, or poetry for the Linda Flowers Literary Award. Submissions should detail examinations of intimate, provocative, and inspiring portraiture of North Carolina, its people and cultures, bringing to light real men and women having to make their way in the face of change, loss, triumph, and disappointments.

While authors do not have to be North Carolinians, entries are expected to draw on particular North Carolina connections and/or memories. Above all, entries should celebrate excellence in the humanities and reflect the experience of people who, like Linda Flowers, not only identify with the state, but also explore the promises, the problems, the experiences, and the meanings of lives that have been shaped by North Carolina and its many cultures.

Guidelines

ENTRIES SHOULD BE ORIGINAL, unpublished works of up to 2,000–2,500 words, typed and double-spaced. Five copies of each submission are required with a cover letter (copies will not be returned). The author’s name should not appear on the submission. Only one entry per writer will be accepted. The winner of the Linda Flowers Literary Award receives a cash prize of $500 and a stipend towards a Writer’s Residency at the Weymouth Center for Arts and Humanities in Southern Pines, North Carolina.

You may wish to enclose a SASE postcard for the Humanities Council to acknowledge receipt of your manuscript and a SASE for notification of the award selection.

Send entries for the 2010 Linda Flowers Literary Award, postmarked by August 15, 2010, to the North Carolina Humanities Council, 122 N. Elm Street, Suite 601, Greensboro, NC, 27401. Questions may be directed to Executive Director Shelley Crisp at (336) 334-5383 or scrisp@nchumanities.org.

That my book about Eastern North Carolina might touch a chord with some people, and with several ready-made audiences — teachers, social workers, health personnel, civic organizations, book clubs, readers in general… I had not anticipated. What these groups are responding to in Thowed Away, I think, is its human dimension: the focus on real men and women having to make their way in the face of a changing, onrushing and typically uncaring world….This humanistic apprehension, I tell my students, is as necessary for living fully as anything else they may ever hope to have…they must recognize and nurture it in themselves…to realize more fully the potential of the human spirit.

~ Linda Flowers,
letter to the North Carolina Humanities Council Membership Committee, July 1992
Teaching North Carolina’s American Indian History

Excerpt from Teachers Institute Curriculum Enrichment Project: North Carolina American Indian Studies ©2009

Kathryn Walbert

Kathryn Walbert (Ph.D., U.S. History, UNC Chapel Hill) served as the curriculum development coordinator for the North Carolina Humanities Council’s Teachers Institute Curriculum Enrichment Project: North Carolina American Indian Studies ©2009. Walbert develops and teaches online professional development courses on U.S. history topics and in the Carolina Online Teacher Program (COLT) at LEARN NC. The Curriculum Enrichment Project can be accessed at www.LEARNNC.org.

The Critical Reasons

While there is wide debate about when, exactly, people came to live in what is now North Carolina, archaeologists believe that indigenous people have lived here for at least 11,000 years... There are even some estimates of 19,000 years. Many tribal groups have origin stories that originate them in their ancestral lands for all time.

By comparison, the few centuries that our state has been inhabited by people who originated elsewhere make up a very brief period of time. Most of North Carolina’s past was an exclusively American Indian past, and the descendants of those first inhabitants of North Carolina have remained vital parts of our state history ever since. North Carolina’s rich American Indian history provides students with fascinating topics for historical study — the cultural traditions of southeastern tribes in the era before contact, Nanye’hi’s (Nancy Ward’s) efforts to create peace between the Cherokee and white settlers, the story of Tsali during Indian Removal, the actions of Henry Berry Lowrie’s band, the creation of American Indian schools within the state, the experiences of Lumbee farmers during the Great Depression, the contributions of American Indian war veterans, the conflict between the Ku Klux Klan and the Lumbee in 1958, the participation of North Carolina’s American Indian population in social reform movements, the resurgence of interest in the Cherokee
Christopher Arris Oakley, assistant professor in the Department of History at East Carolina University, presents to teachers the story of the 1958 confrontation in Robeson County between the Lumbee Indians and the Ku Klux Klan. Moreover, American Indians were living in each of one hundred counties of North Carolina. Chances are, most North Carolina teachers either have taught or will teach a significant number of American Indian students…. and teachers in certain counties with large American Indian populations (for example, Columbus, Cumberland, Guilford, Halifax, Hoke, Jackson, Mecklenburg, Robeson, Scotland, Swain, and Wake) are likely to have American Indian students in any given class.

Incorporating American Indian history throughout the curriculum sends a strong message to American Indian students that their own community’s history and culture is valued by the teacher and considered an important part of all students’ educations. Including this history throughout the academic year allows non-Indian students to learn more about the history and culture of their American Indian peers, helping to...create cross-cultural understanding. Many students have substantial misunderstandings about American Indian history that must be corrected through accurate, respectful teaching about American Indians and student activities that promote critical thinking and explicit discussion of stereotype.

For the benefit of all of the students in their classrooms, teachers will want to adapt the Curriculum Enrichment Project for use in their own unique...communities. There are eight state-recognized tribes in North Carolina, and teaching about the American Indian communities within each teacher’s own county can heighten student interest and build on the sense of place that students have in their own home communities.

Teaching about American Indians in North Carolina gives our students a more inclusive and accurate sense of North Carolina history, allows students to see the historical cultural diversity of our state, and invites opportunities for critical thinking. At the same time, incorporating American Indian history into the curriculum can send a strong and welcome message to the American Indian students in North Carolina classrooms that the experiences of their ancestors matter… and are respected and valued.... For non-Indian students, instruction in American Indian history can dispel damaging stereotypes... while providing an introduction to a fascinating history that they may...
not otherwise have known much about. Incorporating American Indian history throughout all the decades of North Carolina history is not only more inclusive, it is also more accurate — North Carolina’s native people have always been and will continue to be important to our state’s history, and our teaching should reflect that reality.

**Teachers Pilot Curriculum Enrichment Project**

Under the leadership of Clara Sue Kidwell, the American Indian Center at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill worked with the North Carolina Humanities Council to encourage the use of the *Curriculum Enrichment Project: North Carolina American Indian Studies* as a resource in the classroom. The Center held a series of workshops for directors of the federally-funded Title VII Indian Education programs. Participants practiced ways to use the resource packet and held their own workshops to train other teachers.

Rita Locklear, Director of the Indian Education Resource Center in the public schools of Robeson County, along with two other educators from Robeson County, participated in the first such workshop, in turn training over forty teachers in Robeson County. According to Locklear, “The *Curriculum Enrichment Project* provides teachers with concrete suggestions for integrating the study of American Indians into their classroom.”

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**AlumNews**

**Allison Shepherd (TI 09)**, a theatre teacher at Wake Forest Rolesville High School in Wake County, attended the Teachers Institute seminar, “North Carolina Textile Heritage: Stories of Mill Workers,” held in May at the Levine Museum of the New South. During the fall semester, Shepherd led her school’s Matinee Players in researching the history of North Carolina mills using many of the materials provided in the seminar. The students then wrote and performed for over five hundred elementary and middle school students an original play, “Millstory,” and they provided a packet of information for classroom use.

**Theresa Pierce (TI 09)** graduated in December from Catawba College in Salisbury with a M.A. in Education and was inducted into Kappa Delta Pi. Pierce teaches K–8 history at Horizons Unlimited in the Rowan-Salisbury County Schools.

**Christopher White (TI 08, 09)**, a seventh-grade social studies teacher in the Union County Schools, writes lyrics about history and literature, sets them to popular tunes, and sings them with his middle-school students. Recently, the Annenberg Foundation found his rendering of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and asked to use it in a series it funded about using ancient literature in the modern-day classroom. The Foundation flew Christopher to New York City to interview him about his methods and record the song for a video. The interview will air on PBS in the fall.

**Tammy Young (TI 01, 04)**, a media specialist at Charles D. Owen High School in Black Mountain (Buncombe County Schools), participated in a National Endowment for the Humanities “Landmarks of American History and Culture” seminar, “Inventing America: Lowell and the Industrial Revolution.” The seminar, held in Lowell, MA, included trips to various sites, including Walden Pond, Old Sturbridge Village, and Concord.

TI ALUMS: Send your news to lynnwk@nchumanities.org for inclusion in the Summer • Fall issue of *North Carolina Conversations*. 
Teachers Institute Sponsors Fall Seminar in Wilmington: “The Segregated South through Autobiography”

LED BY Melton McLaurin (professor emeritus, UNC Wilmington, Department of History), twenty-three educators from across North Carolina participated in the Teachers Institute fall seminar, October 2–3, 2009.

This seminar examined legal racial segregation in the American South from its origin in the 1890s until its demise at the end of the 1960s. Through the autobiographical writings of the era’s most prominent interpreters, black and white, male and female, participants explored the reasons for segregation’s rise and fall and its legal, social, and moral aspects.

A highlight of the seminar was the session held in downtown Wilmington at the 1898 Memorial, recognizing the Race Riot of 1898. Joining McLaurin was Earl Sheridan, professor of political science at UNC Wilmington. Sheridan shared his experience as one of the founding members of the 1898 Foundation, instrumental in enlisting community support for the creation of the memorial.

In 1898, Wilmington’s white supremacist movement rioted in protest of the presence of African Americans in the elected city government, killing African American citizens and destroying their properties. The incident was one of many sparking the Jim Crow era. The focal point of the memorial, designed by sculpture artist Ayokunle Odeleye, consists of six bronze paddles standing in memory of those who were killed in the violence. The paddles evoke water as a metaphor for moving people from this life to the next.
Every time they are sung, they sound new
Beverly Patterson, Statewide Scholar for New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music and Executive Director of the North Carolina Folklife Institute

AN EXPERIENCE WITH MUSIC
can open new worlds. I remember, as a teenager, being especially struck by the congregational singing during my first visit to a small, rural African American church in East Texas. The strength of the voices, the sure sense of timing, and the spontaneity all astonished me as the singers improvised their way through every congregational song. No copies of words or music were anywhere to be seen, nor was any leader apparent. A piano player somehow coaxed the perfect accompaniment out of an old, weather-beaten, and way-out-of-tune upright piano. How did they do that? How did that music bring such exhilaration to singers and visitors alike at the end of a long day? It was a wonderful mystery.

It is still a mystery even as we become aware of the vitality of many different music traditions active in communities all across the nation and throughout the world. It seems only fitting that the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum on Main Street (MoMS) staff would organize one of its traveling exhibits around the subject of American “roots” or traditional music. How appropriate that the exhibition coming to North Carolina, New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music, is designed to travel to small towns and communities like many that continue to nurture the development of local music traditions.

The state’s music heritage is as rich as any in the nation. One measure of that can be seen in the range of musicians receiving a North Carolina Folk Heritage Award. Since the North Carolina Arts Council began the awards program in 1989, more than fifty musicians have been recognized, including African American fiddler Joe Thompson and his cousin and banjo player, Odell Thompson, from Alamance County, shape-note singing leader Quay Smathers from Haywood County, rhythm and blues artists The Five Royales from Winston-Salem, Piedmont blues musician Etta Baker from Morganton, and bluegrass musicians The Briarhoppers from Charlotte. Other award-winning blues musicians, gospel singers, ballad singers, buck dancers, flat-foot dancers, and instrument makers represent musical treasures across the state. Montagnard musician and singer Dock Rhah, for example, who resettled in Greensboro in the 1980s, has enriched our musical landscape with sounds and instruments rooted in his native Vietnamese highlands.

Beverly Patterson serves as the statewide scholar for the touring Smithsonian Institution exhibition New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music. North Carolina has a vast and rich roots music heritage, and Patterson has been central to its examination and celebration.
In 1991, a group of African American menhaden fishermen living in Beaufort received the Folk Heritage Award for reviving the songs they once sang to help ease and pace the difficult labor of manually working the nets to raise thousands of pounds of fish in the days before hydraulic winches and lifters. Drawing on sources such as hymns, spirituals, gospel songs, blues, and barbershop quartets, the singers had recreated and shaped older repertoires to fit new situations, just as musicians have always done.

North Carolina music traditions, in fact, have attracted researchers for more than a hundred years. Among the early song collectors were Cecil Sharp and Maud Karpeles, who traveled from England to the mountains of western North Carolina several times during 1916–1918 in search of old English songs and ballads. With pencil and paper, he notated the tunes while she wrote the words as people sang for them. Sharp described their findings in his introduction to the 1917 edition of his book *English Folksongs of the Southern Appalachians*. “My sole purpose in visiting this country was to collect the traditional songs and ballads which...were still being sung there. I naturally expected to find conditions very similar to those which I had encountered in England when engaged on the same quest. But of this I was soon to be agreeably disillusioned....I discovered that I could get what I wanted from pretty nearly every one I met, young and old. In fact, I found myself for the first time in my life in a community in which singing was as common and almost as universal a practice as speaking.”

Ballad singer Doug Wallin grew up in one of the mountain areas Sharp described. He was born in Madison County shortly after Sharp and Karpeles visited there, but he remembered his mother telling of seeing them pass by their house often and of his grandfather telling the family not to sing for them. “To tell you the truth,” Wallin said, “people at first thought they were spies or something — that was during World War I.” Even without much participation from that family, the researchers collected well over two hundred tunes in Madison County alone. Wallin was in his early seventies by 1990 when he traveled to Washington, DC, to receive the National Heritage Fellowship Award from the National Endowment for the Arts.
Two years later, Wayne Martin and I recorded Wallin and his brother Jack for an album released by Smithsonian Folkways in 1995, *Doug and Jack Wallin: Family Songs and Stories from the North Carolina Mountains*. His singing, like that of his forebears, was as natural and unselfconscious as his speech. Music, in Wallin’s experience, went well beyond entertainment. It evoked powerful memories of family and community history, and it held deep meanings about such things as tragedy and tenderness in human relationships. After singing the last verse of a song in which two lovers are reunited, he once said wistfully, “I can see that just as plain — he reached up and put that arm around her.”

Not long after Wallin received national recognition for ballad singing, Cherokee elder Walker Calhoun received a National Heritage Fellowship Award for keeping alive ancient Cherokee cultural traditions, especially the tribal ceremonial songs and dances he learned from his Uncle Will West Long, a medicine man and ceremonial dance leader in Walker’s home community, Big Cove. Calhoun grew up in Big Cove speaking Cherokee as his first language, but he was not isolated and he absorbed music and stories from many sources, even teaching himself to play the banjo. The ceremonial songs he sings have many associations. For example, he tells the following story about the Eagle Dance Song, which was recorded by folklorist Michael Kline for the album *Where the Ravens Roost: Songs and Ceremonies of Big Cove* (Mountain Heritage Center, Western Carolina University, 1991):

> Well the Eagle Dance is pretty. It’s a sacred dance. The eagle is a sacred bird to the Indians. They really honor that bird. They also have some use for its feathers, use it for ceremonial purpose, the claws, its beauty. I know a little bit of story about the eagle. My daddy used to tell this. I don’t know if it’s true or not. Anyway I’m going to tell it. Said when you’re out hunting in the woods up on the mountain if you see an eagle flying around — there used to be a lot of eagles way back then — said you’d just sit down on a log or something, wherever you was at sing this song, the first part. Said the eagle will circle around where you was at or right straight above where you was sitting and it would stop like you know how a hawk stops sometimes in the wind there. Just like they’re standing still there. They work their wings some way. They’ll do that till you quit singing. Then they’ll go away. That’s the way my daddy used to tell it.

Doug Wallin and Walker Calhoun are representative of many across North Carolina who have helped preserve the distinctive music traditions of their families and communities. Most of these traditional artists are little known and have not received widespread public recognition. Fortunately, documentarians have produced recordings and films that offer some public records of this heritage. One example is *A Singing Stream: A Black Family Chronicle*, a documentary film produced by the University of North Carolina’s Curriculum in Folklore department and Davenport Films. It highlights the musical life of one African American family over the lifetime of family matriarch, 86-year-old Bertha Landis with family at a reunion in Creedmoor, NC, in the 1980s. The Landises, like many North Carolina families, have contributed great singers and musicians to the thriving gospel music traditions across the state. Photo by Tom Davenport.
Landis. The film dates from the early 1980s, when a group of UNC folklore students and faculty collaborated with the Landis family of Creedmoor and filmmaker Tom Davenport to film informal singing at home, interviews with family members, family reunions, church services, and the annual anniversary gospel concerts of the Golden Echoes, a gospel group featuring Landis’ sons. From that footage, they edited an unscripted film in which the Landises tell their own story.

A few excerpts from Landis’ comments offer a glimpse of the musical life of the family. With a photograph, she introduced her family of eight sons and three daughters:

“As the boys grew up, I saw that they had a talent for singing. I began to realize that they had a singing stream coming from both sides of the family. I wanted them to grow up and be involved in something that was worthwhile and something that would bring them joy and happiness as they grew up in years. So I began to teach them.”

She enjoyed telling about the boys singing upstairs in the dark after they had all gone to bed.

“Two bedrooms upstairs when they was here, and they were singing across the hall, you know. And their daddy would holler at them and tell them to hush that fuss up there. They’d be singing and patting their foot, you know, over top of our heads. And he’d holler at them, “Cut that fuss out.” I’d say, “Well, let them sing. They ain’t out doing no mischief or nothing.”

Hymns, spirituals, and gospel songs formed the family’s repertoire.

“We’d get to singing in the field. And the people around in the community would stop and listen at us.”

From such experiences, as film viewers see and hear, came master singers and performers in the tradition of a black gospel.

Gospel music is one of the most widespread music traditions across the state, but many other local song, instrumental, and dance traditions are also vital and active and may be featured during the upcoming MoMS exhibition. During an exuberant Golden Echoes performance, Landis exclaimed, “These old songs, even though they are old, every time that they are sung, they sound new.”

The truth of Landis’ affirmation is the core of what makes this music, regardless of expressive tradition, living culture that nourishes us through connecting our past and present. Its power is that it conveys in the most intimate way the heartfelt experiences of daily life that reveal to us what it means to be human. That is why the passage of time never diminishes our passion for listening to, exploring, and remaking roots music.

Walker Calhoun, one of the most widely respected elders among the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, has been influential in preserving a wide range of Cherokee traditions. Photo by Tes Thraves.

NEW HARMONIES
Celebrating American Roots Music

The North Carolina Humanities Council brings New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music to six North Carolina sites in 2010. The traveling exhibition is a collaborative effort between state humanities councils and the Smithsonian Institution to serve rural audiences and give communities across North Carolina the opportunity to celebrate their unique regional roots music heritage.

Mount Airy
March 13 – April 24
Mount Airy Museum of Regional History

Warrenton
May 1 – June 12
Warren County Memorial Library

Elizabeth City
June 19 – August 1
Museum of the Albemarle

Goldsboro
August 7 – September 18
Arts Council of Wayne County

Mars Hill
September 25 – November 6
Rural Life Museum at the Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies, Mars Hill College

Shelby
November 13 – December 29
Don Gibson Theatre
**FROM THE FIELD**

**NC Roadwork Takes Hold in Eastern North Carolina**

**THERE’S A DIFFERENT KIND** of public works project happening in our state. In 2008, the North Carolina Humanities Council established “NC Roadwork” as an initiative to encourage the examination of local history related to routes of human passage. The Humanities Council identified programmatically underserved regions of eastern North Carolina and sent staff to invite citizens to develop projects that lend themselves to digital representation online. Out of this initiative so far have come two projects. In Warrenton in Warren County and Elizabethtown in Bladen County, the public libraries and historical societies have explored two diverse pathways by which North Carolinians journeyed through their local and interconnected communities.

The project team in Warrenton identified the Seaboard Railway and U.S. Route 1 as the focus of a digital video entitled “Norlina: Evolution of a Town.” The project was led by Sue Loper, former director of the Warren County Public Library. The lead scholar was associate professor Charmaine McKissick-Melton of the Communications Department at North Carolina Central University. McKissick-Melton is no stranger to the region; she is currently a local resident and grew up there while her father, Floyd McKissick, Sr., attempted to develop Soul City in the early 1970s. Jamon Glover, a North Carolina Central University senior, served as videographer and film editor. According to Loper, there is great interest in the video: “People who grew up in Norlina have heard of it and are requesting copies.” (View the video at www.vimeo.com/7301629.)

Norlina’s story traces its roots to the Great Trading Path that cut the territory of North Carolina in half from the southwest to the northeast. According to archeologist Cliff Jackson, trade between the original people of this region was conducted along trails that existed before recorded history. Today, I-85 runs along the Great Trading Path. The railway, highways, and roads in the area were also formerly the trading and traveling routes of American Indians.

“Location, location, location,” says Jackson, “is the take-away lesson.” Or as Trading Path scholar Tom Magnuson also explained at the first public presentation for this project, “Follow the geology. It will tell you what you need to know.” The paths, trails, and river crossings developed along the least challenging land; and the rails and roads were built on this old knowledge.

In the video, Sears Buggs, a rail historian, explains that Warrenton had the chance for the railroad to

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*Warrenton “Roadwork” Contributors. (L to R) Tom Magnuson, Charmaine McKissick-Melton, Sears Bugg, Sue Loper, and Cliff Jackson.*
come through back in the 1840s, but the residents did not want it. Some say those in opposition ran the railroad representatives out of town. Instead the line was run three miles to the north of Warrenton. A large switching yard was built which set the stage for hotels and other businesses to sprout in response to the needs of the passengers and staff. Norlina evolved out of this development along the rail line, as did other communities like Ridgeway with its famously sweet cantaloupes shipped north to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York.

The railroad was of substantive value to the people of both northeastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia. There were small North Carolina stops along the way such as Warren Plains, Littleton, Thelma, Granite, and Gumberry. Norlina is known for being “where North Carolina begins.” Warrenton eventually became one of the stops with a three-mile track connecting it to the larger line, making it supposedly the shortest full-gauge rail line in the world.

**Follow the geology.**

*It will tell you what you need to know.*

~ Tom Magnuson

The railroad’s value as an employer contributed to the development of the area. Vilma Gatling, a local resident interviewed for the video, related how her father went from sharecropping to working on the railroad and that her five brothers also were eventually in its employ. The job offered a secure economic footing for many rail workers’ families and a way to pay for the college education of their children.

Train enthusiasts, archeologists, historians, library staff, middle school and college students, and senior citizens who lived these stories contributed to this video documentation of their history. Glover conveys how the project captivated and inspired him, as it did others: “I grew up in Henderson not far from here and I didn’t know a lot of this — the trading paths connection to our roads. Ms. Gatling and Ms. Lucy Holzmann filled in the holes for me. I never made a documentary film, but I learned how to be a better storyteller with film and video. I want a stake in this.”

[Map of Virginia Division Seaboard Railway. Drawn by Stanley Short.]
This extensive level of excitement expressed by Glover on the Warrenton project was also reflected in the group who worked on the “Cape Fear River: Road to Bladen County” project in Elizabethtown. Library staff, history enthusiasts, historians, writers, collectors, photographers, workers and landowners along the river, and other community participants could not contain their exuberance at the unveiling of the website where the fruits of their collaboration were collated. They were assisted by independent humanities scholar Gabriel Cumming. Their chosen objective was to collect and put online the oral histories of living sources, textual evidence, and visual representations of the Cape Fear River’s historical role as a conduit of commerce and human interactivity.

Horace Butler fascinates listeners when he recounts his logging experiences on the Cape Fear River. At 88 years old and the last logger to take a log raft down river in 1957, he is the repository of a life intimately linked to the Cape Fear. He will say his memory is fading then point out what he has seen and the process for getting timber down to the mills in Wilmington:

*We went in while the leaves were on the trees. We stump the trees. Normally six to eight weeks for the leaves to draw the sap out of the trees to make ‘em float. The oak and hickory, you needn’t even carry them to the river ‘cause you can’t make them float. Now the ash and tupelo are pretty good floaters. Sweet gum, maple, ash, poplar, and hackberry can sit six to eight weeks when the leaves start to fall off the tops. Then we’d go in and measure the logs up and cut ‘em to whatever length. And then, back then we had mules and log carts — pulled by a team. Of course machinery come in towards the last. But we’d haul the logs to the river.*

It could take as much as a week to get the long, snaking links of wood to their final destination. Along the way loggers slept in a tent set up on the raft. Butler, who still works in timber, calls this period in his life “the log rafting days” which consisted of “a lot of enjoyment and endurance.” This time resides not only in his heart and mind, but also in a little red book he carries around in which he recorded river shipping statistics and his anecdotal experiences.

Butler’s oral history is one of the several on the project website that can be accessed on the homepage of the Bladen County Public Library. The word-of-mouth recruitment of Butler and the other participants in this project happened as library director and project leader Rhea Hébert says, “when you least expected it. You get to talking and stuff comes out, whether it was at a book discussion, D.A.R., or church.”

Pat Braddy, who owns a sideboard salvaged from a wrecked steamboat that once moved up and down the Cape Fear, knew Butler. Hébert found out Frances T. Butler (no relation to Horace Butler) was a poet and invited her to consider writing something. “She jumped on it like a duck on a June bug,” says Hébert. Rich and vital content was provided by the Reverend Nash Odom who had a vast collection of weekly histories he had written for the local paper. Bill Gibson had already developed a website which uses a Google map to provide a satellite view of the river and the landings along it. This site and his “The Cape Fear River Steamers: Wilder Days on the Cape Fear” are linked to this project’s site. Laurie Smith, Lewis Smith, Richard Smith, none of whom are related, and a regal 99-year-old Mary Mintz...
...a water road
Of unexpected fame, the river is
Immortalized in films, which bear its name;
Acclaimed in articles and books and verse.
Born in the confluence of lesser streams,
The Haw and Deep, the waters of the Cape Fear River course southeastward toward the coast...

~ From The Cape Fear River Saga: A History in Poetry of Bladen County’s River Road by Frances T. Butler

also contributed memories and research that library staffer Shamella Cromartie mixed with the rest to create a wonderful interplay of “river road” history.

Both “NC Roadwork” projects continue to generate interest and the collection of additional personal histories and images. A specific commitment expressed by the participants is to make these digital stories more directly available to younger audiences. The different roads they traveled to bring local history together in one place is a path soon to be well-traveled.

For more information about “NC Roadwork,” contact Darrell Stover at dstover@nchumanities.org or (336) 334-5723.

At its November 2009 quarterly meeting, the Council welcomed seven new members.

**CYNTHIA (CINDY) BRODHEAD**, as the spouse of the President of Duke University, spends much of her time working to extend the outreach of the President to university and community constituencies. She currently serves on boards of Duke’s Nasher Museum of Art, Sarah P. Duke Gardens, Carolina Ballet, Preservation North Carolina, the Durham Arts Council, the Central North Carolina Chapter of the American Red Cross, and St. Joseph’s Historic Foundation Hayti Heritage Center. Brodhead graduated from Syracuse University; studied as a Ph.D. student at Yale University, where she earned an M.A. in English; and earned her law degree from the University of Connecticut School of Law. Before coming to Durham in 2004, Brodhead worked as a lawyer in the Connecticut law firm of Wiggin and Dana.

**CAMMIE R. HAUTFUHRER** of Charlotte earned a B.A. from Duke University and a J.D. from the University of Virginia, where she was the executive editor of the *Law Review*. She was Law Clerk for the Honorable Collins J. Seitz, United States Court of Appeals, third Circuit, and Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr., United States Supreme Court. Hauptfuhrer has practiced law both in New York City with Legal Aid Society of New York and in Charlotte with Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson. Her community involvement also includes the United Way of the Central Carolinas, Duke Divinity School Advisory Board, the Mecklenburg Ministries, Crossroads Charlotte Advisory Board, and the Cornerstone Project.

**TIMOTHY A. MINOR** is associate vice chancellor of University Development at North Carolina A&T State University. He is responsible for the day-to-day operations of A&T’s central development office comprising five departments, as well as the coordinated development activity of the university’s schools and unit development efforts across campus. Minor received a B.A. in political science from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill in 1994. An active citizen, Minor serves at his church, Abundant Hope, as the chair of the Nehemiah Ministry and its Campaign for Hope.

**LINDA E. OXENDINE** of Pembroke, whose tribal affiliation is Lumbee, is professor emeritus of the University of North Carolina Pembroke, where she served as Director and Curator of the Native American Resource Center from 1982 to 1986 and chaired the Department of American Indian Studies from 1989 to 2006. Oxendine has received numerous awards for her work, including the Advancement of Education Service Award from the Lumbee Regional Development Association, the Education Service Award from the United Tribes of North Carolina, and the Outstanding...
Humanities Council Welcomes New Chair

TOWNSEND (Towny) Ludington, who joined the North Carolina Humanities Council in 2007, is the Boshamer Distinguished Professor Emeritus of American Studies and English at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, where he taught from 1966 to 2004. He directed the American Studies program at UNC Chapel Hill from 1968 to 1971 and again in 1986 to 2001. In the late 1960s, Ludington participated in the creation of the African American Studies Program and was instrumental in launching a Native American Studies program, now housed in American Studies. Upon his retirement the Townsend Ludington Professorship in American Studies was established at the university.

Ludington is the author or editor of eleven books about American literature, art, and culture. Among them are the biographies *John Dos Passos: A Twentieth-Century Odyssey*, which won a North Carolina Mayflower Award, and *Marsden Hartley: The Biography of an American Artist*. In 2007 one of his essays received honorable mention for a Pushcart Prize.

Ludington taught in France on a Fulbright Lectureship; he has also taught in Spain and Germany. He has directed two National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institutes and served as Resident Scholar in American Studies for the U.S. International Communications Agency. In 1985–86 was awarded a fellowship at the National Humanities Center in the Research Triangle Park.

NEVA J. SPECHT, associate professor of History at Appalachian State University and associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, also serves as assistant chair and university liaison to the Blue Ridge Parkway. She teaches courses on museum education, public programming, and material culture as well as the History of Pirates. A native Iowan, Specht received her B.A. from Grinnell College (1989), and her M.A., Museum Studies Certification (1991), and Ph.D. from the University of Delaware (1997).

NC CONVERSATIONS • Winter • Spring 2010 • 41
Advisory Board Provides Statewide Support

FOR OVER TEN YEARS, the Humanities Council has enjoyed the support of an Advisory Board whose members create a network to extend and deepen the reach of the North Carolina Humanities Council across the state. Serving in an advisory capacity, this group gathers annually in the spring for a representative humanities program and a business meeting to learn about Humanities Council activities, budgetary needs, and new initiatives. Last spring’s program, entitled “Picturing Ourselves: Documenting North Carolina Lives,” featured North Carolina photographer and author Rob Amberg and Tom Rankin, Charles Thompson, and Courtney Reid-Eaton from the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University.

Under the leadership of previous chairs Bill Moore and Sally Robinson and under the current leadership of chair John Medlin, this group has provided resources to support the Teachers Institute, “Road Scholars,” special grant initiatives, and the Humanities Council’s annual campaign and to identify corporate and state support. Through the work of the advisory board, the reach of the public humanities in North Carolina continues to expand. For more information, contact executive director Shelley Crisp at (336) 334-5383 or scrisp@nchumanities.org.

NEH Chairman Visits North Carolina

IN A JANUARY EVENT hosted by the North Carolina Humanities Council and the Levine Museum of the New South, National Endowment for the Humanities Chairman Jim Leach made a stop in Charlotte as part of his nationwide “Civility Tour.” Before an evening lecture, Humanities Council board members, staff, project directors, and scholars met with Leach to describe how Humanities Council initiatives encourage civility by bridging cultures. Attending the meeting were Tom Hanchett, Neva Specht, Reneisha Black, Juliette Montauk-Smith, Carol Reinhardt, Emily Eply, Pamela Grundy, Magdalena Maiz-Peña, and Chris White.
Call for Nominations:
North Carolina Humanities Council Board

If you — or someone you know — can help advance the work of the Humanities Council, please consider making a nomination for membership on the Council Board. Visit www.nchumanities.org for details on the roles and responsibilities for Council members as well as information about where to send a nomination letter and résumé.

Nominations are due by April 15, 2010.

North Carolina Humanities Council Mission Statement and Core Values

The North Carolina Humanities Council serves as an advocate for lifelong learning and thoughtful dialogue about all facets of human life. It facilitates the exploration and celebration of the many voices and stories of North Carolina’s cultures and heritage.

The North Carolina Humanities Council is committed to

• an interdisciplinary approach to the humanities
• dialogue
• discovery and understanding of the humanities — culture, identity, and history
• respect for individual community members and community values
• humanities scholarship and scholars to develop humanities perspectives
• cultural diversity and inclusiveness
• informed and active citizenship as an outgrowth of new awareness of self and community.
2009 North Carolina Humanities Council Donors

We acknowledge with deep appreciation the many individuals and foundations that contributed to the North Carolina Humanities Council during the 2009 calendar year. Support from foundations, corporate givers, organizations, and individuals is critical in funding the Humanities Council’s programs and projects throughout the state. On behalf of all the North Carolinians served, the Humanities Council thanks its generous donors.

**DESIGNATED GIFTS**

**TEACHERS INSTITUTE ENDOWMENT**

The Alice S. Barkley Endowed Scholarship
John & Polly Medlin
Bob & Sally McCoy

Moore-Robinson Endowed Scholarship
Bill & Sandra Moore
Russell & Sally Robinson

Culbertson-Dagenhart-Hauptfuhrer Endowed Scholarship
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Larry & Sarah Dagenhart
Barnes & Cammie Hauptfuhrer

**TEACHERS INSTITUTE**

Borden Scholarship
Ed & Mary Martin Borden

Sally Dalton Robinson Scholarships
Carolyn T. Allen
Herb & Franinnie Browne
Paul & Jean Carr
Peter Caufield & Carol Lawrence
Genevieve Cole
Shelley Crisp & Myles Standish
Bob & Peggy Culbertson
Pepper & Roddey Dowd
Porter & Victoria Durham
Larry & Lynn Jones Ennis
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Frank & Jane Hanes
Barnes & Cammie Hauptfuhrer
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Teachers Institute Scholarship Fund

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Roxanne Newton
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**MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET**

Porter & Victoria Durham

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I QUILT because I have to. The feel of the fabric, the play of color and texture and shape, the quiet excitement and energy of coaxing a design, all nourish my spirit in ways that nothing else quite does. My quilt designs have been inspired by all sorts of things: the sparkling, shimmering yellow leaves on the side of the highway during an October drive from Charleston to Chapel Hill; the chartreuse of early spring leaves; a solitary chair; a description in a novel; a wood carving; a first trip to Africa; the voluptuous softness of a bolt of blue plaid Tasmanian wool; and more and more, the African Americans I study who lived in, and survived, slavery.

I do not come from a tradition of quilting because my family is from Jamaica, where the average temperature is 85 degrees. I learned, instead, by following the patterns in quilt books and magazines, but quickly grew tired of the repetition. I moved on to appliqué in which one piece of fabric is sewn on top of another. This allowed me to create scenes from my imagination and from drawings, paintings, a children’s book, a vase of flowers. Later, the African American history I was studying in graduate school began to seep into the quilts, and I incorporated documents and images from the past.

I do not think of these quilts with images as story quilts, even though some depict stories and each has its own story of what inspired it and how it was designed and constructed. Rather, I think of them more as documentary or history quilts that tell a historical narrative or raise questions about the past. One such quilt I simply call the “History Quilt.”

I wanted to depict both the brutality and resilience that were part of the experience of enslaved African Americans. Images in the quilt speak to separation and family and loss and hope and labor and creativity. I used advertisements of “Negroes for Sale” to speak of the ordinariness of slavery in American society. I offered runaway ads and spirituals as counterpoints to the domination exhibited in the prison and the chains. I paired the Emancipation Proclamation with a photograph of an African American soldier to reinforce the fact that African Americans contributed to their own emancipation. I now use this quilt in my African American History courses. On the first day of class I ask students to reflect on and interpret the images. On that very first day they begin to realize that they come into the classroom with skills of perception and interpretation, and they begin to appreciate the power and poignancy of the people and experiences we will spend the semester studying.

...as a quilter I am able to use words and images and color and physical texture to develop a narrative and convey and perhaps evoke emotion.
“History Quilt” by Heather Williams.
Some quilts grew out of a challenge to myself. For example, in “Rice Workers,” which features a photograph of young women, girls, and boys on a rice barge in South Carolina after the Civil War, I tried hard not to make a typical rectangular or square quilt. I was drawn in by the stance of the women, arms crossed or akimbo, and the skeptical, perhaps even hostile expressions on their faces. They do not appear pleased by the intrusion of the photographer yet may have felt powerless to stop him. I aimed for asymmetry in this quilt and found that achieving it took more time and intention than I had imagined. I used the triangular shape formed by some of the women’s arms as the design for many of the fabric pieces and, in order to remain true to my desire for asymmetry, I had to be careful not to think about how difficult it would be to bind or hang the completed quilt.

My quilts include a variety of fabric including cotton, silk, wool, polyester, and burlap. Some are machine-pieced, some hand-pieced or hand-appliquéd. I quilt all of them by hand. I am currently working on a hand-made quilt that I hope will be on the cover of my next book. In it, I traced over two letters written by enslaved people, one reconnecting with his former wife from whom he had been forcibly separated, the other from a mother asking her former owner what had become of her daughter from whom she was sold. Writing over their hand made me understand them a little better, made me sense something of their
“Information Wanted.” Quilt by Heather Williams.

Emotions that I could not fully grasp just by reading the letters. In addition to the hand-written text, this quilt incorporates antique doll clothing that I purchased in the North Carolina mountains last summer.

As an historian I rely on the written word to convey stories of the past; as a quilter I am able to use words and images and color and physical texture to develop a narrative and convey and perhaps evoke emotion.

**HEATHER ANDREA WILLIAMS**, associate professor of history at UNC Chapel Hill, teaches and writes about African Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Her book *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* was one of the texts used in the North Carolina Humanities Council’s Teachers Institute 2008 Summer Seminar, where Williams served as a lead scholar. She received both her M.A. and Ph.D. from Yale University and a J.D. from Harvard University.

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**Events and Deadlines**

**Large Grants**
For projects beginning after **July 15** and **December 15**
- Draft proposals are due **March 15** and **August 15**
- Final proposals are due **April 15** and **September 15**

**Mini-Grants**
Mini-grant applications must arrive at the Humanities Council office by the **first day of the month** and must be submitted at least **eight weeks** in advance of the program.

**Planning Grants**
There is no deadline for a planning grant.

**Road Scholars**
“Road Scholars” applications must be submitted at least **eight weeks** in advance of the requested program.

**Let’s Talk About It**
“Let’s Talk About It” applications must be submitted at least **eight weeks** in advance of the requested program.

**2010 Council Board Meetings**
June 4, September 11, November 12

**Museum on Main Street**
The *New Harmonies: Celebrating Roots Music* exhibition opens with a celebration on **March 13, 2010**, at the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History. See the complete schedule on page 35.

**New Board Member Nominations**
Nominations for new Council Board members must arrive in the Council office by **April 15, 2010**.

**Linda Flowers Literary Award**
Enteries must be postmarked by **August 15, 2010**.

**Teachers Institute Application Deadlines**
- “Searching for the Real Thing in American Roots Music,” Mount Airy Museum of Regional History, **March 4, 2010**
- “Appalachian Voices,” **April 12, 2010**
- “Searching for the Real Thing in American Roots Music,” Liston B. Ramsey Center for Regional Studies, **August 30, 2010**
The North Carolina Humanities Council serves as an advocate for lifelong learning and thoughtful dialogue about all facets of human life. It facilitates the exploration and celebration of the many voices and stories of North Carolina’s cultures and heritage. The North Carolina Humanities Council is a statewide nonprofit and affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.