

Glimpses of Grayson

Spring 2012

Office Open: Thursdays, 10am – 4pm
Or by appointment

Board of Director Meetings:

Usually the second Tuesday of each month
@7pm at the GCHS Office in Independence

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**We are currently seeking volunteers. If interested,
please call (276) 773-3320 for information.**

Grayson County Historical Society
P.O. Box 529
Independence, Virginia 24348
Web-site: <http://www.graysonvahistsoc.com>
Email:
graysoncountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

Eleanor Roosevelt

Eleanor Roosevelt was a trailblazing example of what an intelligent and socially aware woman could accomplish. Eleanor Roosevelt's future success was made more impressive by the fact that her childhood was marked by several hardships that might have discouraged a lesser woman from having the courage and determination necessary to make her mark on the world.

Eleanor's beloved father was an alcoholic who died when she was 10 years old. Her mother had died two years before and had occasionally teased Eleanor about her somber and unusually mature mannerisms. Eleanor ended up being raised by her grandmother; however, her rather plain appearance and the lack of close and supportive family ties threatened to undermine her self-esteem. She managed to rise above such limitations and became a prize pupil of a noted feminist during her time at a private school.

Even after her marriage to the dashing and dynamic Franklin Roosevelt, Eleanor faced an abrupt challenge to her sense of self-worth when she learned that her husband had been unfaithful to her. While Franklin ended his affair, his relationship with Eleanor became one based more on mutual support than any true romance. Adding to the marital strife was the fact that Franklin's mother, Sara, was possessive and domineering, and Eleanor found herself torn between a need to assert herself as a wife and mother and a desire to listen to and learn from her more experienced mother-in-law.

Eleanor decided to create an identity for herself that was separate from her husband's. She did so by forming friendships with educated people from various walks of life. Drawing upon their observations and her own experiences from her career as a worker at a settlement house, she became Franklin's social conscience and helped him gain a greater understanding of the needs of the American people. She became a tireless advocate for civil rights and she managed to acquire the facts needed to support her compassionate arguments for expansion of equal rights for women and minorities.

When Franklin became weakened by polio, Eleanor made herself his eyes and ears and travelled the country to see exactly how his various social reform programs were impacting the needy they were designed to help. In many cases, she found examples of how various New Deal programs were not being fairly applied to meet the needs of minority groups. Franklin Roosevelt respected his wife's insights, and he made necessary adjustments to many of the programs to expand their scope. She was the one advisor who could always reach him and her unique combination of personal conviction and unrelenting desire for change usually motivated him to take some action on behalf of the causes she supported. They formed a partnership that was far more satisfying in many ways than the difficult romance they had struggled with in the past.

After President Roosevelt's death, Eleanor continued to exert a positive influence on American society and global relations. She became a United Nations General Assembly delegate. Her work led to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which established a global standard for the measurement of basic human rights. She later worked with the Kennedy Administration to stimulate a series of legislative reforms designed to enhance the social and political rights of women. Truman called Eleanor Roosevelt "the First Lady of the World," and she left the world a better place because of her perpetual crusade for freedom and self-expression.



Eleanor Roosevelt and Ruth Bryan Owen in Washington D.C. (October 4, 1934).



Roger Marshall, a local cabinet maker, built the beautiful walnut cabinet in which the prized dress is displayed.

Pioneer industry in Grayson County was woolen mill at Mouth of Wilson

By Pete Rumbaugh
From the Galax Gazette
Progress Edition, April 1960

It was the year 1884, the year that Grover Cleveland defeated the Republican candidate James B. Blaine, to become the 22nd President of the United States. It was also the year that industry came to the twin counties.

F. J. McMillan thus became the pioneer of Grayson County industrial world when he built the woolen mill at Mouth of Wilson. Twelve years later, 1896, this plant was purchased by the late W. C. (Bill) Fields, who in passing, left the manufacturing business to his sons, Cam and D. H. Fields. So it is correct to say that in reality, the plant now operated by Fields Manufacturing Company is in its seventy-fifth year of continuous operation.

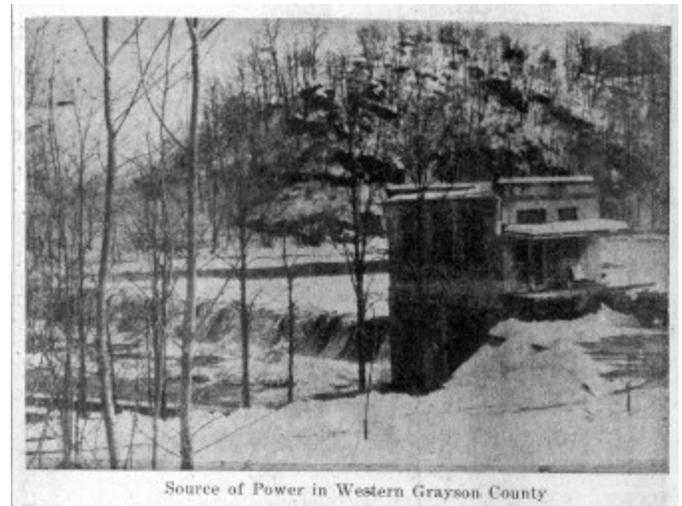
The plant was originally powered by the waterfall in Big Wilson Creek which proved adequate enough for the first forty years or more. The early product of the mill was yarns and then yarns and jeans. Progress had broken loose after the turn of the century and jeans from which housewives fashioned the suits of the men of their families, was pushed aside by the greater use of "store clothes" and other products were to be made.

Woolen blankets were the next major output of the mill, and this was soon to be replaced with the manufacture of special woolen cloths used extensively in the manufacture of cotton goods. These cloths are the chief item turned out at the mill as of this date.

By the year 1928, the Fields brothers, D. H. and Cam, had found the old water wheel power inadequate. It was the electric age but the nearest electric power was in Galax, Fries, or Marion. Independence had installed an electric plant but it had ceased to operate.

The present dam and power plant were started that year of 1928 but construction difficulties were encountered. During the years 1829 and 1930, the dam and power plant were completed.

Mouth of Wilson was now electrified. The new power plant furnished power for the mill, the business places of the corporation and more than 125 homes and farms in the community. In the meantime, farm homes began to use more and more current. R.E.A. came to existence, and just in time to relieve the Fields' project of part of its demand. The corporation still serves about 125 customers.



The dam and mill pond add to the beauty of the country. From this small beginning at Mouth of Wilson, where a dozen or so men and women were employed, industry has spread across the twin counties area to the extent that around five thousand people are employed by some thirty or more plants and mills.

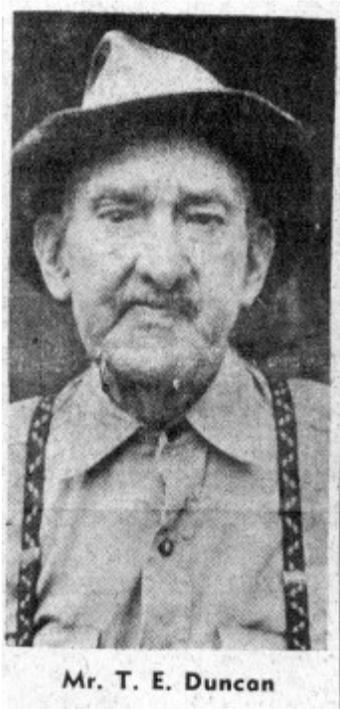
The pioneer industrial worker whose record may not be challenged anywhere in the state, is still on the payroll of that first industrial mill.

Again we pick up excerpts from the article carried in the June, 1959 issue of the Gazette Magazine Section:

Mr. T. E. Duncan can spin a yarn of the longest continuous span of employment of any man

in Virginia and it is apt to prove to be “all wool and a yard wide.”

Mr. Duncan, who celebrated his 88th birthday June 8th, reports to work regularly and does not leave the machines very far or for very many minutes. He calls people who change jobs every ten to twenty years “Job Hoppers.” He thinks that a man who stays on the job less than 30 to 40 years just does not have sticking qualities, and thinks very little of retirement plans.



Mr. Duncan has four sons and two daughters. Walter is an automobile dealer in Beckley, W. VA. Rays and Gene are merchants in Point Pleasant, W. Va. And Bradley, W.Va. Brill is now employed in Chilhowie, Va. One daughter, Mrs. Agnes Shaffer, lives in Huntington, W. Va., and another daughter, Mrs. Virgil (Mattie) Cox covers Mouth of Wilson personals for the Gazette.

As of this date, it is a toss up between the manufacturing industry and the livestock and dairy farming, when reckoning the total annual income in Carroll and Grayson Counties. At any rate each complements the other in making ours the best balanced area of the entire country.

Rufus A. Doughton (1857 – 1946) was a member of the North Carolina General Assembly from Alleghany County, North Carolina and Speaker of the State House of Representatives for one term (1891).

A Democrat, he was elected and served as Lieutenant Governor of North Carolina from 1893 to 1897. He played an important role in establishing the road system in North Carolina. In 1896, Doughton ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. House of Representatives.

Rufus was one of twelve children of J.H. and Rebecca Doughton of Laurel Springs, North Carolina. All twelve children—men and women—went to college. His family home is now a bed and breakfast called Doughton Hall. His brother, Robert L. Doughton, served in the U.S. House of Representatives for many years (1911–1953) and helped write the Social Security Act. Robert chaired the House Ways and Means Committee for many years, longer than any other Congressman. Rufus Doughton married Sue Parks and they had two children. His son, James Kemp Doughton, followed in his footsteps, also getting elected to the state legislature and serving for several years as Speaker of the House.

Our Thanks To . . .

Rich Kreiss and Linda Gent for the donation of two CDs containing the family tree of Jonathan Richard Comer (1795-1873), documenting nine generations of his descendants. These files contain an alphabetical index of names and an annotated list of sources. It is an encyclopedic work, containing much information on descendants with other surnames such as Barker, Blevins, Campbell, Carico, Duncan, Holdaway, Parsons, Pugh, Reedy and many others.

Hazel Anne Burnett for the century old photo of the six children of Allen Moxley and Ida Jane Warden.

Letter from the President

By Amelia Bland Waller

It has been too long since we last composed a newsletter. As I explained in a recent letter to the membership, Grayson County has experienced considerable hardship over the past decade owing in large measure to the economy and loss of local population. The Historical Society has not been immune.

However, much like the nation as a whole, we are facing these challenges. We have undertaken steps to become more efficient and financially sound. We are exploring ways to become more relevant to our membership and to the community at large. Indeed, this effort has led to a discussion of “bigger picture” issues relating to the Society’s future. For example, as primary source material such as census data, vital statistics, and marriage, birth and death records becomes increasingly digitized and accessible via the internet, what future role will small community organizations such as ours play in this new landscape?

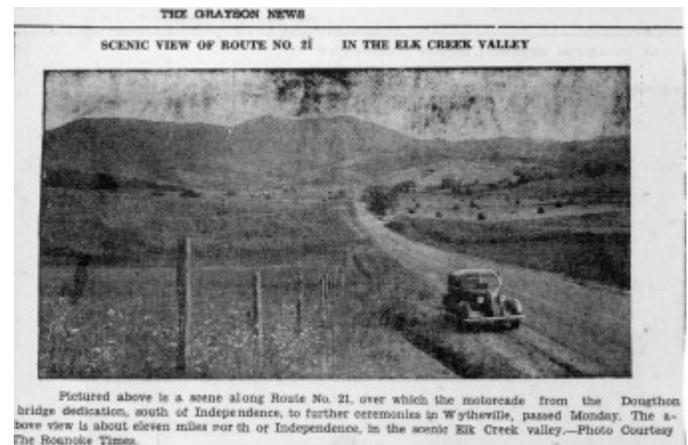
While it may be premature to speculate, I would remind all who share an interest in Grayson County:

The Society is not merely a custodian of archival material; we are also an expression and interpreter of an ongoing narrative that radiates in all directions both past and future. Let’s hope that story is never eclipsed by the vicissitudes of technology.

On a celebratory note, we hope you will be able to join us on May 12, 2012 from 4 – 6 p.m. at the 1908 Courthouse in Independence, to honor the donors of two items to GCHS : a dress worn by Eleanor Roosevelt, who visited the Whitetop Music Festival in 1933; and a black walnut display cabinet, constructed to museum standards by GCHS Board Member Roger Marshall, which will house the dress in perpetuity. We will have mountain music, wine and hors d’oeuvres. Dr. Kate Foreman will speak about the historical significance of Mrs. Roosevelt’s visit to Grayson County. For those of us who love Grayson County, its culture and history, the “Roosevelt Dress Reception” should be a delightful event. The event is not a fundraiser, but admission

will be charged to cover costs. For more information or to purchase tickets, please call 276/773-3320 or e-mail graysoncountyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com. We hope to see you there!

Lakes 2 Florida, Rt. 21



US 21 in the pre-Interstate era was a north–south highway connecting the area around [Lake Erie](#) and the coastal South. One of the few true north–south routes to cross the middle Appalachian Mountains, it became an important corridor for motor traffic between northeastern [Ohio](#), western [Pennsylvania](#), (with [U.S. Route 19](#)) and western [New York state](#) and central [North Carolina](#), central and southeastern [South Carolina](#), and by connecting with other highways, coastal [Georgia](#) and most of [Florida](#).

US 21 originally (in 1926) connected [Cleveland, Ohio](#) and [Yemassee, South Carolina](#). In 1935 it was extended to [Beaufort, South Carolina](#), and again in 1953 to its current southern terminus at the [Atlantic Coast](#) at [Hunting Island State Park](#), between the city of [Beaufort](#) and [Fripp Island](#).

In the [Interstate Highway](#) era much of U.S. 21 became an obvious corridor for a long-distance expressway. The [West Virginia Turnpike](#) between [Charleston, West Virginia](#), and [Princeton, West Virginia](#), was the first segment of a planned series

of toll highways along or near US 21 from [Cleveland, Ohio](#) to [Charlotte, North Carolina](#). All of the other toll highways were shelved in favor of freeways built with Interstate funding; these

freeways and the West Virginia Turnpike became [Interstate 77](#), which completely supplants old U.S. 21 as a long-distance through route. Interstate 77 was later extended to [Columbia, South Carolina](#), also within a few miles of US 21.

In Virginia, US 21 now runs from the NC state line below Independence to Wytheville, for a total length of 36 miles. US 21 appeared as an original US Route in 1927. It was routed over the entirety of original VA 26. It ran from the NC line to the WV line at Bluefield, on its way to Cleveland, OH.

The 1927 route between Wytheville and Bland was rather direct, but US 21 was rerouted to swing west through Favonia and Big Walker Lookout in 1928. The old alignment was not numbered after that, although the route in Bland is today's VA 98. US 21 was truncated to its current endpoint in 1980, leaving behind US 52 and current VA 598.

Great Lakes to Florida Highway Museum set to open its doors

The grand opening of the Great Lakes to Florida Highway Museum will be held Saturday, Aug. 20. Festivities will take place from 10am to 2pm.

Events will include a ribbon-cutting at 10:15am and antique cars, samples of Wythe County barbeque sauce, and free tours of new museum.

The new museum is adjacent to the E. Lee Trinkle Regional Visitors Center at 975 Tazewell Street, Wytheville. Entrance and parking will be at the Visitor's Center.

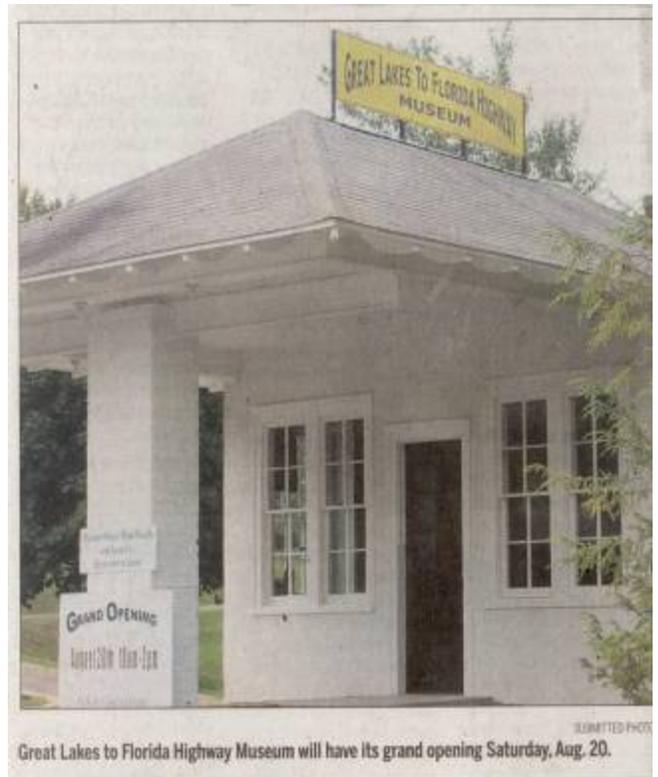
This is the third museum for the Town of Wytheville Museums and the newest addition to the

Willow Brook Jackson/Umberger Homestead Museum Interpretative Site on Tazewell Street.

Visit the recreated 1926-1950's era gas station and return to the days when the Great Lakes to Florida Highway (Route 21) was the main route from Ohio to Florida.

The museum includes original artifacts, newspaper clippings and exhibits that tell the story of the development of Route 21 and Interstate 77.

For more information, call 276-223-3330.



Our Thanks To . . .

Imogene Sutherland, for the donation of her life-long collection of articles and materials relating to Grayson County communities and families. We are working to compile these materials in an accessible format. Please visit our office to see this valuable contribution to our collection.

Mary Wingate and Katherine McLean, for the donation of Ms. McLean's collection of old Galax Gazette newspapers. Some of the articles in this newsletter are derived from this gift. Thank you!

GRAYSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

The Grayson County Historical Society, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, chartered for the purpose of collecting, preserving and sharing the rich history of Grayson County, Virginia. The Society membership meets on the second Tuesday of March, June, September and November at 7:00 p.m. at a location to be announced. Members are also invited to the Society's annual picnic and Christmas dinner; date, time and location TBA. Dues are assessed annually in January and are not pro-rated.

- Individual Annual Membership (outside USA add \$5) \$15.00
- Family Annual Membership (outside USA add \$5) \$20.00
- Lifetime Individual Membership \$200.00

Please complete and detach the form below, and mail with your check payable to "GCHS" to P.O. Box 529, Independence VA 24348.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

I am currently searching for information regarding these surnames in Grayson County:

**Grayson
County
Historical
Society**



P.O. Box 529
Independence, VA 24348

(276 773-3320)

graysoncountyhistoricalsociety
@gmail.com

Guidelines for Glimpses of Grayson

The Publicity Committee of Glimpses of Grayson has established the following guidelines for material submitted for publication:

- The committee reserves the right to accept or reject materials sent for publication and to edit all materials if necessary.
- Any material copied from a printed publication must be identified and accompanied by written permission of the author or copyright owner before it can be published.
- Materials will be placed in the society's archives unless otherwise specified. A self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) must accompany those items to be returned.
- There is no charge for publishing queries for GCHS members.
- Be concise and be specific. Do not abbreviate. Be sure to include sender's name and address.
- All queries should be mailed to the society's post office box.
- The committee cannot assume responsibility for accuracy of data submitted.

**Today's news is tomorrow's history.
Help us preserve it.**

About Our Organization...

The Grayson County Historical Society is a non-profit organization chartered for the purpose of collecting, preserving, and sharing the rich history of Grayson County, VA. The society meets quarterly on the second Tuesday of March, June, September, and November. Check local newspapers for location and subject of the next program.

The public is invited to attend.

**Grayson County Historical
Society**
P.O. Box 529
Independence, Virginia 24348