



On Your MARC

MUSEUM & ARCHIVES OF ROCKINGHAM COUNTY

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MARC seeks diary entries regarding pandemic

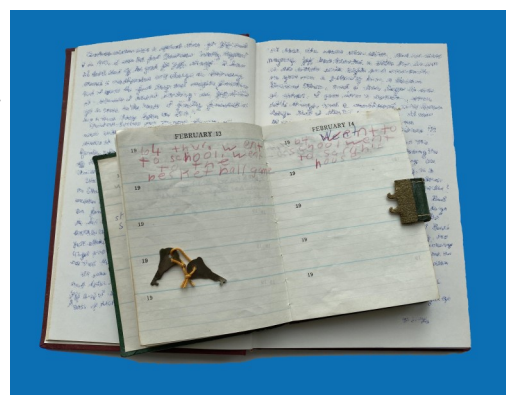
With the Coronavirus (COVID-19) spreading, Rockingham County citizens, like people worldwide, are finding ourselves bound to the confines of our own homes. The frantic pace of modern life has ground to a halt and social distancing has become the new normal.

Once a popular past time, diary writing has sadly fallen out of fashion in the 21st century. But it is during testing times like these that telling stories can unite us and reconnect us with what it means to be human. Therefore, the MARC has created a platform on our website for sharing thoughts and experiences related to this historically significant phenomenon.

History books will recount the statistics of the pandemic. But, our thoughts, feelings, and reactions will only be known if they are documented now. MARC offers our *Distancing Diaries Project* as a means of preserving the more ephemeral, personal histories of everyday people, of all ages and backgrounds, to document current concerns - from worries to unexpected positives, or from new ways of interacting as family to quiet moments of reflection. How are we coping? What are we doing differently? How will our lives change from this?

Keeping a diary is known as both a therapeutic emotional outlet and as an opportunity to capture the sentiments that connect us as people. It is our hope that participation in MARC's *Distancing Diaries Project* will help promote good mental health as we give an enduring voice for those of us experiencing this crisis together.

We encourage members and friends to contribute to this gathering of personal histories [HERE](#). Entries can be anonymous, and you are welcome to submit as often as you wish. Hard copy entries may be mailed or delivered to MARC.



We are a part of history in the making. The pandemic is a big, big deal and will be viewed as such for years to come. Your contributions to the *Distancing Diaries Project* will provide the emotional connection for future generations to better understand our experiences.



Member
Federation of NC
Historical Societies

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From our director, Matthew Titchiner

MARC our Words!

Dear friends and supporters of MARC,

So much has happened since the last newsletter in January, not least that I am currently writing this from the confines of my home, like so many of you adjusting to the new reality ushered in by the public health crisis.

On March 13, MARC's leadership made the difficult decision to temporarily close our operation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our absolute top priority has been and continues to be the health and well-being of our visitors, members, staff, and the wider communities we serve. We are continuing to monitor developments and official advice closely, and updating our status through our Facebook page and website. We plan to be back to normal operations as soon as is safe.

We have added a dedicated COVID-19 & Public Health page to our website, collating a compendium of federal government, State of North Carolina, and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) information and resources to help people navigate this challenging time. Our website also outlines MARC's role in this crisis, our ethos, actions, and public commitment. I encourage you to click the link [HERE](#) to access this valuable resource.

In the meantime, we will use a slightly different medium to continue to 'MARC our words' and drive forward our historical and educational mission to serve you, our MARC ambassadors,

"Creating cultural experiences whilst providing resources and materials to the local community and visitors to preserve and celebrate the history of the area" - MARC Vision Statement

Even when our facilities are closed, we are available to connect with you digitally. We are accessible by email no matter where we are working. We continually seek ways to share treasures from our vault and exhibits via Facebook and our website, and we welcome your suggestions for new ways we can serve you. We recently launched a new feature, "This Month In Rockingham County History," on Facebook and on the 'History Corner' section of our website. You can learn more about this work on page 6 of this newsletter. And, I strongly encourage you to contribute your observations, actions, and reactions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic by participating in our *Distancing Diary Project*. This cathartic learning tool for children and adults alike will give life and meaning to the details of this horrific experience in Rockingham County to educate future generations. Click [HERE](#) to make your first entry!

Finally, from myself and the MARC team, we wish everyone good health and bid you to stay safe.



Volunteers are the key to our suc -

MARC volunteer's experience triggers growth and opportunity

The adage, "plan your work and work your plan," has been proven true in many realms of life. By putting that adage into action, our featured volunteer, Zachary Gauldin of Reidsville, is opening doors to achieve his life goals.



From decorator to docent, Zach Gauldin is open to any opportunity to gain experience in museum operations. He and Libby Barrett created this display for Pickin' at the MARC and quickly transitioned it into a Christmas theme a few weeks later.

Zach is a 2018 graduate from Rockingham Early College High where he earned his Associate in Arts degree. His plans to finish his four-year degree are on hold while he works to save for educational expenses. Because of his interest in history and science, Zach is considering a career in the museum field, and his desire to learn more about the work led him to offer his services as a volunteer at MARC.

The day he first appeared at MARC's door was a great turning point for Zach and MARC! Both Nadine Case, MARC's Volunteer Coordinator/Administrative Assistant, and Zach recall the shy introduction he gave of himself and his purpose. With the pending tasks at MARC far exceeding the number of hands to do them, we were most grateful for his offer.

Since that day in August of 2019, Zach has given a great deal of his personal time to MARC - including full days on most Saturdays. He has cheerfully helped with filing, organizing, housekeeping, preparing for and helping with events, and handling duties at the admissions desk.

As Zach became more involved here, he also grew in his self-confidence. During one of the de-cluttering jobs, he found a spare copy of the MARC docent manual which he took home to study. The manual gave him in-depth knowledge of MARC exhibits which the once-shy docent now enjoys sharing with guests on tours of the museum and at Wright Tavern. "Interactions with guests now rank at the top of the list as my favorite volunteer duty. Being in a museum setting is something I really want to do. Every task I do - from cleaning to tours is a great experience for me," Zach said.

Sadly, MARC does not have funds to pay for Zach's valuable skills and service. However, when Zach found an advertisement for a paid position at the Greensboro Science Center, Nadine, along with Director Matthew Titchiner gave Zach their complete support to apply and prepare for the hiring process. He had only worked there a few days when the COVID virus forced public facilities to temporarily close. As Matthew said, "Zach has been a fantastic addition to our volunteer team, bringing much enthusiasm to our tours and events. I am thrilled and proud MARC could offer him valuable experience that has helped him progress in the museum sector. It is our desire for all volunteers to achieve a sense of personal growth and satisfaction from their experiences with MARC." Thankfully, Zach will still volunteer at MARC, too!

Archives & Galleries

Non-profits face challenges of pandemic proportions

This unprecedented time has brought financial worry to individuals, businesses, and communities all around the world. One of the hardest hit casualties may be the non-profit sector. Many institutions that are seen as stalwart and even immutable pillars of communities, such as cultural heritage organizations, religious organizations, and food banks, now face the very real situation that they may not exist after the dust settles from the economic effects of the Corona virus. For historical museums, the advocacy of history's importance is a tenet often expressed in justifying their own existence. That view has never been more poignant. The disappearance of our beloved museums would not only leave a void for essential learning and recreation, but would also risk the history of communities being lost forever.



These friends from Burlington, NC, enjoyed a full morning touring MARC one Saturday in February.

The MARC, like all non-profits, relies on funding from donations, memberships, and grants to open our doors and provide a diverse program of events and services. As we continue to try and support our audiences during and after this economic struggle, we too need a helping hand. No matter the amount, if you can spare a little to help us through this crisis, your donation will be a true investment in Rockingham County's heritage and will be gratefully appreciated. You can make a one-time donation or set up recurring donations of any amount through our secure website page [HERE](#) or send a check to: The MARC, P.O. BOX 84, Wentworth, NC 27375.

How can we support MARC to replace our economic losses caused by COVID-19?

- Donations, large and small, are needed for current cash flow
- Support MARC at our Annual Summer Gala, our primary fundraising event
- All membership renewals we receive at this time will help the current cause. Prior to the crisis, we were finalizing work to transition our membership records to museum management software. This will allow us to maintain more accurate records to help keep memberships current.
- You can support MARC every time you shop Amazon at no cost to you. Please designate the Museum and Archives of Rockingham County for all your Amazon purchases.

During this time of social distancing, if you are sorting through closets and files, remember the MARC might be interested in documents or items related to local schools, businesses, family histories, sports, and communities.

If you are updating technology in your home or business, MARC needs used iPads, flat panel TV's and laptop computers.

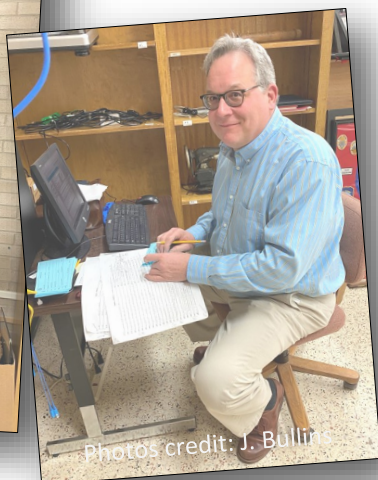
Recent Events

February's Food for Thought celebrates Black History Month



Our fourth *Food for Thought: Barbeque* event on February 29 attracted 92 guests, the highest attendance ever for our annual Black History Month celebration. Many thanks to our speaker, Valencia Abbot, (right photo with Matthew Titchiner) for her vision and desire to honor cultural traditions through the lens of food. We are also grateful to these local eateries and volunteers who donated a variety of wonderful 'Southern' culinary delights and assisted: Short Sugars (Reidsville), Ronni's Restaurant (Madison), That Little Pork Shop (Eden), Kelly's Kitchen (Reidsville), Raven Abbott, Valencia Abbott, Libby Barrett, Ann Brady, Bonnie Brooks, Jean Bullins, Bob Carter, Nadine Case, Zach Gauldin, Willy Graham, Joyce Hales, Marcia Jones, Elaine McCollum, Dan Mosca, Hazel Puckett, Debbie Russell, Samantha Thomas, Dani Titchiner, and Sylvia Via.

Legacy Archival Project has a strong start



The launching of the *Legacy Archival Project* in January was met with great success and enthusiasm - more than we ever imagined! Attracting no less than 15 volunteers, folks both familiar and new, we are cataloguing and organizing some of MARC's lesser known vault collections and archives. We have made great first strides in the project, and everyone is looking forward to getting back and delving into the preservation and mystery solving process when MARC reopens.

Marie and Bert Schmitz from Stokesdale (photos left) are MARC visitors whose enthusiasm led them to become regular volunteers in the *Archival Project*. With the long-term nature of the project it is never too late to join. For more information, click [HERE](#).

Reaching the community

Monthly articles to revisit county's intriguing past

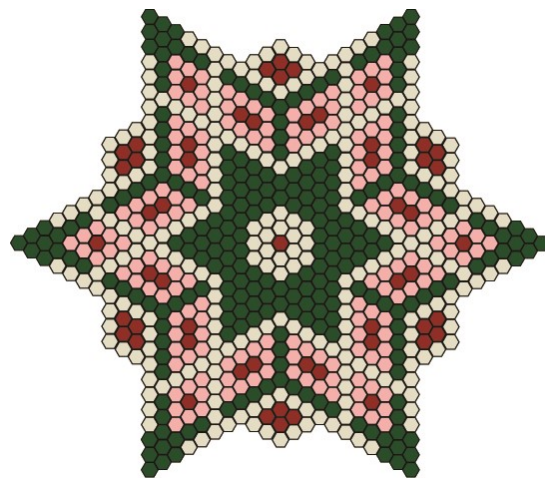
By Debbie Russell

I am enjoying researching and writing a monthly article, "This Month in Rockingham County History," for the MARC website and Facebook page. While researching my dissertation topic, a local history, I spent many hours delving through old Rockingham County newspapers and records. In doing so, I came across dozens of topics that interested me. In fact, stopping to read them and take notes on the gems that caught my eye slowed me down a great deal, but I came to a much better understanding of the area where I have lived my entire life.

Writing "This Month in Rockingham County History" gives me an opportunity to use some of these notes to share the once newsworthy topics of local interest. I also plan to present other topics that seem timely, doing original research in primary sources whenever possible. When available, articles will be illustrated with MARC archival material. Feel free to contact MARC to recommend topics you would like to read about.

We may think that "history" is something significant that happened somewhere else in years past. But, of course, every place has its own history and the local details of day-to-day life in each era can help us understand history's broader patterns. In fact, looking thoughtfully into the past can, I believe, be a vehicle for a deeper understanding of our common humanity and might even make us better people. I hope that readers of "This Month in Rockingham County History" will enjoy dipping into a moment from the past and learning a little more about our county and the people who lived here before us.

Dr. Deborah Russell earned her Ph.D. in history in 2019 from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Prior to her graduate studies, the Madison native retired from a career in Rockingham County Schools where she taught a variety of subjects, including English, AP United States History, Spanish, newspaper, and yearbook. She served as a teaching assistant and adjunct instructor while attending UNCG. We are grateful for her contributions on the MARC Board of Directors, as MARC Secretary, a member of the Publicity Committee, and Legacy Project volunteer.



Watch for the star logo (above) which designates issues of "This Month In Rockingham County History." Articles are posted around the middle of the month on Facebook and in the History Corner on the MARC website [HERE](#).

This graphic design replicates the original pattern of the floor tile at the center of MARC's old courthouse section, beneath our automobile exhibition in the rotunda. It has been said this location is at the geographical center of Rockingham County.



We are pleased to announce the Museum and Archives of Rockingham County is now an affiliate with the Federation of North Carolina Historical Societies, a nonprofit organization operating under the auspices of the Office of Archives & History, NC Department of Natural & Cultural Resources.

Among other benefits, membership provides access to a statewide network of history professionals; support for the publication of local history books, educational media, or development of special events; and opportunities to host free traveling exhibits.



Mr. History: Bob Carter, County Histori-

The History of Matrimony Mill

Bob provided this research to assist with the Matrimony Creek Greenway signage project sponsored by the Dan River Basin Association and the City of Eden. They are enhancing the trail with signs to convey the historical and natural significance of the area. Damage from flooding in February has caused a temporary closure for repairs.

For more information on the trail, visit [HERE](https://www.edennc.us/609/Matrimony-Creek-Greenway) (<https://www.edennc.us/609/Matrimony-Creek-Greenway>)

Matrimony Creek rises in southern Henry County, Virginia and flows through Rockingham County, joining the Dan River at the western city limits of Eden. The stream is approximately twelve miles long. In 1728, when William Byrd was surveying the boundary line between the colonies of North Carolina and Virginia, he wrote in his diary that Matrimony was “call’d so by an unfortunate married man because it was exceeding noisy and impetuous.”

Waterfalls along the creek provided excellent energy to operate mills. Soon after the region began to be populated by white settlers, water-powered grist mills were erected to grind corn to make bread – then considered the staff of life.

Records show that a mill had been erected at the Matrimony Mill site near the five-foot waterfall, the largest on the creek, by July 1764; however, it is not known who built the first mill. In 1782, a tract of 640 acres was granted by the State of North Carolina to James Leak, a brother of Leaksville founder, Captain John Leak. In 1786, James Leak sold a one-hundred-acre tract with the mill to Reece Price. Sometime between 1786 and 1793, Reece Price built a gristmill there. In 1793, he sold the mill to John Gibson and within the next few years, the mill was destroyed by flood or fire. In 1797, the Rockingham County court gave Gibson permission to rebuild the mill.

In 1800, the mill property passed into the hands of Joshua Lindsay, a millwright. Under his ownership, the site included a grist mill, sawmill, and a cotton machine. In 1831, a Leaksville citizen, George Jones, purchased the mill property. Jones died in 1839 and later his heirs sold the property to the Lanes, Moirs, and Roberts, who carried on the mills, cabinet shop, carriage shop, sawmills, and a tan yard. The family of Benton Field was active in these enterprises.

In 1859, Thomas A. Ragland, a native of Halifax, Virginia, purchased the mill property and by 1860 had established an iron foundry near the mill. The foundry produced plows, frying pans, skillets, and other castings. During this period, Daniel and John E. Fields, sons of Benton Fields, carried on the milling business at Matrimony.

In 1862, Jones W. Burton, a Leaksville merchant, purchased one-half interest in the mills and foundry. Two years later he purchased the remaining half interest in the property. Following the Civil War, Burton was forced into bankruptcy. At the sale of Burton’s property in 1868, Thomas A. Ragland purchased the entire enterprise for \$300.

In 1869, Ragland sold the mill and foundry to Dan E. Field, but Ragland reserved the use of the foundry for the next four years. At some point Casper Rodenhizer became a partner in the foundry business with Ragland. Casper Rodenhizer died, and his heirs continued the foundry business.

Between 1884 and 1886, the three heirs each sold their interest in the foundry to Zebedee Beale. Beale continued both the milling and foundry business at the Matrimony Mill site. In 1886, Beale advertised in the

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Mr. History: Bob Carter, County Historian

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Dan Valley Echo (Leaksville, NC) that he would continue the foundry operation making all kinds of castings, plows, and hollowware. This is the last known reference to the foundry. A few years later, Beale lost the property when he defaulted on the property mortgage.

Between 1895 and 1898, the Matrimony Mill was purchased by Jesse C. and E. B. King. They were the sons of Joseph B. King who had owned a grist and sawmill on the upper reaches of Matrimony Creek located a short distance below the Virginia state line. That mill became known as “King’s Upper Mill” and the Matrimony Mill near Leaksville became known as “King’s Lower Mill.” In 1893, Joseph King sold the upper mill to his brother, D. F. King, a well known Leaksville businessman. The upper mill was no longer in operation after 1940.

Jesse and E. B. King leased their lower mill to various millers, and in 1908, the wood frame dam was replaced by a rock dam. The mill continued to use a water turbine to power the milling enterprise. The King brothers gave their mill a new name in the early 1900s – Liberty Mills.



**King's Mill Dam
Circa 1909**

Photo credit: From the
collection of the late
Peggy Osborne.
MARC Archives

In 1909, the towns of Leaksville, Spray, and Draper still had no electric service. That year, E.B. King and J. Frank King formed the Leaksville Light and Power Company under the direction of their father, Joseph B. King. The company began service by generating electric power with the Liberty Mill turbine, providing electricity to customers from sundown until 11:00 pm. They began business with 79 customers. As more houses were wired and added to the system, it became necessary to increase the amount of electricity generated, and the company purchased a two-cylinder diesel engine. Later they added a large Hamilton Corlis steam engine with a 30-foot flywheel. When still more capacity was needed, they added two large coal burning steam boilers that were erected in front of the Liberty Mill building.

By 1917, the company was no longer able to generate enough power, and they began to purchase electricity from Southern Public Utility Company, a forerunner of Duke Energy. In 1931, the Kings sold their power company to Southern Public Utility Company, and the days of the small power company were over.

(Continued on page 9)

Coming events

Korean War exhibit opening planned for June

A highlight in our event schedule for this year is the opening of the Korean War exhibit, which is scheduled as a members-only event on June 18. The public opening is due to take place on June 25. We are most hopeful that these dates do not change due to the current public health crisis.

Marie Southern initiated this exhibit several years ago when she first loaned us objects related to the military service of her husband, James "Jay" Percy Southern. She also contributed funds to establish the gallery. Her desire to honor her husband and other Korean War veterans inspired the plan for the exhibit to look at the conflict through the eyes of the American service men and women who experienced it.

MARC Director Matthew Titchiner says, "I am keen to promote members-only preview evenings. This membership benefit not only provides sneak peeks at the new exhibits, but they also provide the opportunity to discuss their meanings with the team of staff and volunteers who have researched and designed the displays. Our Korean War exhibit will be small but poignant, housing several personal artifacts from a local Korean War veteran and providing information on this often forgotten war."

Mr. History: Bob Carter, County Historian

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Various millers continued the flour, corn, and sawmill business at Liberty Mills. On 7 March 1937, the old King's mill was destroyed by fire of unknown origin. King's losses on the building were estimated at \$15,000 and R. W. Howerton's losses in the operation were about \$1500. Later in that year a new corporation, Leaksville Milling Company, was formed with Howerton, J. Frank King, and Bessie King as partners. At this time, E. B. King sold his interest in the mill property to the new company. A new mill was rebuilt on the old foundations. The building was similar to the old mill that had burned. The new mill produced flour, corn meal, and animal feed under miller R. W. Howerton. In 1946, Howerton sold the mill to F. H. Jennings, but the following year Howerton re-purchased the business.

In 1956, the Howerton heirs sold the mill to Albert Lee Scott, who had been employed at the mill since the mid-1940s. Scott continued to run the mill until around 1970 when the stone dam burst. The mill structure with all the milling equipment stood dormant until 15 October 1994 when the building was burned by fire of unknown origins, thus ending two hundred years of milling history at the site.



Photo credit: Used with permission from the book, "A Tale of Three Cities, Eden's Heritage".

MARC Business

Recent grants help fund repairs and program-

The Marion Steadman Covington Foundation awarded MARC a \$25,000 matching grant for essential infrastructure repair on the old courthouse heating system (some of the pipes are older than our exhibits!). As landlord of the building, the Rockingham County Commissioners voted at a March meeting to provide the required match so that work can begin in the new fiscal year.

The Town of Wentworth awarded a \$13,000 grant to MARC to assist with operations and educational programming. Matthew Titchiner expressed his appreciation for the diligent work of the MARC leadership to support our grant requests and presentations, as well as thanking the Covington Foundation and local governments for their assistance and endorsement of the mission of the museum. As a non-profit organization, we depend on donations, memberships, grants, and fundraisers to fund our existence.

In remembrance of our long-time friends

Sadly, we will miss two members of our organization whose ties date back to our original Historical Society days.



Honesta Dobyns, who served as Historical Society president in 2002-03, passed away January 25, 2020. During her tenure as president, she promoted group outings to regional historic sites and maintenance of the society's Iron

Works, High Rock, and Wright Tavern properties. With the help of their son, Bo, Honesta and her husband James restored The Hermitage, a Rockingham County landmark. Their work saved the home from ruin and provided a great place of pride and happiness for the historic minded family.

Dr. Roy Truslow passed away in Greensboro, NC on February 23 at the age of 98. Dr. Truslow was a life member and supported the Historical Society and MARC for many years. His son and daughter-in-law, Dr. Will and Mary Truslow continue his interest in MARC, as Mary recently served a term on the board and Will is a current director.



Save the date -- **Saturday, August 1**
At -- **Pennrose Park Country Club in Reidsville**

Seventh Annual Summer Gala

Please plan to join us to celebrate and support the MARC!

Our British theme will pay homage to the origins of the county and British Prime Minister Charles Watson-Wentworth, from whom Wentworth and the county take their names.

Staying connected to history during the health crisis

By Debbie Russell

In these days when we are mandated to stay home, trying to stay healthy, and trying to slow the spread of the coronavirus, there are many engaging websites that can keep us connected to history. Here are some I am aware of and can recommend if, like me, you find history fascinating and just love to learn.

First, please stay connected to our **MARC website**. There you will find the *Distancing Diary Project* described elsewhere in this issue where you can contribute your own “history” of these unprecedented times. You can also access “This Month in Rockingham County History,” Bob Carter’s “Mr. History” articles, and other contributions from our members at “The History Corner.” [HERE](#) And don’t forget that archived copies of your “On the MARC” newsletter from 2016 to the present are available there as well.

The **H. Lee Waters Films archived at the Duke University Library site** are fascinating silent films, time capsules of daily life in many Piedmont North Carolina towns during the 1930s and 1940s. (Some VA and SC towns are also included.) Read about photographer Lee Waters and then watch films of folks at work, at school, and at leisure in several towns and communities, including some in Rockingham County. (<https://repository.duke.edu/dc/hleewaters>) Click on “Movies of Local People, 1936-1942.”

“**This Day in North Carolina History**” is an engaging history resource. For each day of the year, the staff at the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, the State Archives, and the State Library post two or three short descriptions of significant historic events that have happened in NC on that date. You can check the site from time to time or subscribe to their e-mail list and get a daily dose of NC history in your in-box. (<https://www.ncdcr.gov/blogs/this-day-in-north-carolina-history>)

From 1908 to 1924, **photographer Lewis Hine** documented the lives of working people, especially child labor. His photographs of textile workers from these years can be found at the **Library of Congress website**. At this site, more than 200 of the 1600-plus photographs of mill workers are from North Carolina. (<https://www.loc.gov/collections/national-child-labor-committee/?fa=subject:textile+mill+workers>)

The **North Carolina Digital Collections**, sponsored by the State Archives of NC and the State Library of NC, offer a wide variety of primary sources—early newspapers, school yearbooks, posters from the world wars, oral histories from veterans, travel and tourism photographs, and more. (<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/>) or (<https://www.ncdcr.gov/resources/digital-collections-online-exhibits>)

The editors of ***Commonplace: The Journal of Early American Life*** describe their publication as “a bit less formal than a scholarly journal, and a bit more scholarly than a popular magazine.” Researched and written by some of today’s most respected historians, this source offers reliable information and sound interpretations through thought-provoking articles. Click on the “Learn” or “Objects” tabs to get started. Helpful lessons are also included under the “Teach” tab. (<http://commonplace.online/>)

The **UNC Greensboro Digital Collections** website contains a trove of educational materials on a wide variety of historical topics. (<http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/>) Click on “Featured Projects” for four of the most consulted: “Civil Rights Greensboro,” “Good Medicine: Greensboro’s Hospitals and Healers,” “NC Runaway Slave Advertisements,” and “Textiles, Teachers, and Troops.”

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ON YOUR MARC Staff

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Bob Carter	Matthew Titchiner

MARC your calendar

High Rock Ford Park is open daily from sunrise to sunset. Enjoy hiking trails, river access, and learning about the historical significance of the area. See our website for directions and trip planning tips. Remember to practice social distancing when you encounter other visitors.

Please note: Dates for upcoming events are tentative and dependent upon government-issued guidelines for public health and safety. Check our website for the latest updates regarding our regular operational hours and special events. We look forward to seeing you again soon.

Thursday, June 18

New Korean War Exhibit Member Preview and Reception

6:00 pm at the MARC

Saturday, August 1

7th Annual Summer Gala

at Pennrose Park Country Club, Reidsville

Saturday, August 15

4th Annual Freetown Seminar

at the Madison-Mayodan Public Library

MARC Hours of Operation

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday	1 pm - 6 pm
Saturday	10 am - 4 pm

Museum Admission

Adult	\$5.00
Seniors & Students	\$3.50
Children	\$2.50
Children under 4 years	FREE
Family pass	\$15.00
Members	FREE

Visit our website for individual and business membership information and forms. Become a sustainer by pledging monthly donations!

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