



The Herald

Presbyterian Heritage Center at Montreat

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Winter 2024

Weathering the Storm & Preparing for 2025

The Presbyterian Heritage Center came through the recent flooding in Montreat with minimal damage—only a few leaks and fallen ceiling tiles. Our collections and staff were unscathed.

The PHC currently remains closed to the public as we wait for visitors to be able to safely return to Montreat. Our library and archives are open by appointment.

In the meantime, we've begun planning for and installing new exhibits. If you have visited the PHC in the past, you may have noticed the beautiful **John Mack Walker wood carvings** on display throughout our building. The carvings have now been moved into one gallery so that guests can view them as a collection (see image).



Next year, we will have new exhibits mounted on **Biblical pottery and glass**, featuring an outstanding collection donated by the Cousins family; early **Presbyterians in the Swannanoa Valley**; and the **1916 flood in Montreat**. The 1916 flood exhibit will include a section on the 2024 flood illustrated with items, stories, and images collected during and after the storm.

We hope you will join us for our annual **Christmas Tea on Wednesday, December 4th at 3:00pm** for refreshments, fellowship, and a preview of our new exhibits.

In 2025, the PHC Board of Directors will undertake a Strategic Planning process with Leighton Ford Ministries to set a course for the PHC well into the future.

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Reflections on 17 Years of Leadership

In April, the PHC's founding Chairman, Dick Ray, passed away. Dick served as Chair from day one for 17 years. He poured his life and soul into the PHC, as did his wife, Lila Ray.

In a recent interview with Lila, she shared thoughts on what it was about the PHC that caused Dick and her to dedicate themselves to its growth and development for so many years. For Dick, it was about history. Lila stated that Dick often said, "You cannot understand the present and the future unless you understand the past." Dick knew this held true for Christian history as well—it was important and worthy of study. **continued on page 2**



Dick & Lila Ray

17 Years of Leadership, continued

continued from page 1

When the decision to close the Historical Foundation was made by the PC(USA) in 2006, Dick was deeply troubled. He felt a strong need to maintain a facility in Montreat to advance the history and theology of Presbyterians and the Reformed faith. After much work, with Dick and Jim Cogswell at the forefront, the Presbyterian Heritage Center was established in 2007, with Dick as its Chair.

For Lila, her focus for the PHC was also history. Her father was a Presbyterian pastor and loved church history. He would come to the Historical Foundation to study and do research. That love was passed on to Lila. She, too, had a deep passion to ensure there was a place in Montreat where people could research, study, and enjoy learning what the church fathers did to make sure we are able to worship freely today.

Dick worked with many people, especially the PHC's first Executive Director, Ron Vinson, to build an organization that was creative, vital, and had a special spirit. The PHC was created to enlighten visitors about what God has done through Jesus Christ with and through His people to discern His will today and in the future. The PHC has achieved that vision through mounting exhibits, preserving collections, hosting conferences, teaching confirmation classes, and welcoming visitors, who can access the PHC's resources both in person and online.

Dick and Lila also loved how the PHC has worked to create community. "There is amazing involvement of Montreaters in PHC activities," Lila commented. "We certainly enjoyed those experiences and met a lot of people," referring to events like the Tour of Homes, Christmas Tea, and Ice Cream Social.

Is that reason enough for the Rays to have dedicated the last 17 years of their lives to the growth and development of the PHC? "Yes," said Lila, especially when transformation happens.

One story of transformation involved a group of teenagers in MRA's Clubs program. They came to the PHC to learn about the Reformation and its leaders.

After hearing stories about incredible and deadly challenges that the Reformers endured and died for, one teenager commented, "I had no idea all these people died so I could read the Bible."

For that young man, his visit to the PHC was transforming. For Dick and Lila, this was why they poured their lives into the PHC. As Lila commented, "Dick never envisioned the wonder the PHC is today." He wanted it to be vibrant, creative, and current. And it is.

Christmas in Montreat, 1898

Only a handful of people lived in Montreat in December of 1898. One of these early residents was Philadelphia Mary Martin, who had fallen in love with the valley during a visit earlier that year.

She found everyone that she met "delightful," proclaimed that the scenery rivaled Switzerland's, and by the end of November, permanently relocated into a small Montreat home (Chinquapin Lodge), which she had commissioned.

With Christmas approaching, Mary began to adjust to mountain life. Though she bemoaned that she had no place to shop for gifts, she decorated with "masses of holly, laurel, and hemlock," and festooned her tree with cookies and picture cards. Mary invited as many people to her holiday tea as she had cups and saucers.

Later, the community gathered for a "social" at Montreat's lone hotel, which was known as Big Piney Out. "It is the most marvelous structure," she quipped. "It looks more like a row of bath houses than anything else." (Hotel Montreat was yet to come.)

At the Martin house, Christmas dinner was a young chicken, picked and cleaned, for which Mary had paid 20 cents. One friend gave her a mousetrap as a gift. It was all wonderful – she was happy and healthy. "It is remarkable how safe one feels in this wilderness," she wrote. "A walk in the woods is like a journey into fairyland."

Mary spent many subsequent Christmases in Montreat. In 1902, she married James Miller, a retired civil engineer, and they raised three children in Chinquapin.



*Mary Martin (at right),
Chinquapin Lodge (below),
Montreat*



The information in this article was adapted from: "Mother Pioneered at Montreat: Her Letters 1898-1899." Drop by the PHC to pick up a free copy.

Partner with Us in Supporting the PHC's Heritage Fund Annual Giving Campaign Before the End of the Year



This year was a year of change for the Presbyterian Heritage Center. With Executive Director Ron Vinson's retirement, we gained Anne Chesky and her tremendous skills and ability. We mourned the passing of long-time Board Chair Dick Ray. Former Vice Chair Bill Scheu stepped into the role and brings a wealth of leadership skills to our organization.

The guiding goals and objectives of the PHC remain unchanged. With our new leadership, we are looking toward the future. The Board has approved moving forward with an updated long-range strategic plan that will lead us into and through the years ahead. This planning process will begin in 2025, and we hope that you, our PHC supporters, will lend your time and talents to help us envision the PHC's future.

Our strategic plan will undoubtedly include new initiatives that uti-

lize modern technology to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ and tell the story of the Reformed tradition. For example, we are currently working with a web design firm to construct a new website with expanded capabilities for digital collections, programs, and exhibits. The new site, which will launch in 2025, will allow us to more easily extend our reach to people across the globe.

As we move forward with these new initiatives that will shape our future for years to come, we need your financial support.

The PHC receives virtually all its operating funds from contributions to our Heritage Fund annual giving campaign. The PHC's extensive programs and activities, including its museum exhibits, educational activities, conferences, library, publications, archives, and soon-to-be expanding web-based offerings, are paid

for almost entirely by contributions to the annual Heritage Fund campaign. Please prayerfully consider making a gift to the Heritage Fund prior to December 31st. A self-addressed return envelope is included with this issue to make your contribution as easy and convenient as possible.

Raising funds at this time, when so many of us are giving to help our neighbors and community recover from the devastation of Helene, is challenging. But please help us keep our doors open by including the PHC in your charitable giving. The Presbyterian Heritage Center needs your support to continue our work and mission.

Your generous contributions to the Presbyterian Heritage Center's Heritage Fund annual giving campaign each year are vitally important and greatly appreciated. We have always been and will continue to be careful stewards of your generosity.

As a final note, The Presbyterian Heritage Center is qualified by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization. Our EIN is 56-2462726. Your contributions to the Presbyterian Heritage Center are tax deductible as allowed by law. Various types of donations that provide you with tax advantages, including contributions of appreciated stock and donations of Required Minimum Distributions from IRAs, are welcomed and can easily be accommodated.

Presbyterian Heritage Center Heritage Fund

Please return this insert with your gift to make sure we have your most up-to-date contact information.

Name(s) _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Physical Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Make my gift anonymous: The PHC acknowledges all gifts in our annual report. If you would like your gift to remain anonymous, please check the box.

Giving Levels

Heritage Society

\$25,000+

Witherspoon Society

\$2,500 - \$4,999

Celtic Circle

\$100 - \$499

Calvin Society

\$10,000 - \$24,999

Tartan Circle

\$1,000 - \$2,499

Friends of the PHC

\$1 - \$99

Knox Society

\$5,000 - \$9,999

Kirkin Circle

\$500 - \$999

Other Amount

\$ _____

To give to the Heritage Fund:

- Mail a check to the PHC at PO Box 207, Montreat, NC 28757
- Make a tax-free Qualified Charitable Deduction from your IRA
- Donate at www.phcmontreat.org/give or scan the QR code:



Thank you for your generosity and for supporting the Presbyterian Heritage Center through your contribution to the Heritage Fund.

Collection Spotlight: July 19, 1916 Edition of *The Black Mountain News*

Until September 27, 2024, the worst flood in Buncombe County's recorded history* occurred on July 16, 1916, when the Swannanoa River crested at nearly 21 feet. In 2024, the river, which just four days earlier was flowing at 1.44 feet, crested at 27.33 feet, setting a record and causing extensive damage and loss of life.

In July 1916, two tropical storms hit western North Carolina within a week of each other. As much as 22 inches of rain fell in some areas. Nearly 90% of that rain became runoff. The mountains funneled torrents of water down through the valleys.

In Montreat, an unknown resident recalled, "I was awake at intervals all that night and the roar of the waters was fierce. Added to the noise of the falls over the dam—now a miniature Niagara—was the sound of heavily falling rain, the down rushing torrent of the stream just across the road from the foot of our lawn. Then I began to detect still other ominous noises as great trees, logs and boulders came banging against the bridges. It was a fearful night."

Compared to some parts of the region, Montreat sustained little damage. No lives were lost, though the town was reported to still be underwater a day after the storm moved out of the area.

On July 19, 1916, the issue of *The Black Mountain News* (pictured above) reported, under the headline "Montreat Damages Not Very Heavy," that Montreat's "lake dam which was reported to have washed out is not hurt, owing to the fact that the water after a course of three hours made its way through the earth at the end of the dam, resulting in practically no damage below the dam, with the exception of one wash-out in the road.



July 19, 1916, *The Black Mountain News*
This newspaper will be one of many items appearing in our new exhibit on the floods of 1916 and 2024 in the Montreat area.

"Everything is moving on smoothly, and Montreat has lights, water and a good food supply."

**In 1791, one year prior to the founding of Buncombe County, the Swannanoa River is said to have crested at 23 feet. According to local lore, Davy Crockett later referred to this flood as "the 2nd epistle to Noah's."*

What was your experience of the 2024 Flood?

The PHC is actively collecting objects, images, videos, papers, pamphlets, signs, stories, etc. to preserve memories of the flood as well as recovery and rebuilding efforts.

To donate your items or share your story, please contact the PHC at 828-669-6556 or info@phcmontreat.org. You may also add your items to the exhibit once it opens.

Trivia Time!

What was the name of the railroad that ran through Montreat property between 1911 and 1919?

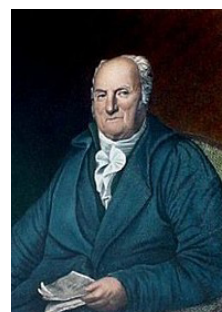
Above Montreat, beginning in 1911, the Dickey & Campbell Company from PA constructed a narrow-gauge rail line that originated at their lumber mill in Black Mountain and ascended to a large timber tract.

The Mountain Retreat Association granted the railroad right of way through their Montreat property. Three trestles were used in Montreat to bridge gaps in the road-bed created by steep slopes.

In 1913, Dickey & Campbell sold the railroad to another PA-based firm, Perley & Crockett, which increased production to 110,000 feet of lumber a day. By 1914, they had added three passenger cars for tourists on the back of the logging train.

Correct answers will be entered into a drawing for a prize! Email your answer to info@phcmontreat.org.

From the last issue:



Question:

"Which United States Founding Father purchased 20,000 acres in eastern Buncombe County, NC, adjacent to land that would one day become Montreat?"

Answer: Elias Boudinot (above).

Five correct answers were submitted. Congratulations to Pamela McCunn for being our first trivia drawing winner! Contact us to claim your prize.



Presbyterian Heritage Center
PO Box 207
Montreat, NC 28757



Christmas Tea

Begin your Christmas Holidays with the annual Christmas Tea sponsored by the Presbyterian Heritage Center.

On Wednesday, December 4, 2024, from 3:00 to 5:00pm, the PHC will be serving a variety of delectable tea sandwiches, scrumptious desserts, and Lucy's famous Christmas punch. This event is open to everyone and is a thank you from the Heritage Center for the community's support of its various programs. Enjoy mingling with your neighbors while sipping delicious punch.

When: Wednesday, December 4, 2024 from 3:00pm - 5:00pm

Where: Presbyterian Heritage Center
318 Georgia Terrace, Montreat

Free and Open to the Public, Casual Dress