

Art & Heritage

By Kitty Turner / Times-News Staff Writer

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When it was formed in October 2003, the Fletcher Arts and Heritage Association developed a mission statement:

“The mission of the Fletcher Arts & Heritage Association is to develop an appreciation of the nature of our community through artistic expression and heritage education.”

They started with the education, developing a series of talks that are held from 7 to 8 p.m. the first Tuesday of each month at the Fletcher Public Library.

“Our first few programs attracted 35 to 45 participants,” said Eugene Avergone, a member of the association. “But they keep increasing. Terry Garren, the author of a book on the Civil War had an audience of over 100.”

The next talk will feature members of St. John’s Baptist Church discussing the church’s 126 year history and the early freedman movement following emancipation of slaves in Henderson County. The program will be presented at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Fletcher Library.

Photography exhibit

The program coincides with the opening of an exhibit “Early Images of Fletcher 1850 to 1950” at the library.

“Art has always been part of the association’s mission,” Avergon said. “We started very early working on creating an archive of original photos of Fletcher.”

Although the Fletcher Arts and Heritage Association had asked for anyone to bring in photographs, they didn’t have much luck until the representatives of the Fletcher churches -- Calvary Episcopal Church, St. John’s Baptist Church, Fletcher First Baptist Church and Fletcher United Methodist Church -- met to discuss the churches’ role in the lecture program.

“Steve Nesbitt from Calvary Episcopal Church brought along a file of photos from the church’s archives and showed everyone what was available,” Avergon said. “That got people excited about the idea and they went back to their churches and started promoting the idea of contributing.”

The association digitally scans the photos for the archives and returns them to the owner. The digital photos can then be enlarged and printed for exhibit.

“I’ve enlarged several of the pictures,” Avergon said, gesturing at the wall where the photos are hung. It makes it easier to see the details.

“John Horton of the N.C. Division of Historical Resources was able to let us borrow materials from the state that took the exhibit all the way back to 1850.”

On the wall

The photos are evocative of a different time and a slower pace of life. Families relax on shaded front porches, wagons raise dust on deserted streets, and the devastation of fire contrasts with the determination to rebuild.

“Geneva Moore, the new owner of the Meadows, one of the most historic homes in Fletcher, came in with a whole box of things she’d discovered in her research of the property and shared it with us,” Avergon said. “The enthusiasm and participation has been wonderful.”

The photographs will be on exhibit for six weeks.

“We may change things occasionally in those six weeks if some new material comes in,” Avergon said.

Turner can be reached at 694-7882 or by e-mail at kitty.turner@hendersonvillenews.com