

∞ Past Times ∞

A Newsletter of the Cashiers Historical Society

Special Symposium Edition

Will Thomas

Symposium

May 5, 6, & 7, 2005

After months of planning, the celebration is about to begin. Eight scholars will arrive in Cashiers to help us celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of this man named Thomas, long remembered in these parts for the Thomas Legion, a Confederate group of mountain men and Cherokee Indians who fought during the Civil War. The achievements of Thomas during his lifetime have been reduced to a footnote in our history books. That will change with the soon to be released 2nd novel by Charles Frazier, author of *Cold Mountain*, fashioned around the life of Thomas.

Symposium Schedule

Thursday, May 5, 2005

8:00AM - 9:00AM Registration

9:00AM - 4:30PM Guided Bus Tour to Cherokee, NC .

6:30PM - Welcome Dinner at High Hampton Inn, Cashiers

Friday, May 6, 2005

8:00AM - 9:00AM Registration

9:00AM - Opening Ceremony

9:00AM - 11:30AM Symposium

11:30AM - 2:00PM Zachary-Tolbert House Picnic and Tour

2:00PM - 4:30PM Symposium

Saturday, May 7, 2005

8:00AM - 9:00PM Registration

9:00AM - 11:30AM Symposium
(2 hrs with ½ hr break)

12:30PM - Post Symposium Guided Tour to Stumphouse Tunnel.

The Symposium Topics Announced

Dr. E. Stanly Godbold is honorary chairman and moderator of the Symposium.



Dr. E. Stanly Godbold

He has selected for the title "William Holland Thomas: A Man for All Seasons." Godbold will share unpublished new information he gathered while preparing his book for publication. This will include a complete overview of the life of Thomas.

Godbold, along with the late Mattie Russell, wrote the only definitive biography of Thomas, *Confederate Colonel, Cherokee Chief: The Life of William Holland Thomas*, a winner of the prestigious Thomas Wolf Literary Award.

Godbold received his undergraduate and Ph.D. degrees from Duke. Also a Theology degree from Southern Methodist University, Dallas. He taught for many years at Mississippi State University.

Dr. William Anderson, Professor Emeritus at Western Carolina University and editor of the *Journal of Cherokee Studies*, will add intrigue with the title "One Little, Two Little, Three Little White Men or Another White Chief?" This presentation deals with a white man, who was part of the "inner circle" of Ross and the Patriot Party and who led the fight in Western North Carolina against removal of Cherokee citizens.

Jane Gibson Nardy, registered Genealogist, past president of the Cashiers Historical Society and Zachary descendant will present her talk following lunch at the Zachary-Tolbert House. Entitled "WILL THOMAS SLEPT HERE", Nardy will discuss both personal and professional connections between Will Thomas and the Cashiers Valley. From the 1830s and until the 1890s, examples of this relationship will be demonstrated from oral history, official documents, and Thomas' own diary.



Jane Gibson Nardy

Dr. Gordon McKinney will unite two 19th century characters in his talk "Political Partisans in Western North Carolina: William Holland Thomas and Zebulon Baird Vance." Dr. McKinney reveals: "I will discuss the rivalry of Vance and Thomas who were political opponents from 1854 to 1865. They belonged to different political parties, had different plans for the Western North Carolina Railroad, opposed each other's candidacies for Congress, and clashed bitterly over Confederate troop movements during the Civil War—disagreements that were fueled by their previous partisan differences." This is sure to spark lively questions and debate.

(Continued)

CASHIERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Mission of the Cashiers Historical Society is to preserve and interpret the Zachary-Tolbert House and Cashiers Valley in order to inspire discovery and to appreciate our past as guidance for the future.

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Published four times annually
by the Cashiers Historical Society
Chairman: Eleanor Welling
Editor: Jan Wyatt

The Cashiers Historical Society is supported by its members, by generous contributions of foundations and corporations, by grants from the Cashiers Community Foundation, an affiliate of the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources and all those interested in preserving the past of Cashiers.

The Past is always Present in Cashiers

\$5,000 Grant from Cherokee Preservation Foundation awarded Will Thomas Symposium

The Cherokee Preservation Foundation has awarded the Cashiers Historical Society a \$5000 grant for the William Holland Thomas Symposium May 5, 6, & 7, 2005 at the historic High Hampton Inn, Cashiers, NC. Monies from the grant will be used to produce three permanent products announced Jan Wyatt, President. They include: 1. Publish the Proceeding of the Symposium, edited by Symposium scholar **Dr. William Anderson**, as an issue of the *Journal of Cherokee Studies*, 2. Develop and train step-on tour guides, with the aid of **Dr. Richard Iobst**, about a William Holland Thomas Trail through Jackson County and the Qualla Boundary and 3. Replicate a Cherokee meal with the help of **Dr. Barbara Duncan**. "We are so pleased to begin a relationship with our friends in Cherokee that will establish the Cashiers connection" said Wyatt.

The Symposium participants who attend the Field Trip to Cherokee will be on the inaugural journey along the Thomas Trail. As a special added bonus, E. Stanly Godbold, author of the definitive biography of Will Thomas, *Confederate Colonel and Cherokee Chief, The Life and Times of William Holland Thomas*, will share stories on the bus that he discovered in researching the book.

From Cashiers, the bus will journey along the old Tuckasegee and Keowee Turnpike (Highway I07) as it follows the river. Stops in Cherokee will include a visit to the Rev. Ulrich Keener Cabin, home of Elvira Keener Zachary, first resident of the Zachary-Tolbert House of Cashiers. Ulrich, a friend of Thomas, was the first Methodist Missionary to the Cherokee in the 1840s and his cabin is the oldest piece of architecture remaining on a Cherokee site in North Carolina. Elvira and her sister Ann Eliza were the first teachers in the Missionary School. Elvira could read, write and speak Cherokee. Later she taught her own children the language.



Keener Cabin

The group will visit the site of the Quallatown Trading Post, center of operation for Will Thomas, the entrepreneur, and walk a section of the original road behind the store getting to see what it must have been like to move goods and people through the area in the middle 1800s. In the Great Smoky Mountain Park, the bus will pass sections of the old Oconoluftee Turnpike used by the Confederate Thomas Legion.

Highlight of the trip will be a behind the scenes tour at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian. In the Archives, the Thomas Diaries and important papers will be shown by museum staff. The fragile Thomas portrait will be viewed. During the guided Museum tour, little known facts will be shared.

Following our Cherokee meal at an exceptional place, the bus will travel through Thomas Valley beside the railroad track that Thomas built and past Stekoa Field.

A visit to the area would not be complete without a visit to the Campground Cemetery and its large monument to Thomas, given by the people of Cherokee,



Thomas Memorial

Topics chosen by Speakers (continued)

George Ellison, a noted naturalist and regional writer, will speak on the topic, "Tsali vs. Thomas: Who Saved the Cherokee?" This presentation takes a look at events involving Will Thomas and the Cherokee "martyr" Tsali in the fall of 1838. A detailed analysis will examine the Tsali family's capture by the U.S. military, their escape after killing two of the soldiers, and the subsequent execution of several male members of the family, including Tsali, by other Cherokees in return for being allowed to remain in western North Carolina rather than being deported to Oklahoma. The focus of the presentation will be the possible role of Thomas in these affairs as well as a description (with slides) of Tsali's probable final hiding place at a rock shelter on the Left Fork of Deep Creek under Clingmans Dome in the present day Great Smoky Mountains National Park.



Page from Scott's Creek Ledger

such as the Zachary ledger, Scott's Creek and others that describes the commodities being bought and sold, prices, and other transactions. William Holland Thomas, a successful businessman with seven regional trading posts, will be incorporated into the discussion.

Dr. Barbara Duncan, Director of Education at the Museum of the Cherokee Indian will present "Buying Back Cherokee Land: Thomas, Siler, Morris, and Welch—Cherokee Families and Friends" a look at the work and the families of four men who helped Cherokees buy back land during the post-Removal period in western North Carolina in present-day Macon, Swain, Jackson, and Graham counties. Although Thomas was instrumental in helping the Eastern



Dr. Barbara Duncan

Band of the Cherokee Nation remain in western North Carolina, other men who are less well known also followed the same pattern. The paper explores these men's relationships with Cherokee wives and children as a factor in their actions on behalf of the Eastern Band.



Thomas Diary

Dr. Richard Iobst will present "A Mountain Man's Legacy: The William H. Thomas Papers and Diaries in the Museum of the Cherokee Indian." His talk will focus on his personal relationship with the Thomas materials beginning in the late 1960s with emphasis on recent work in transcribing and cataloguing the papers and diaries.

Deputy Secretary North Carolina Office Archives and History writes:

Few North Carolinians have a story to match that of William Holland Thomas (1805-1893), the "white Chief" of the Cherokee. Left fatherless and adopted by Chief Yonaguska. A pivotal role in securing land for the native people who remained in North Carolina after 1835. A land baron with, at time, conflicting tribal and personal interest. Organizer of the Confederate "Legion of Indians and Mountaineers". Mental instability and subsequent death in the state asylum at Morganton.

Any of these aspects of this remarkable life - and many more could be added to the list - would be deserving of scholarly inquiry. I commend those who have labored to bring to light more about Thomas and his role in the development of western North Carolina. During my graduate school days at Duke University, I knew and even worked for Dr. Mattie Russell, curator of manuscripts, whose dissertation Stanly Godbold revised in 1990 for publication. The opportunity to organize a symposium of distinguished specialists on Thomas and the Cherokee in May is an exciting prospect, made doubly so by the appeal of the High Hampton Inn. I commend you and other organizers for your historical acumen and energy. . . .

My best wishes to you and other participants for a successful symposium.

Sincerely,
Jeffery J. Crow

Symposium Registration

To register for the Symposium, please fill out the enclosed form and mail *immediately* with your check payable to:

Cashiers Historical Society
P.O. Box 104
Cashiers, NC 28717

We will do our best to accommodate your needs on a first come first serve basis until our capacity is reached. At that time we will establish a waiting list.

Visit us at:
www.cashiershistoricalsociety.org

Duke gives first support

On January 4, 2005, we were notified that **Duke Power** through the **Duke Energy Foundation** had given the Cashiers Historical Society its first Symposium Grant- \$500 to help underwrite the speaker honorariums. **Fred Alexander**, District Manager - Nantahala Area, gave us help in planning the event, as well as guidance encouragement.

Travel and Tourism Authority helps fund PR

Both the **Cashiers Travel and Tourism Authority** and the **Jackson County Travel and Tourism Authority** have given their support to the Symposium through \$1,000 grants to underwrite printing and PR costs that have helped get the word out to the public.

2nd Annual Symposium

Our 2nd Annual Symposium, to be held in the spring of 2006, will honor and study General Wade Hampton. **Dr. Robert Lathan** of Atlanta and Cashiers has agreed to chair this event.

There is a great potential to give the tourist season a jump-start each year with a Symposium that will study a different important character in Western North Carolina history.

Friends of the Library host Pre-Symposium Event

Thank you to **Jane Nardy** who spoke at the Albert Carlton Community Library on April 14, 2005 setting the stage for the Symposium.



CASHIERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Post Office Box 104

Cashiers, NC 28717

Register today for the

Will Thomas Symposium

May 5, 6, & 7, 2005

High Hampton Inn, Cashiers, N.C.

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