

# New Greenville THE MOUNTAINEER.

Newsletter of the Greenville County Historical Society

Volume XLVI, Number 1, April 2025



## The Stories We Have Yet to Tell

### Renewing Our Legacy and Relevance: *The Future of the Historical Society in a Post-COVID World*

COVID seems like it happened decades ago. Yet the COVID-19 pandemic reshaped nearly every aspect of our lives, from how we work and gather to how we preserve and share our history. For the Greenville County Historical Society, these changes have presented both challenges and opportunities as we look toward the future. Now, more than ever, we must rally our community to renew our commitment to preserving the rich history of Greenville County.

During the height of the pandemic, historical societies and museums across the country faced dramatic declines in membership, funding, and engagement. In-person events, once a cornerstone of our outreach, were postponed or canceled. Research visits dwindled, and many longtime supporters shifted their focus to more immediate personal and community needs. These challenges forced us to adapt, finding new ways to connect through digital archives, virtual programming, and online engagement. While these innovations will continue to play a role in our future, they cannot replace the power of a thriving, engaged membership.

Membership is the lifeblood of any historical organization. It is through our members that we preserve history, advocate for our shared past, and educate future generations. With fewer members, we lose not just financial support, but also the voices, stories, and dedication that make our mission meaningful.

As we move forward, we must renew and revitalize our membership base. We call on past members to renew their commitment and invite new supporters to join us in this critical work. Whether you are a longtime resident with deep ties to Greenville's history or a newcomer eager to learn more about your community, your involvement makes a difference. Membership in the Historical Society is not just about supporting an organization—it is about ensuring that the stories of our past remain alive for the future.

The pandemic taught us many lessons, but one stands out: history is not static. It is a living, breathing record of who we are, shaped by those who choose to preserve it. We must now write the next chapter together, with renewed energy and a shared commitment to safeguarding our history. Join us. Renew your membership. Encourage others to do the same. Let's ensure that the Greenville County Historical Society not only survives but thrives for generations to come.

#### UPCOMING EVENTS Put it on the Calendar

##### Annual Membership Meeting

*Sunday, April 13*  
"The History of the Poinsett Hotel"  
@ the Poinsett Hotel

[www.gchs\\_annualmeeting.eventbrite.com/](http://www.gchs_annualmeeting.eventbrite.com/)

##### Monthly Lecture Series

*Thursday, April 17*  
"Vardry McBee: The Father of Greenville"  
John Nolan

*Thursday, May 15*  
"Pictorial History of Falls Park"  
John Nolan

[www.greenvillehistory.org/2024-2025-lecture-series/](http://www.greenvillehistory.org/2024-2025-lecture-series/)

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### What's Behind the New Mountaineer Name?

The Greenville County Historical Society's newsletter, "The New Greenville Mountaineer," likely draws its name from "The Greenville Mountaineer," a prominent newspaper in Greenville's history. Founded in 1826, "The Greenville Mountaineer" was among the city's earliest newspapers, serving as a significant source of news and information for the community during the 19th century. By naming the newsletter "The New Greenville Mountaineer," the Historical Society honors this legacy, connecting contemporary readers with Greenville's rich journalistic past.



### From the Interim Executive Director

*Russell H. Stall, AICP*

As a lifelong resident of Greenville and a devoted enthusiast of its rich history, I'm thrilled to step into the role of Interim Executive Director of the Greenville County Historical Society. My passion for this community—and its unique stories—is rooted in years of experience in city planning, nonprofit leadership, and historical research. For me, history isn't just about the past—it's a powerful tool for understanding who we are and guiding where we're going.

Greenville has always been a city of transformation. Over the past century, we've evolved from the "Textile Capital of the World" into a vibrant, dynamic community that continues to grow and thrive. At the heart of that growth is our history—and the Historical Society has been instrumental in preserving the records, places, and stories that define us.

But preservation is only part of the equation. We also have a responsibility to make history come alive—keeping it relevant, accessible, and inspiring for all. That's why your support is so important. Whether you're volunteering, attending events, diving into research, or simply sharing our mission with others, your involvement helps ensure that Greenville's history remains a vital part of our present and future.

This is an exciting new chapter for the Greenville County Historical Society. In the months ahead, we'll be enhancing access to our archives and collections, expanding our community outreach, and creating more opportunities for education and engagement.

I look forward to connecting with each of you—hearing your stories, your ideas, and your hopes for the future of the Society. Together, we'll celebrate and protect the extraordinary history that makes Greenville County such a special place to call home.



PLEASE JOIN US  
FOR OUR ANNUAL MEETING AND LECTURE

**100 YEARS OF THE POINSETT HOTEL**

SUNDAY, APRIL 13 AT 3:00 PM

THE WESTIN POINSETT





## From the President

*John Nolan*

The more time I spend researching the collections of the Greenville County Historical Society, the more I'm amazed by the depth and significance of what we preserve. Our archives capture some of the most pivotal moments in Greenville's history—from the 1815 sale of land from Lemuel Alston to Vardry McBee, to the 1874 contract conveying land along the lower Reedy Falls to Sampson & Hall for the first downtown textile mill, to the 1863 deed for T.Q. Donaldson's home on Crescent Avenue. And that's just the beginning.

Our unparalleled photo archives—including the Coxe, Jordan, and Elrod collections—document virtually every aspect of Greenville society from the late 1800s to today. These visual records are a window into the people, places, and stories that shaped our community.

I rely on these collections constantly—for books, articles in the Greenville Journal, monthly lectures, social media posts, historic tours, and research requests. They are a treasure trove of local history, and we invite you to explore them for yourself.

We also hope you'll join us for our upcoming Spring Membership Meeting at the Poinsett Hotel Ballroom. As Greenville's grandest and most historic hotel turns 100, we're thrilled to partner with The Westin to celebrate this milestone. Discover the hotel's remarkable legacy, explore rare photographs and artifacts—including items tied to its namesake, Joel R. Poinsett—and learn about the people who shaped its story: owners, staff, investors, and guests.

## Thank You, Darlene

The end of January were the last days for our Executive Director, Darlene Parker. We are thankful for her faithful service over the years. Right around when the COVID pandemic hit, Darlene was retiring from a long career working for attorneys, then for Greenville's Chamber of Commerce as well as non-profits. The Greenville County Historical Society was in need of a new director, and she graciously accepted.

Taking over during the pandemic was a tall order. Since then, Darlene has served many people with their requests for help, research, and use of the collections. Advocacy for historic preservation was a particular passion of Darlene's including projects that made a lasting difference like saving

an historic home in the Earle St. district from demolition and being a voice in the use/restoration of the Wyche Pavilion. Her efforts were integral in the acquisition of some of the Society's most significant recent donations, including the Joe Jordan photo collection and the Whitmire/McBee archive.

Beyond these bigger projects, Darlene was particularly adept at getting to know the members and public, listening to their personal stories, and taking a caring interest in helping people to preserve their unique stories and historic items. We wish her the very best in her retirement and have the heartiest gratitude for her years of service.



John Nolan presents to the Furman OLLI program at the Westin Poinsett Hotel.



Candice Boatwright presenting "The Snow Campaign" at the monthly lecture series.



## Grant to Preserve the Whitmire/McBee Collection

In September 2024, the South Carolina State Historical Records Advisory Board awarded the Greenville County Historical Society a grant through its Historical Records Regrant Program. These funds support the preservation of our important Mildred Edwards Whitmire Collection/Vardry McBee Family documents, a cornerstone of Greenville's rich history.

With this grant, the Society has acquired high-quality archival materials, including clear polyester L-sleeves, acid-free folders, and storage boxes designed to protect and permanently house the collection's 850 historical documents. Volunteer efforts by Shirley Brown and Frances Knight are fulfilling the required 25% matching contribution through their time and dedication. Following approved preservation protocols, they have already rehoused more than 500 documents, with the project scheduled for completion by June 30, 2025.

This preservation initiative builds on the Society's ongoing work to create a comprehensive inventory of the Vardry McBee Family papers. Dating from the 1780s through the early 1900s, these documents include land grants, deeds, plats (both recorded and unrecorded), gold mining agreements, business records, personal letters, tax receipts, and more—offering invaluable insight into the life and legacy of Vardry McBee, the "Father of Greenville."

To date, the collection has been meticulously organized into 33 distinct series, reflecting individuals, land holdings, and businesses connected to the McBee family, including Gower, Cox & Markley, the Baptist Female College, Camperdown Mills, and the Grand Opera House. The inventory has been compiled in a searchable database, which will be made publicly available online at the conclusion of the project.

The Society extends its sincere thanks to the South Carolina State Historical Records Advisory Board for their support and to our dedicated volunteers for their commitment to preserving Greenville's historical treasures. Together, these efforts ensure the preservation, usability, and accessibility of this significant collection for generations to come.



A page from the deed between Lemuel Alston and Vardry McBee for around the Reedy River from the Mildred Edwards Whitmire Collection/Vardry McBee Family Documents.

"A Plat of part of the Bottom Ground of the Reedy River" from the Mildred Edwards Whitmire Collection/Vardry McBee Family Documents.

## Recent Acquisitions

**Catherine Fayssoux.** Photographs of the Mansion House soda fountain and the grocery at 656 Green Avenue; packet of deeds 1876-1935; telephone directory March 1948; South Carolina National Bank book; Augusta Road Community Club booklet 1945; Kiwanis Club booklet 1947.

**Greenville County Historical Society Purchases.** Larry M. Voreis's book, *A Biographical Study of Richard Pearis and Jacob Hite: Early Inhabitants of Frederick County, Virginia and the Backcountry of South Carolina* (2 volumes).

**James T. Hammond.** His book *Tom's War*, 4 digital presentations, historic photographs and newspaper articles.

**Anonymous.** Four issues of the Greenville Piedmont and Greenville News from 1945, with headlines for President Roosevelt's funeral and the end of World War II in Europe.

**Jason Alexander.** Newspaper clipping regarding the Mackey Boy's Choir; postcard of the U.S. National Guard at Camp Sevier using a camp water bag.

**Knox White.** Panoramic photograph of the Navy Recruiting Station at the Court House..

**Bob Howard,** the books *Bridging the Gap* and *The Faces of South Carolina*.

**Sandra Markham.** panoramic photograph of the military band at Camp Sevier.



Ostrich feather fan (circa 1900) donated by Rose Tomlin found in the attic of a home at 1104 Augusta Street.

## Membership has its advantages.

Membership in the Greenville County Historical Society (GCHS) offers several benefits, particularly for those interested in local history, genealogy, and preservation. We have added a few additional benefits to current memberships including an invitation to our new intimate fireside chats with local historians, discounts to other museums through the North American Reciprocal Museum Association, and for donations over \$250, Greenville History Tours for two.

Yes, membership has its advantages.



Scan to Join!

	Individual	Family	Conestee Society	Camperdown Society	Hugeunot Society
Membership Price	\$45	\$75	\$100	\$250	\$500
Subscription to The New Greenville Mountaineer newsletter	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Subscription to The Proceedings and Papers of the Greenville County Historical Society	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recognition in a Historical Society publication	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Discount in the Historical Society gift shop, including Jordan, Coxe and Landing Collection photographs		10%	15%	20%	30%
Invitation to Fireside Chats				✓	✓
Reciprocal Museum Association Discounts (NARM)				✓	✓
Greenville History Tours for two				✓	✓

**New and Renewed Members** *(December-March)*

Karen Allen	James Humbert	Robert Rasile
William and Marion Atkins	Indie Craft Parade	Margaret A. Shaleuly
Archie Black	Dora Impson	Bill Sharpton
Catherine Blount	Suzanne and Jonathan Jensen	Frances and Paul Ellis Simon
Anne Blythe	Kent Jespersen	Russell and Susan Stall
Candace Boatwright	Walter Johnson	Erwin Starnes
Bibb Cain	Kimberly Kennett	Steph Stockton
John Carlisle	Jennifer Klimas	Gregory Stottlemeyer
Robert Carson	Jack and Lucy Kuhne	Mark Sweeney
Mike Chibbaro	Melinda LaFoy	Ed and Sydney Taylor
Sandi Coan	Sarah Lane	Raymond and Arlene Teaster
Jo Anne Conner	William Lynn	Jack Tedards
Nancy Cooper	Erwin and Nancy Maddrey	Rose Tomlin
Catherine Depew	Jeffrey Makala	Ruud Veltman
Meredith K. Dobson	John Matzko	Mia Walker
Catherine Fayssoux	Patrick and Barbara McPoland	Sally Wallace
Charles Ford	Jeffrey Meadowcroft	Mary Walter
James Foreman	Robert Moi	Barbara Watson
Mary Gabala	Motion Explosion Books	Cheryl Weise
Harold Gallivan	J. Gunn Murphy Jr	Sarah Peterson White
Richard Galloway	Georgianna Nichols	Charlie Whitmire
J. Berry and Julie Garrett	Michael Norris	Mack Whittle
Janet Goode	Jane Patrick	Ray and Kay Williams
James and Elizabeth	Greg Pennington	Ben Woodside
Hammond	Camillia Pitman	Brad Wyche and Diane Smock
Gary Hester	Loretta Porter	Bill Young
Bob and Bev Howard	Elizabeth Potter	John Zimmerman

**Society Leadership****Board of Directors**

John Nolan, President  
 Terence Brooks, Vice President  
 John Zimmerman, Secretary/Treasurer

**Members At Large**

Archie Black  
 Candace Boatwright  
 Sandi Coan  
 Frances Knight  
 Michelle Simmons

**Past Immediate Presidents**

Robert Benedict  
 Tom Cheves

**Volunteer Staff**

Russell Stall  
*Interim Executive Director*  
  
 Frances Knight  
*Collections Curator*

**Greenville County Historical Society**

100 Lavinia Avenue  
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