

Students of Mary Potter Middle School get a lesson in history

By LYNN ALLRED
Ledger staff

Eighth graders at Mary Potter Middle learned about the heritage and history of their school recently as the Mary Potter Club hosted 'Heritage Day' on the grounds of the the G.C. Shaw Museum and surrounding area. The museum, located at 202 East

scotch, horseshoes, hula hoops and others. A walking tour of the old campus was also provided.

Carolyn Williams, director of the Shaw Museum, and Rosalyn Green, President of the National Mary Potter Club offered welcoming remarks. Juanita Rogers served as Project Manag-

uating class in 1953. From her home in Scotch Plains, New Jersey, Mrs. Cooper-Casey described in her message how students from all over the world had been enrolled at the school, which was well-known as a high school of excellence across the state as well as in the nation. In fact, in 1922, the school was placed on the state's Accredited list, and in 1924, it was the first school in Granville County to be placed on the accredited list of the Southern Association of Secondary Schools.

The Mary Potter campus once included the Academy's classrooms, a gym, a church, living quarters and an assembly hall. Mrs. Cooper-Casey explained how students were tasked with duties and responsibilities they were expected to perform, and how each student was also expected to attend church on Sundays.

In 1953, the year Mrs. Cooper-Casey graduated, the property was sold to the Board of Education, and in 1970 the school became integrated, serving students in fifth through eighth grades. Today, students of grades 6, 7, and 8 attend Mary Potter Middle School, which is located where Mary Potter Academy once stood.



An old-fashioned game of jump rope was enjoyed. (Ledger photo)

McClanahan Street, was originally the home of Dr. George Clayton Shaw, founder of Mary Potter Academy and founding Pastor of the Timothy Darling Presbyterian Church.

The event, originally scheduled for May 5, had been postponed due to rain, but despite the overcast conditions on the day it was held, students enjoyed participating in many activities of the past, such as a May pole, jump rope, hop-

er and coordinator for the event, with the assistance of former "Potterites" and friends who served as volunteers.

Sallyann Hobson provided a media presentation on the school's history and a genealogy lesson was offered as part of the day's program, along with tours of the Shaw Museum and a videotaped greeting by former Mary Potter Academy student Patrice Renee Cooper-Casey, a member of the last grad-



Principal Chris Ham joins students in the May Pole activity at the Shaw Museum. (Ledger photo)



Beverly Nichols stands in the doorway of the Brown-Watkins house with the medallion she received from the HPC. (Ledger photo)

Stewardship award presented by Historic Preservation Commission

In a special presentation held during the May meeting of the City's Board of Commissioners, the Oxford Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) announced the winner of the 2017 Oxford Historic Preservation Stewardship Award. This year's recipient is Beverly Nichols, owner of the Brown-Watkins House (c. 1900), located at 217 College Street, for the exterior work completed during the past year. Marc Brooks, HPC Treasurer, presented the award.

The Oxford HPC presents the award each year during the month of May, which is National Historic Preservation Month. The award program, presented as part of the HPC mission to promote conservation of the Oxford Historic Districts, began in 2012 as a means of recognizing outstanding stewardship of historic properties in the Oxford Historic Districts. It is given to property owners who have completed improvements or restorations during the prior two years that best demonstrate a commitment to

preserving the architectural integrity of the individual property, as well



as the Historic Districts as a whole. All applicants for a Certificate of Appropriateness (required for exterior improvements for homes in the Oxford Historic Districts) who complete the approved work are automatically eligible for consideration for the Award.

"One of the requirements for judging eligi-

ble properties is to have strong elements of restoration in the form, features and character of the property," said Tony Armento, HPC Chairman. "Rarely do you find an example of restoration that so thoroughly embraces this requirement, an achievement so important to the community, and a winner so deserving."

The home is being restored with guidelines set by Preservation North Carolina.

In addition to a certificate, the winner of the Oxford Historic Preservation Stewardship Award also receives a bronze medallion, which allows winners to display the recognition they received for outstanding stewardship of their historic property.

Granville Youth Corner

Andre Hargrove, Jr. represented Penn Avenue Baptist Church in Raleigh on May 20 at the N.C. Laymen's Bible Bowl. The winner will advance to the national competition in St. Louis, Missouri.

Young people in the community are being featured in a regular column to showcase their personal achievements and positive impact. Look for this tribute to our local youth in upcoming editions of the Oxford Public Ledger.

Remembering Mrs. Mabel Harris of Wilton...

As many of you know, Mabel Allen Harris of Wilton passed away recently at the age of 103. I wrote the following column about Mrs. Harris three years ago, when she celebrated her 100th birthday. What a lady! Get ready, God, you've got a good one coming.

Mabel Allen Harris celebrated her 100th birthday on March 21, and for every one of those 100 years, Mrs. Harris has called Granville County home. A big get together was held at her beloved church in Wilton, Brassfield Baptist Church, to honor her. And let me tell you, this lady has many friends, as the reception room was overflowing with people. My wife, Beth, and I had to wait for 10 minutes or so just to get to Mrs. Harris to greet her. But it was well worth it to be with this centenarian who has been such a big part of our county's history.

Mabel Catherine Allen was born in 1914 on a farm near Creedmoor. Her parents were Gra-

ham Allen and Mary Floyd Allen. Mrs. Harris still remembers her father proudly coming home one day in 1919 after selling a good crop of tobacco with a brand new Model-T Ford, which he had bought for \$300. Now back in 1919, there were not a lot of cars being driven around the roads of Oxford and even fewer in the farming communities like Providence, Hester and Wilton. Very proud of growing up on a farm, Mrs. Harris remembers the hard but rewarding work that she and her family did. There were cows to be milked, milk to be churned and butter made, hogs to be killed, corn to be shucked, gardens to tend, tobacco to be harvested, wood boxes to be filled, tobacco to be graded, potatoes to be dug, clothes to hand wash, tobacco barns to "put in and take out," bee hives to check on, and big country meals to cook for hungry mouths after all these chores and many others were done. She remembers getting up at 5 in the morning to



start working, and one of the jobs she was really good at was "weeding rows of tobacco with a hoe," and making her Papa proud of her as she kept up with the other workers at her young age.

One treat she enjoyed was hog brains cooked with eggs. (Now there is a recipe you city folks out there might want to try tonight.)

Going to the annual Farmer's Day in Oxford was a real treat for Mrs. Harris and her family. At one of these in the early 1930's she was crowned Queen for the Day as she represented Wilton against other young beauties from around the county. In 1937 a handsome young man, Oliver Herbert Harris, was one lucky man as he married Mabel. By this time, Mabel had graduated from East Carolina

Teacher's College and had started teaching school in Stem. Of the many old pictures I now have, perhaps the one I cherish most, is a first grade class of Mrs. Harris' at Stem in 1933. Mrs. Harris stands on the steps at Stem School surrounded by her little students, two of which are my parents Mary and O.L. Bowling, Jr. That first year she received a salary of \$62.50 a month, and \$25 of that went to room and board at the teacherage located next to the school in Stem.

Mrs. Harris had to stop teaching after she got married, because at that time women were not allowed to teach if they married, but she started back again in 1943 when WWII necessitated a change. She went on to receive many teaching awards, including being

named Teacher of the Year in Granville County in 1976-77.

Mrs. Harris retired from teaching in 1984 after 45 years of service, mostly at Wilton School. One of her daughters, Jannie Preddy, followed in her mother's footsteps, teaching for many years and also becoming principal at Wilton School.

Note in the previous paragraph I wrote that Mrs. Harris retired from teaching in 1984, but believe me, she has not retired from living. She retired at 70 years of age, but the 30 years since retirement probably have been just as busy. Not one "to sit around and do nothing," Mrs. Harris stays busy as a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, along with being active at her church, Brassfield Baptist, in Wilton, where she resides.

And she cooks. My, how this woman cooks. I say this without reservation, Mabel Harris makes the best rolls I have ever eaten. When it comes to homemade rolls, there

are none better than those made by Mabel Harris. Believe it or not, people give me things when I speak to them and their groups. I sometimes get paid a little money, I've gotten gift cards, books, certificates, meals, you name it. I actually have received a jar of peanuts for speaking to a group at a Methodist Church in Durham! But perhaps the best thing I ever got for speaking was a batch of Mabel Harris' rolls, and I really mean that. In that case, much better than money.

Needless to say, we are lucky to have Mabel Allen Harris here in Granville County. You have given us a good 100 years, Mrs. Harris, but we Granvillians expect many more years from you, because women like you make Granville County the good place it is.

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