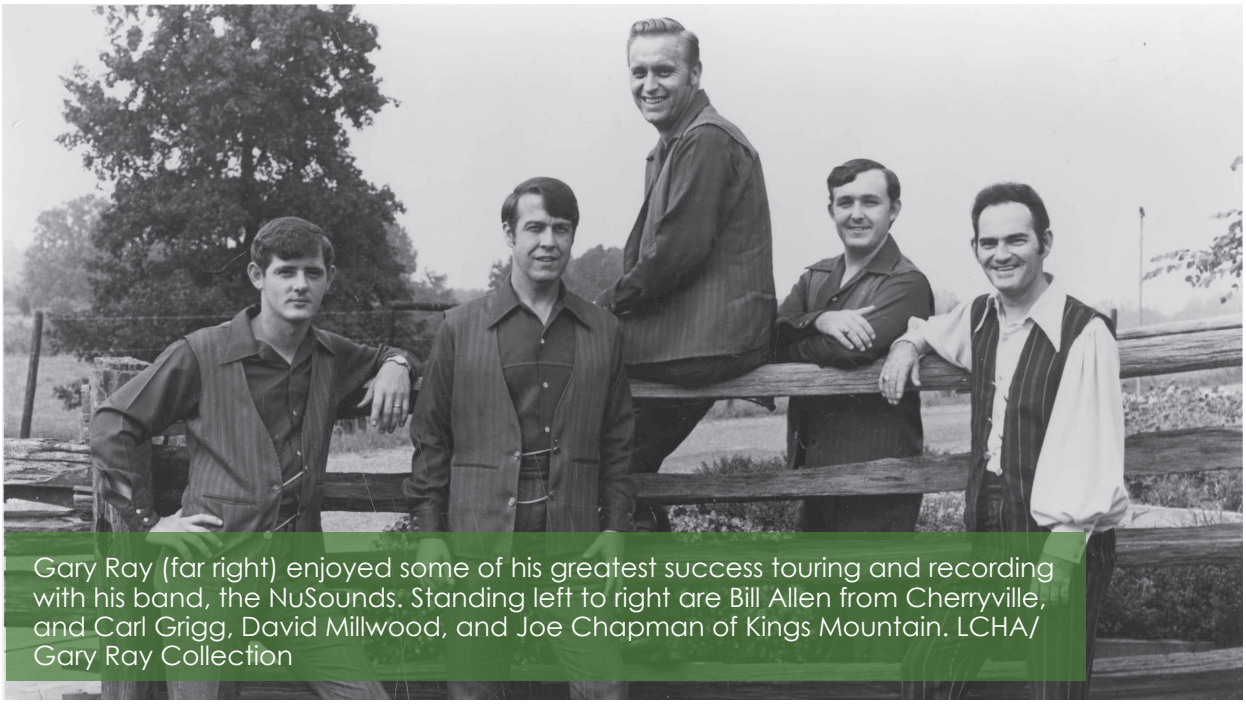
The Newsletter of the **Lincoln County Historical Association**

The Lincoln County Historian

2021
V2•N1

From High Shoals to Hamburg, Gary Ray Resonates



Gary Ray (far right) enjoyed some of his greatest success touring and recording with his band, the NuSounds. Standing left to right are Bill Allen from Cherryville, and Carl Grigg, David Millwood, and Joe Chapman of Kings Mountain. LCHA/ Gary Ray Collection

A Lincoln County mill town was an unlikely cradle for a young man's musical dreams.

Gary Ray was born in 1939 and grew up on River Street in High Shoals, as good a place as any to foster the dreams of a future country artist. His pure, silky voice, a love of music and a passion to perform led him to a body of work that continues to reflect on his Lincoln County roots, with one of his songs a European listener favorite even today.

Ray started singing as a teenager when his father, Baptist minister Cager Ray, and his aunt, Grace Gibson, traveled as a gospel trio. As he grew older, he switched to country music.

In 1963, he made his first recording, a rockabilly song he wrote called "Extra Extra," at Arthur Smith's Charlotte recording studio. On backup were Tommy Faile and Wayne Haas, with his wife, Faye, on keyboard. He called his record label Lincoln Studios. On the "B" side, "Mr. Heartaches."

"Because he was footing the bill, he could name his label anything he wanted," says his son, J.C. Ray. "He loved his town so he put it on the label."

For more than 25 years, Ray performed on local television as a musical guest, on military bases and small towns around the Southeast while keeping his day job as an upholsterer at Burris Industries in Lincolnton.

"Dad's drug was music, and he was addicted," says J.C. "Mom and Dad had a bus, and when me and my two brothers got to be teenagers, they went on the road every single weekend," says his son. With Faye, on piano, Gary

Continued on page 6

The Lincoln County Historian is published six times a year by the Lincoln County Historical Association for LCHA members and contributors.

Story submissions and ideas for upcoming issues are welcomed and encouraged.

Past issues of The Historian are posted on our website.

Lincoln Co. Historical Association

Lincoln Co. Museum of History

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Letters to the Association

From J. Best of Morganton

LCHA/Gaither Shrum Collection

"I was recently driving through Lincolnton going toward Lake Norman and saw a group of little cabins at the intersection of Hwy. 150 and Hwy. 27. What are these cabins?"

What you saw are the remnants of Wise Tourist Court. According to *Our Enduring Past,* the motor court and a gas station were built by Will and Effie Wise and their daughter and son-in-law Blanche and Loy Norman around 1932. The rate was $1.50 a night, and the only amenity was a bed. The cabins were closed after the state required that every hotel and motel room have a bathroom.

From Kay Johnson Mann

"Please renew my membership. I really enjoy your very interesting newsletter. It makes me wish I lived closer to participate in activities in Lincoln County. With my parents and sister deceased now, my visits "home" are very rare. But I love Lincolnton, my church there, First United Methodist, and cherish so many sweet memories of family and friends there.

"As a student home from college over Christmas holidays, I really got the Christmas spirit working with Sam and Jean King at their lovely shop on Main Street (1955 I think).They gave me a Parker ink pen for Christmas. I wish I had it now!

"In 1957-1958 I was privileged to work as Mr. Everett Henley's secretary at Lincoln National Bank - that sweet corner building across from the courthouse. Mr. Henley was a very kind, distinguished gentleman, and I so enjoyed working with him and each one of the fine folks at that very friendly hometown bank. I returned to my college in Brevard, NC to work in their admissions office. The courthouse in Lincolnton had been a source of a family story. My mother told of pulling her father's little red wagon carrying his lunch from their home on Startown road when he was working as the contractor for excavation of the foundation of the court house. Poor Kate! Her dad was Walter Hines.

"Years later, my sister Barbara and I discovered a wealth of material in the court house about our patriot ancestor, Christian Arney. We were then directed to the Library where, incredibly, we made further discoveries in their files containing records of original families who settled in Tryon, later Lincoln County. We were amazed by the research already done, and transcripions of such detailed old records. Reading the actual testimony of our ancestor, trying to describe his military service during the American Revolution, and giving the names of the officers under whom he served was an unbelievable experience for both my sister and me; all available and simply waiting to the discovered. Perhaps the archives in Raleigh has much of this material, but that day it was very present in Lincvolnton. It was a hometown treasure for us!"

Black History: The Story of Adam Miller Moore

"All persons held as slaves within any States... in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free." ... "such persons of suitable condition will be received into the armed service of the United States."

–The Emancipation Proclamation, President Abraham Lincoln, January 1, 1863.

According to pension documents he filed in 1931, Adam Miller Moore was born a slave in 1832 to Jesse Holland, his mother's owner. The two were sold to Moses Roberts of Cherryville when he was only five.

According to research compiled by local historian Rudolph Young, Moore grew up alongside his master's son, A. Miller Roberts of Lincoln County, on a farm in Indian Creek. When the Civil War began, young Roberts joined the Confederate Army. Injured from fighting, Roberts spent time in a Richmond hospital and then journeyed home to recuperate. When he was ready to return to his company, Moore recalled that his master sent him to the Confederate army with young Moore, eight years his junior.

According to a 2017 article by John Coski from The American Civil War Museum website, tens of thousands of enslaved and free African Americans served with Confederate armies, but primarily as body servants and laborers. As a rule, black servants in the Confederate army could not officially carry weapons, but Roberts gave Moore a pistol that he kept under his shirt.

The two men boarded a train at the Cherryville railroad station and arrived in Chancellorsville, Virginia on April 30, 1863. They became separated, and Roberts was killed in action the next day along with 1,606 others during the Chancellorsville campaign. Moore brought his dead master home then returned to his company.

According to Coski, the reasons why many Africans-Americans supported the South are unclear. He cited a 1995 study by Prof. Ervin L. Jordan that reasons varied; self-defense, loyalty to a master or friend, or commitment to the Confederacy. Moore had one goal in mind: freedom. Once when asked why he had simply not run away rather than bring his master's body home. He replied, "If the South had won, my master promised me freedom and if the North won, the Yankees promised freedom."

Moore was in charge of building breastworks, or temporary fortifications. For three years he helped with the horses, a wagoner, and sometimes as camp cook. He stayed with Company "M" of the 16th North Carolina until the unit surrendered at Appomattox in 1865. Then he walked back to his master's home in Cherryville, and settling in Iron Station.

He worked for the railroad and as a farmer until blindness struck at the age of 97. During his lifetime he co-founded Mt. Vernon Baptist Church in 1898 and Mt. Vernon School in 1902.

A witness to history – According to a Charlotte Observer article dated December 17, 1938, Moore recounted that he was present at Appomattox when General Lee surrendered to General Grant on April 9, 1865. The two generals met at the home of Wilmer McLean House shown above. A Confederate soldier gave Moore an apple tree branch from McLean home which he carried home to Cherryville as a souvenir. Library of Congress photo

Moore died in 1941 at the age of 109, and is buried in Mt. Vernon Church cemetery. It's worth noting that his stone doesn't mention his part in the Civil War, but simply "My work is over. My vacation has begun. The path of glory leads but to the grave."

To learn more about African-Americans in the Civil War: "Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia" by Prof. Ervin L. Jordan, Jr., 1995, and "Black Southerners in Gray: Essays on Afro-Americans in Confederate Armies" which includes an essay by Rudolph Young. Both are available new and used on Ebay and Amazon.

Sources:

"Negro Who Saw Lee Surrender Active at 108." The Charlotte Observer, December 17, 1938.

Amateur Historian Traces Lives of Black Confederates by Joe DePriest. The Baltimore Sun, September 27, 1993.

"109-Year-Old Negro Is Dead." The Charlotte News, August 27, 1941.

"On The Trail of a Legend, Historian tracks black Civil War vet through time." The Charlotte Observer, July 6, 1997.

"Myths & Misunderstandings: Black Confederates, John Coski. The Aftrican Civil War Museum website, November 7, 2017.

Historical Happenings

Recent Accessions

2020.007 John Reynolds Collection. Memorabilia belonging to John "Bill" Reynolds including framed Purple Heart and Distinguished Service Cross. By George Reynolds.

2020.009 Roy M. Nixon Collection. Military service memorabilia and personal papers. By Susan Nixon Kuenzel

2020.010 8-Star Diamond quilt circa 1870 by Elvina M. Bolinger Mace. By Gwen Rudisill Carpenter

2020.011 Memorabilia related to LHS Sports, activities at First Baptist Church, Wampum Mill. By George Reynolds

2020.012 Gary Ray Collection. Memorabilia related to the musical career of Gary Ray of High Shoals. By J.C. Ray

Welcome Educators!

As part of our goal to introduce Lincoln County history to students, the LCHA provides complimentary memberships to Lincoln County educators. If you are a Lincoln County Schools educator and interested in learning more about a complimentary membership, contact us at LincolnCountyHistoryNC@gmail.com.

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In the November-December issue of The Historian, we listed an incorrect name for renewed members and donors Ken and Linda Harrill Rudisill. LCHA regrets the error.

Thank You, Donors!

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Businesses and individuals help keep the presses running on our newsletter, The Historian. A one-year newsletter sponsorship of $100 supports this outreach to our community. Benefits include:

- recognition in our newsletter for six issues (one year)

- membership in the LCHA

- exclusive invitations to special events

If you appreciate our newsletter, become a sponsor. Your generous contribution is tax deductible.

LCHA/Gaither Shrum Collection 2001.082.089

LCHA Photo

Farewell to history – The oldest of Lincolnton's last extant homes is missing from our downtown landscape. The David Deitz house, succumbed to the wrecking ball during the first week of December.

According to *Our Enduring Past* by Marvin Brown, the two-story center-hall plan was built on lot 24 of the northeast square of Lincolnton's original plat. It is believed to have been purchased from the town commissioners by David Deitz. In 1819, Deitz sold the lot to Thomas Smith for $800. At that time, undeveloped lots could be purchased from the town in the late 1810s for $60 - $120, so the high price suggested that there was a structure in place. Originally located just to the southwest at the corner of Aspen and Pine, it was moved sometime in this century to a plot behind the current Sound City.

Through the years, the house had numerous owners and for a time served as Democratic Party Headquarters.

The structure's front section was built of heavy timber members pegged together. It was three bays wide with brick chimneys at its gable ends. A two-panel door, topped by a rectangular transom, lead into the center hallway. Ssome of the nine-over-six and six-over-six windows were still enframed in their original late-Federal style surrounds.

Sadly, the windows were destroyed in the demolition, but the Greek Revival style mantel, with corner blocks and fluted posts and lintels, was salvaged from the wreckage heap by Bill Beam.

Gary Ray Resonates – continued from page 1

played country venues all over the southeast with his band, the New Sounds, all regional musicians. When the band broke up, he returned to Lincolnton. It looked like the end for Ray's dreams of Music Row stardom.

In 1988, he returned to the studio to record "Give Me Love," a song that caught the attention of country radio disc jockeys and went to Number 28 on the Cash Box independent charts. It hit Number 97 on the chart of top 100 records from independent studios and studios like RCA and Columbia. In 1988 he was nominated for a Grammy for his single, "Leave Me or Love Me Alone."

It was no lack of talent that kept Ray from the big time. In the 1980s, he auditioned for the Nashville Network's "You Can Be a Star" television show and earned second place with "Nothing On But the Radio." Also on the lineup was a young Randy Traywick, who later earned musical success as Randy Travis. That day, Traywick didn't make the cut.

Ray signed with Lamon Records, where he continued to record. Overall, over a 30-year career, he had six Top 100 Cash Box recordings, and in 1992 performed on the Grand Ole Opry stage.

Ray even recorded a video of "Give Me Love" produced by local producer Gretchen Robinson, and was shot locally. It includes scenes outside of Block Gym and Lincolnton High School, Lake Norman, and Iron Station. It was featured on The Nashville Network, and in 1991 he was nominated for independent video of the year. You can watch it on YouTube by visiting the Gary Ray channel, compiled by his grandson, Cager Ray.

One Sunday morning at Southside Baptist Church, Ray rededicated his life to God. Returning to his gospel roots, he recorded several albums and toured with a new band, the New Creations. Just for fun, he would dress as Elvis Pressley and perform Elvis songs.

"Country music is a dog-eat-dog business, and Dad got cheated out of his investment a couple of times. A company in Holland bootlegged "Extra, Extra" and added it to an album under another band's name. J.C. says he's yet to see any royalties, and lawsuits are expensive.

He believes that some bad decisions and bad timing contributed to blocking his father's big break. "After the New Sounds broke up, Dad could have continued the tour with studio musicians, but chose to skip the rest of the engagements and head for home, a decision he came to regret.

"George Hamilton, IV wanted to record "Extra, Extra," but Dad wouldn't let him use it. He later said he wished he had let him have it."

"Gary Ray was as talented as a lot of those who became big stars," says Wayne Howard, once the voice of WLON in Lincolnton and now with the Lincoln Herald. "The entertainment business is fickle. Talent alone doesn't mean success. Gary had talent. He never got the big break."

He came so close," says J.C.. "He was at the top of the mountain, and all he had to do was fall off."

Ray's legacy continues, however. His music is popular in the U.K, and J.C. receives regular calls from fans. Ray's young cousin and bluegrass artist Colin Ray, also from Lincolnton, is making his own musical dreams a reality. Ray passed away in 2016, and his headstone in Southside Baptist Church cemetery reads, "Guess Who's Singing Now."

Ray's family has donated several of his records, a promotional poster, and even one of his Elvis costumes to the Association's collection. Other artifacts are on display at the Don Gibson Theater in Shelby, and he is currently nominated for entry into the North Carolina Music Hall of Fame in Kannapolis.

"Dad would have been humbled that the Lincoln County Historical Association wanted to preserve some of his belongings," says J.C. "He was truly proud of his hometown."

- Carole Howell

Pandemic: The Scourge of Polio

During the decades before Corona virus, the disease that struck fear in the hearts of parents was infantile paralysis, polio. This inflammation of the central nervous system could cause permanent paralysis and even death.

It was a seasonal epidemic that reached its peak in the 1940s and 50s, closing swimming pools, avoiding public gatherings, and even temporary quarantines for children under 17. The young were the most affected, and there was very little specific information available for preventing the disease or how it spread.

This region was particularly hard hit. According to the North Carolina History Project, Hickory was the hot spot In North Carolina.

Former Lincolnton city manager, David Lowe, contracted polio in 1943 when he was only seven years old.

"The doctors didn't know what to do with it," says Lowe. "They told my parents to put me in the bed, and they even carried me to the bathroom. For three or four months I couldn't walk at all.

"Dr. W.D. Costner had been to a sanitarium, and came back and started a practice in Gamble Hospital. He told Daddy to get me out of the bed and get me a stationary bicycle. Daddy had to build the bicycle, and he put it in my room.

"It was old Dr. Burris the chiropractor who got me walking again," says Lowe. "I saw him three or four times a week, and he would put me in a whirlpool, then on a table where he would crack all my bones, then back in the whirlpool. It hurt, but between six months to a year, you couldn't tell that much of anything was wrong with me.

"Still, I couldn't do a lot of things the other kids did," he said. The disease had left him with a left club foot.

"I would wear out two left shoes to one right shoe because my left foot would drag," says Lowe. "Dave Lerner would order shoes for me, but instead of a pair, he would order two left shoes and one right shoe."

Gradually, he says, his walking got better, and by the time he entered the Air Force, it was barely noticeable. "By the time I had to tell the Air Force that I'd had polio, you couldn't tell it, so I guess they just chose to ignore it."

In 1955, relief came in the form of a polio vaccine invented by Jonas Salk, and in 1959, North Carolina became the first state to require that children to receive the vaccine. In 1961, Albert Sabin licensed an orally administered polio vaccine, delivered on a sugar cube, it held real promise for eradicating polio.

Polio left young David Lowe with a club foot, but with therapy his walking got better. By the time he enlisted in the Air Force, his infirmity was barely noticible. He attributes his fear of the drill sargeant and lots of marching for straightening his leg out for good. Photo courtesy David Lowe

North Carolina staged "KO Polio Sundays," and on March 22, 1964, more than 1.9 million men, women and children in 47 counties ate a cube of sugar containing Sabin's vaccine. In May, 10 counties including Lincoln, did it again. In all, three doses of the vaccine were necessary for lasting immunity.

"I remember that I was co-chairman with Dr. Boyce Griggs on the local polio drive," says Lowe. "It was after church on a Sunday, and we rigged it up with schools all over the county. I was at Park Elementary.

"I don't know how many people we did that day," he said. "They lined up in their cars all the way up McBee Street to Flint. We must have done thousands of people, because they came by the carload. We stayed until dark and no one else was in line. We didn't have to do it again, and people claim that its what eradicated polio.

"I believe the Covid vaccine is working on the same principle and the same goal as the polio," Lowe concluded. "The main difference is how it has to be distributed. I'm hoping that by early fall, we'll be seeing real progress as long as we all work together."

LINCOLN COUNTY
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
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The Museum is currently closed for renovation.

Social distancing requirements have closed our office until further notice, with visits to our resource rooms by appointment only. Please contact us by email,

LincolnCountyHistoryNC@gmail.com

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LINCOLN COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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