



# Fort Mill History Museum NEWS

www.fmhm.org

## FMHM ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING HELD JANUARY 28

On January 28, the Museum held its Annual Membership Meeting at the Spratt Building on Main Street. At the morning meeting, members enjoyed coffee and breakfast treats as they gathered to hear Board Chairman Rick Dammann report on the museum's new location in the Wilson House. He also gave members an overview of some of the events already planned for the next year. Mr. Dammann thanked the Museum's volunteers for their hard work during a very active 2015.

Treasurer Jason Ackerman announced that the museum is in sound financial shape but he emphasized the need to increase membership on an individual and corporate level. He advised the group that for any non-profit organization to thrive, support from the public is crucial.

Museum Director Ann Y. Evans spoke to the group about the launch of several outreach projects. Last year FMHM introduced the history of our town to 1500 students, teachers and parents through the "History Trunk Project." The "Trunk" project packs historical items for travel into the schools along with informative talks by museum volunteers.

"The Tour of Fort Mill Homes," "History Days" demonstrations, participation in the Strawberry Festival and other activities are also on the schedule of upcoming events.

A highlight of this meeting is always the opportunity to talk with members and hear their stories and bits of family history.



The Boys and Girls Club of York County at the Fort Mill History Museum with Mayor Guynn Savage following the MLK Day program and peace walk. (Photo by Rudy Sanders)

## Fort Mill Celebrates MLK Day: A Community Walking Hand in Hand

Fort Mill citizens held an holiday observance in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on January 19th. The community observance began at the Fort Mill Church of God on Academy Street. The 10:00 am program, "A Community Walking Hand in Hand," featured Juanita Sanders, a retired educator from the Fort Mill School District, as keynote speaker.

Ms. Sanders spoke on the topic "What are You Doing for Others?" and discussed the importance of service and involvement in the community. This MLK event was followed by a peace walk from the church to the Fort Mill History Museum. Among those participating in the celebration were Fort Mill Mayor Guynn Savage, the Boys & Girls Club of York County and Boy Scout Troop 219.

Don't miss the history museum's special exhibit for **Black History Month**, which runs through February. The exhibit profiles prominent black citizens from Fort Mill's past and includes photographs and mementos from the history of George Fish School, the first school to be built here specifically for the black community.

*George Fish School stood on Steele Street from 1925 to 1968. Today the site is marked by a monument dedicated to the individuals who made the building of the school possible and to the Paradise community as a whole. (See page 3 for more on George Fish School.)*

# The Walter Meacham House

The Walter Meacham House was located at the corner of Springs and Clebourne Streets, across from the current site of the Fort Mill History Museum. This photo is a poignant reminder of the encroachment of growth on Fort Mill's most iconic structures.

Originally a one story house, the structure was later remodeled and a second story was added.

The house endured until a few years ago. It was sold and eventually deteriorated to a point where restoration became impractical. After the house was demolished, the lot was cleared to make way for commercial uses.

As Fort Mill has grown, we have seen the loss of many structures like the Meacham house as we lose old



landmarks to the needs of an expanding township. These losses should remind us that we must be open to the realities of progress, but at the same time we should be

mindful of the places and people who have shaped our community and continue to make Fort Mill a "one of a kind" place to live.

## GENEALOGY CORNER

One easy-to-use website that can provide a lot of family history information is **FindAGrave.com**. It provides a way to explore cemeteries all over the country without leaving home. Volunteers (many volunteers) photograph and /or record the information on headstones and monuments in churchyards and burial sites wherever they live. The information they gather is uploaded to the website and you can search for ancestors by cemetery, surname or county and state.

If you want to explore a particular cemetery, go to [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com) and enter the state and county location and at least the first word of the cemetery name. The locations that match your entries can be searched further by family name.

Of course, the data for most facilities is necessarily incomplete. The loss of headstones and records through time is unavoidable and, even if all monuments are intact, it is easy to miss some along the way. Most cemeteries are laid out haphazardly so following a consistent path to record data is almost impossible.

There are, however, about 140,000 records in **Find a Grave**. The home page gives you a choice of searching for

"famous" graves or going to a list of more normal searches, the ones useful to most of us.

Choose [Search 141 million grave records](#) and the site takes you to a **Find a Grave Search Form**. Fill in as much information as you can and SEARCH.

Choose [Search for a cemetery](#) and go to **Cemetery Search**. Enter the first word of cemetery name. Add a location: State/ County. SEARCH and you will find a list of properties for an entire county, with specific locations and the number of gravesites catalogued in each.

Choose [Surname](#) and it's back to the **Find A Grave Search Form**. Again, fill in the surname information you know.

This is a free site; you don't leave a credit card number and you don't have to register unless you'd like to upload or correct information yourself.

When you reach a burial that you find interesting, you will generally see a photo of the headstone (if it is still present) and perhaps some other landmarks of interest in the cemetery. Items that may be included on headstones are: person's birth and death dates, family

links like spouse, children, or possibly parents. There is a tab that may contain Interactive map and GPS information.

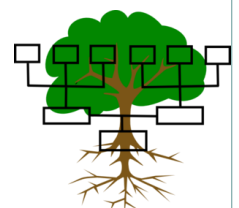
Often a researcher can locate a group of graves for which no church remains (or ever stood), like a family burial site. This "grouping" can be particularly helpful in researching "founding families."

In addition to birth and death dates for the deceased, there may be expanded information on the family, like one or multiple spouses with birth and death dates, parents' birth and death dates, a list of children with the same types of notes, or a list of siblings.

Try this! You may find something (or someone) amazing!

**Cheryl Hill**

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# FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH

## Remembering George Fish School

Before there was a school for black children in Fort Mill, various churches took on the responsibility of educating the young people of the community.

When the Fort Mill Academy, the first public school, moved its students to the newly built Carothers Elementary, the Academy building was used to educate the black community.

In 1925, George Fish School was built on Steele Street and became the first school built for black children in Fort Mill.

In the early 1920's, Julius Rosenwald, president and part owner of Sears & Roebuck, endowed a study at Tuskegee Institute in coordination with Booker T. Washington. Together they created a foundation to build schools that would serve "African-American children in the South."

Over 5000 Rosenwald Schools were built throughout the South and one grant provided the starter funding for George Fish School.



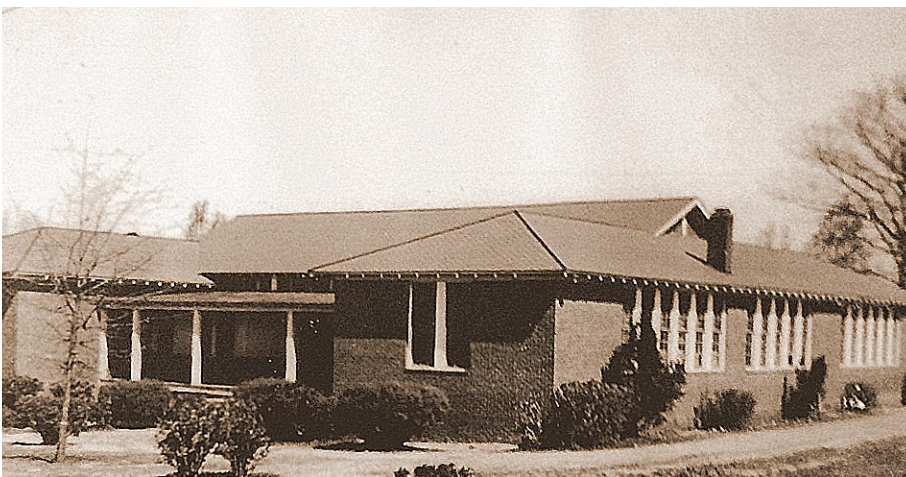
The monument pictured above, erected in 2007, stands at the former site of George Fish School, which opened in 1925 and served the Paradise community for nearly 45 years.

When George Fish officially opened its doors, the students at the Academy marched in a procession to the new school and took part in the dedication. A principal's home was included in the grant and its first occupant was Professor Elliott Avery, who served as principal for the school until 1938.

George Fish School served the Paradise community until 1968, when Fort Mill's public schools were integrated. The school building on Steele Street was converted to the Fort Mill Junior High School that year.

It functioned in this capacity until the early 1980's, when the building was demolished. The George Fish School Alumni Memorial Monument, designed by Fort Mill native Rufus "Rudy" Sanders, was erected in 2007 and stands on the school grounds, now occupied by a local office of Duke Energy.

The school was named for Dr. George Fish, an Englishman who served as a superintendent of Springs plants #1 and #2 and who was a strong advocate of education for the black community.



An early photo of George Fish School.



Mr. & Mrs. Harmon Gill celebrate with students (grades 1 thru 5) upon completion of their service to the community honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr during the holiday observance.

# Prominent Citizens of Fort Mill: Harold “Mac” McCallum

When Harold “Mac” McCallum became the Agriculture teacher at Fort Mill High in 1953, no one knew what a great influence he would have on his students, teachers and the Town of Fort Mill.

In 1953, Mac and his wife moved to Fort Mill; Mac became the Agriculture teacher at Fort Mill High. His wife Phoebe taught business and typing at the high school.

While any of his former students could tell you that Mac’s passion was teaching and working with young people, his influence was felt all over the state. He taught at Fort Mill High School until 1969.

At that time he was chosen as the first principal at the newly organized Fort Mill Junior High School. He remained at the Junior High School until his retirement in 1981.

An annual scholarship was set up in 1983 to honor Mac and his wife Phoebe for their role in shaping and inspiring the lives of the students they taught.

During his tenure as an educator, Mr. McCallum also served as president of the York County Education Association, President of the S.C. Agricultural Association, and the S.C. Vocational Association.

In service to his community, McCallum was president of the Optimist Club, president of the Rock Hill Toastmasters, Executive Secretary of the



**Mac McCallum**  
(1919—2008)

Fort Mill Chamber of Commerce, and General Chairman of the Fort Mill Centennial Celebration among other offices.

In 1966, Mac received Fort Mill’s Man of the Year Award.” He was also named to the Fort Mill Hall of Fame in 2010.

**Fort Mill’s Hall of Fame** was founded in 2008 to recognize outstanding Fort Mill citizens who have been instrumental in shaping Fort Mill’s legacy.

The Hall of Fame Nomination Committee annually recognizes Fort Mill citizens who have achieved distinction in their lives and /or chosen fields through significant contributions to their careers, community, or through personal achievements.

## PLANNED PROGRAMS & EVENTS AT THE MUSEUM 2016

- Author Aron Paul Seaborn (*The Mourners’ Bench*) of Indian Land will speak on growing up in the South. Book Signing! Thursday, Feb 25th at 6:00 PM, FMHM. Details will follow.
- Completion of History Trunk traveling exhibit for the middle schools.
- Walking tours of Fort Mill’s Historic District, Confederate Park, Fort Mill sculptures and historic sites.
- *Historic Homes of Fort Mill Christmas Tour* and a *History Days* event.
- Participation in annual local events, *The Strawberry Festival*, and *Earth Day* at the ASC Greenway.

**Join the Museum!**  
Memberships start at  
**\$35.00.**

| INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIPS |         |
|------------------------|---------|
| Level                  | \$      |
| Patron                 | 35.00   |
| Out of Towner          | 50.00   |
| Contributor            | 100.00  |
| Sustainer              | 250.00  |
| Conservator            | 500.00  |
| Benefactor             | 1000.00 |
| BUSINESS MEMBERSHIPS   |         |
| Partner                | 1000.00 |
| Leader                 | 300.00  |
| Sponsor                | 3000.00 |



# FM Community Playhouse Marks 2016 Season By Moving To Main Street

When a small group of Fort Mill citizens gathered in 1981 to organize a community theater, they had no experience, no actors, no props, and no venue. With support from Springs Industries these theater pioneers found local talent to build sets, paint scenery, create costumes, apply make-up, sell tickets and develop publicity.

In 1986 the auditorium at the aging middle school burned, leaving the playhouse to once again pitch the “big top” tent in the area behind Bank of America on Tom Hall Street.

FMCP later received permission to hold productions at the newly constructed Fort Mill High School

performances, including *Bandstand Tales I* and *II*, a musical history of Fort Mill written by author and former resident Mignon Ballard.

After thirty-six years of providing an ever-growing community with quality entertainment, the Playhouse now moves to the old City Hall building on Main Street.

The theater will launch its 36th season with the play *Honky-Tonk Angels* beginning March 3rd with performances through March 20th.



**Bandstand Tales**, performed for three seasons (2006, 2007, and 2010), is a musical history of Fort Mill told from the Fort Mill's most famous landmark.

Anxious to put a roof over their heads, the playhouse rented a huge canvas “big top” tent and set it up on what is now a soccer field beside the Springs Recreation Complex. Auditions were held to recruit local “actors” by the dozens and The Fort Mill Community Playhouse made its debut with the extravaganza *Spring for Sure*.

Soon after, the theatre moved operations to the A.O. Jones Middle School auditorium and began to present musicals like *Music Man*, *Carnival*, and *Carousel*.

auditorium, (built in 1987) where they continued with productions like *The Sound of Music*, *Li'l Abner*, *My Fair Lady* and *Anything Goes*.

In 1990 the playhouse made a permanent home at its Banks Street location, a smaller venue with some big

Check playhouse  
performance  
dates and times  
and make reservations  
by calling at 803-548-8102  
or by visiting the  
FMCP website at:  
[www.fortmillplayhouse.org](http://www.fortmillplayhouse.org).



# Do You Know . . .

By Mike Hill

In the 1950's and 1960's, the pace of Fort Mill traffic was much less hectic than today. With one elementary and one middle school in the center of town, the police relied on students at each school to serve as the School Safety Patrol.

At Carothers Elementary, proud fourth graders wore Sam Brown belts (wide white belts fitting around the waist and over one shoulder), along with caps and badges, to help students cross the streets at the corner of Confederate and Monroe White Streets.

For the middle school, then called Central and later renamed A.O. Jones, eighth graders ruled the corner of Tom Hall Street and Monroe White. The patrol members were not allowed to stop traffic, just the students.

The reward for a year on the Safety Patrol (besides the status) was a summer trip to Springmaid Beach for a week. Sleeping on concrete slabs covered by three-inch mattresses and playing on the beach all day was a heavenly treat for the patrol boys.

This photo from the late 1950's shows the well-tanned Safety Patrol arriving back in town after one such beach trip. Do you know any of these guys? If so, let me know at [michaelcasehill@yahoo.com](mailto:michaelcasehill@yahoo.com).



This picture, taken in the 1950's, and shows members of the safety patrol disembarking from the school bus in Fort Mill after a week at Springmaid Beach.

Join us at the  
Fort Mill History Museum!



Fort Mill History Museum  
107 Clebourne Street  
Fort Mill, SC 29716

Contact us for membership  
information or with questions:

Phone: (803) 802-3646  
Email: [Info@FMHM.org](mailto:Info@FMHM.org)

**Hours of Operation:**  
10:00 am - 4:00 pm  
Wednesday thru Saturday

#### Admission Rates

Adult 19 and up - \$5.00  
Children 7 to 18 - \$2.00  
Children under 6 - Free  
Museum Members - Free

\*FMHM is an NARM Participant.

#### TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FMHM's Participation in NARM

Our Fort Mill History Museum belongs to a program called the **North American Reciprocal Association**.

NARM is a reciprocating membership organization with participation by over 800 arts, cultural, and historical institutions, along with botanical gardens, children's museums, and more.

These institutions offer FMHM members reciprocal benefits such as free or membership admission during regular museum hours and discounts in many museum shops. For information, you can check with the museum or visit:

<http://narmassociation.org>.

#### Visit the J. B. Mills Gift Shop

Be sure to come by our gift shop for great items related to Fort Mill.

The museum shop has books by local authors as well as Fort Mill mementos of many kinds.

We have great gift ideas!

#### FEEDBACK?

Have comments, suggestions or corrections for the newsletter?

Please send them to Michael C. Hill at [michaelcasehill@yahoo.com](mailto:michaelcasehill@yahoo.com)

Editors: Mike and Cheryl Hill