



Fort Mill History Museum NEWS

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Gilbert Blue, Longtime Chief of the Catawba Nation, Dies at 82

Gilbert Blue, the legendary former Catawba Indian Chief who was the driving force behind the tribe's ultimate recognition by the US and South Carolina governments, died Saturday, June 11th on the reservation outside Rock Hill. He was 82.

The Catawbans are the native inhabitants of the Piedmont region of the Carolinas and have been in this area for thousands of years.

Blue took over as chief in 1973 and led the Catawbans through their struggles with both state and federal governments to finally gain recognition status for the tribe in 1993. The tribe is South Carolina's only federally recognized Native American group.

Blue was a U.S. Navy veteran whose patriotism for America and devotion to the Catawbans was well known throughout the state.



Gilbert Blue, former Catawba Chief



The cannon roars to life on Independence Day. (Photo by Tony McMehan)

Fort Mill Celebrates the Fourth of July (with a bang!)

The cannons sat silent on Main Street for over 100 years until suddenly, in the early 1970's, they roared to life and a Fourth of July tradition was born. The adventure began at the Fort Mill American Legion when one of a group of friends casually asked the question, "Do you think those old cannons in the park could still fire?"

Clyde Short, who had worked with the WPA to build roads through the mountains and was familiar with explosives announced that he could do it.

When the day came, the group of local characters gathered in Confederate Park with an oil can full of black powder and paper to use as wadding.

But there was a hitch. No one had bothered to ask permission and

things looked bleak when Police Chief Floyd Foss showed up and began asking questions. He told the men that if they fired the cannon he would arrest them and fine them \$1000.

Things were at a standstill until an unknown donor in the crowd said, "I've got a thousand dollars!" and so the fun began. The cannon roared, flame shot out of the barrel and pieces of burning newspaper floated toward the railroad tracks.

Over the forty years since, Fort Mill citizens have gathered on the morning of the Fourth of July to listen to speakers, mingle with friends, young and old, and watch the cannon crew rig and fire the cannon.

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Fort Mill's 4th of July

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The guns themselves are not actual-ly cannons. They are shore defense 100 lb. Parrott Rifles made at the West Point foundry in 1862.

The date and place of manufacture dispels the myth that they were used by the South during the Civil War. They may have been used during those years but not against Northern troops.

Stories abound about the holidays when the cannon fired. A favorite is about the day the concussion from the cannon fire shattered the large glass window in front of the Fort Mill Times.

Everyone was a little stunned and unsure of how to proceed until John Mantle, the editor at that time and an Englishman by birth, stepped out the door waving a white flag.

Once again, the Redcoats had surrendered.

— By Mike Hill with Mike Short



Cannoneer Mike Short carries on the tradition established by his uncle Clyde Short and father Charlie Short. Thanks to the dozens of Fort Mill folks who have helped fire the cannon over the years. If you have been one of those, let us know at michaelcasehill@yahoo.com. (Photo: Mike Hill)



(Above left) The Fort Mill Elks Club presents a history of flags used as America's symbol over the years.

(Above right) Former Mayors Lunsford McFadden and Charles Powers are the honorary cannoneers for the 2016 cannon firing.

(Far left) Joe Hardy plays "America the Beautiful" on the bagpipes.

(Near left) Billy Barron is accompanied by his daughter Vereen Brown; Billy was one of the original cannoneers back in the 70's.



The preamble of the Declaration of Independence, signed on July 4th, 1776, includes this famous passage:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

The Lure (and Lore) Of The Old Peach Stand

by Mike Hill

When summer comes to Fort Mill, the old wooden building at the corner of Business 160 and Highway 21 comes to life with shutters opening and baskets of fragrant peaches warming in the sun.

Since the 1930's, when Colonel Elliott Springs opened the building to sell local Springs Farm produce, residents have relied on the Peach stand for peaches, tomatoes, corn and watermelons.

The stand, with its white painted exterior and aging gray wood interior, has been a place where summer workers, from teens to retirees, bake in the sun to sell produce and chat with locals and travelers.

When the New Peach Stand was built in the late 1970's, the old building was moved from its original spot to its current location across the road. The folks at Springs Farms realized the lure of an old-fashioned roadside produce market with its aroma of fresh peaches and kept the stand and its traditions alive.

Old-timers would ask the same questions from year to year. "Are these Alberta Peaches?"



(The name is actually *Elberta* but rarely did anyone call them that.)

And "Do you have Georgia Bells?" Georgia Bells are a peach with white flesh and are so sugar-filled that after picking, they rarely last a summer's day in the heat without beginning to soften.

And Silver Queen corn...Regulars knew the day and the hour that Silver Queen would come in from the fields and they would line up waiting for the bounty to arrive so they could take it home to make creamed corn or to cook it on the cob.

The Springs family were always involved with the old Peach Stand and workers would sometimes be blessed, on a blistering day, when Ann Springs Close would bring them a fresh baked blackberry cobbler and a half gallon of vanilla ice cream.

With traditions disappearing as Fort Mill grows, it's nice to stop, breathe the fragrances of the past, bring back childhood memories and chat about old times.

While you're there, pick up a basket of peaches for Aunt Rosa...she loves them so.



THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY DONORS

The Museum would like to recognize the following organizations for their contributions to the FMHM's **History Trunk Committee**.

Their contributions are helping the committee create retractable panels that illustrate local history:

- ◆ ALPHAGRAPHICS
- ◆ FORT MILL MIDDLE SCHOOL PTO

The History Trunk is a valuable and unique asset to the Museum Fort Mill Schools. We deeply appreciate these contributions.

FEEDBACK?

Do you have stories, photos, comments, suggestions or corrections for the newsletter?

Share them with us!

Please send them to
Michael C. Hill at
michaelsehill@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editors:
Mike and Cheryl Hill

People of Paradise: John Samuel Sanders Sr.

By Cora Dunlap Lyles



The John Samuel Sanders Sr. family

It afforded a sense of honor and dignity in death to those who otherwise did not receive it in life.

John was a founding member of the old Bethlehem Baptist Church which was once located on Steele Street. As the church treasurer, he wrote an editorial that appeared in the Fort Mill Times in 1921 expressing thanks to various members of the community for their support and financial contributions toward the church building fund.

John was also a founding member of the Jerusalem Baptist Church whose appointments included Chairman of the Deacon Board, Superintendent of the Sunday school and Chairman of the Church Building Committee. Moreover, he was a George Fish School trustee.

John Samuel Sanders Sr. died on November 22, 1962. He was a man who was well respected in the Town of Fort Mill and within the Paradise community. He was my maternal great-grandfather.

Sanders Street is a small stretch of road that runs between Doby Bridge Road and Tom Hall Street. It was named in honor of John Samuel Sanders Sr. His house, which no longer stands, was built on a parcel of land that his wife, Lillie Campbell Sanders, inherited from her parents.

John Samuel Sanders Sr. was born May 1, 1886. He was also known as "Duck" Sanders. He worked with Springs Industries as a carpenter. He was a community and church leader.

Some of his civic associations included Grand Senior Deacon of the Prince Hall F.A.M. of South Carolina, Worshipful Master of the Golden Rule Lodge Masonic Lodge No. 102 and Worthy Patron of the Peep of Day Chapter No. 124 Order of Eastern Star. He was instrumental in the purchase of the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge on Smith Street.

One of his most important roles within the community was that of president of the Burial Aid Society. The Burial Aid Society provided aid to orphans and widows after the death of a parent or a spouse. It assisted families with funeral arrangements and provided a place of burial of their loved ones.

The Burial Aid Society also sought to maintain and preserve graveyards such as the old Bethlehem Baptist Church cemetery on Banks Street.

Although now defunct, these societies promoted a much needed sense of community for a people dealing with the residual effects of slavery during the height of segregation.



The "Springs of Achievement" statue pictured here is located on the front lawn of the former Springs Executive Offices at the corner of North White Street and McCammon. All of the seven "Achievement" statues were created by Italian sculptor Bruno Lucchesi and commissioned by Springs Mills in the 1990's. They represent the values important to every business, town, state or nation. This statue reflects "*Personal and Family Well-Being.*"

Fort Mill's Calendar Art

In the late 1800's and early 1900's, when roads were little more than rutted wagon paths and cars were newfangled and unreliable, folks that lived in and around Fort Mill (and every other small town) rarely traveled farther than Main Street to purchase any "store-bought" goods they needed.

Fort Mill's Main Street bustled with businesses and was the place to see and be seen.

THE CASH STORE (Main Street, Fort Mill) 1926



HARRIS DEPARTMENT STORE

Fort Mill February 1915

On Saturdays the farmers came into town and the many mill-workers had some time off to do their weekly shopping and browsing.

Grocery stores, dry good stores, and hardware stores sold everything from shoes to shovels.

Pharmacies, physicians and dentists treated the sick and ailing with the best remedies those days could provide and locals caught up on the news as they sat on the bandstand and whittled or looked over the newest styles in the shop windows.

With competition only half a block down the street, local

businesses had to advertise to keep old patrons interested and attract new customers. Ads in the Fort Mill Times were a good way but the newspaper came out only once a week (and had a minimum of longterm esthetic appeal).

Since every house and barn had a wall to decorate, calendars became the ideal advertising solution for many local stores and businesses.

SPRINGMAID SHEETS (Springs Mills, Fort Mill) July—Aug 1962



The Lancaster & Chester Railroad

The **Lancaster & Chester Railroad**, (L & C), is one of the shortest in the country (only 29 miles), but it has one of the most colorful histories of any railroad anywhere. Back in 1873 it was chartered as the Cheraw and Chester Railway, but only the stretch from Chester to was built before the developers ran out of money.

In 1896 Col. Leroy Springs, who had just built a cotton mill in Lancaster, bought the bankrupt railroad for \$25,000. Springs' interest in owning a railroad may have stemmed partly from the fact that his grandfather, John Springs III, had been an early investor in the **South Carolina Railroad** and was one of the business leaders responsible for the **C. C. & A.** building the tracks that created the towns of Rock Hill and Fort Mill.

The L & C tracks were narrow gauge, which made it impossible to exchange cars with other railroad companies. The locomotive burned wood instead of coal. To add to Springs's problems, the wooden Catawba River bridge burned in 1889. Springs built a steel replacement trestle. In 1902, Springs borrowed \$125,000 to upgrade the three-foot gauge to standard gauge.

He also bought new locomotive cars and sold his old equipment.

Sometimes the railroad carried passengers, especially to baseball games. In 1913, three passenger coaches full of baseball fans were tossed about when a car jumped the tracks at Hooper Creek trestle. Five people were killed and there were numerous injuries. The tragedy ended the railroad's passenger service.

The Great Flood of 1916 floated the L & C Catawba River trestle downstream. Springs found a replacement trestle with double spans, one set for railroad and the other for auto mobile traffic.

Leroy Springs died in 1931. His only child, Capt. Elliott White Springs, a gifted, imaginative man, took over a tottering empire that was hit hard by the Great Depression and (by) his father's inattention to his financial affairs due to ill health.

Elliott Springs appointed 29 vice-presidents, one for each mile of the line. The vice presidents included Adm. "Bull" Halsey, artist James Montgomery Flagg, golfer Bobby Jones, radio man Lowell Thomas, and, the one who received the

most attention, striptease artist Gypsy Rose Lee. Springs named Miss Lee as his "vice president in charge of unveiling."

When he built a fancy Williamsburg-style railroad station" in Lancaster in 1951, Gypsy Rose Lee was there to "unveil" the only example of proprietary colonial architecture among railway stations in the United States.



The distinctive blue engines of the L & C Railroad can still be seen running between the cities of Lancaster and Chester.

This story was excerpted from an article by distinguished local historian, Louise Pettus.

The full text of this article was published in the York section of The Observer on July 14, 1991.

Upcoming Events in Fort Mill ...

Fort Mill History Days
September 23, 2016 –
September 25, 2016
Walter Elisha Park

Christmas Tree Lighting
December 1, 2016
Confederate Park

Fort Mill Christmas Parade
December 3, 2016
Downtown Fort Mill

Historic Homes Tour
December 10, 2016
Sites to be announced



The Fort Mill Southern Railway trestle was washed away from the Catawba River crossing by the Great Flood, July 17, 1916. (From the collection of W.B. Meacham.)

Do You Know?



This month's "Do You Know?" column is more of a "What Do You Know?"

Massey's Drug Store, pictured here, stood on Main Street and, according to the sign, sold more than just pharmaceuticals.

(This photo is a part of J.B. Mills' extensive collection.)

Do you know where it stood on Main Street, what years it was in business, and what Massey family was affiliated with the store?



New Admission Rates at FMHM!

ADULTS

\$3.00 EACH FOR WALK IN GROUPS OF THREE OR MORE; \$7.00 MAXIMUM

SCHOOL CHILDREN

K-12: \$1.00

COLLEGE STUDENTS & MILITARY PERSONNEL

WITH ID: \$1.00

CHILDREN UNDER 5:

FREE

MUSEUM MEMBERS:

FREE

Be sure to visit our **J. B. Mills Gift Shop** for great items related to Fort Mill's history.

The museum shop has books by local authors as well as Fort Mill mementos and gift items.



Museum members receive a 10% discount on gift shop merchandise!

Join us at the Fort Mill History Museum!



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Contact us for membership information or with questions:

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

Business and Individual Memberships Available.

*FMHM is an NARM Participant.

If you have questions or information for the newsletter, please contact the editors, Mike and Cheryl Hill, at michaelcasehill@yahoo.com.