

ROWAN ROOTS

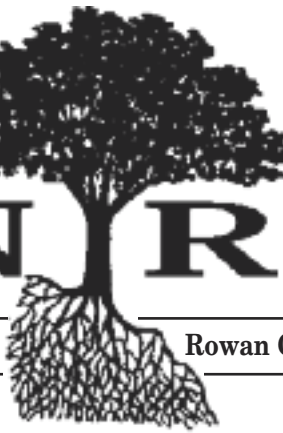
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Brown-Fisher Association

Rowan County, North Carolina

February 2020

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WHAT LIES BENEATH?

Three hundred and forty four (344) years is a long, long time over which one could build something on the Michael Brown House Grounds, tear it down, and build again. Unfortunately, there were few, if any, records kept of all the structures that were built since 1766 around the Old Stone House or items that were buried elsewhere on the property. To our good fortune, technology has evolved, and radar imaging can now be used to help answer the question of what lies beneath. If you live locally, perhaps you recall the study conducted a few years ago at the National Veterans' Cemetery. It revealed the existence of unknown mass graves used by the Confederate States to bury deceased Union soldiers who'd been held at the Salisbury Prison during the Civil War.

In July 2018, Rowan Museum (the Museum) contracted with New South Associates of Stone Mountain, GA to perform a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) study of the Michael Brown House and Grounds. New South is a women-owned small business that is "nationally-recognized for its ability to integrate studies of sites and structures of the past with planning and construction for the future." The Museum's goal was to document any evidence of previous structures and/or ground disturbances, such as graves, before embarking upon the upcoming Education and Visitor's Center project which will require the most extensive topography changes of the grounds since the house was built in 1766.

New South studied three specific areas on the grounds but perhaps the most significant discoveries were found in and around the Brown family cemetery where previously unknown graves are believed to have been found. The probable graves were identified based on their size, shape, depth, orientation, and other characteristics. Many factors influence the overall effectiveness of GPR for detecting soil anomalies consistent with graves, including soil type and level of acidity, level of moisture and precipitation, age of probable graves, likely grave depth, and burial container (e.g., shroud, wood coffin, metal casket, concrete vault). In general, if the anomaly had any of the characteristics of a grave it was marked as a potential grave.

The study identified 41 probable graves, 17 of those were marked in some fashion (e.g. a simple unmarked rock) while

24 were not. These probable graves represented a distinct contrast with surrounding soils and were identifiable in both plan and profile view. Six marked graves did not have associated anomalies visible in the GPR results. If these are included in the grave count, then there are 47 individual graves in the cemetery. Of course, the names of the deceased are unknown in most cases.

There is a modern memorial to Michael Brown and footstone adjacent to the grave of Brown's first wife, Margareta, but the precise location of Brown's grave is unknown (Linn 1979). Probable Grave Anomaly 8 is associated with the memorial and footstone. It is impossible to know who is buried in this grave, but it has been recorded as Michael's since the Michael Brown memorial stone and associated footstone serve as its marker. New research has brought into question Brown's dates of birth and death as engraved on the memorial. Rowan Museum staff are presently working with other historians to resolve the discrepancies, after which corrections will be made to the memorial itself.

The revelation of the bodies of additional souls buried adjacent to the family cemetery begs the obvious question as to who might be buried there. Rowan Museum Executive Director Aaron Kepley says that it's possible that the family's slaves might be buried in these graves. He gave as an example the City of Salisbury's use of a GPR study in the 1990s that identified the existence of slaves buried in the Old English Cemetery. In that case, the cemetery was encompassed with a stone wall and the study revealed that the slaves were buried on the other side of the wall. The discovery prompted city leaders to look at the entire cemetery in a new light, open the stone wall and create reflection benches throughout.

Though nothing like this is currently planned for the Brown Cemetery, it nonetheless leaves us wondering if indeed Michael Brown chose to bury the family slaves nearby. Today, using a DNA test, one can miraculously prove he/she descended from someone who passed centuries ago. Having said that, it's entirely possible that someone may come forward one day who can prove that a person buried "beyond the wall" is their long lost relative!

MOUNT PLEASANT COLLEGE

It is well documented that our Brown and Fisher ancestors were devout Lutherans, bringing Martin Luther's doctrine with them from Germany to America. The men were expected to spread Luther's message whenever possible while taking up occupations to support their families and livelihoods. Their convictions were so strong that a significant number of German settlers, including many Browns and Fishers, sought to further evangelize the Lutheran message by ministering to the populace; however, very few had the theological knowledge to do it effectively.

In July 1852, the North Carolina Synod of the Lutheran Church, meeting at Concord, North Carolina, resolved to place a seminary called **Western Carolina Male Academy** at Mount Pleasant. After years of efforts to assure a supply of educated Lutherans for the clergy, this made Mount Pleasant an educational center. It began on 16 acres purchased for \$81.25 from Mathias Barrier. The campus initially consisted of a three-story brick school building, a president's home, and a chapel. While a dormitory was built, students had to board with residents at an expense of \$6 monthly, while paying the school \$3 monthly for stove wood and oil for lamps.

Supported by the Lutheran Church, the school established itself as a respected institute of religion and higher learning. The school's 1857-58 catalogue indicates the school had a staff of three teachers: Rev. William Gerhardt, principal; Rev. C. Lentz, assistant; and William L. Barrier, tutor. Fifty boys were on the roll at that time, including Nathan Brown, a Michael Brown descendant through his son David, and his son Solomon and wife Amy Miller Brown. In early February of

1858, Nathan received a letter from his father Solomon, telling him to come home the last Saturday of the month because his sister Loisa, age 19, was to be married on the following Tuesday. Unfortunately, the event never occurred because Loisa tragically died on her wedding day after suffering an attack of stomach colic while she was pressing her wedding dress. Loisa is buried in the cemetery at the Old Stone House.

Over time, the school began enrolling students from across the state, prompting it to change its name to **North Carolina College** in 1859. The school continued to prosper, doubling its enrollment by the fall of 1861, however attendance dwindled rapidly as young men left for the Civil War battlefield. The school's endowment fund was cut nearly in half when repudiation of the Confederate debt turned the school's war bond holdings into worthless papers, forcing it to close. The college, however, reopened in 1866 and for the rest of the century struggled financially. The College never regained its antebellum footing and finally closed its doors in 1901.

After lying dormant for a year, the Reverend L.E. Busby established a private school on the grounds in 1902. After one year as a private school, the Mt. Pleasant campus reopened as a collegiate preparatory institution and gained the new name of the **Mount Pleasant Collegiate Institute**. The first session began in 1903. Four years later the institute introduced the modified military system. The Institute continued operation into the early years of the Depression. Again, because of lack of funding, the school closed its doors after the class of 1933 was graduated.

NEED FAMILY STORIES

We really need readers to help us generate an informative newsletter. We need to make the newsletter a primary reason why descendants want to become members/keep their membership. We should work to make the newsletter a "must have" for our membership and we need everyone's help to make that happen. So please take a few minutes to write down things that you recall from your past. Perhaps a funny story about your grandparents or a story about a family member who leads/led an interesting life and email it to Brenda Zimmerman @ brendaz280@gmail.com . There's really no limitation!



GERMANFEST 2019



To the Point Dance Company performs traditional German Folk Dance



Nanay Gaines demonstrating one of many skills that would have been essential in the 18th century: Spinning



Tricia Creel preparing dough to be baked in the outdoor oven



Recently grading allowed for plenty of room for the tents, vendors & activities at the 2019 Germanfest.



"The past is not dead, it is living in us and will be alike in the future which we are now helping to make."

- William Morris 1834-1886



94TH ANNUAL REUNION OF BROWNS & FISHERS PROMPTS GLIMPSE OF PAST AND VISION OF FUTURE

The 65 members and friends attending the 94th annual reunion of the Brown-Fisher Association were asked to imagine the past, with sweeping fields of wheat, cotton and corn covering the hills surrounding Michael Brown's massive stone house. There, you'd have found 16 indentured servants, and, in later years, a mix of laborers working the land. Michael Brown's 1766 House and Grounds fell into neglect; vandalized over the years to the point where the rock walls of the house were the only remnants of the once grand home. The grounds too, fell into disrepair, with the fields being overtaken by the woods, leaving the incorrect impression that the house was originally nestled in the forest. With the help of recent grading and tree removal, attendees were then asked to imagine a brand new Visitor's and Event Center situated on the hill above the house, offering a grand view of the Old Stone House below, surrounded by a working farm, complete with quarters for the indentured servants and the crops from long ago.

Members were informed that that vision is now one step closer, thanks to a gracious bequeath from the Estate of Juanita Fisher Lagg. Mrs. Lagg had dreamed for years of just such a building to house the extensive archives and heirlooms of both families, as well as to house modern, handicapped accessible restrooms, along with a gift shop/office and other amenities.

BFA President Stephen Brown of Durham, NC explained the progress on this project over the past year, including the removal of the 1950s caretaker's house and taking control of a log cabin, gifted to them by the estates of the late Rep. Eugene and Jean Fisher McCombs. Remnants of the cabin have been moved to the Grounds and will be used to reconstruct the quarters of the indentured servants. President Brown reported that Rowan Museum is in the planning stages of a capital campaign and asked everyone to contribute so that the vision will become a reality.

President Brown welcomed everyone attending and called on Vice President Deane Brown of Spartanburg, SC to give the luncheon invocation. The meal consisted of all-you-can eat hot dogs, hamburgers, baked beans and all the trimmings, prepared by Board of Directors members Norman Ribelin of Granite Quarry, NC and Larry Brown of China Grove, among others.

President Brown then called the business meeting to order and opened his comments by discussing the relationship between the Browns and Fishers and how the two families have supported the renewal and continued upkeep of the Old Stone House. Having been separate organizations previously, the two families joined into one association in 1925 due to the

numerous marriages between the two. The Association includes descendants of German immigrants who migrated to Rowan and Cabarrus Counties from Philadelphia, PA and other ports of call.

Original ancestors were brothers Abraham, Andrew, Jacob, and Michael Brown (Braun) and Frederick, George, Jr. and Sybilla Fisher (Fischer). In closing, he reminded attendees that is now up to us to carry on the examples set by these ancestors.

Coordinator Doug Robinson distributed minutes of the 2018 meeting which were approved unanimously. Treasurer Larry Brown reported total assets on hand as of September 20, 2019 as \$286,301.62. A significant portion of those assets was the bequeath of Mrs. Lagg's estate. One dollar gold coins were awarded to the following: oldest persons attending - Jack Taylor of Salisbury, age 91, and Shirley Brown of Salisbury, age 87; youngest person attending - Brooks Brown, son of Ben and Candace Brown of China Grove, age 4; person who traveled the farthest - Melissa Brown Hayes of Nashville, TN; person with most descendants attending - Grace Brown Marlatt who represented 10 first cousins of Juanita Fisher Lagg.

Coordinator Doug Robinson noted that the 2019 membership drive had been disappointing due to the late kickoff following the death of newsletter Cathy Kirchin. New board member Brenda Zimmerman has assumed the editor's tasks. Robinson closed his remarks stating that the Association had not increased membership dues in 25 years since it was formed in 1994.

He noted that after considering expenses, the board recommended, and the membership approved, that the dues be increased as in 2020 as follows: Annual - from \$10 to \$15, Donor - from \$20 to \$25, and Sustaining - from \$50 to \$75.

President Brown then thanked Debbie Brown Taylor of Salisbury, Norman Ribelin of Granite Quarry and Keith Wolf of Albemarle for their service on the Board over the last four years. Each agreed to serve another term and they were duly elected.

In closing, President Brown asked members to think back to that vision of fields of wheat, corn, and cotton surrounding the Old Stone House, cabins to tell the stories of indentured servants and perhaps even a shed where Michael perfected his printing process before opening shop in Salisbury. It's a vision of Michael Brown's farm once again coming to life, a vision each of us can help make a reality.



SPRING FROLIC 2020

The Rowan Museum will sponsor its fourth Annual Colonial Spring Frolic on Saturday, April 4 in celebration of spring and the re-opening of the 1766 Old Stone House for the season.

Included in the festivities are tours of the only surviving colonial house in Rowan County with guides in period costumes. Historical interpreters will offer tours of the house, crafts, including dyeing Easter eggs with natural dyes and guests may participate. Muskets will be fired, along with woodworking, weaving, spinning, candle making, open fire cooking and tastings, children’s games, colonial dancers & music by the Windsong Recorder Ensemble, and much more. There will be animals, and there will certainly be treks to the creek and to the family cemetery down through the woods on the property.

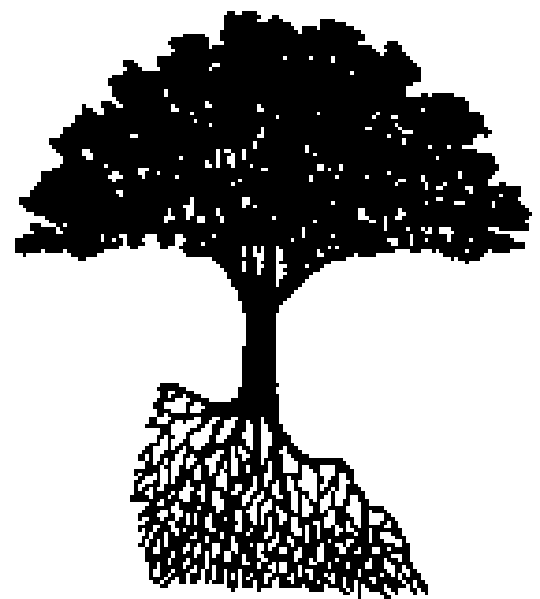
The Old Stone House is located only one half mile down Old Stone House Road off Highway 52 in Granite Quarry. Activities are 10 am until 4 pm. Cost is \$4.00 for

adults and \$2.00 for students. For more information call the Museum at 704-633-5946 or email rowanmuseum@fibrant.com,

Also....from Kaye Hirst, Executive Director: “It’s a great way to herald spring in a simpler fashion as our ancestors did many years ago. They picked violets and used them to create a beautiful blue dye; onion skins made a yellow dye...all for coloring eggs. They cleaned out the root cellar.....we will make a soup they made many years ago...”Scrag End Soup”....the left over end of a hambone from the smoke house, beans that were dried and not used over the winter....potatoes and carrots from the root cellar (probably a little shriveled), and dandelion greens from the yard and fields, and maybe some greens in the garden... .cooked over an open fire...it’s delicious! And we will dance in the fresh green grass, and the kids will frolic in the yard and through the trails. We will celebrate spring!!”

SAVE THE DATE

- April 4, 2020:** Spring Frolic
- September 19, 2020:** Germanfest
- January 2-3, 2021:** Old Christmas at Michael Braun Haus
- June 2020, TBA:** Revolutionary History



BFA ONLINE SHOPPING

The Brown-Fisher Association is thrilled to announce that we now have an online store! You may shop for prints of the Old Stone House and the Nathan Brown House, Volumes #1 and #2 of the Jacob Fisher Family books, and a vintage Old Stone House postcard. Visit the Brown-Fisher Association shop today at www.brownfisher.org/shop

Books: Jacob Fisher Family - Volumes 1 & 2



Compiled and edited by the late John Burgess Fisher, a past President of BFA, and the late Roscoe Brown Fisher, this two volume set traces the family from the Palatinate region of Germany, from there in 1727 to Pennsylvania in the Americas, and their subsequent migration to North Carolina. The volume includes the names of Jacob's descendants through 1958.

Note: Only seven of these two volumes are in stock.
Price of \$55.00 includes Priority Mail shipping in the contiguous United States.

Art: Old Stone House Postcard 1950s postcard of the Old Stone House



Price of \$10.00 includes Priority Mail shipping in the contiguous United States.

Art: Old Stone House Print



This limited-edition, individually numbered pen-and-ink drawing was done in 2016 by artist Betty Sedberry. Mrs. Sedberry is the same artist who drew the original drawing of the house, done from the left vantage point rather than the right as she did with this one.

Price of \$110.00 includes Priority Mail shipping in the contiguous United States.

Art: Nathan Brown House Print



Limited-edition, individually signed and numbered print by artist Betty Sedberry. Proceeds go toward the rehabilitation of the 1850s home of Solomon and Amy Miller Brown. Solomon's father was David, Sr., one of Michael Brown's sons. Solomon passed away during the Civil War while his sons, including the eldest, Nathan, were fighting for the Confederacy. Nathan returned home after the war, and at age 30 became the patriarch of the family. Upon his mother Amy's death, Nathan inherited the house and it remained in family hands until being saved from demolition in 2004 by a newly-formed non-profit.

Known at the time as the "Brown Mansion" (due to its one and one-half story design), it and the Old Stone House are the last remaining Brown family houses.

Price of \$35.00 includes Priority Mail shipping in the contiguous United States.

And these additional items will be added as time permits.

Art: Nathan Brown House note cards

Book: Family Traditions Cookbook



DEATHS 2019



MARVIN LEE BOST JR. (SYBILLA FISHER descendant) was born 27 February in Cabarrus County, North Carolina, and died 8 November 2019 in Rowan County. He is buried in Grace Lower Stone Reformed Church Cemetery, Rowan County.

CARL JOHN WELKER BROWN (MICHAEL Moses BROWN descendant) was born 23 December 1923 in Rowan County, North Carolina, and died there, 22 October 2019. He is buried in Brookhill Memorial Gardens, Rockwell.

FRANKLIN MAX BROWN (MICHAEL-David BROWN descendant) was born 23 August 1938 in Rowan County, North Carolina, and died there, 16 July 2019.

WALTER EUGENE "GENE" BROWN (MICHAEL James BROWN descendant) was born 23 January 1943 in Rowan County, North Carolina, and died there, 17 August 2019. He is buried Rowan Memorial Park, Salisbury.

LARRY DONALD BYRD, PhD. (MICHAEL-James BROWN * GEORGE FISHER JR. descendant) was born 14 July 1936 in Salisbury, North Carolina, and died 1 December 2019 in Duluth, Georgia.

Marshall Albert William Culp, husband of **CHRISTINE GOODMAN CULP** (MICHAEL-James BROWN descendant) was born 7 October 1948 in Stanly County, North Carolina, and died 24 September 2019 in Rowan County. He is buried in Organ Lutheran Church Cemetery, Rowan County.

Teresa Dawn Owens Doby, wife of **DAVID BROWN DOBY, SR.** (ANDREW-Phillip BROWN descendant) was born 17 June 1965 in Rowan County, North Carolina, and died there 17 May 2019. She is interred in Smith Grove Baptist Church Cemetery, Davidson County.

LIFE MEMBER Betty Jean Fowler Goodwin, wife of **ROBERT EVANS GOODWIN** (MICHAEL-Peter BROWN descendant) was born 27 November 1930 in Charlotte,

Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, and died 7 September 2019 in Salisbury, Rowan County. She is buried in Union Lutheran Church Cemetery, Rowan County.

Ray Benjamin "Ben" Ketchie, widower of **PEGGY J. ELLER KETCHIE** (MICHAEL - Michael Jr. BROWN descendant) was born 3 October 1926 in Rowan County, North Carolina and died there, 25 July 2019. He is buried in St. Matthews Lutheran Church Cemetery, Rowan County.

THE REVEREND WALTER HOBSON KIRK JR. (MICHAEL-James BROWN descendant) was born 20 June 1929 in Rowan County, North Carolina, and died there, 27 July 2019. He is buried in City Memorial Park, Salisbury.

HARRY LEE KLUTTZ JR. (GEORGE FISHER JR, descendant) was born 23 November 1945 in Salisbury, Rowan County, North Carolina, and died there, 17 December 2019. He is entombed at Brookhill Memorial Gardens, Rockwell.

Sheryl Ann Davis Rabon, mother of **SASHA LINLEY RABON** and **SIDNEY BYRON RABON** (MICHAEL-Jeremiah BROWN descendants) was born 21 May 1959 in Greenville, South Carolina, and died 20 September 2019 in Salisbury, North Carolina.

NANCY CHRISTINE MILLER McKINNEY (MICHAEL-David BROWN descendant) was born 16 November 1926 in Rowan County, North Carolina, and died 23 October 2019 in Davidson County. She is buried in Mountain View Memorial Gardens, Denton.

JOYCE DIANE BROWN PEELER (MICHAEL Moses BROWN descendant), wife of **JEFFREY PAUL PEELER** (GEORGE FISHER JR. descendant) was born 26 July 1947 in Rowan County, North Carolina, and died there, 15 February 2019. She is buried in Chestnut Hill Cemetery, Salisbury.

LEWIS RAY PEELER (GEORGE FISHER JR. descendant) was born 2 July 1953 in Salisbury, Rowan County,

North Carolina, and died there, 28 October 2019. He is buried in the U.S. National Cemetery, Salisbury.

Patricia Kay Cranford Pridgen, wife of **JOHN THOMAS PRIDGEN** (MICHAEL-Jeremiah BROWN descendant) was born 1 May 1952 in Rowan County, North Carolina, and died 24 September 2019 in Forsyth County. She is buried in Rowan Memorial Park, Salisbury.

Jean Carrick Puckett, widower of **CAROLYN BEAVER PUCKETT** (GEORGE FISHER JR. descendant) was born 2 April 1931 in Henderson, North Carolina, and died 3 September 2019 in Rowan County. He is buried in Ursinus United Church of Christ Cemetery, Rockwell.

OLEBA BROWN "BUB" BERNHARDT SEBASTIAN (MICHAEL-David-James BROWN descendant) was born 25 December 1927 in Rowan County, North Carolina, and died there, 17 September 2019.

2ND CHARTER LIFE MEMBER John Robert Spencer, D.D.S., husband of **BETTY DAN NICHOLAS SPENCER** (MICHAEL-Moses BROWN descendant) was born 13 September 1928 in Rowan County, North Carolina, and died there, 2 October 2019. He is buried in Chestnut Hill Cemetery, Salisbury.

JOHN SHEEHAN JR. (MICHAEL-James BROWN descendant) was born 11 July 1942 in New Hanover County, North Carolina, and died 17 December 2019 in Salisbury, Rowan County.

Byron Clay "Jack" Taylor, husband of **JACQUELINE STUART BOST TAYLOR** (MICHAEL-Moses BROWN descendant) was born 7 October 1927 in Rowan County, North Carolina, and died there, 26 October 2019. He is buried in Ursinus Church of Christ Cemetery, Rockwell.



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2020 MEMBERSHIP ENVELOPE ENCLOSED

By Doug Robinson, Coordinator

As noted elsewhere in this newsletter, our 2020 Membership Drive is underway. Quite simply, we need you to join. We need your family to join. Why, you may ask? Funds raised from our membership drive make it possible for us to reach out to others who may be family descendants. You make it possible for BFA to have a robust and growing website which contains all back issues of Rowan Roots, minutes of quarterly meetings of the Board of Director, minutes of Annual Membership Meetings, the ability to join or renew your membership electronically as well as to make donations, and to give honorariums and memorials to others. Online memberships, donations, honorariums and memorials generate an electronic end-to-end process which eliminates manual handling and automatically sends an acknowledgement to the donor. No more forgetting on my part!

Soon we will be adding a Purchase Page from which you can buy the new Michael Brown (Old) Stone House print, Old Stone House glass ornaments, and other items we hope you and your family will treasure.

We also have a blossoming Facebook page where you'll find the latest announcements, photographs, etc. But that's not all your membership supports. Income from

memberships also help us to put monies aside for upkeep of the Old Stone House and family burial sites. Most exciting however is the fact that your membership/donation supports the new Education and Visitor's Center which will contain a room to house our family archives. Site preparation is complete, and architects are busy drawing plans. You'll hear more about this soon but in the meantime look at the photos on our Facebook page. Things certainly look much different around the Old Stone House these days!

Last year's membership drive didn't begin until later in the year, resulting in significantly diminished results. BFA can withstand one down year but two years in a row will make things financially challenging. Won't you please help us continue what our ancestors began as early as 1925? We need to keep the family together and you can help! Please look at your address label to determine the status of your membership. Several of you have already renewed your membership for 2020 and for that we are most grateful. However, there are many of you who haven't renewed in years and many who have never joined at all. Please make as little as a \$20 investment today or as much as \$250 for a Lifetime Membership. Any amount will help. As always, thanks for your gracious support now and through the years.