

From an Eyesore to a Museum

In 2001, the owner of this rental property decided to have it burned down because it had become too expensive to repair and maintain. Realizing the historic significance of the building, the fire chief not only declined to issue a burning permit, but he also reported the request to the town.



The town purchased the property and began seeking grant money to turn the building into a museum. With the help of a \$335,000 grant from the North Carolina Department of Transportation, the plans became a reality when the Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum held its grand opening on January 18, 2007.

The museum is also known as the Baird House because it is located in the historic home of the town's first settler. Built in the 1790s by Andrew Baird, the home is the second oldest residence in Caldwell County after Fort Defiance. Mr. Baird built his home along with a small village around an iron forge he established on Gunpowder Creek, using power from the falls that gives the town its name.



Baird House before Renovations

**Open
on Saturdays and Sundays
from 2 until 4 p.m.
(except holiday weekends)
and at other times by appointment.**

**To schedule a private tour,
call the town office at
828-396-3131.**

**For more information, check out our
website:
www.granitefallshistorymuseum.org
or follow us on Facebook under
"Granite Falls
History and Transportation Museum."**



Baird House after Renovations

A Matchless Treasure



Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum

The Historic Home of Andrew Baird

**107 Falls Avenue
Granite Falls, N. C. 28630
828-396-2792**

www.granitefallshistorymuseum.org

**We are on Facebook under
"Granite Falls History and
Transportation Museum."**

Through the Years

On December 11, 1792, Andrew Baird and Clisby Cobb acquired 3000 acres on Gunpowder Creek for the purpose of erecting an iron forge. Within a few years, Mr. Baird purchased Mr. Cobb's share plus additional acreage. In addition to his business, Mr. Baird built a home, stables, sawmill, gristmill, post office, meeting house, school, store, blacksmith shop, cemetery, and other buildings.

Andrew Baird became a prominent landowner, a colonel in the local militia, a Justice of the Burke County Court (before the formation of Caldwell County), state legislator, and a county coroner. The village he built for his growing business would one day become the Town of Granite Falls.

Before his death, Mr. Baird sold much of his land to settlers moving into the area. He passed away in 1827 and was buried in the family cemetery not far from his house. He left the remainder of his holdings to his sons. After one died, the other closed the forge and moved to Mississippi.

J. L. Kistler and J. A. Killian of Lincoln County purchased 1200 acres of the Baird Estate along Gunpowder Creek, including the home, gristmill, barns, the falls, etc. They operated a flour mill.

In 1880, Mr. Killian and Mr. Kistler entered into partnership with N. H. Gwyn, A. A. Shuford, P. G. Moore, and W. H. Conley to make yarn under the name Shuford, Gwyn & Co. In exchange for shares in the new company, Mr. Killian and Mr. Kistler built a 50' x 100' building for the mill and 15 rental houses to be used by employees.

The mill owners hired James Munroe (Mun) Allred, an architect from Mountain City, Tennessee, to design the mill. The 20 year old became the first superintendent of the mill. He moved into the Baird House, which eventually became known as the "the Allred House." The mill opened in the spring of 1880 with 50 employees. The business underwent different names until becoming Shuford Mills.

In the late 1930s, Shuford Mills began selling company owned housing to employees. They sold the Baird House (aka the Allred House) in 1962. It remained under private ownership until 2001.

After the town secured the property and the grant, town employees, consultants, contractors, and volunteers labored long and hard to restore the building and furnish it with historical items and documents. It opened in January 2007. Volunteers keep the museum open on weekends by serving one two-hour shift each quarter. The Granite Falls History Committee, appointed by the town council, oversees the facilities, sets up exhibits, and plans special events. In addition, the Committee promotes the museum via its website site, Facebook page, and a newsletter called *The Granite Tablet*.

The Granite Falls Historical Association, Inc., a 501 (c) (3) organization, provides additional support for the museum by sponsoring educational workshops, historical programs, and fun events such as hiking to the falls that gives our town its name. Members also receive a newsletter called *Tablet II* (published every other month). In 2018, the Association began updating the town's history book with plans to publish it in conjunction with the town's 125th Anniversary in 2024.

The Town of Granite Falls began at the falls on Gunpowder Creek where industrialists could harness power for their equipment.



As more people moved into the area, merchants set up shop along the main road between Hickory and Lenoir - creating the downtown business district. The arrival of the train in 1884 brought more people and business to the area. In 1899, the village became the Town of Granite Falls.



The town continued to expand after the bypass, built in the 1950s, opened up more land for development.

