



The Granite Tablet



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The above photo is a still image from a video made by the editor of this newsletter while she was traveling as a passenger from Granite Falls to Hickory on June 16th. She noted that HOT ROD fans had set up chairs along the route so they could view the 6,000 classic vehicles that passed through our town on that day.

HOT ROD POWER TOUR 2023 ***From Atlanta to Bristol via Granite Falls***

Approximately 6,000 classic vehicles traveled Highway 321 through Granite Falls on Friday, June 16, 2023 enroute to Bristol Motor Speedway in Tennessee. The 29th HOT ROD Power Tour began at an event held at the Atlanta Motor Speedway in Hampton, Georgia on Monday, June 12th. From there, enthusiasts traveled to South Carolina State Fairgrounds in Columbia, South Carolina on Tuesday, June 13th; to Rockingham Speedway in Rockingham, North Carolina on Wednesday, June 14th; to zMAX Dragway in Concord, North Carolina on Wednesday, June 15th; and to Bristol Motor Speedway in Bristol, Tennessee on Friday, June 16th. (source: article by Michael Galimi on www.motortrend.com entitled HOT ROD Power Tour 2023: Everything You Need to Know! HOT Rod Power Tour Driven by Continental Tire)

HISTORY IN THE MAKING ***Sheetz and Starbucks are Coming to Town***

Grading has begun at the intersection of Highway 321 and Highway 321A in preparation for the construction of a Sheetz and Starbucks. According to the Sheetz website, the convenience store offers "award-winning Made-To-Order® Foods, Espresso Bar with Made-To-Order® Specialty Coffees®, quality gasoline at low prices, and the lowest priced cigarettes/tobacco allowed by law." The business promises to be open "24/7/365." They don't even close for Christmas. Starbucks is well known for its "fresh roasted" coffee, but it also provides a variety of food and beverages.



CHANGES ARE COMING ***Turn Lanes Being Built***

The NCDOT plans to add turn lanes to both sides of the intersection of Highway 321 and Pinewood Road. The photo shows grading/digging on the northbound side in front of Speedway/Subway.

Preparing for Six Lanes

Meanwhile, the NCDOT has been purchasing land along Hwy 321 between the Catawba River Bridge and Hwy 321A in preparation for the widening of the highway from four to six lanes. According to the NCDOT website, the construction should begin the fall of 2025.



NEWS FROM GRANITE FALLS *Don't Fall for Phony Phone Calls*

The Town of Granite Falls sent out a warning on June 30th reminding residents not to fall for a scam where callers threaten to cut off electricity and other utilities unless immediate payment is made by credit/debit card over the phone. First, the Town of Granite Falls does not accept this information over the phone, and, second, the town does not normally disconnect utilities on holidays and over the weekends. While the town provides critical services (fire, police, electricity, and water) 24/7, regular business hours are Monday through Friday from 8 a. m. - 5 p.m. The phone number for the town office is 828-396-3131. Employees are on site during regular business hours, and someone monitors calls 24/7 for utility outages and repair needs.

The police department has someone available to answer phone calls made to 828-396-3358 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., but callers should dial 828-758-2324 at other times for non-emergency needs. **Dial 9-1-1 for police, fire, and medical emergencies.**



The Electric Department installs lights at Christmas (photo by Jeanne Whisnant)

ANNUAL REPORTS *Electric Department*

Rick Sisk, Electric Services Director, gave the 2022 annual report for his department on February 6, 2023. As of January 2023, the Town provided electricity to 2,635 customers (residential - 2,186, commercial - 405, industrial - 6, and municipal - 38). During 2022, the town installed

38 new residential services, 2 new commercial services, and 14 temporary services. In addition, workers completed 14 service changes, upgraded 14 underground and overhead services, installed 4 new LED security lights, upgraded 76 existing security/street lights to LED, and performed 1,833 various work orders for connections, disconnections, electric service, voltage quality studies, bad electric connections, streetlight repairs, etc. Also in 2022, the department answered 1,081 calls from the 811 line that encourages people digging holes to "Know what's below. Call before you dig."

To maintain reliable service, the Electric Department has taken preventive measures to prevent interruptions and power outages. The tree trimming programs keeps trees and/or limbs from falling on powerlines, and animal guards keep squirrels out of electrical equipment. The also started

replacing all steel construction with polymer or composite because these materials don't conduct electricity. In 2022, workers upgraded 16 poles.

Records for last year show there were 20 outages - 6 were caused by squirrels, 6 by equipment failures, 4 by trees, 1 by old equipment, 1 by a bird, 1 by a vehicle accident, and 1 by lightning.

The Town of Granite Electric Department also upgraded infrastructure during the past year. Workers installed a backup generator at the town office, upgraded an underground primary at 18 and 20 Berkley Avenue, upgraded an underground primary at Southeastern BioMedical Associates, replaced 14 "danger poles," added new underground primary for Duke Street Cottages, and continued upgrading street/security lights from HID to LED.

Fire Department

Fire Chief Brian Bennett also presented his annual report for 2022 on February 6, 2023. The department is manned by twelve (12) paid employees and six (6) volunteers. Last year, they limited property losses (\$230,800) to .03% of the total value (\$588,513,418). An average of eight (8) firefighters per call responded to 1,025 calls, spending a total of 691 hours on calls. The average response time was 3 minutes and 7 seconds. Of the total calls, 782 were inside the city limits with 243 outside. The calls were comprised up medical (46%), false alarms (13%), vehicle accidents (13%), fire (9%), and miscellaneous (19%).



The above photo by Jonathan Fox shows the Fire Department using the former home of Pete and Marie Bumgarner for training practice in 2018. The land is now occupied by the multipurpose sports field at Granite Falls Middle School.

Firefighters completed 2,660 hours of training. Drone pilots trained for 79 hours and had 14 hours of flight time. One firefighter earned his Emergency Medical Technician certification, and one completed state certification to be a firefighter. For the six consecutive year, the department received the Gold Safety Award from the North Carolina Department of Labor.

The Granite Falls Fire Department also assists the community in other ways. During 2022, the department obtained a \$5,000 grant from the League of Municipalities so the Police Department could buy parking lot bollards. During Fire Prevention Week, firefighters taught 101 children at Granite Falls Elementary School about fire safety. Safe Kids World Wide has designated the Granite Falls Fire Department as a permanent car seat checking station.

Dateline: Granite Falls, N. C. 1981 - 1991

From *Etched in Granite, The History of Granite Falls, North Carolina* by Maxine McCall

- In 1981, Chief of Police Ralph "Rusty" Barlow retired after 27 years of service.
- In June 1982, Catawba Valley Cable TV began offering its services to residents in Granite Falls and Rhodhiss. Prime Cable purchased the system in 1987 and eventually sold out to Charter Communications, the current owner, which goes by the trade name Spectrum.
- In 1985, the fire department received more good news from the Insurance Services Office (ISO) with a Class 5 rating.
- In October 1985, the town council approved the purchase of a 1986 White-Grumman pumper-tanker with the hauling capacity of 1,000 gallons of water and a pumping capacity of 1250 GPM. This vehicle replaced the 1953 Ford American-LaFrance 500 GPM pumper.
- In 1986, the fire department began training members to be First Responders and Emergency Medical Technicians, so the fire department could respond to medical emergencies.
- In 1987, the Olympic Torch passed through Granite Falls enroute to a special event in Raleigh.
- On September 22, 1989, Hurricane Hugo hit Granite Falls with sustained winds of 85 mph, knocking out 30% of the electrical system. Town crews with mutual aid from other ElectriCities members restored power to all residents within 4 days. Large numbers of people in Caldwell County went without power for up to two weeks. Disaster relief from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provided \$500,000 to clean up and rebuild the electrical system.

One of the hardest hit areas was Crestview Street. Shown in the photo is the home of Mayor A. W. "Bert" Huffman. The photo is a still image from a video made after the storm passed.



- In August 1991, the town contracted with Garbage Disposal Services (GDS), now Republic Services, to pick up garbage and recycling.

Celebrating our 125th Year



Remnants of the First Self-Serve Gas Pumps in Granite Falls

Down Memory Lane with Linda Richards Crowder

Earlier this year, I learned that PNC Bank in Granite Falls had replaced tellers with ATMs in February. This makes me wonder - is this the future for banking? We will have to wait and see if more banks follow PNC's lead.

Alas, ATMs may well be the future. Years ago, we adjusted to self-service gasoline pumps, giving up full service stations where attendants cleaned windshields, checked tire pressure, and inflated tires in addition to pumping our gas. This brings me to the photo at the top of this column. These are the remnants of what I believe to be the first self-serve gas pumps in Granite Falls. In the bushes in the background, you can see the remains of a dilapidated kiosk from the same time period. These remnants of a bygone era are located next to Perry's Corner, which currently houses City Grind and Al's Diner.

I don't know when they were installed or when they were abandoned, but they were there in the early 80s. Jonathan Fox, the grandson of the man who sold the property to the entrepreneur who brought self-serve to Granite Falls, remembers helping his grandfather maintain the pumps along with the vending machines that sold soft drinks and eggs. (Yes, eggs!)

Jonathan's grandfather was Perry Starnes. He was married to my father's sister Hattie. Uncle Perry owned/operated the City Café on South Main Street and had a Nationwide Insurance office in the back. According to a copy of an ad his daughter, Betty, gave me, he sold the café to Mr. and Mrs. Harold Reid

(DOWN MEMORY LANE continued on page 4)

HISTORY IN THE MAKING *Art in the Park Cancelled Again*

Art in the Park has not taken place this year due to a rainy forecast for both the original date (May 15) and rain date (June 5). At this point, we do not know if/when it will be rescheduled.

Caldwell Pregnancy Care Center is Expanding

Caldwell Pregnancy Care Center announced on June 22, 2023 that the organization had purchased the former site of CAST (Creative Arts Show Time) at 200 Timberbrook Lane in Granite Falls in order to open a second location. The organization provides free, confidential services for pregnant women, including pregnancy tests, limited ultrasounds, emotional support, educational classes, counseling, information about available options/resources, and help with material needs. To learn more, visit their location at 201 Ridge Street in Lenoir, call the 24/7 hotline (1-800-712-4357), visit www.caldwellpregnancy.com, and/or check out their Facebook page "Caldwell Pregnancy Care Center."

On May 28, 2023, CAST announced they were selling the building with plans to move to a different location that better meets their needs. Since they closed on the sale before they found the right place to call home, they will be performing in various venues in the near future. For more information, go to "Creative Arts Show Time" on Facebook.

Al's Diner Closing

After 27 years of providing delicious food at Al's Diner, Dennis and Tammy Bradshaw announced recently that they will be retiring and closing the popular eatery. While some people assume "Al" was the owner, the restaurant was actually named for their daughters, using the first initials of their names - Ashley and Latasha. They will be serving a limited menu through regular hours on Saturday, July 29, 2023.

GRANITE FALLS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION *Pinecrest Cemetery Update*

The Granite Falls Historical Association is pleased to announce that two local men - Tommy High and Chris Newsom - have collaborated to produce a spreadsheet containing information about people buried in Pinecrest Cemetery. Tommy based his file on years of research and personal knowledge. Chris based his work on the Find A Grave® website, which he updated after taking photos of tombstones. Chris merged his file with Tommy's, researched discrepancies, and reconciled the differences. While no listing can be 100% accurate due to poor record keeping in the early years and human error over the years, the file will be a valuable resource for persons wishing to locate burial sites or do research. The Association plans to keep the spreadsheet updated as needed and to make them available to the public upon request.



The Granite Tablet is a publication of the Granite Falls History Committee, which manages the Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum. The museum is located in the historic home of Andrew Baird, an early settler. The building is the second oldest residence in Caldwell County. The Baird House was built around 1795 with additions made over the next hundred years. The house remained a residence until 2001 when the owner sought permission to have it burned down due to the high cost of maintenance. Recognizing the historical significance of the building, the Town of Granite Falls purchased the home with the intentions of turning it into a museum. With the help of a grant from the North Carolina Department of Transportation and hours of hard work by dedicated people, the vision became a reality. The Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum held its grand opening and ribbon cutting on February 18, 2007. Visit us on Facebook under "Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum." Our website is www.granitefallshistorymuseum.org.

Granite Falls History and Transportation Museum - 107 Falls Avenue, Granite Falls, North Carolina 28630 - Phone: 828-396-2792

Newsletter Editor: Linda Richards Crowder [email: lrdrcrowder@gmail.com - phone: (828) 396-1066 - text: (828) 496-2835]

(DOWN MEMORY LANE continued from page 3)

so he could focus on insurance.

Perry didn't stay away from the food industry long. He decided to build a new restaurant and an insurance office in front of a house he owned at 47 Falls Avenue. Betty told me that Garland Marshall, the building inspector, initially refused to issue a permit, but Perry got up early one morning and started digging the foundation. Mr. Marshall changed his mind and issued a permit on September 8, 1961. The estimated cost was \$12,000.00, and the builder was listed as Ted Seigel. (see photo below)

Perry called his restaurant the Town Drive-In. He specialized in seafood, but he also served sandwiches. Betty remembered being excited because everything was new, unlike the City Café, which used items passed on by previous owners.

After Perry closed the Town Drive-In, he leased the building so others could operate businesses there. If walls could talk, they would reveal a lot of memories. Perry's family continues to own the property, and I am looking forward to seeing what happens next at Perry's Corner.

