



M C H S

"Our mission is....to collect, preserve, protect and publicly display materials that are historically significant to Mitchell County...and to make its citizens aware of their heritage."

MITCHELL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Third Quarter 2017

GREETINGS FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF MITCHELL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MCHS had six great programs this season, from Daniel Barron's presentation on the region's cultural crossroads in April to Chris Hollifield's history of Harris Schools in September. This year, there will be a Veterans Day program to commemorate the US entry into the First World War 100 years ago. And don't forget the annual Apple Butter Festival described in this edition of our newsletter! Watch for information on upcoming events, including a Christmas Tour of Historic Mitchell County Homes, and the 2nd annual MCHS History Bee in March. Finally, we're already putting together a roster for 2018's programs!

Please support Mitchell County Historical Society by attending these events, purchasing our apple butter, ornaments, and books, and also by sending in your tax-deductible membership fees of \$20 per individual and \$25 family.

*Mitchell County
Historical Society
presents the 2017*

Apple Butter Festival

**SATURDAY OCTOBER 21
10 AM - 4 PM
Bakersville Creekwalk**



MCHS 2017 APPLE BUTTER FESTIVAL

The Mitchell County Historical Society will hold its 4th annual Apple Butter Festival on Saturday, 10/21/17, from 10:00 to 4:00 at the Bakersville Creek Walk. Members of our Board of Directors and volunteers will be cooking apple butter over an open flame. Watch them stirring the large kettle and enjoy a sample of hot apple butter with fresh biscuit. We will also have jars of apple butter – pints & half pints – for sale. They make wonderful Christmas gifts – as well as a delicious breakfast!

Speaking of Christmas gifts, 25 or more local vendors will offer various arts & crafts. Visit booths of talented mountain artisans as you stroll along the picturesque Cane Creek. And don't go hungry; there will be food vendors selling snacks and lunch!

We'll have great live music all day long; bring a chair and be entertained, or enjoy music as you visit vendors or watch us make apple butter. You will be able to purchase MCHS commemorative Christmas ornaments - one or a set of 6. This year's ornament depicts the Spruce Pine railroad depot and Clinchfield Locomotive #1. We'll have books for sale, including the wonderful history of Mitchell County, *Voices of the Valley* by Elizabeth Hunter, and the Arcadia Images of America series.

MCHS will have a table for local history and genealogy, and we'll have a scanner there, so bring your old photos of Mitchell County places and people. We're always seeking photos for the weekly Looking Back feature in the *Mitchell News-Journal*.

There will be activities for all in the family to enjoy, so come out and spend the day at the Mitchell County Historical Society's 2017 Apple Butter Festival.

THE TRADITION OF APPLE BUTTER

The origin of the apple butter-making traditions is uncertain; many believe it began in Germany or the Lowlands during the Middle Ages. The Pennsylvania Dutch (or Deutsch for German) still number apple butter as one of their traditional "seven sweets and seven sours." It might have been brought to Appalachia by settlers from Pennsylvania who arrived after the War for Independence. Whatever its beginnings, apple butter became a mountain staple.

Making apple butter was a good way for households to preserve surplus apples, and apple butter combined with honey or sorghum syrup to provide an extra source of sweetening. Apple butter isn't really dairy butter, of course; the label is based on the consistency of the product and it being commonly spread on bread.

Apple butter is produced by cooking apples long and slowly, with the addition of cider or water, until it's rich and a deep brown due to the caramelization of the sugars in the apples. The concentration of the sugars not only make a tasty treat, but also helps to keep it from spoiling – a much longer shelf life than mere apple sauce. Sometimes cinnamon or other spices are added to the kettle, and today sugar is added to suit our sweeter tooth.

Making apple butter was a family or community event due to the labor involved to process large quantities of apples. Large kettles, first brass and later copper, were set up over an open flame, with large stacks of firewood close by, as the apples took hours to “cook down.” As the liquids evaporated, the volume of the product was reduced by seven times. Large wooden paddles or sticks were used to stir the apples.

APPLE BUTTER STACK CAKE

4 cups self-rising flour
2 eggs, beaten
1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
1/2 cup shortening
1 cup buttermilk
2 cups sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 to 2 ½ cups apple butter
(or sweetened applesauce)



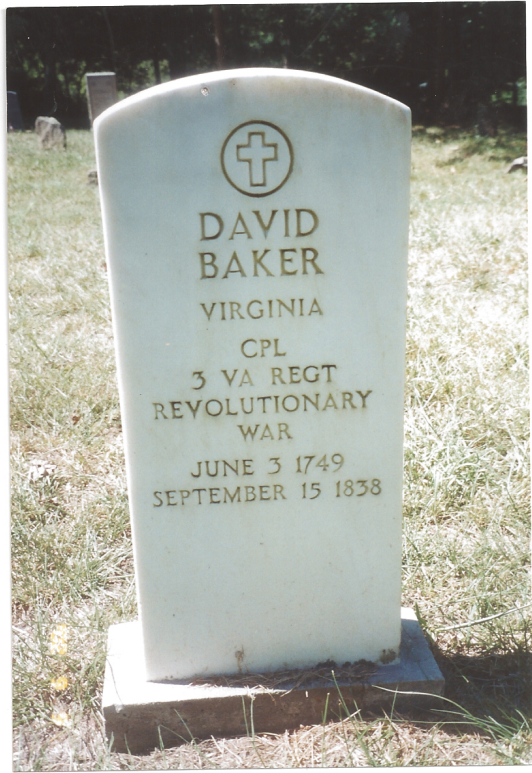
Sift the flour into a large bowl and make a well in the middle. Pour in sugar, beaten eggs, softened butter and shortening, and vanilla. Mix like biscuit dough. Add buttermilk gradually and work all together. Add more flour if a stiffer dough is desired. Chill for 30 minutes.

Take about one quarter of the dough and pat or roll out large enough to fit into four 8-inch cake pans which you have greased and floured. Dough should be spread out thinly in the pans, so if it seems too thick, you might want to make five layers. Bake at 350 degrees for about 12 minutes or until golden brown.

When the layers are cool, stack with about 1/2 cup apple butter spread between each layer and on the top. Some folks prefer cooked apples or applesauce, with or without sugar and cinnamon. The cake will be better if you let it sit for a day or two, until the layers are soaked through. You may also dust with confectioner's sugar before serving.

DECORATION AT OLD BAKERSVILLE CEMETERY

Soon after the Civil War, Decoration Day began to be observed in many cemeteries around the Mountain South. Southerners often claim the custom was copied in the North and became our national holiday, Memorial Day. Generally held in the summer,



Decoration Day involved cleaning the cemetery and decorating graves with flowers. If the graveyard was connected to a church, there might have been a religious service, and there was often dinner on the ground.

While observation of Decoration Day has declined, the Mitchell County Historical Society maintains the time-honored tradition, setting aside a Sunday every September to gather at the Old Bakersville Town Cemetery. One of those buried in this cemetery on the hill above the Historic Mitchell County Courthouse is David Baker, for whom Bakersville was named. Baker, the son of Thomas and Dorothy Davenport Baker, was born in Culpeper County, VA, in 1749, settled in what is now Mitchell County around the time of the Revolutionary War and died here in 1838. He

was the father of 13 children by his two wives, Mary Webb (1762-1794) and Dorothy Wiseman (1765-1855), so he has a multitude of descendants both locally and around the nation.

DELLINGER GRIST MILL NEEDS YOUR HELP !

Dellinger Grist Mill on Cane Creek in Mitchell County, the last gristmill of its kind in North Carolina, is looking for volunteers to help restore its Apple Barn and is also asking for donations of chestnut boards to help with that project. If you are interested in helping with an important part of Mitchell County History, contact Bruce Koran at ibkoran@me.com

