



MITCHELL COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FIRST QUARTER 2019 NEWSLETTER

Spring has arrived, and Mitchell County Historical Society has wonderful plans for this year's programs; we hope everyone will come out the third Monday each month from April through September.

- Geologist Alex Glover will be with us at the Historic Courthouse on April 15th to talk about the Appalachia/Scotland Connection.
- On May 20th, we'll be at the English Inn, where David Biddix will give a presentation about Union Soldiers who were sheltered by the Inn's owner, Isaac D. English.
- We'll hear about the Overmountain Victory Historic Trail from Starli McDowell on June 17th at the Historic Courthouse.
- It's back to Spruce Pine on July 15th when we learn about Calvin Hall's amazing collection of artifacts.
- August's program is not yet determined, but it will be a musical program, which we customarily do each year.
- The regular programs will wrap up on September 16th at the Historic Courthouse when Kathy Huie presents a program on Lydia Holman, nurse practitioner in Mitchell County.

October is the month for our annual Apple Butter Festival, but we plan to have a program for Veterans Day on November 11th.

Third Annual Mitchell County History Bee a Success!

Do you know what year Mitchell County was established? Can you identify the people who influenced our county's history during its first 150 years? You might have trouble reciting the details, but students gathered in the Historic Mitchell County Courthouse on Thursday evening, 3/21, didn't.

The Third Annual History Bee was co-sponsored by the Mitchell County Historical Society and the *Mitchell News-Journal*. Generous individuals and businesses in the county provided cash prizes for the winning contestants. First place in each division won \$500, second was \$300, and third place brought \$200. Each winner also received a free subscription to the *Mitchell News-Journal*.

For the Middle School division, Ada Troxler came in first, Connor Warren was second, and Maggie Martin third. In the High School division, Jared Pittman was first, Devin Randolph second, and Si Tao Lin won third place.



For the Middle School Division: L - R -
Connor Warren (2nd); Ada Troxler (1st);
Maggie Martin (3rd)



For the High School
Division: L - R - Jared
Pittman (1st); Si Tao Lin
(3rd); Devin Randolph (2nd)

Recent donations to MCHS:

- Doug Buchanan of Avery County donated *The CSX Clinchfield Route in the 21st Century* by Jerry Taylor and Ray Poteat.
- Brenda Y. Vaughan of Charleston, SC, donated a 24x20 turn-of-the-20th-century portrait of Addie & sisters Rheba Silver
- Crystal Edwards Campbell of Green Mountain, NC, donated a number of books and genealogical records collected by her late father, Clinton Edwards.

Thanks to these donors for helping MCHS preserve our county's history. We hope others will consider donating to our Society. We welcome items for our museum or research materials for our library.



Jason Basil Deyton: Warrior, Teacher, Administrator, and Community Leader

By Daniel Barron

Edited for space

Jason Basil Deyton was born to Nathan and Buena Vista Masters Deyton on 2/13/1894, near Red Hill. Jason graduated from Burnsville's short-lived Stanley McCormick Institute, funded by inventor Cyrus McCormick's widow and named for her son. The Institute was a boarding school and the girl's dorm is now operated as the Terrell House Bed and Breakfast.

Jason reported to the Bakersville draft board in May 1917 and February 1918 but was not selected. In May 1918, however, listing his occupation as teacher, he was accepted for military service and sent to Camp Jackson, SC, where he completed basic training. A Private in the 321st Infantry when he shipped out from Philadelphia in July 1918, he was promoted to Corporal in October. The 321st saw steady fighting through the fall, and on the morning the Armistice was signed they "went over the top" and attacked enemy trench positions with many casualties before the firing stopped at 11AM.

Shortly after returning home in Jun 1919, he entered Maryville College in Maryville, TN, a small yet rigorous program affiliated with the Presbyterian Church. He was President of the Law Club and graduated *cum laude* with an A.B. degree.

Jason became the Superintendent of Mitchell County Schools in 1921 but became a history teacher at Harris High School in 1926 and later Principal. He returned in 1939 to the position of Superintendent which he held until 1961. In 1932 he received his master's degree from UNC Chapel Hill and later pursued post-graduate studies at Syracuse and Columbia Universities. During his tenure, he had to deal with school burnings, oversaw schools being built, was an advocate for an occupational curriculum, encouraged innovative teaching among all teachers, and was a well-respected administrator.

His work "The Toe River Valley to 1865," was his master's degree thesis from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1932 and was published in *The North Carolina Historical Review* for October 1947. It has been acclaimed as the most comprehensive study of the county to date and has been quoted frequently by students and local historians.

Jason married Nelle English Phillips on 5/11/1922. They were the parents of Susan Deyton Dotti and Jason B. Deyton, Jr., both of whom went on to have notably creative and productive lives.

In addition to his successful role as Superintendent of Schools, Jason made many other important community contributions, including organizing the county's first Boy Scout Troop and chairing the War Bond Committee during WWII. A County and Regional Library Board member, serving as Chair 1940-68. He was President of the Spruce Pine Rotary Club and took a leadership role in the Mitchell County Democratic Party. He was a frequent featured speaker at historical and community development functions for many years including the 1964 program honoring the Revolutionary War and David Baker.

But Deyton was not a perfect citizen. In 1959 he was charged with improper passing which cost him \$10 in fines. Other than this disrespect for the law, Jason Basil Deyton's life and service epitomize his alma mater's motto: "Do good on the largest possible scale."

Thanks to Jonathan Bennett for input and review.

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We also need help in our museum and with MCHS events. If you would like to volunteer in our work to promote Mitchell County history, please call our office at 828-688-4371 or contact us on the website.