

Society works to preserve history

New group takes on Walkertown's past By John Hinton

By John Hinton | Assistant Metro Editor

Published: July 19, 2008

WALKERTOWN - A group of residents has formed the Walkertown Area Historical Society Inc. to preserve the town's 237 years of history in northeastern Forsyth County.

"We need to preserve some of the history of Walkertown," said Wayne Biby, a member of the group that started the nonprofit society. "There has been a lot of interest in our history since 2007."

Last April, the town paid about \$143,000 for the Booe House, a historic house at 5135 Sullivantown Road that adjoins town-owned property. As a town committee discussed how to use the house, some residents became interested in local history, Biby said.

The Walkertown Town Council has decided to open the house for tours.

Forty-six people attended the group's first meeting Tuesday at the Walkertown library on North Main Street, organizers said. The society has 39 members.

The society wants to establish committees to gather genealogy and artifacts, Biby said. Its members will talk with older residents and ask them questions about Walkertown's history and their families' histories in the town.

It also wants to collect the history of present and former businesses, local schools and churches. It also will gather historical information from nearby communities of Belews Creek and Guthrie, Biby said.

The organizers noted how the community thrived during the late 1880s and the early decades of the 1900s.

Walkertown's prominent businesses included Sullivan Tobacco Co., Crews Chair Co. and the Leight Box Co., which produced wooden boxes for tobacco shipments.

"Walkertown played a big part in northeastern Forsyth County," Biby said.

Norfolk-Western Railroad Co. (now known as Norfolk-Southern Railway Corp.) had its tracks along U.S. 311 that carried passenger and freight trains, Biby said. The rail service ran through Walnut Cove to Roanoke, Va.

Wallace Baird, the chairman of the committee of volunteers that formed the society, said that Walkertown history is important.

"We ought to try and record it and get everyone interested in preserving their family history," Baird said. "We welcome everyone's interest in the Walkertown area."

Walkertown is named after Dr. Robert Walker, who was living there as early as 1771, according to the North Carolina Gazetteer. Love's Meeting House, a Methodist church, was built in 1797. Started as a farming community, the town was incorporated in 1984.

The society's mission is to "research, collect, organize and preserve the history of Walkertown and the surrounding areas," its mission statement says. "The society seeks to

educate and communicate the story of Walkertown's rich history."

Harold Warner, a society member, said that the organization also wants to collect records and historical documents about the town and its surrounding area. A Web site for the society is being prepared.

"We are accumulating pictures of Walkertown's history," said Warner, whose twin brother, Horace, was a member of the Walkertown Town Council. "We are trying to develop this ourselves. I don't know all of the history of the town myself."

The society will elect its officers in mid-August, and it plans to hold a meeting at 6 p.m. Sept. 15 at the Walkertown library.

"When we meet, we find more things that we need to find out about," Warner said.

■ John Hinton can be reached at 727-7299 or at jhinton@wsjournal.com.

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