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The Vintage Rabun Quarterly

Remembering The Bynum House

Thaddeus L. Bynum, a well-known Clayton attorney and member of the Georgia Senate (1917-1918) and House of Representatives (1939-1944), first opened his six-room farmhouse to summer vacationers in 1913. Vacationers already had begun travelling on the Tallulah Falls Railroad, which reached Clayton in 1905 and its terminus in Franklin, NC in 1907, to explore scenery and amenities in the area.

The Bynum House's glory days lasted 57 years, from 1913 to 1970. During this time, Thaddeus and his wife, Irene Powell Bynum, expanded their farmhouse, located just west of downtown Clayton, into a three-story, 48-room establishment. They also built several cottages around the main house, some named for families who visited each summer.



Thad Bynum in the foreground



Irene Bynum

The importance of meals at the Bynum House was reflected in the time and energy devoted to raising vegetables, feeding cattle and milking cows. The work continued in the kitchen where on some days the staff would cook for 200 to 300 guests and local people. The resulting meals made devotees of visitors like Walt Disney who, with his crew, dined at the Bynum House while filming *The Great Locomotive Chase* in the mid-1950s.

Given the many activities taking place at the Bynum House, it is no wonder that its operation was a family affair. The four Bynum children and, in time, spouses and grandchildren all joined in.

Overlooking the entire Bynum House enterprise was Irene Bynum. She created the family-like atmosphere for which the Bynum house was known. It is therefore telling that, when announcing the closing of the Bynum House in a September, 1970 letter, Mrs. Bynum referred to her former guests as "... our Bynum House family."



In 1933, a 30 by 60 foot concrete swimming pool was installed for guests to enjoy. Local citizens also could use the pool, for a fee, making it the county's first public swimming pool. Other forms of recreation offered included tennis, croquet, shuffleboard, horseshoes, fishing and wading ponds, and ping pong tournaments. Many guests simply enjoyed sitting in rocking chairs while reading or talking with friends. In the evening, guests gathered in the lobby of the main house to dance, enjoy magic tricks, play the piano, sing, play bingo with corn kernels, and participate in talent shows.



More than a century has passed since the Bynum House first welcomed vacationers. Today the property on which the Bynum House once stood is the site of development of 91 rental cottages designed to help in meeting the local need for affordable housing.

1819 Artifact Returns to Rabun

Historical artifacts from Rabun County's year of establishment in 1819 are rare and thus important. The Rabun County Historical Society is very fortunate to have and display the original Land Lottery book which lists land lots distributed in a lottery to the county's first residents. Joining that valuable piece of history beginning in April will be the original boundary stone placed in 1819 marking Rabun's and Georgia's northern boundary line.

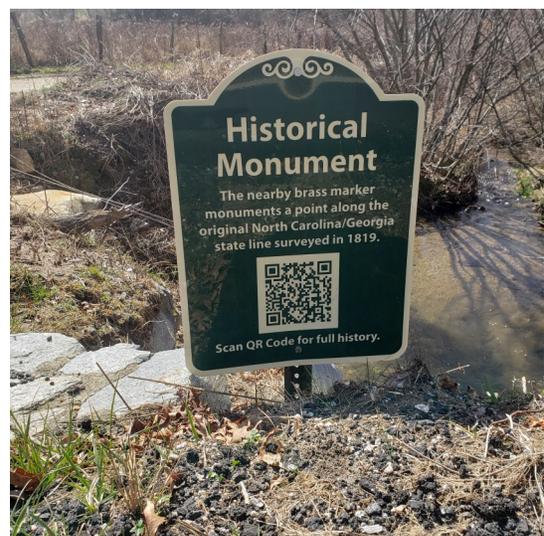
The marker's history begins in September of 1819 when commissioners and surveyors sought to end a dispute between Georgia and North Carolina over the location of the 35th parallel, their common border. After more than one attempt in the steep and rugged terrain, surveyors placed a stone inscribed "NxG 1819" eleven miles west of Ellicott's Rock, which is on the eastern side of the Chattooga River. This marker was located on what is today's Hale Ridge Road, a U.S. Forest Service maintained track between Scaly Mountain, North Carolina and Warwoman Road in eastern Rabun. It was known as the Commissioners' Rock or the Eleven Mile Rock.



In February, Linda Barden, representing the Rabun County Historical Society received the boundary stone from James Gay, representing the North Carolina Society of Surveyors.

The boundary stone was at some point in the 21st century displaced, lost in a creek, recovered and stored for years of safekeeping in North Carolina until a group of surveyors from both states worked to return it to Rabun County. A brass disc has been installed at the place where it stood for almost two centuries, but the original stone now resides where it may receive all the historical recognition it deserves at the Rabun County Historical Society, beginning in April.

Pictured here are the brass disc and the historical marker located at the site of the original boundary stone on Hale Ridge Road.



Rabun County Historical Society
81 North Church Street
P.O. Box 921
Clayton, GA 30525



Phone: 706-782-5292
www.rabunhistory.org
Email:
rabuncountyhistory@gmail.com



- Please visit our museum and research library on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 11:00 until 3:00.
- Group tours by appointment

Historical Society Membership Updates

Updates to the membership list included in the December 2022 issue of the *Vintage Rabun Quarterly* are noted below.

Corrections:

Patron
Roger Thomas
Mary Thomason

New Members:

Friend
LuSinda Clark

Family
Tom Cathers
Neil and Kay Hightower

Patron
Charles and Yetty Arp

