



## Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission

204 East Academy St. ♦ P.O. Box 771 ♦ Asheboro, North Carolina 27204

November 27, 2012

The Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission (HLPC) met in the Meeting Room of the 1909 Historic Courthouse at 145 Worth Street, Asheboro, NC, and the meeting was called to order by Chairman Hal Johnson at 2:00 p.m.

Members present were Hal Johnson, Fran Andrews, Nan Kemp, Warren Dixon, Bill Johnson, Marsha Haithcock, Robyn Hankins and Mac Whatley. Lynn Qualls and Bill Ivey were absent.

### Approval of Minutes

*On motion of B. Johnson, seconded by Dixon, the HLPC voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of October 23, 2012, as presented.*

### Request and Approval of Resolution Designating The Raymond Cox Mill as a Cultural Heritage Site

Commission member Warren Dixon presented the request. He stated that the Raymond Cox Mill on Mill Creek is worthy of Cultural Heritage Site recognition simply because it is the last grist mill standing in Randolph County. It was still custom-grinding and mixing animal feed in 1985 when Mac Whatley wrote his Architectural History of Randolph County, which includes the Raymond Cox Mill. Mr. Dixon said that Mr. Whatley had written "Still in place, although full of silt and unused since September 1945, is an overshot Finch water wheel made in Hanover, Pa. The dam used until that time was an oak plank dam, now destroyed. A covered bridge over the river was demolished in June 1953. The present mill was built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by Allison Beane, and is also known as 'Beane's Mill.' The site of an earlier mill can be seen nearby."



Mr. Dixon stated that Raymond and his wife, Flossie Cox, ran the mill from the 1930's until his death in 1986. He was still using water power until 1945 when flood waters overran the working parts, rising 47 inches into the ground level area, but he continued to grind meal and animal feed using a diesel engine.

In addition to the Raymond Cox Mill, the Mill Creek site is a historic area in its own right. According to Mac Whatley, the site of the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century mill, known as William Cox's Mill, is about 100 yards downstream from this mill. William Cox received a land grant in November 1757 on the head of "Cox Mill Creek," waters of Deep River on both sides of Crawford Road, implying that William Cox's Mill was already in existence in 1757. Old deeds often refer to Mill Creek as "Coxes Mill Creek." [sic]

According to an excerpt in William Cox's will (Orange County Will Book A, page 53, dated January 1767) Mr. Cox left his son, Thomas Cox, "the remaining part of the aforesaid tract of land I now live on...including mills and improvements..."

The 1765 minutes of Cane Creek Friends Meeting mentions a preparatory meeting "on Mill Creek in Cox's Settlement." Friends in the area had formally requested that they be permitted to hold meetings on Mill Creek in 1758 and probably held some early meetings at the home of William Cox. As the Mill Creek movement faded, Friends were granted permission to hold a preparative meeting at nearby Holly Spring in 1790.

*On motion of Whatley, seconded by Dixon, the HLPC voted unanimously to approve a Resolution of Recognition for the Raymond Cox Mill, as follows:*

***WHEREAS,** The Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission desires to recognize those Cultural Heritage Sites that provide a tangible link to the past, with the people and events that have made significant contributions to Randolph County history, and thus shaped our present; and*

***WHEREAS,** the Raymond Cox Mill, ca. 1770, was one of the last operating grist mills in the state having been last run by Raymond and Flossie Cox from the 1930's until his death in 1986, and is located in an area where William Cox received a land grant from the King of England in 1757, noted as Cox Mill Creek, which implied that a Cox Mill was already in existence in 1757; and*

***NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,** that official recognition as a Cultural Heritage Site and approved in public meeting by the Historic Landmark Preservation Commission, is given to:*

#### **RAYMOND COX MILL**

***BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that this Resolution be recorded in the minutes of the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission, appropriate history and photographs placed on the Commission's historical website, and a suitable copy presented to the recipient.*

#### **Request and Approval of Resolution Designating The Harmon Cox Mill Site as a Cultural Heritage Site**

Commission member Warren Dixon presented the request and stated the Harmon Cox Mill site deserves Cultural Heritage Site recognition not only because it served as headquarters for notorious Tory Colonel David Fanning, but because it has long been recognized as one of the county's Revolutionary landmarks. For these reasons, it could easily

be considered as a Randolph County Historic Landmark, and pursuant to the property owner's desire to nominate it.



Harmon Cox Mill stands in the background and beyond the saw mill.

When William Cox, who owned the mill across Deep River on Mill Creek (the Raymond Cox Mill), willed his mill to his son, Thomas, in 1767, he bequeathed the land on the opposite side of the river on Millstone Creek to his son, Harmon. It was Harmon's mill on the east side of Deep River that became the center of community action.

The following narrative, written by Mac Whatley, was presented in the meeting. Mr. Whatley said that it illustrates the importance of the Harmon Cox Mill site to Randolph County and North Carolina:

*Harmon Cox (1723-1817) was something of the family black sheep and became heavily involved with the Regulator movement, signing their letters and public announcements and hosting large public meetings as early as 1768. By April 1769, he had been disowned by his Friends meeting for his un-Quaker-ly actions. After the Battle of Alamance, Governor Tryon specifically ordered state troops to "Herman Cox's on Deep River, to make a requisition of provisions from the inhabitants on the south side of Deep River and Richland Creek" and "to apprehend any of the Outlaws that may be sculking in the neighbourhood..."*

*When the Revolution came, Cox's Mill was apparently designated or considered a "public store" in much the same way as Bell's Mill, since the mill itself was protected from destruction by both sides. When food and forage for the Continental Army ran low in Chatham County, Cox's Mill became its destination and headquarters, with provisions sufficient to keep the forces supplied for more than a month. As the various state militias and county troops followed the Continentals toward Camden, Cox's Mill remained the staging area for United States forces to join the fight. It may have been at this time that the troops fortified the mill area, creating what guerilla leader David Fanning later called "the Fort of Deep River at Cox's Mill."*

*As local Whig authority collapsed in the aftermath of the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, and the loyalist militias gained control of the area, Cox's Mill must have looked like the*

*perfect headquarters for Fanning, the de facto warlord of Randolph and Chatham counties for more than a year. A number of battles were fought for possession and control of the mill, which changed hands at least four times as Fanning vanished into the countryside when out-numbered or endangered. The Battle of Brush Creek either started or ended at Cox's Mill, as the Whig and Tory forces fought along the connecting road to Lindley's Mill for more than a day. But Whig forces retaliated in December 1781, forcing the Tories into the woods with a state militia force, which "came down from the mountains," Fanning wrote in his Narrative, "with a party of three hundred men; and formed his camp at Coxe's [Cox's] Mill, in the settlement I had formerly ranged in; in order to take me; where he continued nearly three months..." When Fanning sought to negotiate at truce in January 1782, a Whig officer offered "a parole on the terms you desired; thirty miles east and west; fifteen miles north and south. Hammond [Harmon] Coxe's [Cox's] Mill to be the center of your bounds..."*

*With Fanning's departure in the summer of 1782, Cox's Mill was never again the center of death and destruction, but it remained an important industrial center. Nothing visible remains of the Revolutionary fortifications on the bluffs above the mill site, but the foundations of the mill and saw mill are visible, as are the foundations of later bridges, whether covered, steel or culvert varieties.*

Mr. Bill Johnson added that most likely two mills were built because Deep River often flooded, and flooding would last for weeks to months so that the two river fords could not be accessed, leaving it necessary to have a source of food on the east and west side of Deep River.

*On motion of Whatley, seconded by Dixon, the HLPC voted unanimously to approve a Resolution of Recognition for the Harmon Cox Mill site, as follows:*

**WHEREAS**, *The Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission desires to recognize those Cultural Heritage Sites that provide a tangible link to the past, with the people and events that have made significant contributions to Randolph County history, and thus shaped our present; and*

**WHEREAS**, *the Harmon Cox Mill, ca. 1767, is considered one of Randolph County's Revolutionary War landmarks, and was considered a "public store" when food and forage ran low for the Continental Army, having served as a staging area for both the Continental and Tory armies.*

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, *that official recognition as a Cultural Heritage Site and approved in public meeting by the Historic Landmark Preservation Commission, is given to:*

### **HARMON COX MILL**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, *that this Resolution be recorded in the minutes of the Randolph County Historic Landmark Preservation Commission, appropriate history and photographs placed on the Commission's historical website, and a suitable copy presented to the recipient.*

**Overview of 2013 Tourism Visitor Guide Applicable to Historic Landmark Promotion**

Chairman Johnson welcomed Director of Tourism Tammy O’Kelley. Ms. O’Kelley stated that she has been unable to find any other historic boards that have partnered with tourism offices to promote landmarks and cultural heritage sites as part of tourism. She states that tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the world’s economy in this century, and that the identification and protection of the county’s historic landmarks are providing resources that will be vital for the Tourism Development Authority’s future historic tourism efforts. She stated that research found that cultural and historic tourists tend to stay longer at most destinations and overnight in hotels and bed and breakfasts. Cultural and historic tourists spend more money than the average traveler, making this a segment of travel that is very important to Randolph County. International travel is growing and those travelers look for most value for their dollar and are generous in spending. The international traveler is more likely to visit a diversity of sites, cities, and regions than the average traveler.

Ms. O’Kelley asked the Commission that as they work to designate future landmarks to consider how, as a County, to encourage the enhancement and preservation of local historic landmarks. Ms. O’Kelley said part of the reason she asked to be on the agenda is that she believes Randolph County has an amazing opportunity for future economic growth in the area of historic preservation, and that our local landmarks could attract national and possibly, international, travelers. Because of our location and accessibility, Randolph County could become a possible “central base” for exploration of not only our, but also North Carolina’s, many historic treasures. In the industry, these are called “hub and spoke” travelers. They find a “home base” and visit locally and then regionally, but return to the home base to eat, sleep and shop. This goes directly to the aforementioned research citing that cultural and heritage visitors are more likely to take in a diversity of sites, cities and regions.

Ms. O’Kelley said that when utilizing historic preservation as a tool for economic development, the adaptive reuse of buildings is key and has several measurable benefits. For example, the labor intensity of historic preservation projects focused on building rehab can lead to greater local economic impact on jobs and income. She stated that this was seen in action with regards to the preservation of the Historic Courthouse. The building was made sustainable using almost all local materials and labor with just a few exceptions as there were 52 vendors – 35 local (including County of Randolph), 11 regional, and only 6 outside of the state of North Carolina. To that end, historic preservation is locally based and uses expertise, labor, and materials from the local market. In contrast, new construction typically imports most of its materials and much of its labor.

Ms. O’Kelley said that for nearly 1,200 locals to show up on Halloween night for the ghost tours of the Historic Courthouse is a real testament to the interest level in historic preservation locally and feels the TDA and HLPC should collaborate on ways to work cooperatively in the County to capitalize on these prospective visitors.

Ms. O’Kelley stated that the Landmarks and Cultural Heritage sites are listed on [www.HeartofNorthCarolina.com](http://www.HeartofNorthCarolina.com) now with the addition of the public accessibility information so visitors will know if they can visit before they make the trip. The TDA website is linked to the HLPC pages for additional information about each designation.

Ms. O’Kelley gave an overview of the 2013 Visitor Guide as applicable to RCHLPC stating that because there are so many designated sites, that in 2014, they may not be able to

include them in the Visitor Guide, but instead, as a guide of their own and published by the HLPC.

Ms. O’Kelley stated that she feels the HLPC is missing opportunities with social media and feels including more frequent FaceBook posts, adding Twitter and YouTube videos would give some additional marketing of the HLPC and the historic sites.

Chairman Johnson stated that the HLPC and TDA partnership is important and has been great for advertising the designated sites and promoting the work of the HLPC and thanked the staff of the TDA for their assistance.

Commission member Fran Andrews stated there were three locations in Trinity that she would be working on for future designation as landmarks.

Chairman Johnson stated there would be no December meeting.

**Adjournment**

*At 3:06 p.m., on motion of Whatley, seconded by Dixon, the HLPC voted unanimously to adjourn.*

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Hal Johnson, Chairman

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Amanda Varner, Clerk to the HLPC