

CHOWAN ROUND-UP

Christmas trees, children and parades

By Miles Layton

A round-up of all things Chowan County...

Digital NC has updated its Chowan Herald's database until 1980. To see back editions of the newspaper, visit <http://www.digitalnc.org/newspapers/the-chowan-herald-edenton-n-c/>. Give our librarian **Jennifer Finley** some credit for her tireless efforts to preserve the county's history.

Speaking of history, **J. Dawson Tyler**, of Down East Preservation Construction and Design, gave me the nickel tour of the Conger Building earlier this week. Amazing. Dates back to 1896. Maybe the last fish/industrial complex from that era in northeastern North Carolina. No firm timeline yet as to when the place will be restored, turned into a brew pub, but when it's completed, man is it going to be sweet! Next year, craft beer and Sound views.

In other news, folks who are reading this up North and wherever else and may be considering moving to Edenton - our tree lighting spectacular is special because of the warm hometown feeling that truly does get you in the spirit.

Albemarle Sounds as accompanied by the top notch musical talent from White Oak and D.F. Walker elementary schools did a wonderful job performing at the annual tree lighting ceremony.

Worth noting, Friday night was outgoing Mayor



MILES LAYTON/CHOWAN HERALD

J. Dawson Tyler of Down East Preservation talks about how Edenton will someday have a brew pub/restaurant at the old Conger Building.

Roland Vaughan's last time to get the crowd all fired up to spur the spirit to light the Christmas tree. Next year, it will be Mayor **Jimmy Stallings**.

Though I had kids who were either complaining about needing cookies, upset about not finding her boyfriend in the crowd or a boy who needed to go to the potty but only at the office, our family had a great time. I love seeing people I know in the crowd.

Councilman Roger Coleman got new glasses. **Simon and Brooke Rich's** baby daughter Emma, who was in a carriage, attended her first tree lighting ceremony. Tourism guru **Nancy Nicholls** was there as was **Town Manager Anne**

Marie Knighton. Judge Meador Harriss was navigating his boat as part of the flotilla. Said hello to **Dr. Alex Kehayes**. Saw **Jeanie and Bill Taylor** who are repairing and restoring the old train depot.

Santa Claus - I know him, I know him (Elf) - was busy listening to kids ask for toys.

My youngest son Joseph is an original thinker, the kind of person that makes a nervous parent pray in silence some days. ... Once, the boy asked **Reverend Malone Gilliam** if communion was cannibalism.

Anyway, Joseph and I have been working on his negotiation skills so as he can be a better dealmaker when navigating the politics

associated with bargaining with his older siblings.

After Joseph told Santa what he wanted for Christmas, he told Santa that if he didn't deliver, he wouldn't believe in him - thus throwing down the gauntlet for the Big Man - put up or shut up!

Santa took the boy's challenge in good stride. Much thanks, **Gary Lico**.

After the boy walked away, I told him Joseph that in order to bargain, albeit threaten, someone with super powers such as Santa, you must have at least an equal to or stronger negotiating position. Moreover, Santa is doing you a favor by being charitable, so its best not to antagonize those who are about to give you what you want for Christmas.

And Joseph, if you don't believe in Santa, well ... good luck with that. Don't dare mess with a man who keeps a list of who's naughty or nice.

Saturday's parade was huge! Lots of floats, cars and such traveled South down Broad Street. Emceed presentation by **Mike McArthur**, clerk of courts, and Superintendent **Rob Jackson** reminded me of those professional broadcasters talking as they watch the Macy's Christmas parades.

In other news, thanks goes to **Lyn Castellani** the other week. As I was driving to Hertford, my car's engine lost compression as

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READERS WRITE

Edenton Lions Club thanks supporters

The Edenton Lions Club recently held its Brighter Vision collection campaign in Edenton to raise funds to help support the ongoing assistance to blind/visually impaired people in Edenton and Chowan County and throughout the state of North Carolina. A special thanks goes out to Gloria Morris of the Rose's store and Michelle Kupka of

Food Lion in Edenton for allowing us to canvas customers for donations. Their support is a valuable asset to our community in helping to help others. A special thank you to all who donated. Anyone who would like to still donate may do so by sending your check to Edenton Lions Club, PO Box 702, Edenton, NC 27932.

GARY SWANNER
BRIGHTER VISION
CHAIRMAN, EDENTON
LIONS CLUB

Edenton lights at Advent, part 1

Our town of Edenton, and her surrounding countryside (where I live), is blossoming in the night with the loveliest of Christmas lights.

They are like my neighbor's camellias, now blooming in cold December. Mine, which don't get as much sun as his, will come out in February at Candlemas (hopefully).



JONATHAN TOBIAS

I have a weakness for Christmas trees and wreaths, Christmas carols and choralia, Christmas feasts and especially Christmas lights. I have been and will ever remain a Christmas child at heart, because when I see these lights shining in the darkness, hope rises, and the memory of spring breaks the certainties of winter.

It doesn't matter that Christmas lights and Christmas trees show up in pre-Christian pagan history. If we had to get rid of everything that was used or is used outside of Christianity, then life would turn into a cheerless dullness. It's true: Pagans did lots of feasting, and knew how to "deck the halls" quite well indeed, especially around the time of the Winter Solstice.

Some people are bothered by the holiday lights and decorations and Christmas festivities, just because of this dating of Christmas with the Solstice. Not a few insist that the actual birth date of Christ was not on Dec. 25, but sometime later in the spring. These folks suggest that the early Church artificially placed the Feast of the Lord's Nativity at the Solstice, in order to replace the pagan celebration of "Saturnalia" - which was an ancient Roman festival of general merrymaking and revelry.

There is no evidence that the early church leaders made any such deliberation. Instead, there are many ancient Christian writers (from the 100's on) who were convinced that Dec. 25 is the actual date of Christ's birth.

I think the jury is still out on that argument. But what is more important is that the Christian community of the first millennium recognized (better than us modern Christians) the true and deep relationship between the church year and the equinoxes and solstices of the astronomical year.

This is cool stuff. The Venerable Bede (a brilliant saint of the English Church who lived from 673 to 735 AD) wrote this:

"... very many of the Church's teachers recount... that our Lord was conceived and suffered on 25 March, at the spring equinox, and that he was born at the winter solstice on 25 December. And again, that the Lord's blessed precursor and [John the Baptist] was conceived at the autumn equinox on 24 September and born at the summer solstice on the 24 June. To this they add the explanation that it was fitting that the Creator of eternal light should be conceived and born along with the increase of temporal light, and that the herald of penance, who must decrease, should be engendered and born at a time when the light is diminishing" (from his "Reckoning of Time," written in 723 AD).

Time and Grace are intertwined at the deepest levels of life and reality. It turns out to be a good thing that Advent, the season of preparation for Christmas, takes place at the darkest time of the year. The return of the Sun in lengthening daylight should and must be celebrated at the Solstice. There was never anything wrong with this celebration, because the joy of cold darkness melting away into warm vernal light is deeply embedded in human nature ...

... embedded, I think, by God Himself. And that pre-Christian and even pagan joy is completed by the birth of the "True Sun of Righteousness" ("Solcnu Pravdy," as we Carpatho-Rusyns like to say), who is "the Light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it."

So there is nothing wrong at all and everything right about Christmas lights and strewing them on a Yuletide tree and festooning your house in the Advent preparation. We are expecting the Sunrise of the Son, after all.

I would add two things, though. The best Christmas lights in Edenton are your generosity to the poor, your hope to the discouraged, and your friendship to the distressed. So give freely, perhaps a dollar for every physical light you put up, perhaps a covered dish for every time you hear Rudolph's silly, happy song. Sing freely and full-throated. Enter into the candle-light hush of the Advent church.

Pray, if you want (because we are all "in want"). The other thing I suggest is that the actual Christmas celebration is not one day. It is actually 12, as the song reminds us about what "my true love gave to me." As my beloved Rusyn mother-in-law used to say to me, repeatedly: "Don't take down the Christmas tree until Epiphany."

And she was right, of course and as usual. Next week, part 2 will deal with Advent lights again, but this time, in Middle Earth (in Tolkien's story, but also in the real Middle Earth, which does indeed exist).

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Forest's letter to educators on teacher pay

Greetings North Carolina teachers and school personnel:

You recently received a letter from Governor Cooper about education spending and pay raises.

Unfortunately, the Governor has not provided a full picture of teacher pay raises and education spending in North Carolina.

I do not know if you have ever received the true story about what has happened with regards to public education spending over the last handful of years, but I felt that it was a disservice to you and your colleagues if you didn't have all those facts.

Prior to the current leadership of the General Assembly taking control in 2011, \$1.25 billion was cut from public education.

On top of this massive cut to public education, the previous party still managed to leave the state with a nearly \$3 billion deficit. Teachers were furloughed, overall teacher pay was frozen and education funding remained stagnant for several years.

In 2013, my first year in office, the current General Assembly leadership discovered incompetent mismanagement from a previous ad-



DAN FOREST

ministration that left North Carolina with another massive budget shortfall of \$500 million in Medicaid cost overruns.

Our previous government leaders spent \$1.4 billion more than we had for Medicaid and our costs were 301% higher than other states with similar populations.

I tell you all this because the money used to cover the costs of this mismanagement were the same funds that were supposed to go towards teacher salaries.

After fixing our broken government and placing North Carolina on strong financial ground, our General Assembly set out to give the respect that our teachers deserved after several years of neglect. Once our state government overruns were taken care of, your General Assembly made it a priority to unfreeze teacher pay, raise starting teacher salaries, fix an outdated pay scale and invest more into public education. Here are the facts about what we have done for our North

Carolina public schools and teachers up until Governor Cooper's most recent veto:

- #2 Ranking in average teacher pay in the Southeast (NC was 48th in the US in 2013)
- #3 fastest rising teacher pay in the US
- #6 in the nation for percentage of state level funding of public education
- 65% of public education costs funded by the state (national average for states is 45%)
- \$8,600 average teacher pay raise
- 20% average percentage teacher pay increase
- 5th consecutive teacher pay raises
- \$5,000 increase in entry level teacher pay
- Career teachers will earn \$237,500+ more in salary under new pay scale
- \$3+ billion more in education spending
- \$2+ billion in rainy day fund (to ensure that education funding doesn't get cut again)
- \$80 million more in textbook

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Cooper's letter to educators on teacher pay

Dear North Carolina teachers and school personnel:

As we approach the holiday season, I know many of you are concerned about the status of public school teacher and staff pay raises for this school year.

I am, too. I know how hard you work every day to ensure the children of our state have a great education and a bright future, and I thank you for that. Unfortunately, you haven't been afforded the respect you deserve in the legislative budget process.

When I vetoed the General Assembly's conference budget in June, I was in pursuit of a better deal for North Carolinians.

One of my primary reasons for opposing the legislature's budget was the fact that it did not invest nearly enough resources in our public schools and those who take care of our students every day, especially our teachers and non-certified school personnel.

Instead of putting our students, educators, and school personnel first, the General Assembly's budget focused on corporate tax cuts and mandatory set-asides that will reduce the amount of state funding available to invest in



ROY COOPER

salaries and public education both this year and in future years.

In addition, the General Assembly's pay plan would have provided a paltry 3.9% average increase in teacher pay, a 2% increase in pay for non-certified school personnel, and a 1% cost of living adjustment for retirees over two years. As the professionals who take great care of our students every day, you deserve better.

My compromise budget proposal, which I sent the General Assembly leadership at the beginning of July, includes an average 8.5% increase in teacher pay, a 5% pay increase for non-certified school personnel, and a 2% cost of living adjustment for retirees over two years. Every teacher under my plan would see a pay raise, and the pay raise for non-certified school personnel would be equal to the raise the General Assembly gave to other state employees. In addition, these raises should

be backdated so you can receive all your raise from July 1 to the present. We have the resources to make these important investments in our teachers and school personnel right now, and we should do it.

In October, I offered to negotiate pay raises for teachers and non-certified school personnel separately from the rest of the budget, setting aside other pressing issues like Medicaid expansion. So far, the General Assembly leadership has not accepted my offer to talk.

I know we can find common ground on a reasonable pay plan for our educators. I encourage you to reach out to your legislators and ask them to negotiate with me around a better pay plan for teachers and non-certified school personnel. I am doing my part. Now we need them to do theirs.

Thank you for all that you do for students, their families, and our state's public schools. Your great work inspires me to keep fighting for all North Carolina students to have respected, effective teachers and quality schools.

Roy Cooper is the governor of North Carolina.