

# GARNER AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

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*Our mission: Preserving the history of Garner and nearby crossroads, educating youth and promoting Garner's story in and outside of the community.*



## First Mayor, Postmaster of Garner's Station, Honored with Monument

The Town of Garner and the Garner Area Historical Society recently partnered with the Johnston County Heritage Center and Bingham descendants to place a monument on the grave of the first postmaster and mayor of Garner's Station, Thomas A. Bingham. The historic Smithfield Riverside Cemetery was the burial site of Thomas Bingham, his wife and his daughter. The gravesite had not been marked until this ceremony.

A native of Johnston County, Thomas Bingham was a business person who moved to what is now Garner in the 1870's, where he owned a storehouse near the railroad line. Bingham requested the name "Garner's Station" from the postal service and in September, 1878, a post office was established; in 1883 Garner's Station was incorporated and Bingham was named the mayor. In 1891, Garner's Station lost its charter for reasons that are unclear; the community was re-incorporated in 1905 as the Town of Garner.

Todd Johnson, Director of the Johnston County Heritage Center, along with Garner historian Kaye Buffalo Whaley, has done extensive research on Thomas Bingham. Bingham was involved in several different businesses throughout his life. After leaving Garner in the late 1880's, he returned to Johnston County. The



location of the Bingham's graves was known, but was never marked with headstones or monuments.

Thomas Bingham was featured as a character (portrayed by Broadway actor John Arthur Greene) in the Johnston County Heritage Center's annual Ghost Walk, which was recorded and broadcast on JCHC's YouTube



Channel in October of 2020; the production can still be seen at JohnstonNC Heritage.

Attending the ceremony dedicating the monument were Garner Mayor Ken Marshburn, Garner Area Historical Society Executive Committee members Judy Bass, Karen Padgett and Kaye Whaley, JCHC Director Todd Johnson, and Bingham family descendants from the Smithfield area, including Wingate Lassiter, retired editor of the Smithfield Herald newspaper. The stone monument reads: "Thomas A. Bingham, 1847-1908, First Postmaster and Mayor of Garner, NC; Sarah Elizabeth Ligon Bingham, 1853-1906, Wife of Thomas A.; Callie E. Bingham, 1880-1905, Daughter of Thomas A. and Sarah. Erected 2020 by Garner Area Historical Society, Town of Garner, and Bingham Descendants."

The Garner Area Historical Society is a 501(C)(3) non-profit organization.  
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## GAHS Board of Directors Makes Recommendations

The Board of Directors of the Garner Area Historical Society has approved the nomination of Mrs. Cindy Wright Davis to fill the vacancy on its Board of Directors, upon recommendation of the Nominating Committee. Cindy, who grew up in Garner and graduated from Garner High, recently retired after a long career with the North Carolina General Assembly. She was very active in the "early days" of the Depot restoration, before it was moved to Pearl Street. Welcome, Cindy!

In other GAHS Board action, the official name for the Museum was chosen, and a sign for the property is being fabricated to read:

### **GARNER HISTORY MUSEUM AT THE DEPOT**

Exterior repairs to the Depot are complete and we are off and running! Our goal is to have the Museum interior up-fitted and ready to open by this coming July. We so appreciate the past support of our Members and Donors. A continuing focus for us is seeking out financial support for the Museum. Please help us spread the word: Garner will soon have a first-rate History Museum!!

## In Memoriam

Sadly, two of our Founding Members have passed away within the last year. They were both Garner natives who were known for their outstanding achievements and for their service.

Barbara A. Kelly passed away in February of 2020 at her home in Garner. Ms. Kelly had a 38-year career in sports at the University of Virginia, serving in several capacities, including women's basketball coach and director of women's sports. Coach Kelly founded and directed the

first ACC Women's Basketball Tournament, according to The Cavalier Daily.

A lifetime lover of sports, Barbara Kelly played both basketball and softball at Garner High before attending Campbell University and ECU. Upon retirement from UVA, she moved back to Garner. She was a strong advocate of animal rescue, and fostered numerous dogs.

Beverly Beaman Adams passed away in February of 2021. Beverly retired after a 40-year career with the North Carolina General Assembly, and then went on to work for the Garner Chamber of Commerce. She held leadership roles for many years at the local, state and national levels of the Miss America organization, and served on the Garner Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and the Garner YMCA Board. Beverly Adams' life was defined by her service to family, service to friends and neighbors, and service to the Garner community.

It is appropriate during Women's History Month to recognize these two native daughters of Garner who achieved so much and touched so many lives. Each made history in her own way.

## How You Can Contribute

There are many ways that you can contribute to the Garner History Museum. (1) Be on the lookout for historic artifacts, photos and documents pertinent to Garner's History; (2) Volunteer to help with the Museum; (3) Make a financial contribution to the Museum, either by check or by credit card through our PayPal account via our website. Your gifts are tax-deductible!

