

PRESBYTERIAN HERITAGE CENTER MONTREAT

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In this Issue:

Memories of Montreat	1
Share Your Story	2
Collection Spotlight	2
Remembering Ron Vinson	3
10 Reasons to Visit	4
Support the PHC	5
Distinguished Lecture	6

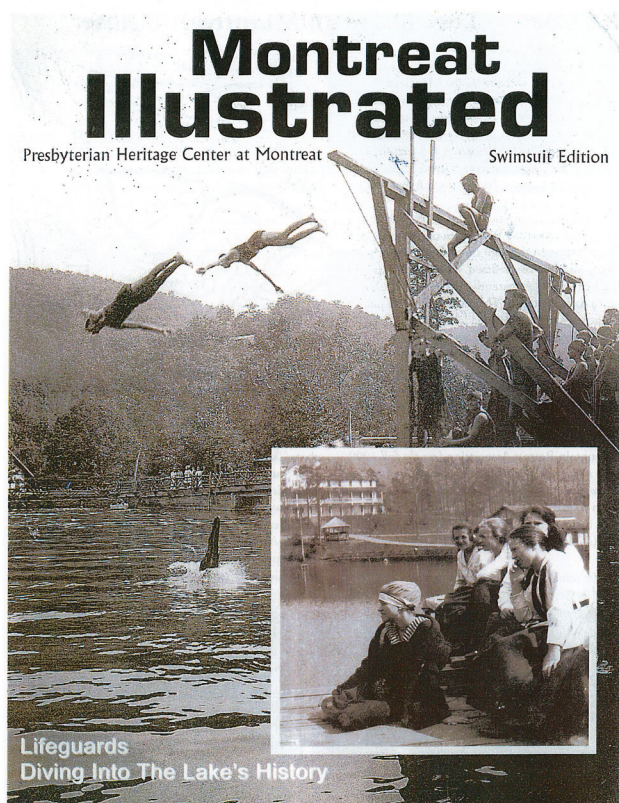
Memories of Montreat

Whether your family has been coming to Montreat for generations or just a few summers, everyone has stories to tell of this place. In fact, that is what helps create the Montreat experience—living it, remembering it, and sharing it. Memories like: seeing a mother bear and her three cubs walk through the front yard; or hopping rocks for the entire length of Flat Creek from Greybeard to the Gate; or churning peach ice cream on the front porch for a family picnic.

One of the PHC's Core Values is Heritage—honoring the legacy of God's people by preserving and making accessible their stories, archives, and artifacts to enrich the present and inspire future generations. That is why we share memories like those in "Lake Susan Stories" below.

In 2013, then-Executive Director, Ron Vinson, with help from a PHC committee led by Judy Shuford, collected memories of Lake Susan to produce a booklet called "Montreat Illustrated, Swimsuit Edition." Here are a few of the stories they preserved.

Lake Susan Stories



"My funniest remembrance of that summer was the evening four of us girls snuck out one night to go swimming in the lake, trying hard not to cause ripples, as we swam out to the wooden float. Our one nightwatchman came by in his pickup, saw the ripples, stopped his truck and said calmly, 'All right, kids, come on out.' We all went up to Assembly Inn for a bowl of ice cream!"

- Martha Montgomery, July 7, 2013, remembering the summer of 1953 when she lived in Geneva Hall and worked as a waitress in Howerton Hall cafeteria

"When the dock and high dive were removed, Mrs. Billy Graham saved the wide oak diving board from the dump and fashioned a handsome mantle in the living room fireplace at her new log home. A German craftsman later carved 'A Mighty Fortress Is Our God' in German into the wide slab of oak."

- Robert O. Jones, 2013

continued page 2

“One thing I remember about Lake Susan was how very cold it was. There was one relief: after swimming we could go to the Boys Club (now the Craft Center) where the boys’ club leaders lived upstairs, and there was a game room for ping pong, etc., and showers downstairs. There was a coal-fired water heater for the showers, and before swimming, we would load it up with coal, usually with the help of Jimbo Bryan, swim as long as we could stand it, and then head for the hot showers, hoping there was enough hot water to return us to room temperature.”

- Carlton Wilde, July 10, 2013

We Want to Hear From You!

We all have Montreat memories. As we share them, the Montreat Experience deepens for everyone.

This summer, writers Lauren Graeber and Shelby Wardlaw led writing workshops at the PHC designed to encourage participants to commit their memories to paper.

Exercises helped those in the workshops to recover details long thought forgotten and to record reactions and feelings to remembered events. Individuals left with a renewed sense of their Montreat Experience and added to their own memory bank by hearing the stories of others. They also honed valuable communication skills.

One participant indicated that in his succession planning work he now uses stories about people in his blog posts that help his readers empathize with his cause.

Share Your Story

The PHC wants you to share your memories with us. Housed in a collective repository and available to all, they will further illuminate our understanding of the Montreat Experience.

Do you remember swimming in Lake Susan? The sliding boards? The docks out in the middle? The diving tower? The Camp Montreat water show? What forgotten details pop up as you reflect on an event?

Every memory that each of us adds will deepen our collective understanding and add to Montreat history.

To share your story with the PHC, scan the QR code below, visit www.phcmontreat.org/shareyourstory, or email your story to info@phcmontreat.org.



Collection Spotlight

At left: *This bathing suit costume was made by Lila Ray to resemble a suit worn in Montreat in 1919. It was worn by Margaret Neale in “Way Back When.”*

Below: *Lila Ray (with microphone) and Margaret Neale in the 2006 program, “Way Back When.”*



Below: *Shelby Wardlaw teaches a writing class at PHC, July 2026.*





In 2019, the C.S. Lewis International Symposium attracted more than 600 participants, including CS Lewis' stepson, Douglas Gresham, from Malta. For the symposium, Ron developed an impressive Wardrobe Door into Narnia. Pictured above (left): Ron and Douglas Gresham; (right): Don King and Ron.

Ron (at center) was past president of the Montreat Scottish Society which sponsors the annual Kirkin' o'the Tartan.

Remembering Ron Vinson

Ron Vinson stepped into the large, empty space in Montreat in 2007 with Rev. Jim Cogswell and Rev. Dick Ray. His creative mind excitedly began planning to transform the emptiness.

PHC Board Chairman Bill Scheu said, "Ron's creativity and imaginative thinking not only launched the Presbyterian Heritage Center, but continued to make it a vanguard center of learning for the next 16 years."

The transition from the Historical Foundation to the Presbyterian Heritage Center provided excellent educational opportunities to tell the stories of Christ, and Ron hit the ground running as he chose to highlight a mission field each year.

To attract a crowd, Ron borrowed a taxidermied lion for an exhibit on missions in Africa. Once there, people read about the important work done by missionaries seeking to spread the word about Jesus in Africa.

Ron's exhibit on the History of the English-Language Bible revealed eye-opening stories about the dangers faced by early Christians. A young visitor was particularly struck by the fact that people died so he could read his Bible today.

Lila Ray, wife of Dick Ray, PHC's founding Board Chair, indicated that if Dick were here, he would express his deep appreciation of the amazing creativity and engaging personality Ron showed as he answered questions with kindness and friendship.

Dr. John Akers, longtime special assistant to Billy Graham and PHC board member, penned this fine tribute to Ron that eloquently describes him:

"Ron Vinson will long be remembered for **what he did** - his critical role in establishing and guiding the Presbyterian Heritage Center, his unique ability to translate ideas into reality, his creative attention to detail. But Ron will also be long remembered for **what he was** - a uniquely gifted visionary, a friend to all, a faithful disciple. We thank God for the gift of His servant, Ron Vinson."



Scan the QR code to read more about Ron on our webpage.

10 Reasons to Visit this Fall



The Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence exhibit at PHC.

1. Montreat History

Learn about the early history of Montreat in our new exhibit, and share your Montreat memories.

2. Walker Sculptures

Sit with Rev. John Mack Walker Jr.'s "Gospel in Appalachian Wood Carving" sculptures for a new understanding of his ministry.

3. Archival Research

Utilize our archives for your research project. Access many of our finding aids on our website.

4. MecDec Exhibit

Were Mecklenburg County's Presbyterians the first to declare Independence? Vote yea or nay.

5. Donate Artifacts

Preserve your history for future generations by donating your papers or artifacts to the PHC.

6. Peruse the Library

Browse our library in person or via our online catalog, which contains more than 17,000 volumes.

7. Attend Book Club

Learn something new by reading our upcoming book club selections. Hear Erskine Clarke read from his newest title.

8. Volunteer With Us

Get up close with historic artifacts when you volunteer to help catalog collection items.

9. Scavenger Hunt

Bring your kids or grandkids to the PHC for a scavenger hunt through the exhibits. Prizes!

10. Mission History

See mission artifacts from Taiwan, Malawi, and the Congo, including objects from early missionary, William H. Sheppard.

Mark Your Calendar

Tuesday, Oct. 20 @ 2pm
Book Club

Friday, Oct. 23 @ noon
Trillium Circle Founders
Luncheon at PHC

Friday, Oct. 23 @ 7pm
Distinguished Lecture on
the Reformation by Dr. Mark
Valeri in Upper Anderson

Tuesday, Nov. 17 @ 2pm
Book Club

Wednesday, Dec. 9 @ 3pm
Annual Christmas Tea at PHC

Check www.phcmontreat.org
for the most up-to-date info.

All events are free and
open to the public.



This August, the PHC welcomed missionaries and their relatives from Malawi, Taiwan, and the Congo. The visitors especially enjoyed viewing our exhibit "Missions in Montreat," which showcases artifacts from all these countries.

Remembering Our Past, Investing in Our Future

As you begin to plan for your year-end giving, please consider supporting the Presbyterian Heritage Center and its annual Heritage Fund. Your contribution to the Heritage Fund is an investment not only in history, but also in the future of Christianity and the Reformed Church.

The Presbyterian Heritage Center serves as a steward of our collective memory. Through its archives, exhibits, publications and educational programs, it safeguards and tells the stories of men and women who helped shape the Reformed Faith and expand its reach throughout the world. These resources allow future generations to understand

the theological convictions, missionary efforts, educational initiatives and acts of service that have characterized Presbyterian witness for centuries. Its collections and the Christian history they preserve date back to the time of Jesus and the leaders and scholars of the early Christian church.

History is more than a record of the past. It is a source of wisdom, identity, and inspiration for the future. By preserving letters, documents, photographs, church records, and other historical treasures, the Heritage Center helps congregations and individuals remain connected to the enduring legacy of the Reformed Faith and its witness to Jesus Christ.

The Presbyterian Heritage Center depends upon the generosity of donors like you to continue its important work. Contributions from individuals to the Heritage Fund pay for over 75% of the annual operating expenditures of the Presbyterian Heritage Center.

These contributions support the preservation of fragile historical materials, the development of educational resources, the creation of unique exhibits and efforts to make Christian and Presbyterian history accessible to a worldwide audience through an expanded Internet presence. Please include a generous contribution to the Heritage Fund in your year-end giving plans.



Support the 2026 PHC Heritage Fund

Please consider giving to the PHC this year to support our valuable programs.

To give:

- Mail a check to the PHC, PO Box 207, Montreat, NC 28757
- Make a QCD from your IRA
- Donate online at www.phcmontreat.org



I'd like to support the PHC in the annual amount of:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Heritage Society
\$25,000+ | ☐ Tartan Circle
\$1,000 - \$2,499 |
| ☐ Calvin Society
\$10,000 - \$24,999 | ☐ Kirkin Circle
\$500 - \$999 |
| ☐ Knox Society
\$5,000 - \$9,999 | ☐ Celtic Circle
\$100 - \$499 |
| ☐ Witherspoon Society
\$2,500 - \$4,999 | ☐ Friend of the PHC
\$1 - \$99 |



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Dr. Mark Valeri Headlines 2026 Distinguished Lecture

The Presbyterian Heritage Center is honored to host Dr. Mark Valeri as the 2026 Distinguished Lecturer on the Reformation on October 23rd, 2026. As part of the America 250 celebration, Dr. Valeri will be speaking on “Patriotism, the American Revolution, and the Reformed Tradition.”

As he described his presentation, “Presbyterian colonists in America were among the most patriotic supporters of the American Revolution. This talk will describe their

participation in the rebellion and how their Reformed theological inheritance, from John Calvin on, shaped their political views. It will also describe how the Reformed tradition led them to criticize the new nation and reject assertions of a religious national identity.”

Dr. Valeri is the Rev. Priscilla Wood Neaves Distinguished Professor of Religion and Politics and Professor of History at Washington University in St. Louis.



He is one of the country’s leading authorities on how Protestant Christianity shaped early American society—and how early American society, economics, politics, and ideas about religious freedom in turn shaped Protestant Christianity.

*The Distinguished Lecture will be held on Friday, October 23rd at 7:00 pm in Upper Anderson in Montreat.
The lecture is free and open to the public.*
