

Highland County Historical Society celebrates 50th anniversary, Part XLVI

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In the mid-20th century, education history courses taught the “facts.” From the time the subject of history was introduced in fourth or fifth grade and then continued throughout high school, dates and facts were the name of the game. The game being – if one chose to play – to achieve high marks in the subject by memorizing and regurgitating. It was the rare teacher who had the temerity to urge us to question the events and rationale of our past.

Those of us who saw everything in terms of fact or fiction, truth or falsehood had trouble in these courses. There were many awakenings and much alarm post high school as what we thought to be facts were often disproven. (Think young George and the cherry tree!)

We now can do research on the internet in addition to books, newspapers, journals, diaries, magazines, records of all types, minutes of meetings, newsletters and interviews. But what about mistakes? As kids, we believed our textbooks to be absolutely correct. We know now that they were not always. Meaning can be varied by point of view, omissions, honest mistakes and purpose.

Honest, or inadvertent, mistakes are just as misleading as intentional distortions. The importance of keeping this in mind cannot be overrated both as we research and as we record history ourselves. We at the HCHS made a glaring error in the Winter edition of our quarterly newsletter *Museum Muses*. It is a great newsletter, one of which we are very proud. Editor John Glaze does some of the writing himself and he takes all of our submissions and creates a beautiful and interesting document. Director Vicki Knauff and the chair do the final proofreading before it is printed and sent out to approximately 450 member businesses and households. It is always so exciting to pick up each new edition and leaf through it, grinning from ear to ear at the wonder John has wrought.

We were greatly humbled, though, when we picked up the most recent edition still warm from the printer and immediately noticed a misidentified picture in the “honest mistake” category. Let it be known that this is Lowell Chambers! Lowell has volunteered extensively for the HCHS; the first time after the restructured Board took office was in connection with the John and Martha Chaney Estate.

The contents of the house were inherited by the **Society**. Jean Wallis and committee chose several items for accession to the HH collection and the remaining items were auctioned by Prudential Chambers-Fite Realty Co.

Lowell advised us, met us at the house whenever we asked, appraised items and guided



Lowell Chambers is pictured outside the Highland House Museum.

us through the whole process at a token of his company's usual fee. He since has donated his time to serve as auctioneer for two fundraisers for the **Society**. Partly due to his effort, we will soon close our 50th anniversary year in the black.

But this attempt at correcting the error may make some amends but does not solve the problem, does it? It can be imagined that in 50 (more or less) years from now, someone will pick up the old newsletter and say, "Oh, I really thought that was Lowell Chambers, but it says here..." We will have a correction in the Spring newsletter but that won't come out until March 2016; so, I am using this forum to say, "Apologies, Mr. Chambers. We'll be calling soon about our next auction and we sure will remember your name then!"

We would do well to enjoy all writings with questioning minds. And to record our own history with multiple proofreadings. So now, I am going to let this sit overnight, and check it one more time before I send it on to Rory in the morning with hope that I haven't added to the mistake mountain.

And, thanks, Ann Siddons for suggesting this forum for this purpose. Thanks for being a discerning reader!