



Highlands Historical Society

Spring 2026

To preserve and promote the rich heritage of Highlands

Highlands, N.C.

The Birth of Medical Care in Highlands

Mary E. Lapham was the daughter of a Michigan banker. After working with her father at a bank for ten years, she came to visit Highlands in 1893 at the age of 32 and stayed for four years. In 1897, Miss Lapham, not yet Dr.

Lapham, bought 15 acres on Satulah Mountain from Margaretta Ravenel and moved forward with construction on this site. Some sources say that a small house was standing on the property and was renovated and enlarged. Another source says that a house was constructed by master carpenter Marion Wright and finished in July, 1898. In any event, the product was a gracious home which she named "Castle-far-away", known today as "Faraway."

During her visit to Highlands, Miss Lapham became aware of the need for medical care in a small town, which inspired her to a new career. Having acquired her home, she left to attend Women's Medical College in Philadelphia where she graduated in 1901. She then journeyed to Vienna and Switzerland for advanced study. After this training, Miss Lapham, now Dr. Lapham, returned to Highlands to begin a general medical practice and later to establish a sanatorium for the treatment of tuberculosis.

Dr. Mary Lapham felt a genuine concern for the ill. She maintained an active practice, visiting

patients on horseback and later in her horse-drawn carriage with driver, Sam Baty. A two-story addition was made to her Satulah Mountain home and used as an office. Patients were also housed in this wing, although they were not allowed to enter the residence.

A 1904 news item in the local newspaper

reported: "Miss Margaret Neely, daughter of W. S. Neely, of Clear Creek, a cripple, who had not walked for five years, was operated upon a few months ago by Dr. Mary E. Lapham. She was in town a few days ago, and walked as well as any one."

Dr. Lapham's specialty was pneumotherapy, the Swiss method of treatment for tuberculosis which she learned during her schooling there. With this therapy, an affected lung was collapsed and cured by extended rest. Dr. Lapham is credited with being one of three physicians who introduced the method to the United States. Dr. Lapham was a nationally recognized authority and was selected

president of the American Thoracic Society, an exceptional honor for a woman in the early 1900s.

Dr. Lapham believed that clean fresh air was an important aid to the treatment of lung disorders and that the Highlands environment was well suited to this purpose. In 1908 she bought a three-story house with substantial grounds on North Fourth Street, where the Highlands Recreational Park is now located, next to the Highlands Historic Village.

(continued on next page)



Lapham Historical marker located outside the entrance to the Highlands Historical Village



The Highlands Tuberculosis Sanatorium / "Bug Hill"

The house was enlarged by the addition of two wings, and sixty open-sided, one-room structures, which she called "tent cottages," were added to the property. There was no electrical or water system in Highlands at the time. The sanatorium had its own electric generating plant, and water was pumped from a nearby spring to a tank in the top story of the main building. This became the Highlands Tuberculosis Sanitarium, which locals dubbed "Bug Hill." Patients came from throughout the South, sometimes brought by ambulance from the train station in Walhalla, to be cured in Highlands.

Dr. Lapham was also active in civic and business affairs. She became Town Health Officer in 1915, and she held the telephone and telegraph franchise for the town.

When World War I began, Dr. Lapham gave up her practice in Highlands to head a Red Cross mission to war-torn Europe. She devoted herself to the care of refugees and children in Czechoslovakia where she worked with Dr. Alice Masaryk, the daughter of the first president of that country. Dr. Lapham is said to have become a close friend of the future president.

On a cold winter night in 1918, while Dr. Lapham was still in Europe, a worker in Highlands attempting to thaw frozen pipes with a torch set fire to the main building. With snow on the ground and six patients in the building, the patients were bundled up and rolled down the hill to the laundry. The burned building was not replaced, and the sanatorium was closed.

Dr. Lapham returned to Highlands after the war, but her activities in Europe had weakened her health, and she did not resume her medical career. She enjoyed her beloved "Faraway" home for another nine years before moving to Florida in 1926 where she died in 1936 at the age of 75.



Dr. Mary Lapham

President's Letter - Spring 2026

As we thaw out from a snowy winter and enjoy a budding spring, I want to welcome everyone back to beautiful Highlands. Last year was particularly special as we celebrated the Sesquicentennial (150th Anniversary) of the founding of the Town of Highlands in 1875. This year we celebrate the Semiquincentennial (250th anniversary) of the founding of America. This 250th anniversary dovetails beautifully with the many displays we have in our museum of military personnel who served our country well and played a major role in allowing this new country to survive and thrive. To further commemorate this historic occasion, we will be reading the Declaration of Independence at our Season Opening Party on Saturday, May 23rd at our Historical Village on 4th Street. You don't want to miss this free event as we will also have live music, great food, carnival games and lots more. So join us from 11:00-2:00 for a bit of history wrapped in loads of fun. The Historical Society has two other wonderful activities planned for 2026. The evening of August 16th we will be having our Patron's Celebration 1920's Gala - a great chance to don your favorite Roaring 20's attire and enjoy music, food and friends. Be sure to get your tickets on our website as we expect this to sell out quickly. Our much anticipated Walk in the Park is returning on October 3rd and 4th. Take advantage of this opportunity to learn from "ghost actors" about the historical figures who played vital roles in the founding of Highlands. Tickets can be purchased on our website where you can also find more details about this popular event.

Whether you are new to Highlands or have lived here all of your life, make 2026 the year to learn more about our enchanting town. There are several ways to do this: visit our museum and the Prince House (the oldest home on the plateau) which open Thursday, May 21st and remain open Thursday - Sunday through October. Admission is free with docents on hand to conduct tours. One should also take the self-guided city tour that highlights seventeen of the most historic buildings in downtown Highlands. Finally, our website (highlandshistory.com) has been updated to include links to many of our exhibits, including videos of the "ghosts" telling their stories from the most recent Walk in the Park event.

I want to welcome our new Board members Joan Worthy, Jack Wotton and Karen Price. Each brings unique talents that will add to the rich history of our organization. Mark your calendars and join us as we explore and celebrate the history of Highlands together.

Historically yours,

Price Kloess

Price Kloess, MD, President

Board and Staff

Price Kloess, President
Patty Jones, Vice-President
Carlton Cole, Treasurer
Mike Thompson, Secretary

Directors: Dollie Swanson, Lee Lyons, Annette Waldon, Jerry Wilson, James Yaskiewicz, Joan Worthy, Jack Wotten, Karen Price

Ex Officio: Tracy Foor, Harry McDonald, Obie Oakley

Staff: Lance Hardin, Archivist
Ran Shaffner, Archivist Emeritus
Mary Jane McCall, Docent/Bookkeeper
Cora Bauman, Archivist, Executive Assistant

Membership

Thank you for your past gifts to HHS! We hope you will continue your support and renew your membership by returning the enclosed donation envelope with your contribution. You may also renew online via credit card at highlandshistory.com and use the Donate tab. You may choose to designate all, or part, of your contribution to two special funds - the Ran Shaffner Scholarship Fund or the "Raise the Roof" Capital Fund. Any amount not designated will be placed in our General Fund.

Membership Levels:

Individual \$35	Family \$50
Sustainer \$100	Major Donor \$250
Promoter \$500	Preserver \$1,000
Protector \$2,500	Highlander \$5,000

Calendar of Events - 2026

May 23 - Season Opening Celebration
 August 16 - Patron's Gala Dinner
 October 3 & 4 - Walk in the Park

May - October is the opening season of the Historical Society. The museum and Prince House will be open Thursdays - Sundays.

Visit Our Website for More Details! <https://www.highlandshistory.com/events>

Patron's Gala Dinner

<https://app.tickettailor.com/events/highlandshistory/2083028>

SUNDAY

16

AUGUST

5:00-7:00

HIGHLANDS INN
 420 MAIN STREET

*Dress in your best
 1920's Gatsby style!*

Jazz Band, Heavy
 Appétizers and Desserts,
 Bubbly, Wine, Beer and
 a Signature Cocktail!

Season Opening Celebration

Join us on Saturday, May 23 for our season opening celebration at the Historic Village! Our event will begin at 11:00 am and last until 2:00 pm and feature live music provided by Laney and Bishop with Charles Wood.



In addition to tours of the Historic Village and the exhibits within the museum, there will be a dramatic reading of the Declaration of Independence.



There will be free hot dogs, chips, drinks, cotton candy, popcorn and ice cream while it lasts. There will also be old-fashioned carnival games for people to play that are tied to local history.

We hope to see you there!