

McDowell library seeks old yearbooks for digital project

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• Section: Local

Through a new project, people all over the world may soon be able to look at the 1945 Marion High yearbook, the 1958 Glenwood High yearbook or the 1961 Old Fort High yearbook with just the click of a computer mouse.

But in order for this to happen, high school yearbooks from some missing years need to be found so the online collection can be more complete.

Patti Holda is the librarian who operates the Abe Simmons Genealogy and North Carolina History Room at the McDowell County Public Library in Marion. Earlier this year, she worked on a newspaper digitization project with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. That effort involved taking old newspapers from communities across North Carolina and making them available online. It was made possible by a grant to the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center at UNC-Chapel Hill, the State Library of North Carolina and the UNC-Chapel Hill University Library. The county library was asked to submit some old newspapers to be a part of this online effort.

Now, Holda is working on a similar project for old high school yearbooks. The same people who headed up the newspaper digitization effort are doing this one for old yearbooks across North Carolina.

"It is basically another grant-funded project," said Holda. "It looks like they are doing an excellent job with it."

The Abe Simmons Genealogy & North Carolina History Room hopes to work with the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center to have McDowell County's old high school annuals digitally copied and made available online. The local library needs yearbooks that that 50 years old or older (pre-1962). They will be sent to Chapel Hill to be copied and included in the online project.

Holda is hoping that local individuals or groups will be willing to part with their old yearbooks so others can enjoy them.

"Scattered or incomplete collections of yearbooks are unlikely to be considered," she said. "Therefore, to have as many of our county high schools included, we need to complete our collection. To be considered for this project, yearbooks must be owned by a library, museum, or other cultural heritage institution that is open to the public."

That means the yearbook has to be donated to the library in order to be included in this online project. "They have to be owned by the institution that is having them digitized," said Holda, adding she understands that some people may not be willing to part with their old yearbooks.

Furthermore, it would be good if the donated yearbooks are in good condition and don't have a lot of personal messages written on the pages.

"I am not sure if people want personal stuff that is written in it to be seen online," said Holda.

Already, the library in Marion has amassed a good collection of local yearbooks from 1962 and before. But some years are missing.

"We would like to be able to fill in the gaps for those missing years," said Holda. "Our largest collection is Marion High."

The following is a list of yearbooks that Holda already has and the ones she is missing:

* Marion High: Have 1926, 1942, 1944, 1945, 1947 and 1949 through 1962. Need to find any years prior to 1926, 1927 through 1942, 1943, 1946 and 1948.

* Glenwood High: Have 1956 and 1958 through 1962. Need to find any years prior to 1956 and the yearbook for 1957.

* Nebo High: Have 1950. Need to find any years prior to 1950 and 1951 through 1962.

* North Cove High: Have 1957 through 1960. Need to find any years prior to 1957 and the yearbooks for 1961 and 1962.

* Old Fort High: Have 1954, 1956 through 1959, 1961 and 1962. Need to find any years prior to 1954 and the yearbooks for 1955 and 1960.

* Pleasant Gardens High: Have 1947, 1949, 1953 and 1959. Need to find any years prior to 1947 and the yearbooks for 1948, 1950 through 1952, 1954 through 1958, 1960 through 1962.

In addition, Holda said she greatly needs yearbooks from both Hudgins and Mountain View High schools. These were the local schools for black students during the time of segregation.

"We presently have 1951 and 1954 Hudgins High yearbooks which were photocopied from someone's private collection," said Holda. "This is all we have, other than some school reunion information that Vernice Francis has given us."

An official with the digitization project informed Holda that he can digitize the photocopied yearbooks, as he understands that sometimes these are the only copies available to local institutions.

"Therefore, if someone has yearbooks for these schools, and they are not very large, we may be able to photocopy them," said Holda. "This option is, of course, not very practical for all the other school yearbooks from the 1950s and 1960s. They were often 60 or more pages long...too lengthy to copy. The digital quality would also certainly be much better with original yearbooks."

Holda said she hopes to get some of these yearbooks as soon as possible because she doesn't know how long the grant for the project will last.

If you have any of the years needed to fill in the void, and to help assure that your class is represented in this project, contact Patti Holda at the McDowell County Public Library by calling 652-3858 or email pholda@mcdowellpubliclibrary.org.

To view other high school yearbooks from the project online, go to <http://digitalinc.org/exhibits/high-school-yearbooks>.

- Caption: Photo by Mike Conley/mconley@mcdowellnews.com Through a new project, folks all over the world may soon be able to look at the old high school yearbooks from McDowell County with just the click of a computer mouse. But in order for this to happen, high school yearbooks from some missing years need to be found so the online collection can be more complete. Patti Holda is the librarian who operates the Abe Simmons Genealogy and North Carolina History Room at the McDowell County Public Library in Marion. She hopes to work with the North Carolina Digital Heritage Center to have McDowell County's old high school annuals digitally copied and made available online. The local library needs yearbooks that 50 years old or older (pre-1962). They will be sent to Chapel Hill to be copied and included in the online project. Holda is shown holding a photocopy of the old Hudgins High yearbook and an original 1926 yearbook for Marion High. These are already in the library's collection.

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