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# Baumgartner assumes role of town historian

By STEWART McLEOD  
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Some people can never be replaced. The late Virginia Lee Satterfield, Clayton's historian for over 30 years, is a prime example.

"She did so much," said Pam Baumgartner, Clayton's new historian. "I can't imagine the time it took for her to gather all this information, and I can't imagine where we would be without her."

For years up until her death on Feb. 27, 2003, Satterfield kept files on Clayton's history. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, she could be

found in the Hocutt-Ellington Memorial Library's history room perusing files and cataloguing information and documents about Clayton and its people.

Satterfield clipped newspaper articles, interviewed citizens and, most important, recorded the events that shaped Clayton into the town it is today. If it weren't for Satterfield, much of Clayton's rich historical record would be lost to the ages.

Today, Baumgartner works in the same place, now known as the Virginia Lee Satterfield History Room, indexing Satterfield's old files and personal collections. She also is indexing other

collections donated to the library.

"It's amazing the amount of time and effort Ms. Satterfield put into recording Clayton's history," Baumgartner said. "You can't put a value on what she did. It's priceless."

For instance, Baumgartner said that someone looking for information about a specific event in Clayton's history need only to have a date. "Tell me the year, and I'll usually find some information about it in her files."

Satterfield's collection and collections from others, such as the three historical handbooks

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John Talton published in 1909, 1936 and 1961, are valuable research tools for those interested in learning more about Clayton's history. There also are collections from other prominent Clayton families in the history room.

Baumgartner steadily works each week to preserve the records, some of which are very fragile. She meticulously scans old newspapers, books and records, creating electronic files that can be easily accessed by the public. Eventually, the majority of the information in the history room will be available on computer.

The Virginia Lee Satterfield History Room contains church records, family records, business records, tax records, book club records, a history of the Woman's Club, school

records, and copies of the Clayton News and other newspapers dating back to 1914.

Some files contain histories from the American Revolution, firsthand accounts of the Civil War's Battle of Bentonville and accounts of Clayton residents who remembered Sherman's march through town.

Baumgartner said she fell into the job; then she fell in love with it. Librarian Betty Coats said Baumgartner frequented the history room for years doing research on her family. "I saw the great amount of time she was spending in here, so I asked her to come to work," Coats said. "Pam enjoys this kind of work. We're real lucky to have her."

Through the years, Baumgartner often worked along side Satterfield, so her transformation from novice genealogist to town historian made sense. "I got to know her pretty

good and I learned a lot from Ms. Satterfield," Baumgartner said. "I'm still learning - every time I go through her notebooks."

Even when Baumgartner gets all of Satterfield's and others' files copied, scanned and organized, her job will not be complete. Recording history is an ongoing process. She asks that if anyone has historical records or old photographs of, for or about Clayton, to please share them with the library. She is particularly interested in obtaining photographs from the 1950s to the present.

The work Baumgartner is doing, renovation of the history room and purchase of state-of-the-art computer equipment and archiving software were made possible by a \$25,000 gift from Robert Priddy and \$25,000 in matching funds raised by the community.

The Virginia Lee Satterfield His-



Photo by Stewart McLeod

Pam Baumgartner has indexed, catalogued and organized Clayton's historical records.

History Room is open to the public by appointment. Call Coats or Baumgartner at 553-5542 to find out more about Clayton's history. A Web site devoted to Clayton history will be online in the near future.