

The Highlander Weekender

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Thursday, November 13, 2014



Flora, fauna and local features, past and present, get recognition in a new map.



Submitted Photo
Gregg Clark, collector of local ghost stories, will give a presentation at Rickman Store in Cowee this Saturday.

Seeking unusual tales

The Friends of the Rickman Store will host a special presentation of Appalachian stories of the "unusual" with Gregg Clark on Saturday Nov. 15 at 11 a.m.

Clark, a resident of Macon County, constantly seeks the unexplained. He took a job at the historic and haunted Balsam Mountain Inn in Waynesville, N.C., and while there, led the "Weird Travels" television show around the inn. Clark became star of the episode, becoming the go-to employee and most filmed.

Clark, thrilled with the experience of being asked to blend his knowledge of history and ghosts on the popular television show, began collecting and writing ghost stories.

Recognizing the incredible historic offerings of his hometown and region, Clark created the Where Shadows Walk ghost and history tour in Franklin. For two years the ghost and history tour has been very popular, and Clark and his wife, Paulette, will be expanding their tours to two other North Carolina counties in 2015.

The community is invited to attend a unique encounter with Clark at the Rickman Store on Nov. 15 at 11 a.m. The Rickman Store is located at 259 Cowee Creek Road in Cowee, off of Hwy. 28, seven miles north of Franklin. Additional parking is available at the Cowee School. For more information call 828-369-5595.



Submitted Photo
PAC presents a National Theatre of London production from the West End.

'Skylight' play live in HD

The National Theatre of London presents Bill Nighy ("Love Actually," "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel") and Carey Mulligan ("Inside Llewyn Davis," "The Great Gatsby") in a production of David Hare's "Skylight," directed by Stephen Daldry ("The Audience"), captured live from the West End by National Theatre Live.

The production will be shown live in HD at the Highlands Performing Arts Center on Saturday, Nov. 15 at 7 p.m. Tickets are available online at highlandspac.org or by calling 828-526-9047.

Illustrating Highlands

New decorative map serves as love letter to the town

By Carolyn Morrisroe
editor@highlandsnews.com

Paddlers float on Lake Sequoyah, a luna moth flits by, blueberries climb up Satulah Mountain and a peregrine falcon watches over it all. These details are captured by artist Melissa Smith in a whimsically illustrated map of Highlands she released in September.

The map includes local flora and fauna, historical notes and nods to organizations and businesses past and present. The assemblage of facts, drawings, and, yes, maps makes up a 24-inch-by-18-inch full-color lithograph that serves as a snapshot of life in Highlands. Smith is from southwest Florida and currently lives in Fairhope, Ala. She has previously created maps of Mobile Bay, Dauphin Island and the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta, and has wanted to make one for Highlands for some time.

"All the while that I've been doing these maps, one led to another and another, and I kept thinking Highlands is what I want to do because it's near and dear to my heart," Smith said.

Smith has been connected with Highlands since the 1970s, living here off and on. In years past, she would work on her art while here and supplement her income by putting in hours at Images Unlimited salon.

"We spent so much time in



Above: A luna moth is depicted. At right: Artist Melissa Smith displayed her map at Highlands Own Art & Craft Show on Oct. 11.

Highlands, I learned all the back roads and the hikes," Smith said.

That familiarity allowed Smith to include details to delight locals, such as an homage to a beloved soda shop that closed in 1972 and an affectionate depiction of a festival that is no more.

"I try to focus on things that are warm and fuzzy to the people that have been there for years and years, like Bill's Soda Shop and Hillbilly Days," Smith said.

Smith's process for creating these maps is multilayered.

"It is drawn first in pencil, then I start with pen and ink then I go back and hand-color with watercolor and some-

times I might add a little pastel and color pencils," she said.

Smith said 90 percent of the artwork was drawn freehand specifically for this map, but one corner that details a row of Main Street storefronts was done about 15 years ago.

"I was not going to tackle that drawing again," Smith said.

Knowing the intricacy of Highlands, Smith tries to be fair if not comprehensive as to what locations make it onto the map.

"You have to be judicious. Because if you put in one shop, you have to put in another," she said.

She drew the Old Edwards Inn & Spa to offset the downtown "and also because they are

so literally and figuratively big in town," she said.

Smith said she wanted to do a map encompassing the whole area of Highlands, including all the nearby waterfalls, but she realized that would be more than could fit on one canvas.

"It would get bigger and you'd do less of the little details," she said.

And this map is all about the details. It shows stylized initials of the Performing Arts Center, several of the town's stately churches, a Highlander mascot, country clubs and Ran Shaffner's historical tome, "Heart of the Blue Ridge."

"I draw all my own little doodads," Smith said.

Smith has a particular passion for environmental issues and said she loves the Highlands Biological Station and its Zahner lectures. This love is evidenced on the map, which highlights the Highlands Plateau Audubon Society, the Bear Education and Resources Task

Force, the Highlands-Cashiers Land Trust and the Highlands Plateau Greenway.

The map took about three months to complete, Smith said. She hopes it will be appreciated "by people who love the area and dream of more time here, couples that marry here and folks that want to decorate their guest houses or rentals."

Smith's map is sold at the Highland Hiker, where Smith worked at one point, the Dry Sink and Mill Creek Gallery & Framing.

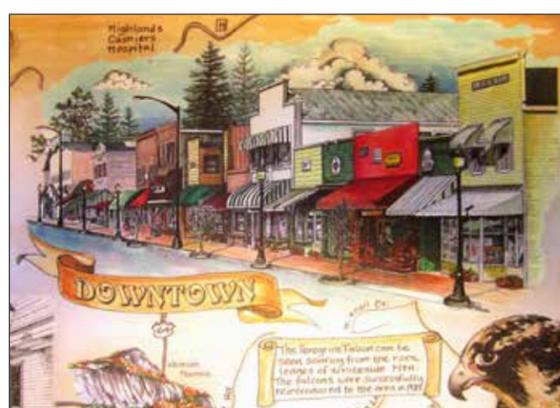
Cynthia Strain, owner of Mill Creek Gallery & Framing, said Smith used some of the photos in Strain's book, "Highlands Through the Seasons" as inspiration for the details on the map.

"I am so impressed by Melissa's talent and ability," Strain said. "She is a first-class illustrator."

More of Smith's work can be seen online at mobilebay-map.com.



Photos by Carolyn Morrisroe/Staff



Details of Smith's map show slices of life in Highlands.