

APRIL 2021

# SALISBURY

the magazine

## TEAM captain

*Kristin Dillard driving force  
behind auto group's success*

FULL CIRCLE WITH  
NASCAR DRIVER

**Derrike Cope**

STROLLING AROUND

**City Park  
Lake**

PRESERVING THE

**McCanless  
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by KRIS MUELLER

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On this page: A fly rod with floating line at City Lake.  
Photos by Jon C. Lakey*



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# Dip your toes into Salisbury history

If you've lived any decent amount of time in Salisbury, you probably have memories tied to City Park and City Lake, whose creation dates back to the Depression days of the 1930s.

Old-timers remember when Mayfest was a big annual event at the park. High school tennis stars used to play their matches at the City Park courts. Even if the signs discouraged them, plenty of folks have fed the ducks and geese at the lake. Or as a fisherman from the shoreline, you might have landed a nice-sized carp.

Parents and grandparents still take their kids to the playground, which has gone through several incarnations. If you go way back, the odds are high you rode the park's Salisbury Jaycees train, which debuted in 1955 and kept running there into the mid 1970s.

The Salisbury Armory used to be located at the northeastern end of the park, an area more recently devoted to honoring the U.S. military branches and local men who have died in past wars.

I have my own seared-in recollections of City Park. My wife will never allow me to live down the day, acting on my own, when I took our first-born son to Mayfest and proudly pushed him around the festival in a stroller, showing him off. It was a hot day and I failed to notice that my son's exposed legs were slowly turning red under the sun.

I returned home with a toddler who had burned legs, and my wife was not thrilled.

She received her park comeuppance a couple of years later when she was allowing our two pre-kindergarten sons a closer look at the ducks. Our youngest boy, only 2, slipped on the edge of the lake and fell in, back first.

My wife yanked our surprised tyke out of the water quickly by his shirt, but City Lake has forever dampened any glee she derives when mentioning the Mayfest sunburn incident — since I can counter with the City Lake splashdown.

In this issue of Salisbury the Magazine, contributing writer Kris Mueller and photographer Jon Lakey reintroduce you to City Park and City Lake. The lake in particular has gone through significant repairs and improvements during our Age of COVID and has emerged shiny and new.

Also in this issue, we are inaugurating a new element called "When History Speaks." The folks at Historic Salisbury Foundation, through a rotating stable of fine writers, have agreed to provide



each issue of the magazine with closer looks into local history and the preservation movement.

Salisbury writer Karen C. Lilly-Bowyer and photographer Sean Meyers kick things off with the fascinating story of Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless and the Second Empire-styled house on South Main Street that bears his name.

Just call him "N.B."

Elsewhere in this edition, look for stories on Team Automotive Group President Kristin Dillard, NASCAR's Derrike Cope, photographer Duane DuVall, the now 20-year-old Gateway building and longtime Salisbury Community Development Corp. Executive Director Chanaka Yatawara — this issue's Rowan Original.

Alissa Redmond offers some reading recommendations in Bookish. Celia Jarrett provides the art for Salisbury's the Place, and Tim Truemper has a nice spring photo for Through the Lens.

So pack up a picnic basket, grab the magazine and take in a warm day at City Park. My only advice: Have sunscreen handy and don't fall into the lake.

**Mark Wineka,**  
*Editor, Salisbury the Magazine*



THROUGH THE LENS by Tim Truemper



*Tim Truemper of Salisbury captured these swallowtails enjoying a flower last spring, when many residents were spending a lot of time at home during the early stages of the pandemic.*



# Relishing the grand statements of children's books

I hope many of you were able to experience the same awe-inducing wonder I did during the last OctoberTour, when I spent hours gawking online at my neighbors' gorgeous bathrooms. DKM Media did such an amazing job with that virtual project for the Historic Salisbury Foundation that I immediately reached out to them to redesign South Main Book Company's website.

If you visit, [www.southmainbookcompany.com](http://www.southmainbookcompany.com) you can virtually "browse" our stacks and click on many of the exposed book jackets to

purchase favorite titles direct from Bookshop, a unified eCommerce platform designed to support indie bookstores like ours. For those unable to venture far from home due to health concerns, I hope our website can provide a few moments of normalcy while shopping for a new read.

If you click on arrows all the way to the back of our store, you will find our wide array of children's books, which I spend a lot of time stocking while anticipating what my daughters, ages 5 and 10, will next want to read.

Given the awkward social conditions we all

face under COVID, my family is spending a great deal too much time at home on our own technologic devices, staring at PBS videos, eBooks, and (of course) our neighbors' bathrooms online. But in the store, I try to engage the girls with real, "live" books — ones that at a bare minimum detail characters' adventures from the television shows they have come to devour.

Here are some of my family's favorite children's titles for these long, oh-so-long! days of the pandemic, each containing rays of hope at the end (and devoid of television characters, as kids see enough of those already).



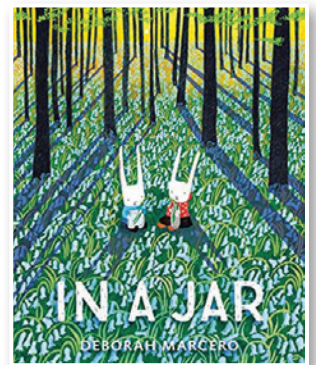
**Eyes That Kiss in the Corners** written by Joanna Ho and illustrated by Dung Ho (40 pages, HarperCollins) — a 2021 publication focused on one girl's discovery of the differences in the shape of her eyes from those of her friends. The girl notes how her eyes, and those of the women in her family, are filled with stories from the past, hope for the future, and they are all beautiful — and so is this story, which I hope your family will enjoy as well.

*My eyes find mountains that rise ahead and look up when others shut down.*

*My lashes curve like the swords of warriors and, through them, I see kingdoms in the clouds.*

*My eyes that kiss in the corners and glow like warm tea are a revolution.*

**In a Jar** by Deborah Marcero (40 pages, G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers) — a Spring 2020 release that may have escaped your notice, given world events at the time. This gorgeous book chronicles the friendship of two rabbits, Llewellyn and Evelyn, who collect seemingly non-collectable things (rainbows, the sound of the ocean, and the wind just before a snowfall) to display in jars on shelves in their neighboring homes — until Evelyn announces she is moving away. Their inventive ways to continue sharing their discoveries is such an inspired tale for kids finding themselves with a smaller, but hopefully just as creative, social circle these days.



**Her Right Foot** by Dave Eggers and illustrated by Shawn Harris (104 pages, Chronicle Books) — published in 2017 by one of my favorite authors of adult nonfiction (Dave Eggers previously wrote *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, *What is the What*, and *Zeitoun*, among other titles), I kept a copy of this picture book on my



desk in embassies over the world to remind my colleagues and me what it means to be an American. Starting with the true tale of the Statue of Liberty's creation in France and eventual rehoming on Ellis Island in New York City, Eggers leaves the reader with deep questions of what the Statue literally "stands" for —

is her leg displaying the intent to move, and does that movement appear bound for the sea? I am continually left with goosebumps towards the conclusion of this story, as we realize Lady Liberty is breaking free of her chains to meet new arrivals to the United States where they are, to accept them as they are, to welcome them to our shores. Sometimes children's literature can possess a grander statement than works intended for adults; this is one of those books.

▶ The titles mentioned are available at Salisbury's independent bookstore, South Main Book Company, located at 110 S. Main St. Call 704-630-9788 or email [southmainbookcompany@gmail.com](mailto:southmainbookcompany@gmail.com) to confirm store hours and events. Alissa Redmond is the owner of this store.



| Q & A |

# Dream job

*Chanaka Yatawara builds community through partnerships, friendships*

Written by **Mark Wineka** / Photography by **Jon C. Lakey**

To see him pushing papers in his West Bank Street office or meeting homeowners in their newly rehabilitated houses, you can't easily picture the path and passions that brought Chanaka Yatawara to Salisbury.

And in those 22 years here, Yatawara has left a lasting legacy as executive director of the Salisbury Community Development Corp., a nonprofit that works closely with the city of Salisbury and community partners in trying to stabilize fragile areas.

The SCDC's work has revitalized and brought affordable housing to targeted neighborhoods, provided down-payment assistance to first-time homebuyers, addressed vacant houses, prevented foreclosures, offered credit counseling and, along the way, won numerous state and local awards for its efforts.

As a youngster, owing to his father's job with a British engineering company, Yatawara spent time in several countries, including his native Sri Lanka, Dubai, Malaysia, Singapore and even Iran prior to the Islamic revolution.

After he completed middle school in Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), Yatawara spent his high school years at a boarding school in Hertfordshire, England, where he further developed his love for cricket.

"I was fortunate to play for a team that toured Holland and Switzerland in the summer playing club cricket," says Yatawara, who also found time for soccer and field hockey beyond the cricket season.

It was on the recommendation of a cousin that Yatawara pursued his education in the States, enrolling at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va., where he graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering.

Yatawara met his wife, Gayle, in a freshman chemistry class, and it was Gayle's job that eventually led them to Salisbury. In the States, Yatawara substituted his love for cricket with golf, and that interest led to the Yatawara daughters (Lily and Grace) becoming highly accomplished, Division I college golfers.

"Grace, as a dual citizen of Sri Lanka, was able to represent Sri Lanka at the South Asian Games (in Nepal) and secure two gold medals," Yatawara says. "She made history in Sri Lanka by winning the first gold medal in golf. It did bring tears to my eyes when I saw her on the podium holding a Sri Lanka flag with the national anthem playing in the background."

*Salisbury the Magazine* recently caught up with Yatawara, 60, for a longer-than-usual question-and-answer session in which he describes, among other things, the work and growth of the SCDC:





**Former City Councilman Bill Burgin once said you had “the dream job” because of what the CDC does in helping people and the community. In what ways has this been the dream job for you?**

I definitely have a dream job! When I first joined Salisbury Community Development Corporation in January 1999, our focus was on neighborhood revitalization. We accomplished this by providing affordable housing to first-time homebuyers. Here’s where the “dream job” comes into play.

You can’t believe the joy it brings you when you realize you played a small part in assisting a family achieve their American dream of purchasing their first home. Most of the families never even imagined they could ever own their own home. I am so grateful for the opportunity to help show them the path to homeownership. Once they could see the path, most families worked hard and made sacrifices to make homeownership a reality. The day of closing on the loan and getting the keys to their new home ... now that was a dream come true! We closed on the first home on North Shaver Street in 1999 and I can still remember it like it was yesterday. Can you believe that I still keep in touch with the first two homeowners 22 years later? It’s always such a joy to meet them around town.

I’ve also made some strong friendships. One particularly close friendship was with Mr. and Mrs. Gilmore. I met them when SCDC was building in the Jersey City neighborhood. Because we had a shared interest in golf, our friendship grew exceptionally close. Mr. Gilmore loved spending time on his front porch, and I always looked forward to stopping for a chat whenever I saw him. I loved listening to his golf stories. He was an excellent golfer, and I enjoyed getting his golfing advice for my daughters. He even came and watched my girls play golf one day.

So, when you ask me why everyone thinks I have a dream job, I’d have to say it’s because I get to improve neighborhoods, make long-lasting friendships and help people accomplish their dreams. Sounds like a dream job to me!



*From his cellphone, Yatawara scrolls through some ‘before’ pictures of the house undergoing major changes at 803 N. Main St*

***What’s the key to or what are the main factors in the CDC’s success?***

Creating partnerships is the key to the success of the SCDC. The partnership of SCDC with the city of Salisbury has helped provide funding and support for various projects. Local banks have worked to provide below market interest rates. Mayor Karen Alexander has provided architectural services at no cost. And local attorneys and appraisers have discounted their services.

All of this together helped make our homes affordable. SCDC has truly partnered with our entire community. I should also thank the Robertson Foundation for providing us with our first grant that paid our operating expenses for our first two years. Another important factor leading to our success was locating our office in the West End neighborhood. This gave me the opportunity to meet and develop relationships with the families that I was assisting.

It was the generosity of gentlemen like William Peoples that helped me to understand some of the matters that needed to be addressed. He stopped by one day and offered to drive me around and show me what he was

talking about. It was after that drive that we decided to start working in the West End.

***What city neighborhoods and places outside of Salisbury have benefited from the CDC’s efforts at providing affordable housing and stabilizing communities?***

The three city neighborhoods that have benefited the most from the SCDC are West End, Park Avenue and Jersey City. In addition, I feel like we have made an impact on South Jackson Street and North Main Street.

Over the last two-and-a-half years, the SCDC administered an exterior rehabilitation program in the West End neighborhood. The City Council and the city manager allocated approximately \$630,000 for this program and 33 families were able to get repairs ranging from new roofs to new windows and siding. This has been such a satisfying program and I’d have to say that it’s one of the most successful programs that I have been involved in in my 30 years of community development.

We have also worked in East Spencer where we administered a housing grant and water-line replacement grant.



We are currently working in the Town of Spencer assisting them with their planning needs and also getting ready to administer a \$750,000 housing grant to assist low- to moderate-income homeowners rehabilitate their homes.

In addition, we partner with Rowan County to administer HOME funds for an owner-occupied rehabilitation program. This is a program where you have to own your home to get the assistance you need.

Salisbury CDC has been awarded grants from the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency for the Urgent Repair Program and the Essential Single Family Rehabilitation Program. These funds assist low income homeowners repair their homes. Currently, we are working on rehabilitating a house on South Main Street.

***How much has the CDC's budget and staff grown from its initial grant funding in 1999 and you as its lone employee?***

The initial operating budget of the Salisbury Community Development Corporation was \$150,000 and was funded completely by the Robertson Family Foundation. Over the years, we've added staff and changed our focus depending on the needs of our community.

When Pillowtex closed in 2003, we started providing credit and mortgage counseling and hired a housing counselor to focus on foreclosure prevention. The Rowan County United Way contacted us and we started a new partnership. They provided the funding to help prevent homes from going into foreclosure. We received our initial funding from the First Reform Church of Landis (\$3,500).

But Pillowtex was just the start of the need for foreclosure prevention counseling. We saw layoffs at Freightliner, Performance Fiber and other industries in Rowan County. This increased the need for a second housing counselor and an intake specialist. In the 2008 housing crisis,

of North Carolina that were to administer these funds.

During the height of the mortgage crisis, the U.S. Treasury provided \$350 million for foreclosure prevention in the State of North Carolina. Salisbury CDC administered over \$8.6 million of these funds that directly assisted families avoid foreclosure and remain in their homes while they found new employment or went through retraining to assist in securing employment. SCDC served a six-county region in our foreclosure prevention program.

***And then?***

Once the need for foreclosure prevention subsided, the city of Salisbury was looking at extending its rehabilitation programs. This included the West End program and another revitalization program that included the acquisition of dilapidated homes and creating homeownership opportunities. We were able to acquire six homes on South Jackson and South Lee Streets. To date, we've stabilized and sold three homes and demolished three homes. We've built and sold two homes and have another home ready to start construction.

As you see, our organization has seen a lot of change over these past 22 years. I'd like to think that we change depending on what's needed in our community. We've now grown to five staff members with an operating budget of \$450,000.

***What about Salisbury has made it a good place for you, Gayle and your daughters, who are now grown?***

Moving to Salisbury has been one of the best decisions Gayle and I have made for our family. It was 1997 when Rowan OB/GYN and Row-



*Yatawara stands outside the Spanish Mission-styled house at 803 N. Main St. that has seen significant improvements thanks to the CDC and numerous community partners, including Fred Stanback, Karen Hobson, Don Conner, the city of Salisbury and F&M Bank.*

North Carolina legislators appropriated \$1.3 million for foreclosure prevention that was to be administered by the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency. Since SCDC was already involved in foreclosure prevention and was a HUD Certified Housing Counseling Agency, we were selected as one of seven agencies in all



an Regional Hospital invited Gayle to come visit Salisbury to see if she would be a fit to join their practice after she completed her residency in obstetrics and gynecology in May of 1998. Coming from Charlotte airport we took exit 76 and drove down West Innes Street and knew this was where we wanted to move.

While Gayle was on her interview, I was playing golf with the office administrator. At this point I was ready to move! After a busy few days, we returned home and knew we would love to move here.

However, I was the deputy executive director at the Virginia Beach Community Development Corporation. I joined VBCDC as their fifth employee and in nine years the organization grew to 18 staff. I was settled in my job, but I did send my resume to the administrator of the practice. At the time, Bill Klutz was the chairman of the hospital and his wife, Susan Klutz, was the mayor. Therefore, my resume quickly got to David Treme, the city manager. It seemed like our move was meant to be as the city was in the process of creating a Community Development Corporation and I had the opportunity to interview for the executive director position and secure it.

It was not an easy decision to leave Norfolk, as Gayle grew up in Virginia Beach, went to college at Old Dominion University and completed her medical school and residency at Eastern Virginia Medical School in Norfolk. In addition, at that time we had Lily, who was cared for by Gayle's mom. We prayed over this decision and decided we would love to live and raise our children in Salisbury.

***Outside of the CDC and golf, what are some of your other interests?***

I love to travel and, fortunately, so does Gayle. After graduating from college, Gayle and I packed up all our belongings, put them in storage and left for Singapore for the next three months. Let me just add that Gayle had never traveled to Asia. So this was going to be an adventure! Thank goodness she likes spicy food. My parents were living in Singapore, and we used it as a home base to travel around South-

east Asia. We spent time in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia (Bali).

And, let's not forget the travel associated with the girls' golf tournaments — nearly every weekend during golf season and in the summer. I don't think I've missed any of their golf tournaments, even in their collegiate career. So that was a lot of traveling and definitely kept me busy! Just with golf, we've had the opportunity to travel to many nearby places as well as Connecticut, Minnesota, Arizona, Florida, Puerto Rico and Nepal.

***Do you still have any family in Sri Lanka, and have you been able to make any trips there in recent years by yourself or with your girls and Gayle?***

Once my father retired, my parents moved from Singapore back home to Sri Lanka. My dad passed away several years ago, but my mom still lives in my childhood home. In addition, we have lots of extended family in Sri Lanka which contributes to the rich social life that my mom continues to enjoy. She loves to play cards and has several groups that she meets weekly. People sometimes ask if she'd ever move here. I don't think so. The social life in Sri Lanka is robust and I think she'd be bored here.

Lily was born when Gayle was a fourth-year medical student. Once she graduated from medical school, we traveled to Sri Lanka with Lily as a 6-month-old. Looking back, I realize how adventurous we were to take a 6 month-old-baby on a trip that took us 36 hours to reach our destination and 24 hours of flying time. Well, needless to say, we made it!

Fortunately, we were able to alternate our international travel with my parents and family. We tried to see my parents about every other year. My parents would visit Salisbury and then we'd travel to Sri Lanka. When they visited, they'd usually stay about three months. They saw plays, went to Grandparents Day and, of course, watched a lot of golf. The girls even brought them to school as "show and tell." My dad loved that and gave everyone a lesson on Sri Lanka.

The last trip we took was in December 2019 when Grace had the opportunity to represent Sri Lanka in golf at the South Asian Games in Kathmandu, Nepal. We traveled first to Sri Lanka to meet the team and visit my mom.

***What are one or two of your favorite movies or television shows?***

I have to be honest, I don't think that I have a favorite movie, because I fall asleep every time I try to watch one. As far as TV shows go, I love to watch "Shark Tank." I'm always surprised at what innovations get funded on that show. I watch it every chance I get.

***What two foods are often in your fridge or pantry? And do you have a favorite Southern food?***

You will most likely find vanilla ice cream in the freezer and wet walnuts in the pantry to go on it. Also, the chance of finding chocolate is very high — especially M&Ms with peanuts.

I love Southern cooking as I was introduced to it not long after I moved to the States. I spent a lot of time at Gayle's parents home in Virginia Beach. Gayle's mom was a good cook and I learned a lot about country cooking. I learned to love everything from grits to collards. But, I'd have to say that my very favorite Southern food is pecan pie. Gayle's grandmother lived with them and would always ask me to help her make pecan pie. We'd sit at the table and shell the pecans and make the pie together.

Since moving to Salisbury, I've also developed a taste for sweet tea. Living so much of my life in England and Sri Lanka, I'd never really had iced tea. We always drink hot tea. Iced tea isn't even an option. But after moving here, I realized that I'd come to love real Southern sweet tea. And Cheerwine. Let's not forget the Cheerwine.

***If you could go back and give some good advice to a 20-year-old Chanaka Yatawara, what would it be?***

Be humble and treat everyone the way you want to be treated. Be a good listener. Also be a servant leader. **S**





# Focal point

*Duane DuVall's camera hits paydirt wherever he goes*

WRITTEN BY MARK WINEKA







***Above:** DuVall liked this feel of Easy Street at night. (Duane DuVall photo) **Below:** DuVall works on framing one of his recent photographs. (Jon C. Lakey photo)*

**D**uane DuVall calls his cramped workspace “The Photographer’s Dungeon.” The self-described 49-year-old man-child lives in a small house on DeSoto Avenue in Kannapolis and his “dungeon” is a basement, accessed from an outside door.

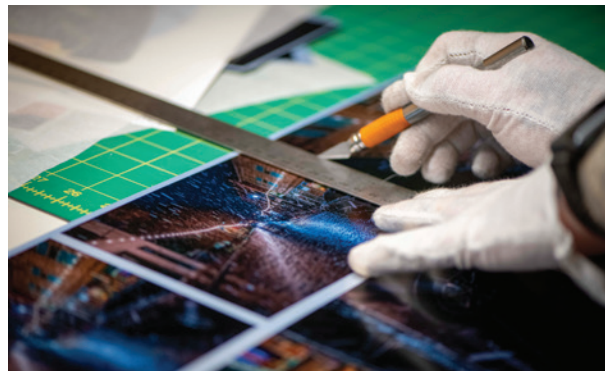
It’s a low-ceilinged, low-lit area with all of his photographic, print-making, matting and framing equipment mixed in with the normal things shoved into a basement. DuVall says there’s “tons of chaos” here, but he’s not complaining.

“I couldn’t beat it when I found this house,” he says, noting the \$600-a-month rent.

With his favorite camera, a Nikon Z6, DuVall has taken photographs of Salisbury and Kannapolis that over recent years have found their way onto the walls of many local residences and businesses. His fascination with Salisbury started when he was a dishwasher for more than two years at Sweet Meadow Cafe, and he came to appreciate the city’s history, architecture and infrastructure.

“The views of Salisbury are just unreal,” he says.

DuVall became fascinated, for example, with the Salis-



bury Depot, the Square at night, the details in old Salisbury doors and drone aerial shots of the downtown.

“I love Fisher Street — the brick street — and the strings of lights that run down there,” DuVall adds as he prints a snowy, nighttime scene of East Fisher on silver paper.

In Kannapolis, his camera focuses on buildings at the N.C. Research Campus. It takes in the new downtown baseball park, Village Park and old Cannon Village streets. Outside of Salisbury and Kannapolis, his catalog of images includes visits to the N.C. mountains, and overall he cap-

***Opposite, clockwise from top:** Photographer Duane DuVall works on framing a recent photograph in his Kannapolis basement workspace (Jon C. Lakey photo); Wiseman’s View Overlook in Newland, N.C. (Duane DuVall photo); DuVall has a stack of his photographs matted and ready for sale. (Jon C. Lakey photo)*



## THE ARTS



*Clockwise from top left: A sweeping view of the Square in Salisbury. (Duane DuVall photo); A corner snapshot reflecting DuVall's early days as a photographer and guitarist. (Jon C. Lakey photo); DuVall has been taking photos for more than 30 years. (Jon C. Lakey photo)*

tures landscapes, closeups of nature, street scenes and desolate roads. With urban pictures, he sometimes adds a topaz-glow effect on the images. "It's kind of my signature thing," DuVall says.

To help pay the rent, DuVall also will hire himself out for weddings, family and pet portraits, and again he has the print shop resources in his basement to provide the whole package — photography, printing, matting and framing.

Because he does it all himself, he says his prices are pretty competitive.

Some of DuVall's pieces hang at Sweet Meadow Cafe, and he credits owner Heather Teeter with connecting him with "some of the best people in Salisbury." He also has sold his photographs at Salisbury places such as Grievous Gallery and Vibes. In an interview with Joe Girdler's JG Media a couple of years ago, DuVall says he found the arts community in Salisbury to be positive, supportive and interconnected.

Thanks to local artist Sue McHugh, DuVall had a 2019 exhibit "Through the Eyes of the City" at the Salisbury Business Center.

"That was a big hit," a grateful DuVall says. "That blew my mind. I wasn't prepared for that."

Promotional material for the exhibit said DuVall "pays hom-





*DuVall works in the basement of his Kannapolis home printing and framing one of his more recent photographs of a snowy night on East Fisher Street in Salisbury. (Jon C. Lakey photo)*

age to the city with a less-is-more approach and takes the viewer to a place that inspires strong reactions, allowing people to project their own city experiences into his view.”

“Duane DuVall sees something remarkable in some of the views we see every single day,” McHugh says today. “His eye for texture and pattern capture the remarkable in the ordinary. His work is bold and dramatic while simultaneously paradoxically subtle.”

In April, more of DuVall’s photos — mostly nature images — will be on display at Heart of Salisbury, located at 120 E. Innes St. You also can check out a lot of his work on his Facebook page: Multimedia Art by Duane DuVall.

From an artistic point of view, DuVall acknowledges he is never really satisfied with his images.

“I start seeing things I could have done differently,” he says.

And he is always intrigued by what attracts people to his photos.

“What they like and what I like are two totally different things,” he says.

DuVall once had a customer reach into the garbage can for something that DuVall had discarded as a mistake — a print on top of another print. But the customer liked the double image and ended up paying him for it.

*‘Saucebury’ painted in a rail crossing near the Salisbury Depot. (Duane DuVall photo)*



•••

DuVall has been involved with photography — film and digital — for





*A back road somewhere in Virginia.  
(Duane DuVall photo)*

some 30 years, but it has never been the smoothest of roads.

He was born in Bangkok, Thailand, during a time his dad was a U.S. soldier overseas. As a young boy, he lived in the Maryland/Pennsylvania area through kindergarten before the family moved to Landis, when his parents bought the town's old junkyard site.

While they fixed up a house on the property, Duane recalls living with his Aunt Helen. His dad worked for the Landis Post Office, and Malone's fabric store employed his mom before she became a customer service manager for Walmart.

DuVall was the youngest of three children. He attended South Rowan High, graduating in 1990. The guitars on his house's living room wall in Kannapolis betray a musical side to him.

"The first half of my life was music; the second half was art," DuVall says.

But as a teen and young adult, DuVall had an overriding goal in life:

"I wanted to be a pro skateboarder," he says.

An interest in photography crept into his life through skateboarding. He wanted a way to document himself and his friends in action. His parents bought him a Pentax K-1000, a fully manual camera with no light meter and numbers on the lens (f-stops) that Duane did

not understand at first.

"I just had to figure out what those numbers meant," DuVall said, adding he burned through too many rolls of film and blurred images until he grasped the technology.

The first photo he took as an 18-year-old was with his skateboarding friends.

Duane also mastered darkroom techniques by trial and error, in the days when photographers favored black-and-white prints. His first darkroom was in a bathroom.

"I pretty much learned how to develop black-and-white film on my own with the help of Wolf Camera," he says.

DuVall enrolled in Randolph County Community College's well-regarded photography program but didn't last long. He says he was kicked out. Looking back at the people who would have been in his graduating class at Randolph Community College, DuVall says, "I'm the only one who's still shooting."

His other photography training came during a nighttime class in Lexington taught by Sonny Hedgecock, a photojournalist for the High Point Enterprise.

For a time, DuVall also enrolled in an arts program at Davidson County Community College, where he enjoyed figure-drawing and sculpture.

One summer early in DuVall's photographic pursuits, the Ingersoll-Rand plant in Davie County asked him to follow 28 air compressors down the assembly line and provide the photographic images at every stop for an instructional manual the company was putting together.

As part of his payment, DuVall received a dry-mount press that he still uses for his prints.

Beyond his skateboarding, DuVall began getting into the tattoo scene. The way he describes it, he got "sucked into" shooting photos for skin-art publications, dropped everything else and "partied my ass off."

DuVall went state to state and convention to convention while hanging out at tattoo shops in between. For income, he also managed some tattoo shops. He tried his own hand at tattooing and found "you have plenty of room for mistakes — just don't misspell anything."

Through tattoos and piercings, DuVall made his own body a work of art. He found he had a passion for body piercings and turned that into a vocation. For 20 years, "it was a good hustle," DuVall says of the piercing business. "The photography was a side hustle."

DuVall freely acknowledges he became a heroin addict, not long after a serious snowboarding accident and his introduction to painkillers. He says he was a functioning addict for 15 years before finally hitting rock bottom.

"It started becoming extremely destructive," DuVall told Girdler in 2019. He went back and forth for a time between the heroin and methadone treatment programs, but reports he has been clean for 13 years.


"I just got fed up with it," he says, and he replaced his addiction to drugs with an addiction to something better — artistic photography.

Today DuVall has a full-time job at the Carvana auto facility in Concord, on the site of the former Philip Morris plant.

He details cars and hopes to be the location's resident photographer, too. "It doesn't matter where you throw me," he says. "I do my best."

DuVall wants to delve into relief printing among other artistic pursuits, and he also has his sights set on buying the equipment from a custom frame shop in Kannapolis.

"My projects are getting bigger," he says.

DuVall has now lived eight years in Kannapolis, but he would love to find a place in Salisbury to rent. Through his camera's eyes, Salisbury has a lot to offer. 

“  
*Duane DuVall  
sees something  
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views we see  
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*Clockwise from top: On a snowy night, a street scene in Kannapolis' Old Cannon Village; after sunset along the Blue Ridge Parkway; a scene in Mount Mitchell State Park; DuVall took this self-portrait in Salisbury's Lost & Found store downtown. (Duane DuVall photos)*

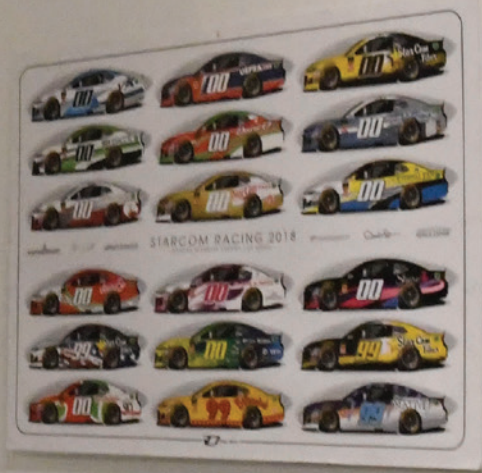




*Well shielded against the COVID-19 virus, Derrike Cope sits among some memories at his StarCom Racing office.*







# Driving force

*Salisbury Derrike Cope forges racing career that checks all the boxes*

WRITTEN BY BEN WHITE / PHOTOGRAPHY BY WAYNE HINSHAW





*NASCAR driver Derrike Cope poses with his helmet and car that he drove in this year's Daytona 500, 31 years after he won the 1990 race. Unfortunately, his car had a tire failure on the third lap and he wasn't able to finish the race. A framed plaque hangs on his office wall from the 1990 race win, below.*

**D**errike Cope, a beloved competitor in NASCAR's premier Cup Series, has said goodbye to one amazing chapter of his life while continuing to pursue another.

The San Diego native and his wife Elyshia now call Salisbury home, having purchased property here in early 2020. Since the formation of StarCom Racing in 2017, Derrike serves as general manager for team owners Mike and Matt Kohler and Bill Woehlemann. The trio of business entrepreneurs called upon the Copes to build stellar race cars and secure sponsorships that keep the team moving forward throughout the 36-race Cup Series season.

"We are a small team so we're all multi-faceted," Derrike said. "I pretty much make all the decisions on the race team. That also includes the financial side of it, what we spend and what we spend it on. Then there's also engineering of the cars and how the team progresses from week to week."



Elyshia enjoyed her role in social work for 19 years after receiving a degree in child development from Lewis-Clark State College in Lewiston, Idaho, in 1994. While pursuing a career in nutritional counseling and marketing, she met Derrike during a potential sponsorship presentation. He asked her to dance after dinner, leading to their marriage in 2014. They've been partners in life and racing ever since.





*Clockwise from top: Cope's car that he drove in this year's Daytona 500 sits in his Salisbury racing shop. Other cars in the background are under construction in the shop; Cope with his wife and manager, Elyshia, at the Historic Salisbury Foundation office at Salisbury Station; Cope celebrates in a 1990 photo after his win in the Daytona 500.*







*Cope's car is full of safety equipment.*



“I am the operations and marketing director and Derrike is more on the technical-mechanical side,” Elyshia said. “Our parent office (StarCom Fiber Telecommunications) is in New Jersey. On site, I make sure the staff has everything they need and make sure the schedules are correct. I oversee all of our travel needs, as well as our at-track catering business for the seven teams that we serve besides our own. The hardest part of my job — but most rewarding — is the sponsorship acquisition side to make sure the races we enter have sponsorship.”

The move to Salisbury from Mooresville last year made perfect sense for a variety of reasons, the first being the Copes' love and appreciation of the history of Salisbury and the friendliness of those who live here.

“Certainly, we love the downtown area,” Derrike said. “It's very peaceful at night. Aesthetically, it's very pleasing.





Salisbury has just a great atmosphere. There are so many historical aspects to the town. Elyshia loves the historical district and the old houses there. We truly, truly enjoy the area.

“Also, being located in close proximity to Richard Childress Racing and ECR Engines (in Welcome) was important to me. Second, a lot of our workforce is from the Kannapolis area to the south and Thomasville to the north. Initially, we were only going to run a limited schedule. I didn’t want a huge building and get into a lot of overhead. I love Salisbury because its quiet, great proximity to the interstate freeways. I just thought it was a great location for us and for every facet of our business.”

Elyshia also felt the move to the perfect city came at the perfect time.

“I love living in Salisbury,” Elyshia said. “I’ve always had an interest in all things historical. I grew in the Pacific Northwest. I always wanted to visit the South. Then I visited Charlotte and the next time I came, I moved here. It’s literally a dream come true. Salisbury has everything Mooresville has but with so much more history. I love the community of Mooresville, and it is old, but not nearly as old as Salisbury. I love taking walks to downtown Salisbury and seeing the old architecture. I love that (the city) has kept the old with the new.”



*Derrick Cope is pictured in a Food Lion poster for a ‘Pick The Winner’ contest earlier in his career.*

The Copes have taken their historical interests to a personal level, as they are currently remodeling a 100-year-old home in town.

“We are working on our own historical home that was built in 1900,” Elyshia said. “There is



*At StarCom Racing, Derrick serves as general manager and Elyshia serves as the operations and marketing director.*

merit to going through the historical society because they realized in the 1950s and ’60s their



history and ancestry was being torn down. They want to make sure the history is preserved.

“We love our home. We are in various stages of remodeling, but I want to keep the old moldings and floors and windows, the outside patio and the little post where horses were once tied. All of those things are charming. It’s definitely a diamond in the rough that’s seen its hard times but it’s on the way up.”

Long ago, Derrike’s initial plan was to become a professional baseball player, and he was scouted by the Chicago Cubs and Baltimore Orioles as a catcher. While in high school, those plans changed in 1978 when he severed ligaments while trying to chase down a wild pitch.

While restricted to a hospital bed and home confinement for many weeks, Cope became interested in stock car racing. He followed this new dream with the help of his father, Donald Cope, an engine builder for several race teams in Washington state.

After a successful short track career on the West Coast, Cope made his NASCAR debut in 1982 on the road course at Riverside International Raceway in California. It was the beginning of a 32-year career driving for many top teams that featured two Cup Series wins, six top-fives and 32 top-10s in 428 starts, including this year’s Daytona 500.

“I’ve been to Daytona and we’ve done our final goodbyes as a driver,” Derrike said. “There was a lot of reflection. I love Daytona and feel close to that place. Elysia and I spent time together on pit road absorbing one last opportunity.”

His victory in the 1990 Daytona 500 still ranks as one of the most exciting races in Daytona International Speedway history. On the final lap, his No. 10 Bob Whitcomb Racing Chevrolet flew past Dale Earnhardt’s famed No. 3 RCR Enterprises Chevrolet when a badly shredded tire sent Earnhardt out of contention for the win.

Derrike has told the story many times over the past 30 years and still lights up as that incredible day comes to mind.

“Honestly, I was on old tires and Earnhardt was on new tires,” Derrike said. “I was on his back bumper every time we went into Turn

One. I was so determined to get to the end of the race and I wasn’t going to make a mistake. I knew I would have momentum going into the last lap if I could stay on the bottom of the race track. I got off the first turn on the final lap with a big run and had the same coming off the second turn. I knew if I went to the bottom I would be at his back bumper at the start-finish line. My plan was to pinch the car down in turn three no matter what.

“*To have raced against Cale Yarborough, Bobby Allison, Neil Bonnet, Dale Earnhardt, Harry Gant, Tim Richmond, Richard Petty and Buddy Baker — they were guys I respect.*”

“All of a sudden I see Earnhardt backing up and the back of his car step out,” Derrike said. “I knew then he had an issue because the closing rate was immense. I was committed to the bottom and had a bunch of wheel into it. His car wiggled and I went right by him. It was just that quick. I didn’t care if I wrecked. I was going to stay on the bottom. Terry Labonte and Bill Elliott had tried me earlier, and I knew they had nothing for me. Coming off the fourth turn, I was wide open. I wasn’t looking at the checkered flag. I was looking at Terry and Bill in my mirror. When I went under the checkered flag, it was a flood of emotion. The two-way radio went crazy with all the guys on the crew. It was a really, really special moment.”

A second victory came in June 1990 at Dover, Delaware, a hot, grueling 500-mile race that proved Derrike’s Daytona 500 wasn’t a one-hit wonder. Both wins came under the direction of Hall of Fame crew chief Buddy Parrott, helping to prove his driver could beat the best at any given moment.

“Buddy is a very unique individual and always has been,” Derrike said. “He had a lot of knowledge. When the car was loose, he got it

tight. When the car was tight, he got it loose. He had been through every way of losing a race that you can imagine. I remember Buddy just drumming things through my head. He would say, ‘If Earnhardt comes in to go to the bathroom, you get out and go to the bathroom with him. I want you to follow him every way, shape and form.’ I knew our car was as good as his car.”

Parrott laughed, remembering that Daytona race.

“Yes, I did tell Derrike to stay with Dale Earnhardt that day at Daytona,” Parrott said. “I knew I didn’t want to draft with anyone except the No. 3 car. I knew we had a good car and could race Dale for the win.

“Derrike was a great racer and worked hard to get to where he was at that point in his career. Now at 62 years of age, here’s a guy that still loves NASCAR enough to put himself in a race car and start this year’s Daytona 500 as a past winner. That’s something that can never be taken away from him. I was proud to work with Derrike and help him accomplish that milestone in his career.”

Derrike hasn’t closed the door on testing or possibly driving in a road course race or two. He’s working too hard to make StarCom Racing the best it can be with current driver Quinn Hough.

His past will always be extremely rewarding.

“I think for me, it was about how I got here, who I drove against, who I drove for, and obviously winning the Daytona 500, winning a pole position, I think I checked all the boxes,” Derrike said.

“To have raced against Cale Yarborough, Bobby Allison, Neil Bonnet, Dale Earnhardt, Harry Gant, Tim Richmond, Richard Petty and Buddy Baker — they were guys I respect. They embodied the sport. I raced against those guys and won. My career was fulfilled and comfortable and I’m happy with that.

“I feel truly blessed and satisfied with what my father and I set out to do and what we accomplished.” **S**

*Ben White is an award-winning NASCAR writer who lives in Salisbury.*



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*The Gateway building on East Innes Street is celebrating its 20th year in Salisbury and is owned and operated by the Rowan County Convention and Visitors Bureau.*







# Address for success

*For two decades, The Gateway has catalyzed conversations, development in Rowan County*

WRITTEN BY BEN STANSELL / PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS

Only a few hours before the Rowan County Chamber of Commerce's annual banquet, Paul Fisher was putting the final touches on his keynote speech.

It was the fall of 1998 and the banquet, held at the Holiday Inn, was going to serve as more than a celebratory event. For months the banquet had been targeted as a finish line — the end of an exhausting fundraising campaign to construct a building near the heart of Salisbury that would bring Rowan County's most important agencies under one roof and catalyze new growth in the downtown.

Called The Gateway, the building would house the Rowan County Chamber of Commerce, Rowan Economic Devel-

opment Commission, Rowan County Tourism and other agencies. To construct the state-of-the-art building, Fisher, then chairman and CEO of F&M Bank, and his team had been charged with raising about \$2.5 million dollars.

Instead of announcing that the campaign had hit its target at the banquet, Fisher was preparing to say just the opposite. Fisher and his team were still \$20,000 short.

"Paul had basically written a speech saying we're not quite there," recalls Pete Teague, who was heavily involved in the project as outgoing chair of the Chamber of Commerce board.

In a last-ditch effort to raise the final \$20,000, Teague, now special assistant to the president at Livingstone College, dialed a potential donor and made an impassioned pitch. To





**Above:** Rod Crider, president and CEO of Rowan County Economic Development Commission, speaks with administrative assistant Joanie Michael. **Below:** A framed print of the architect's rendering in the Chamber of Commerce offices.



his surprise, the donor said his business would put up the money.

Teague leaped out of his chair and made a beeline from his office to the Chamber of Commerce office a few blocks away.

"I hung up the phone and I ran, I don't know why I didn't call, but I ran down to the chamber to tell Bob Wright that we just got the money," Teague said.

Teague and Wright, president of the Rowan County Chamber of Commerce at the time, called Paul Fisher to deliver the good news.

"He changed his speech and he gave this hallelujah speech at the annual banquet that night," Teague said.

Ground was broken on the two-story building at 204 E. Innes St. in January 2000. The first meeting was held in its second-floor conference room just over a year later in February 2001.

Over the past 20 years, The Gateway has been the site for some of the most important meetings and conversations in Rowan County's history. From economic deals struck between the Rowan EDC and major companies such as Chewy to collaborative discussions that led to the creation of programs such as the "Be an Original" marketing campaign.

"Just in the time that I have been here, there have been significant discussions with business leaders and elected officials," said Rowan Chamber President Elaine Spalding, who Teague called The Gateway's biggest champion. "I think it's that ability to sit around the table with folks when you're struggling with a difficult issue and look someone in the eye and say, 'Here's how it's impacting me, here are the problems we're experiencing and let's brainstorm together on solutions.'"

The seed that sprouted into the building where those conversations have occurred was planted in the mid 1990s. With the chamber in need of a new building, Wright





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**VISIT ROWAN**  
Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Rowan County, NC  
Be an original.

*Pete Teague, left, and Steve Fisher stand in the main lobby.*





*Communities in School's Program Manager and Volunteer Coordinator Wanda Huntley works out of the office on the second floor.*



*Above: Stickers adorn an interior window at the Three Rivers LandTrust offices. Above right: The Rowan County Economic Development Commission operates out of second floor offices.*



tabbed Teague for the role of chairman on the task force to get it done.

After “meetings, meetings and more meetings,” it was decided that the chamber would construct a new building. The only question was where.

At the same time, Paul Fisher was scouting locations in downtown Salisbury to locate F&M Bank’s administrative offices. He had his eyes on the Easy Street corridor, but his gaze drifted to the 200 block of East Innes Street when negotiations for the Easy Street property seemed doubtful.

“(Paul Fisher) went through a lot of time and detail putting together all of the parcels across the street and here, locating the owners and getting various options on those pieces of property,” said Steve Fisher, Paul’s son and the current CEO and chairman of F&M Bank.

Paul Fisher had transformed his office into something that looked like a scene from “A Beautiful Mind,” Steve Fisher said, with a board covered in paper on which information about each parcel had been meticulously written.

When Paul Fisher worked out a deal for the Easy Street property, he came up with a different plan for the parcels he’d done so much research on — it would be the site of a building that would serve as a “gateway to the community.”

“Paul was very instrumental in this spot,” Teague said. “He did all of the approaching the then property owners. He did all of that negotiation. The fact that all four agreed to sell and we were able to put that together, it was a miracle.”

Teague wanted more than just Paul Fisher’s contacts and negotiating skills — he wanted





*Three Rivers LandTrust Executive Director Travis Morehead works out of the office on the second floor.*

him to run the campaign to raise enough money to construct the building. Paul Fisher had just finished a “kitchen table to kitchen table” fundraising campaign to make the East Rowan YMCA building a reality and the intensive style of rallying donors had taken its toll on him.

“He made the goal, barely, right at the end,” Teague said. “It was a real struggle. He was tired. We thought to ourselves: Can we really ask him to do this? But the real thing was, we couldn’t not ask him to do this because it had to be him. We didn’t know of anybody else we thought could lead it and it would be successful.”

The fundraising process wasn’t easy, but Paul Fisher refused to compromise on the quality of the building. When \$10,000 more was needed to make the elevator a little nicer, he found a way to raise it.

“His comment was that the economic development commission is upstairs,” Teague said. “A businesses’ first impression of this community and whether they want to be here is going to be that ride up to that space and it’s got to be first-class.”

Paul Fisher led the fundraising efforts, but transforming The Gateway from idealistic thought to actuality was a true community effort, Steve Fisher said. The two biggest donations were from Delhaize and Food Lion, but countless

*Rowan County Convention and Visitors Bureau CEO James Meacham stands in the main lobby.*







other individuals and company contributions made The Gateway possible.

The Gateway seemed suddenly to open the door for charitable giving for future community projects as well.

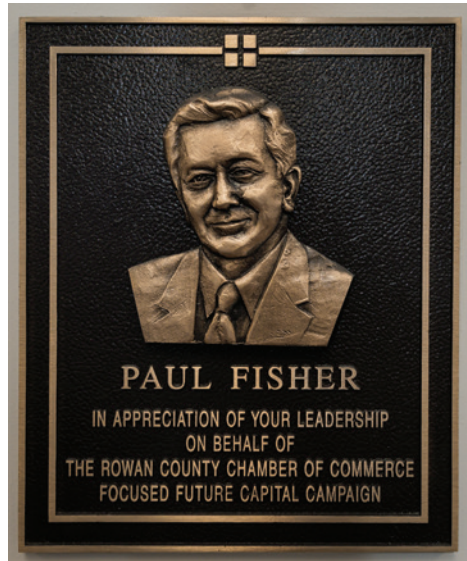
“People did things like donating (that) they have never done before and we’ve seen, in a lot of cases, that continue,” Steve Fisher said. “This project has been a 20-year catalyst in giving.”

Numerous organizations have filled space in The Gateway since it was built. The current roster of tenants includes the Three Rivers LandTrust, Salisbury Symphony and Communities In Schools. Conference rooms in the building can be rented out and many municipal leaders have huddled together around tables in those rooms.

“All walks of life have come through here and had meetings, from your corporate titans of Rowan County like the Novants and the Food Lion, down to training groups for educational volunteerism,” said James Meacham, head of the Rowan County Tourism Development Authority.

The Gateway’s cornerstone organizations have always been Rowan EDC, the Rowan County Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism Authority, which became the building’s official owner in 2013. Those organizations, which work in harmony now, didn’t gel right away when they suddenly found themselves as roommates in the early 2000s.

“If you live without a roommate for years



*Top: The large conference room upstairs offers the latest in meeting technology for large or small groups. Above: A plaque honoring Paul Fisher hangs in the F&M Bank meeting room on the first floor.*

and suddenly you’re tossed in with roommates, it takes a little time to get your footing and understand the cooking schedule, the bathroom schedule, the social schedule,” Steve Fisher said. “It takes a little while to understand how you click and how you integrate.”

A certain kind of synergy formed with time and the organizations now find themselves fitting together more than fighting.

That collaborative spirit has led to progress. It was also the leading factor in the ability for

those three organizations to respond quickly when the COVID-19 pandemic started taking a toll on Rowan County businesses. In the spring and summer, the chamber, the EDC and the Tourism Authority rallied to create the “Visit Local” campaign and helped provide resources to local businesses.

“There’s been a lot of important business on behalf of the community that’s taken place in this building,” Meacham said. “That’s something I know Paul Fisher wanted. He wanted a place people could come together, exchange ideas, debate the merits and develop what’s best for the community ... Paul’s vision has really come to be.”

A smile spreads across Steve Fisher’s face when he looks out of The Gateway’s windows and sees other developments continue to spring up around it. Catalyzing a revitalization of that area of downtown was also one of his dad’s main goals, he said.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has caused some business and organizations to rethink the value of their downtown offices, Meacham doesn’t think that the value of The Gateway building will change now that telework has become more popular. The building’s caretakers have already retrofitted the upstairs conference room to be an optimal space for video calls.

When the pandemic subsides, Steve Fisher said, people will return to The Gateway.

After all, The Gateway has been the community’s building for 20 years and it will be the community’s building for years to come. **S**



# CHEERS

to a well-deserved award...



F&M Bank's own Steve Fisher has been named one of the area's "Most Admired CEOs" by the *Charlotte Business Journal*. Are we surprised? Not even a little bit.

As the third generation of the Fisher family to lead F&M Bank, he learned servant leadership from his father, Paul Fisher. Giving back to the community is part of the Fisher DNA, and Steve inspires all of us at F&M Bank every day to do the same.

**Congratulations to Steve Fisher!**

Steve and Paul Fisher at the 2019 event announcing a \$110,000 donation to the Bell Tower Green park in Salisbury to celebrate F&M Bank's 110th anniversary.



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A woman with long brown hair, wearing a black top, stands behind a large wooden table. Behind her is a large screen displaying the Team Automotive Group logo and slogan. To the left, there is a modern light fixture with two spherical glass shades and a whiteboard with some faint writing.

ata  
mitted

TEAM  
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*Kristin Dillard  
at the Team  
headquarters in  
Salisbury.*





# *Captain of the* **'SHIPS**

Kristin Dillard builds on automotive success with a 'Team' concept

WRITTEN BY SUSAN SHINN TURNER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JON C. LAKEY





In 2018, Team Chevrolet of Swansboro was facing a direct hit from a Category 5 hurricane. As many employees as possible from other dealerships went to help move vehicles.

One of those employees was Jeanie Henry, who serves as satellite office manager for the four dealerships Team now owns in Boone, Creedmoor, Swansboro, and Goldsboro. (Team Automotive Group is headquartered in Salisbury.)

“When we arrive, who do we see in the trenches in scruffy clothes with a hat on?” Henry asks, knowing the answer.

That would be Kristin Dillard, dealer principal and president of Team Automotive Group, filling sandbags. She was literally in the trenches, doing what it took to get the job done.

That’s what she does. It was how she was raised. Dillard, 38, has been in her current role since 2017, but she’s been in every job in the dealership in prepa-





**Opposite page, top:** Team recently established offices for its executive team, call center and accounting on Depot Street in Salisbury. **Right:** Kristin relaxes with her dad, Thom, in a company breakroom. Thom is Team's CEO.







*The sleek, industrial styled offices downtown were a former dance studio.*



*Kristin Dillard, left, and Jennifer Ferreira. Ferreira helped Dillard become approved and appointed as dealer principal of Team's first store, which is in Salisbury. Here, Dillard signs paperwork to make it official. (Submitted photo)*

ration for that position.

When she meets someone new, she's always peppered with questions. You're president of five dealerships? Oh, really? How did you do it? How did you get interested in it?

She's gotten used to it, but the answers are pretty simple.

Her father, Thom Dillard, started in the automotive business the same way she did, washing cars. In 1992, he had an opportunity to purchase a car dealership in Salisbury.

He took it, and followed his mantra: Work hard no matter what.

"It's really a cool story," she says of her dad, whom she calls her mentor and one of her favorite people. "It lays a base to everything we're about. We change lives, and you can change your life and the lives of your entire family through the automotive industry."

But you have to be willing to work the hours.

Dillard's mom, Beverly, held down the fort while her dad was at the office. Her two younger siblings are Kim and Alex.

Dillard is lucky in that she has a home office that's set up just like her office at work, allowing her more flexibility in spending time with her two daughters, 12 and 9.

A little over a year ago, the executive team, the call center and the accounting department moved to new offices downtown across from the Depot.

"We grew out of our space," Dillard explains. "At the time we had three stores, and we were running everything out of the Salisbury campus."

Chris Bradshaw renovated a former dance studio for the company.

"Mr. Bradshaw had that knocked out fast," she says. "He's got to be the nicest dude ever."

Bradshaw and his crew took down many of the walls. No more teal and purple. Now the open space sports the Team colors of black, white and gray. You'll typically find Dillard wearing a black top and black pants.

"We're a team, so we need uniforms," she notes.

That same team spirit permeates the dealerships.

Donna Midgett came to Team in 2014 as a billing clerk.

"I had been in a somewhat unhappy situation with another dealership," she says. "I had been there 14 years and I am not a risk-taker."

But when the Team controller called, she decided to take a chance. "It was more like talking to a friend than an interview," she says. "The whole family-oriented atmosphere was what helped me make my decision to move."

Midgett now is the office manger for all five dealerships.

"When you work at a car dealership, you work with the people over you, but you don't have a relationship with the owner," Midgett says. "From day one, Kristin was interested in your personal life, as





*Dillard takes a moment in the office with her daughters, who are 12 and 9.*

well as what's going on with work. She desires relationships with the people who work for her. She's very down to earth. But we have tremendous respect for her in getting the job done to the best of our ability. We represent her."

When Midgett came to work for Team, she drove each day from Mooresville, a 50-minute commute one-way. Now, she and her husband, a retired minister, are in the process of selling their house so her commute will now be about 11 minutes.

"I know there's no other place I want to be," she says.

Henry, the satellite office manager, says she could talk for hours about Dillard.

"She is one of a kind," she says. "I absolutely love her."

When Dillard visited the Goldsboro dealership, where Henry is still based, she made a "whole bunch of promises."

One of those included one of the company's core values: Lead with love.

"I thought, that's not gonna happen," Henry says. "But she didn't lie. Everything she said, she did. She has a strong family background, and she carries it with her every day."

Dillard is proud of the fact that 30 percent of Team's employees are female, with more than 25 percent of its leadership positions held by women.

Thom Dillard is proud his daughter graduated from Northwood University in West Palm Beach, Fla., with dual bachelor's degrees in automotive marketing and automotive management, and did it in three years.

"She's just been a ball of fire," he says. "She's been awesome in every department she's been in. My philosophy is that you can't tell somebody how to do a job if you haven't done it. She's sat in every chair and even learned to rack

a vehicle and change oil."

When he got into the car business, he says, there were no women, but his daughter convinced him she could do the job.

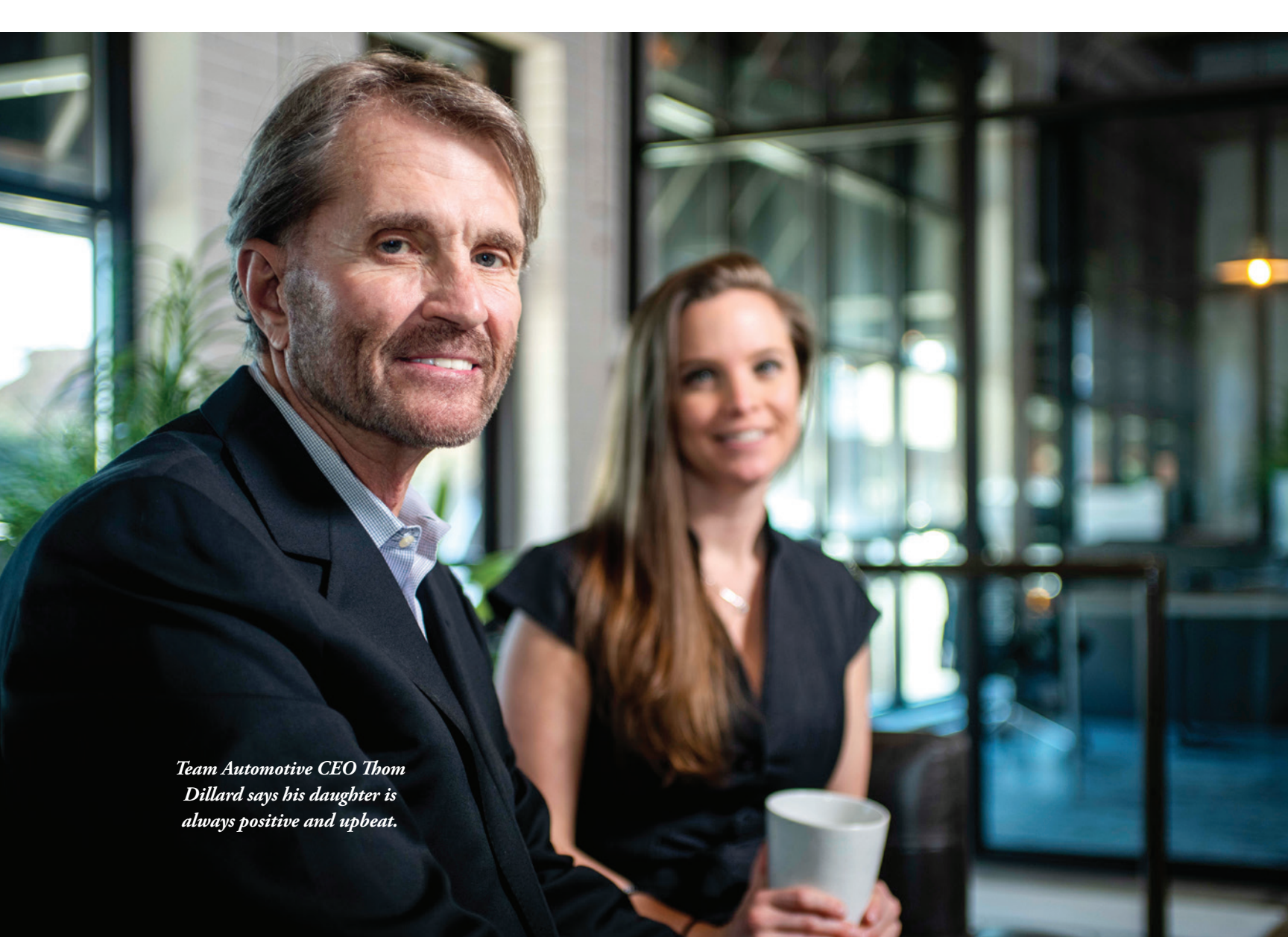
"She's always positive and upbeat," he says. "That's one of the things our employees like. They don't work for her — she works with them. She's strong on teamwork and has embraced the teamwork concept."

Thom Dillard now serves as the company's CEO, but, he says, "I don't do one thing unless she asks me."

One of the major changes Kristin made was converting all advertising to digital in 2015.

"We are 100 percent digital," she says. "You'll never know we're advertising until you start looking for a car. Then you can't get away from us with our in-market targeted marketing. The business has changed greatly in the last few years, and we have changed with it. It's amazing





*Team Automotive CEO Thom Dillard says his daughter is always positive and upbeat.*

how many people want to text versus talk on the phone or email. Our showrooms are built for social distancing, and we're always looking to build relationships. We want you to come back and refer your friends and family and everyone you know."

"She was a driving force before she was a dealer," her dad points out.

The industry has taken notice.

Dillard is a frequent source for Automotive News, a national dealers' magazine, and in 2016 received one of their Top 40 Under 40 awards. She's also been on the cover of Dealer Magazine and Modern Dealer.

"I've always thought she was very good with customers," says Tom Smith, a longtime Team customer. "She has such a pleasant personality and she's been very, very helpful. I've been around a lot of the employees, and I've never

heard a negative word about her. Team has done well under her leadership."

Besides "lead with love," the company's other core values are:

- Own It!
- Do the Right Thing
- Grow or Die
- Team Players with a Winning Spirit

About that grow-or-die part: The company's 10-year plan was to acquire 10 dealerships over that period of time. Its three-year plan was to own five dealerships. But with the acquisition of dealerships in Boone, Creedmoor, Goldsboro and Swansboro ("from the mountains to the coast"), that goal has already been met in under two years.

Even before the pandemic, the company made use of video meetings through an EOS management system. Because Team has 300

employees, Dillard says, "that system really helps us keep everything together and on the same page."

Dillard has never let the fact that she's a woman hold her back.

"For the most part, I feel like it's a level playing ground," she says. "I won't let them lower the bar because I'm a female. If I don't get listened to, it's more because of my age than my gender."

Dillard was once in a Chevy meeting and no one would listen to what she was saying about a particular digital strategy. So Dillard, who's a petite 5 feet, 5 inches tall, stood on a chair.

"They heard me after that," she says, laughing.

They listened. And they knew she was right.

Even though she may be in a male-dominated industry, Dillard knows that most of the de-





*Kristin Dillard, left, and Mary Barra, CEO of General Motors.*

isions about buying cars are made by women.

“They run the checkbooks at home,” she says.

Andy Ritter is General Motors’ Network and Investment Manager in Charlotte, overseeing operations of dealerships in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, West Virginia and Ohio. Dillard is the woman who owns the most GM dealerships in the Carolinas, and also the youngest dealer with that distinction.

“I worked with Kristin’s father for several years, and in that relationship, I got to know Kristin,” Ritter says. “We’ve been able to help her grow. She does such a nice job with the stores she has, and she happens to be quite good at it. We enjoy helping her meet her goals, and ours as well. Her team loves her. She’s a great leader. She’s aggressive, knowledgeable and enthusiastic.”

Away from work, Dillard enjoys spending time with her daughters and their two golden doodles.

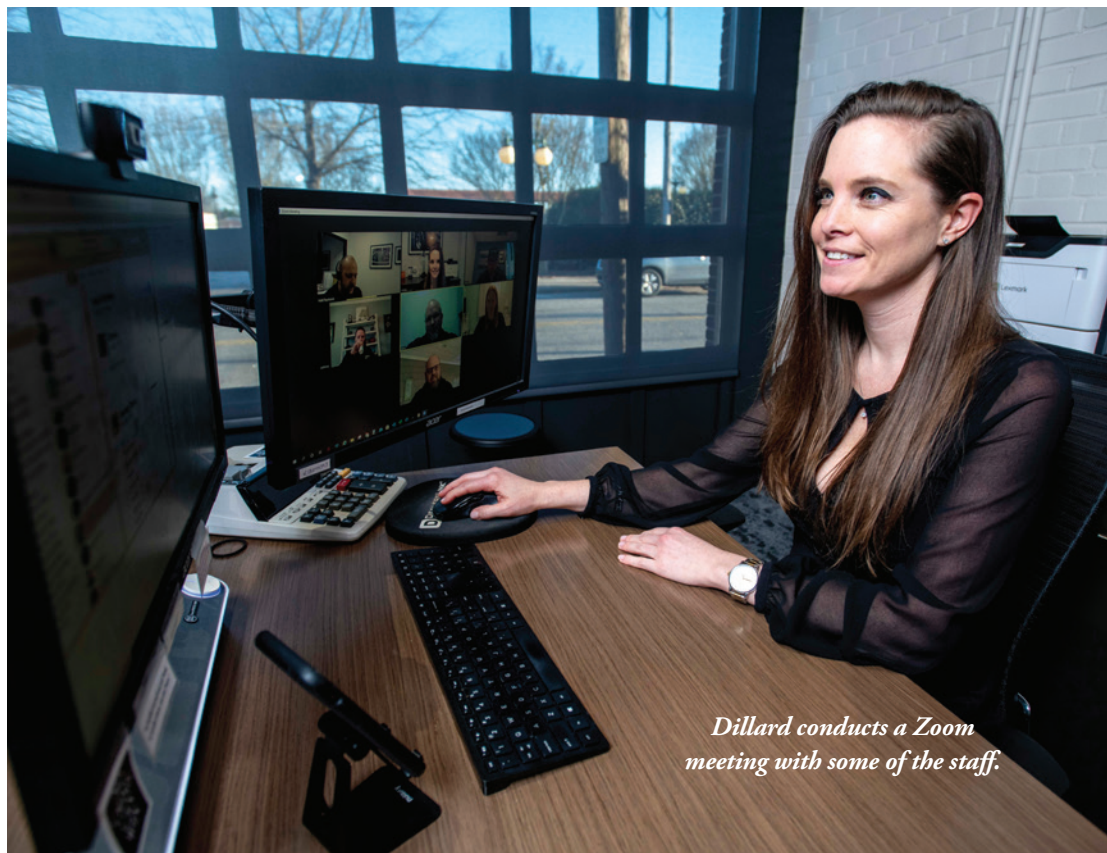
“We love to cook together,” she says. “The girls like to have cook-offs and I have to be the judge.”

The three also enjoy hiking and whitewater rafting.

Right now, Dillard drives a Chevrolet Subur-



*Matt Raymond, director of business development, Kristin Dillard and Amber Reeder walk through the call center at the downtown Salisbury location.*



*Dillard conducts a Zoom meeting with some of the staff.*

ban Z71, off-road edition, “so it’s a little edgy.”

Dillard says that, even though her dad served as her mentor, many women in the industry have helped paved the way for her success. Mary Barra now serves as CEO of General Motors.

“There’s a few of us girls out there,” Dillard

notes. “Most everyone has come up in the family business. I think it just lets you shine a little brighter.”

*Susan Shinn Turner is a freelance writer living in Raleigh.* **S**





*her*  
**MAJESTY**

Renewed City Lake makes park  
a destination point again

WRITTEN BY KRIS MUELLER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JON C. LAKEY





*After extensive dredging, repairs, cleanup and installation of piers and walking paths, the difference at City Lake is like 'night and day,' says Parks and Recreation Director Nick Aceves.*





*Workers representing grounds maintenance, facilities and street divisions from the city of Salisbury gather next to the City Lake on cool, winter day after the project was completed.*

City Lake, the 3-acre body of water that anchors City Park in northern Salisbury, has emerged from a year-long makeover ready to shine as winter rains end, and the spring sun can provide a well-deserved spotlight.

Gone are the foamy green algae blooms that floated atop the water.

The oak trees with their merciless, massive roots no longer crowd the lake bank near Clubhouse Drive. Even the tangled mass of invasive shrubs and vines and some trees above the lake have been removed, opening sightlines to the water for residents on Lake Drive.

Thanks to a large team from the city's Public Works and Parks and Recreation departments, the lake has emerged from her extensive overhaul with a clear, sparkling complexion, nicely coiffed banks and sidewalks, and major enhancements that will make her a crowd favorite.

"This became my dream project when I first got here," said Nick Aceves in February while looking over the lake with Salis-

bury Public Works Director Craig Powers and the city's landscape architect, Stephen Brown. When he became the Parks and Recreation director five years ago, Aceves immediately saw the lake's potential for attracting more citizens to City Park and its next-door neighbors, Hurley Park and Hurley Park Annex. He even sat down with Brown shortly after arriving to discuss their wish lists for the area and sketch out initial drawings.

"Five years ago, the look of the facility...well, I hate to use the word eyesore, but the difference now is like night and day, to use an old cliché," Aceves said. "I am definitely stoked that it turned out so well. We have a lot of talent within the employees of the Public Works Department and we saved a lot of money by doing so much work in-house."

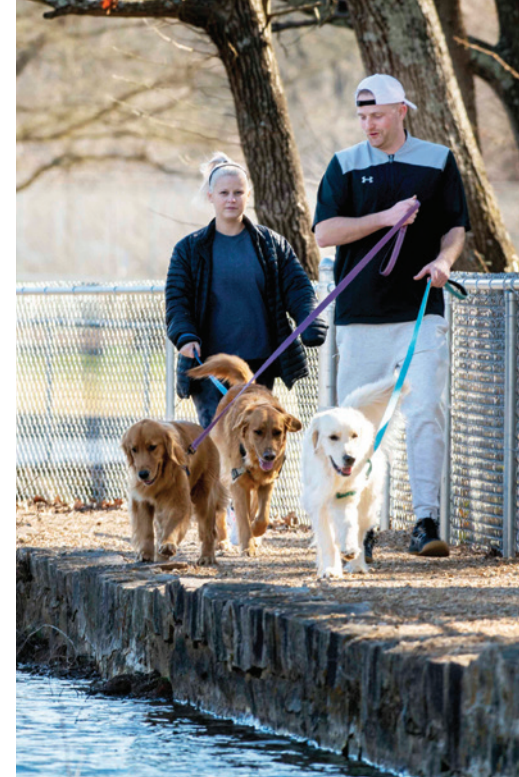
Neighbors around the lake are equally excited about the improvements and how they will enhance life in this community.

Linda Phillips was 8 years old in 1948 when her family built a new home one house away from City Park. After getting married, she lived out of state and visited when she could. She returned in 2000 to live again in her parents' home after they passed away.





*In this view toward the dam and Annandale Avenue, City Lake was a mass construction zone in July 2020.  
(Photo courtesy of City of Salisbury)*



*Irina Popova and J.B. Jones from Chapel Hill, take Mila, Sky and Violet for a walk around the lake.*

She remembers the lake area as a gathering place for neighborhood kids who played in the woods, on the small playground and in the shallow waters of the creeks and the granite culverts that run under Annandale Avenue. Families came primarily to feed the ducks and ride the train, which later was moved to Dan Nicholas Park.

“People really could not walk around the lake,” said Linda. “As the oak trees grew and their roots got overwhelming, there was nowhere to walk easily near the lake. The city would drain the lake (to dredge it and make repairs) but didn’t really do anything else to improve it.”

Due to the nature of lakes, Brown said, every few decades they may need to be dredged, depending on the amount of sludge buildup on the lake floor and whether water quality has deteriorated and caused problems with algae growth.

In 2019 when conditions at City Lake required dredging, Aceves, Brown and Powers pulled out Brown’s sketches and floated the idea of making other improvements needed at the park. The city worked the \$450,000 project into two budget cycles, Powers said, and saved several hundred thousand dollars by using Public Works employees for all projects except the lake dredging.



*From left, standing next to the lake, are Public Works Director Craig Powers, landscape architect and project manager Stephen Brown and Parks and Recreation Director Nick Aceves.*

“Those savings made the project possible,” Powers added.

The crape myrtle and oak trees and roots on the Clubhouse Drive side of the lake were removed to make room for handicapped-accessible sidewalks that encircle most of the lake.

Below Lake Drive, a gravel walking path runs down a small peninsula of land between the lake and the granite-lined stream. A new mini pier built near the corner of Annandale and Lake Drive gives walkers access to the gravel path, which connects to sidewalks further down the lake.

New crape myrtles were planted along Clubhouse Drive and will bloom in the spring. A few young oaks, maples, and sycamores were placed near the playground and along Annan-





*Lauren Weddington takes advantage of a sunny day to walk her dog Simon around the lake.*



*Above: Najjyyah Tabb takes a photo of Alexis Singleton on the pier at City Lake. Right: The city of Salisbury, with the help of the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, stocked the lake with trout, with plans for other species of fish to be added later.*



### ATTENTION ANGLERS



This lake was stocked recently with trout by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission. The following regulations apply to trout fishing in this lake:

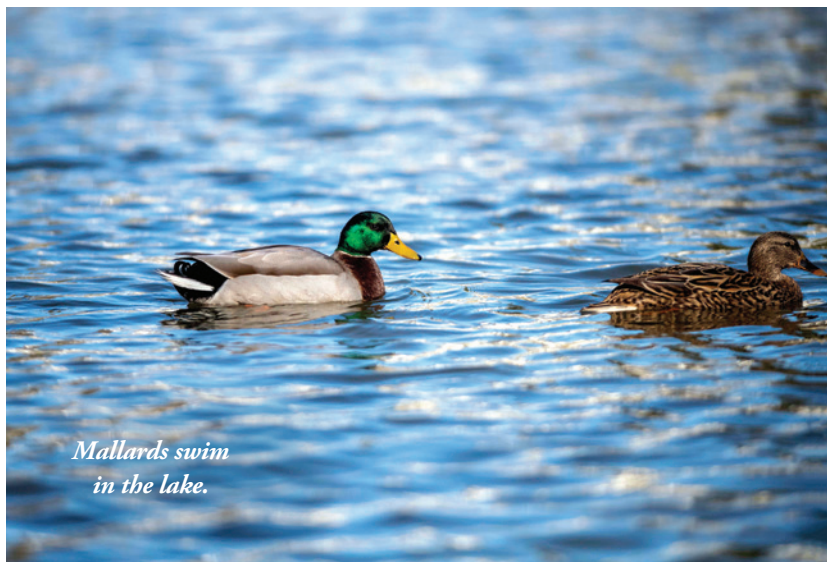
- Seven (7) trout per day creel limit
- No minimum length limit
- No bait restrictions
- Trout may be harvested year-round
- Basic state fishing license required



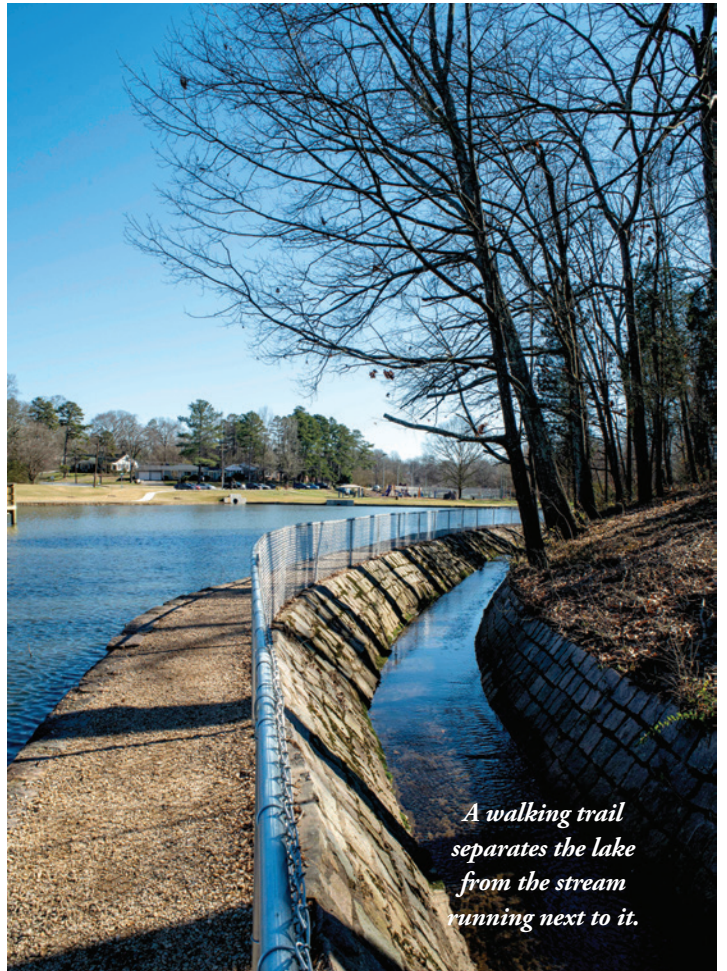




*In this front-page newspaper photo from Oct. 12, 1982, Danny Benedetto, left, and John Waller are among the children holding up carp they pulled from the water draining off City Lake, which was scheduled for one of its dam repairs. (Salisbury Post file photo)*



*Mallards swim in the lake.*



*A walking trail separates the lake from the stream running next to it.*





Barry Saville of Mocksville fishes from a pier. Saville had heard from a co-worker that the city had improved the lake. When rivers are muddied, as has been the case in recent months, lakes make for a good fishing option.

dale Avenue, but much of the space will remain grass to accommodate activities and prevent dirt from eroding into the lake.

From her second-story bedroom four houses from the lake, Joyce Caddell has a bird's-eye view of the lake. She and her husband, Tom, have lived there for 40 years, and she "loves being able to see the water from her window," she said.

She also approves of the lake's new focal point, a 96-foot wooden pier that stretches out to the center of the lake. It ends in a 32x32 foot deck that has electrical outlets and sports a 30-foot flagpole and American flag. The pier replaced a center island which showcased a willow tree, Christmas trees, and other props over the years before crumbling due to age.

"The pier is a wonderful addition," Caddell said. "It's attractive and now I think there can be some events to draw people down to the area. The pier platform has potential for entertainment – musical events would be




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*City crews cleared the underbrush and some trees from the hill overlooking City Lake, giving visitors, passersby and residents on Lake Drive a better view of the water.*

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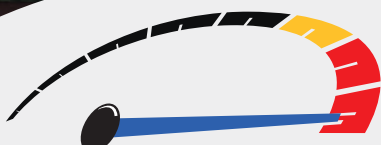
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*A 96-foot-long pier with a 32-foot-square deck, electrical outlets and a 30-foot-high flagpole now extends into the middle of the water, where an island once was.*



  
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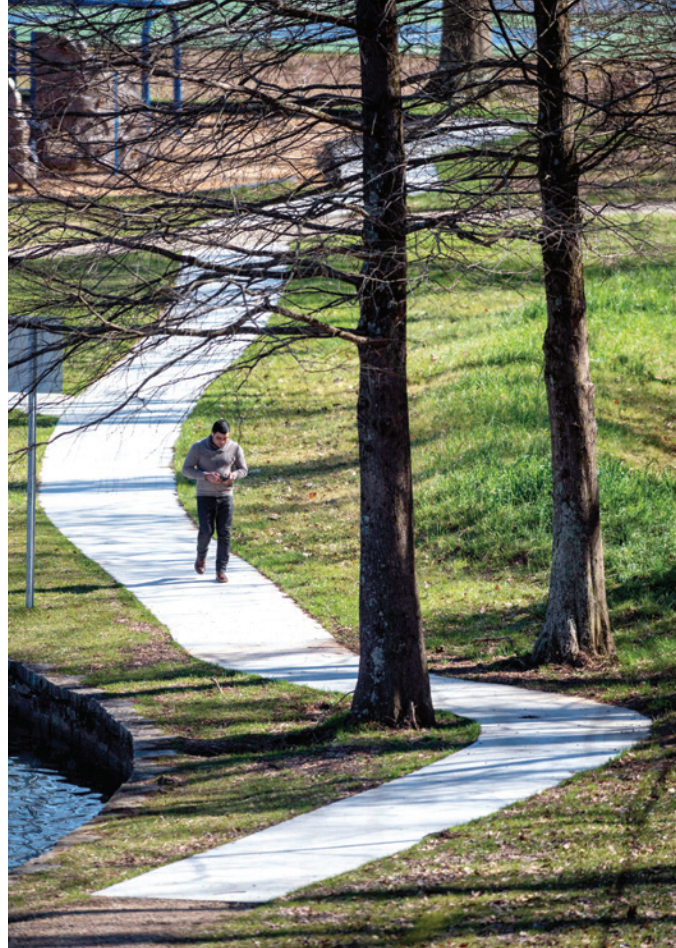
nice, and sound carries so nicely across the water.”

The area above the lake should be much more colorful this spring because invasive plants have been removed, Brown said.

“What is left are the azaleas and rhododendrons on the hills. I think they are white and pink, but it may be a surprise since I haven’t seen them in awhile,” he said. “It’s been 10 years since that was all cleaned out and it is awesome to come down Lake Drive and be able to look down and see the lake.”

The 85-year-old lake occasionally has been a source of frustration for the city and surrounding neighbors, according to previous stories in the Salisbury Post. The lake was built in the late 1930s as the federal and city governments made water, sewer, and street improvements through the Civil Works Administration, which provided jobs for citizens impacted by the Depression. The property was donated by the Henderson estate for use as a park and was suited for that purpose because of its forest, open land, and marshy creeks.

Past stories in the Salisbury Post show that the park may not have reached its full intended potential but enjoyed spurts of heavy usage — when the city bought row boats for use on the lake in 1940, during the many times the lake was stocked with fish, after World War II when lounging along the lake banks was popular, and in the years when the annual Mayfest event brought crowds to the neighborhood.



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*Neighbors Joyce Caddell and Linda Phillips have lived near the city park for many years.*

The 1980s were difficult ones for the lake. Having turned 40, she was plagued with problems, from poor water quality and algae outbreaks to structural problems caused by age and pesky muskrats that dug holes in the dam at Annandale Avenue. At least three times between 1982 and 1985, the lake had to be drained, causing disruption and the accompanying foul odor familiar to longtime residents of the neighborhood.

Muskrats again struck in 1995, but then Salisbury enjoyed a 23-year reprieve from major lake work until this latest project, Brown said. The culprit this time was hydrilla, an invasive aquatic weed that began overtaking the lake in 2012 but was kept at bay for some time.

“The ducks and geese bring hydrilla in on their legs and bodies. They migrate, so it just happens. As hydrilla grows, it chokes out everything,” Brown said. “It created a situation where old algae could not get out of the lake. The tips of the hydrilla kept it from washing away like it normally does.”

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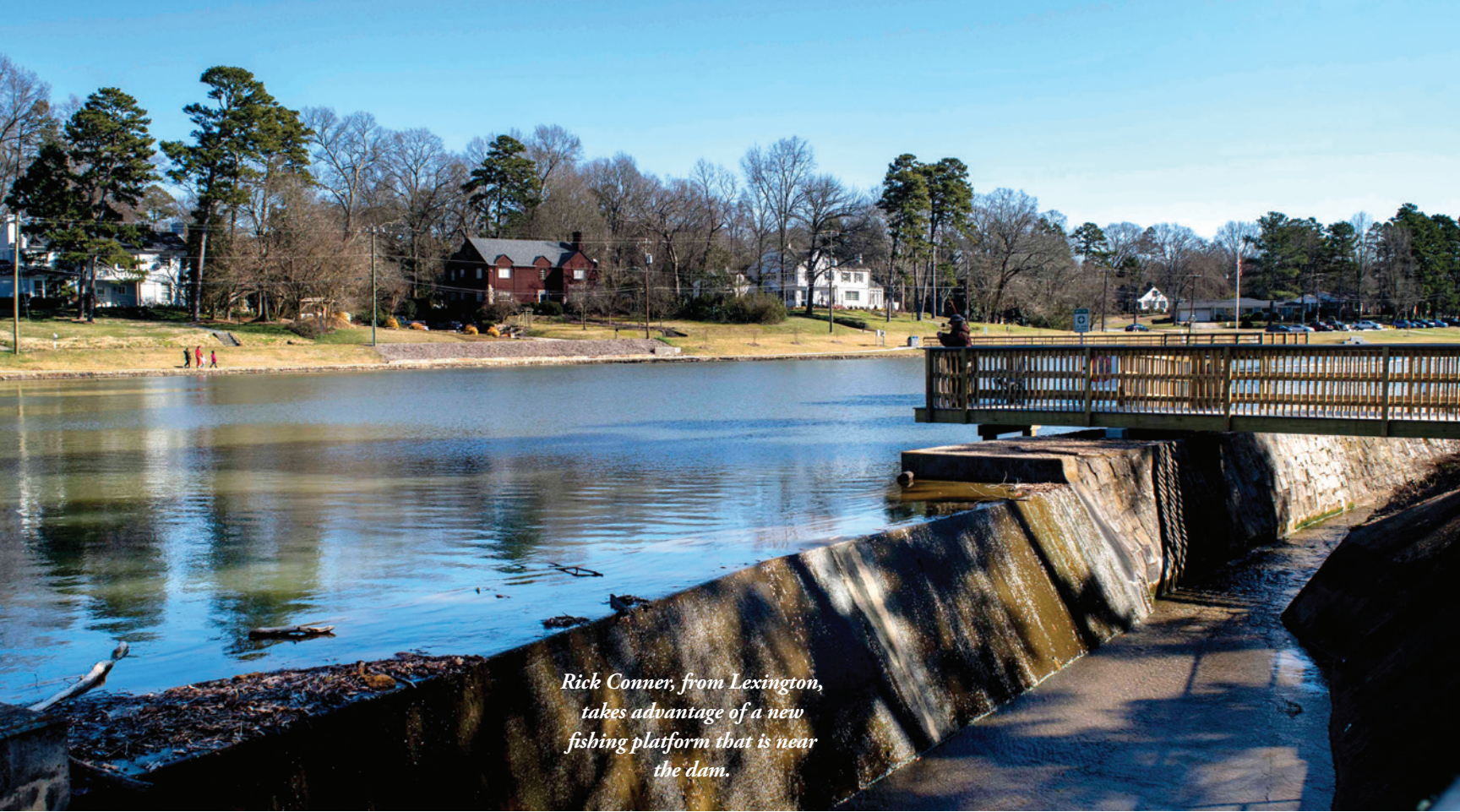
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*Rick Conner, from Lexington, takes advantage of a new fishing platform that is near the dam.*

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They tried several fixes — adding fish called sterile grass carp to the lake to feed on and minimize the hydrilla and lowering the water level in the winter to try to kill it. When the weed persisted, the decision was made to drain and dredge the lake, a more environmentally friendly alternative to using chemicals.

“We took 480 truckloads of debris off the lakebed,” Brown said, adding that they hired a contractor for that task. “We will store it and use it in soil mix for other projects. It makes an awesome compost.”

The lake is now 10-12 feet deep but is very shallow around the edges before the slope begins about 10 feet from the banks, he said.

Drainage improvements were made underneath Clubhouse Drive to connect storm drains to the lake. The stormwater crew built drainage entrances into the lake in a way that blocks trash, leaves, sand, and gravel from

entering the lake and building up as sludge. Crews also proactively repaired any muskrat holes they saw in the dam to prevent destabilization.

“It’s kind of like a brand-new lake now,” Brown commented.

Crews will add more benches, trash cans and recycling cans around the lake, as well as duck feeders filled with nutritionally balanced food that is safe for geese and ducks.

In December, the city partnered with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission to stock brown, brook, and rainbow trout in the lake. Fishermen happily braved cold weather to snag fish not easily found within an hour of Salisbury.

Beyond the lake, the park’s tennis and pickleball courts were resurfaced and relined last August, Aceves said, and two tennis courts were converted to six pickleball courts.

The Rotary Patriots Flag Concourse has added more activities at City Park through its memorials honoring local veterans who died in the two World Wars and the Vietnam War, the walking/running track, and green space and a gazebo for events like outdoor movie nights held last summer. The picnic shelters and playgrounds also have been freshened up with paint and mulch.

“I think the entire area is more inviting for all members of the community,” Aceves said, “and once the weather is warmer and the COVID situation becomes better, I think we will see a lot of activity there and different groups in the community wanting to have events there.”

Linda Phillips agreed, adding, “I think that it will now be a destination.” **S**

*Kris Mueller is a freelance writer living in Salisbury.*



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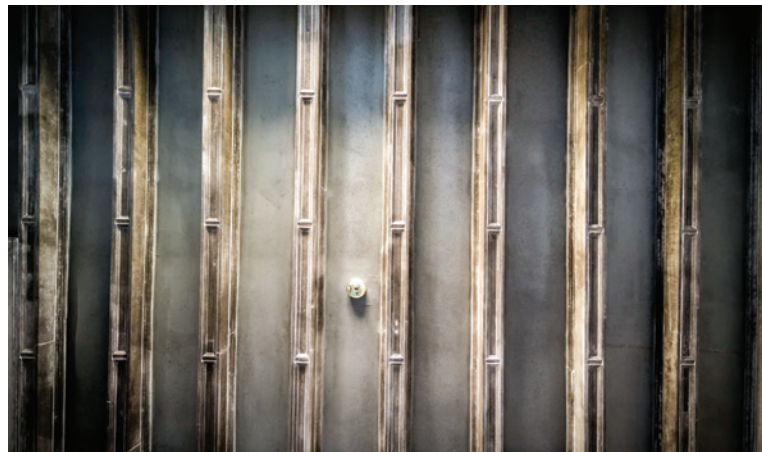
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*Located at 619 S. Main St., not far from the central business district, the 1897 McCanless House shows both its age and unique characteristics inside and out. Historic Salisbury Foundation bought the house in 2019 to make sure it is preserved.*



# A man and his house

*Enterprising Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless  
built a legacy worthy of his name*

WRITTEN BY KAREN C. LILLY-BOWYER / PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN MEYERS

**Editor's note:** *When History Speaks* will be a regular contribution by Historic Salisbury Foundation in issues to come. This is the first offering.

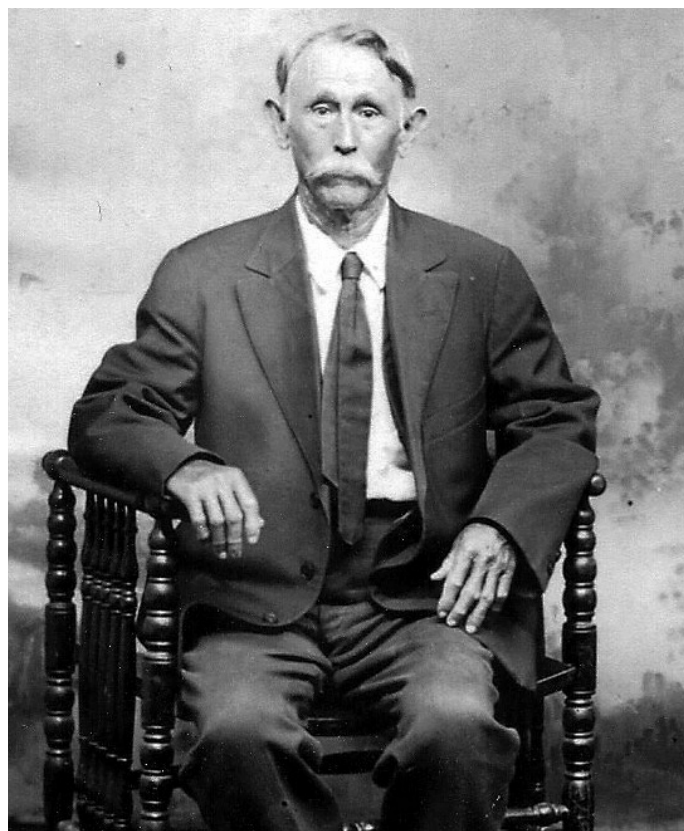
**T**he Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless House was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2014, but that did not mean it would automatically become a Historic Salisbury Landmark. It would first need to be assessed by the Salisbury Historic Preservation Commission.

On Jan. 14, 2020, Historic Salisbury Foundation presented its case before the commission. After all the questions about architectural integrity and cultural significance were answered to the satisfaction of the commission, Andrew “Andy” Walker, chairman of the commission, asked one more question:

“Why Napoleon Bonaparte?”

Andy not only keeps petitioners of the commission on their toes, but he also enjoys adding a bit of levity whenever possible. I was glad I had asked myself the same question in the process of doing my research. In the mid 1800s, it was not unusual for families of means to name their children after famous people. However, Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless, born in 1851, was not born into a family of wealth. He was born to a family who encouraged their children to become exceptional.

Like many young men searching for their place in life, Napoleon at age 14 attempted to join Wheeler’s Calvary of the Confederate Army, but he was unsuccessful. Knowing that his



*Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless’ many enterprises depended on investors, but it usually was McCanless who saw the ventures to fruition.  
(Photo from the Charlotte Peebles family on Ancestry.com)*





*A downstairs parlor or living room; below, an ornamental column punctuates a mantel.*



future would be found away from the small village of Gold Hill, he moved to Salisbury and established himself as a clerk in the firm of McCubbins, Foster and Company.

After three years, his need for adventure sent him to New York to work with his brother, William Lafayette, in the firm of McCanless & Burwell. After his brother's death, Napoleon made another adventuresome move to the new settlement of Wichita, Kansas. There he found work with the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad. After a year, McCanless moved back to Gold Hill.

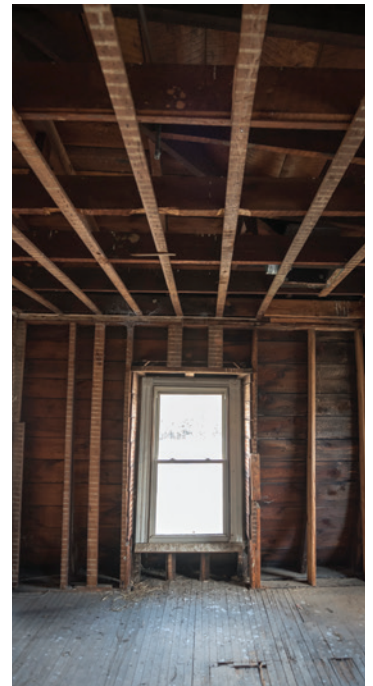
In the 1880 U.S. Census, his occupation was listed as a farmer, but we know that he was also involved with the mining industry. One of his many jobs was to haul Rowan County granite for the construction of a new federal building in Raleigh. In 1872, McCanless married Georgia Frances Mauney, the daughter of Ephraim and Ra-

chel Mauney, owners of Gold Hill's general store. The young couple spent several years of their marriage in Gold Hill, as did many of their eleven children, nine of whom survived to adulthood.

The exact date when the McCanlesses moved to Salisbury is unknown. We do know that on Aug. 13, 1888, Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless purchased 4.7 acres from William H. Horah on South Main Street, and the following year he transferred the same property to his wife. This was the beginning of "N.B.'s", as he was called by his business associates, long career of entrepreneurial ventures. Typical of most entrepreneurs at the time, N.B.'s ventures included investors or partners, but mostly it was McCanless who had the vision and the skills to bring projects to fruition.

Between 1891 and 1917, McCanless had a leading role in an extraordinary number of industrial ventures. The Vance Cotton Mill,





Kesler Cotton Mill, North Side Roller Mill (Grimes Mill), Doggins Mines Company, Yarkin Finishing Company, and Harris Granite Company were among his industrial ventures.

McCanless was also involved with Salisbury and Rowan County commerce. N.B. had an integral part in establishing the Salisbury Savings Bank, the Peoples Bank, and the Morris Plan Company, which later was called Security Bank and Trust Company.

McCanless was instrumental in the development of downtown Salisbury as a partner of the Washington Building, the Central Hotel, and in the development of the Empire Block and Hotel. The Empire Hotel, which was originally built in the 1850s as the Boyden House, underwent extensive renovations under N.B.'s guid-

*Upper right: Historic Salisbury Foundation members Sherry Beck, left, and author Karen C. Lilly-Bowyer are intrigued by the house's potential, reflected in many of its details.*

ance. Frank P. Milburn, a well-known architect, was hired to execute the expansion and renovations of the property. McCanless was one of the largest shareholders in the Empire Company and one of the company's officers.

McCanless' vision for improving the quality of life in Salisbury was apparent in his work with transportation and related businesses. In 1895, McCanless and his partners were awarded a \$50,000 contract to macadamize some of Salisbury's primary roads. Additionally, N.B.

was president of the Salisbury Electric Light and Street Railway Company, and along with his partner, Thomas H. Vanderford, built and equipped the Spencer Street Railway (streetcar/trolley).

The list of McCanless' business partners was a who's who of Salisbury in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The list includes D.R. Julian, Dr. C.M. Van Poole, E.B. Neave, Rev. F.J. Murdoch, Julian Lineberger, Dave Atwell, Tobias Kesler, Lee Overman, C.L. Welch, and J.S. McCubbins, just to name a few.

McCanless was also a residential developer. He purchased a large tract of land near his house, platted it, and built Thomas Street. Wishing to keep his adult children close to home, he constructed numerous houses on the



## WHEN HISTORY SPEAKS



*Left: The round wall of an interior room. Right: One of many fireplaces throughout the house.*

street as residences for his children and their families.

Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless was a proud man. Once he had established himself in Salisbury, he began plans to build a new home that would reflect his standing in the community as “a mover and shaker.”

The new dwelling was built at 619 S. Main St. His intentions were announced in the *Carolina Watchman*. The paper stated, “McCanless will build a handsome residence on Southwest Main Street.” It further reported the house would become, “a feature of that end of the street.”

The predictions of the *Carolina Watchman* were correct. In 1897, N.B. built an impressive three-story home in the Second Empire

style. McCanless wanted his home to reflect his long-time connection with the granite industry. His new brick home was faced with ashlar-cut rusticated granite blocks. It was an impressive residence and is still the only Salisbury Second Empire residence faced with granite.

The elegant home was his residence for most of his years as a businessman in Salisbury. When the house was built all of the McCanless children lived there. They ranged in age from 2 to 23.

The McCanless children, including the daughters, received excellent educations. Two of his daughters were teachers. One daughter who was a talented artist, studied in Paris. She embellished the round wall of the home’s first-floor parlor with a lovely mural. Unfortunately,

over the years, the painting was lost to renovations, but there are photographs that attest to her talent.

When Napoleon died on Jan. 27, 1920, at the age of 68, his obituary and tribute was written by James F. Hurley Sr., editor of the *Salisbury Post*. Hurley summarizes the considerable contributions that McCanless made to Salisbury and Rowan County. The obituary labeled McCanless “A Great Builder” and “one who worked by day and dreamed and planned by night.”

The obituary continued, “He was always promoting the material prosperity of the county. He was no doubt identified with more enterprises than any other man of this county of any age. Much of Salisbury today is due in very



*Left: Some original woodwork remains. Right: The back of the house, which overall reflects a Second Empire style of architecture.*





*Clockwise from top: A solid staircase anchors the interior; The use of granite reflects McCanless' strong ties to the industry; the house will take significant rehabilitation; the house's interesting roof.*



## WHEN HISTORY SPEAKS

large measure to Mr. McCanless' activities and interest. Manufacturing, mining, quarrying, banking, and other activities owe much to his guiding hand and wisdom." Hurley's editorial tribute added that "In the city stand monuments to his genius, his faith, his vision and his fidelity. Spindles hum because of his energies. Streets and buildings which were the inspirations of his mind and tangible evidence of his wisdom and achievements, remain to bless mankind. Covering many years, he wrought heroically [sic] and left ample physical evidence of the practicability of his planning."

It would be a natural assumption to think that Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless died a very rich man. Unfortunately, that was not the case. After McCanless' death, his widow, Georgia, continued to live in the family home until her death in 1940. However, by 1932, Mrs. McCanless was struggling to satisfy a debt to

creditor North Carolina Bank and Trust Company. As a result, the house and associated lot were sold by the sheriff to the North Carolina Bank and Trust Company. Thankfully, excepted from the deed was the homestead allotted to Mrs. McCanless. That "homestead" consisted of two rooms and a bath on the first floor. The rooms were described and measuring approximately 15-foot square and nine-and-a-half-foot square with an adjoining bathroom opening to the hall. Mrs. McCanless was also allowed ingress and egress from the front of the house.

After Georgia's death, the house was sold, and for a time it was leased to a Mrs. Patterson, who operated a nursing home in the house. In 1984, the property was sold to Charles Kim Major of Kannapolis. The following year, Major conveyed a half-interest in the property to Donald R. Bennett, also of Kannapolis. During their ownership, the house was con-

verted to a restaurant which was named after the builder, Boneparte's. In 1988, Major and Bennett sold the property to James T. and Barbara M. Rusher, who also used the house as a restaurant. In 1990, the property was foreclosed and sold at auction to Home Federal Savings Bank. The following year, Rowan Homes, Inc., a non-profit organization providing services for developmentally disabled people in Rowan County, purchased the property to use for their offices and a learning center. In 2004, Rowan Homes Inc. sold the property to William Peeler Raykes of Davidson County, and on Nov. 29, 2011, Raykes sold the property to Livingstone College. The plan was to use the house as Livingstone's new culinary school. Shortly after the sale, Livingstone was offered a better option for their new program, the original Salisbury Holiday Inn. In 2019, Livingstone accepted an offer to purchase from Historic Salisbury Founda-



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tion, which is now the current owner.

During the second half of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, the frequent changes in ownership of the property and the various ways the house was used were, overall, not kind to it. Still, the exterior of the house remains remarkably intact, and many distinctive features of the interior survived.

In February of 2021, the house was designated by the City Council as a Historic Salisbury Landmark. This designation will provide a needed layer of protection for this unique property and will help preserve its architectural integrity for future generations.

It is interesting to note that the house has a long history of being called “haunted.” Tales of unusual events have been shared by employees who worked there when it was a restaurant and when it was owned by Rowan Homes.

Paranormal groups statewide have tried in vain to receive permission to investigate this fascinating home. The new partnership that Historic Salisbury Foundation has established with the Ghost Guild of Raleigh (thehostguild.weebly.com) will finally establish if things do, in fact, “go bump in the night” at the beautiful McCanless House. Stay tuned for the results.

**Author’s note:** *Specific documentation for the historical background of*

*the Napoleon Bonaparte McCanless House can be found in the National Register of Historic Places nomination, Reference No. 14000264, that was written by Laura A.W. Phillips, architectural historian. Salisbury owes Phillips a debt of gratitude for her outstanding research on the McCanless family and the McCanless homeplace. [S]*

*Writer Karen C. Lilly-Bowyer lives in Salisbury. She is a retired educator and the author of The Wettest and Wickedest Town: An Illustrated Guide to The Legends & Ghosts of Salisbury, NC.*



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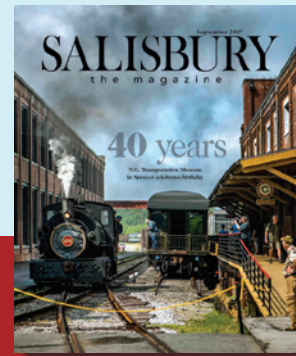
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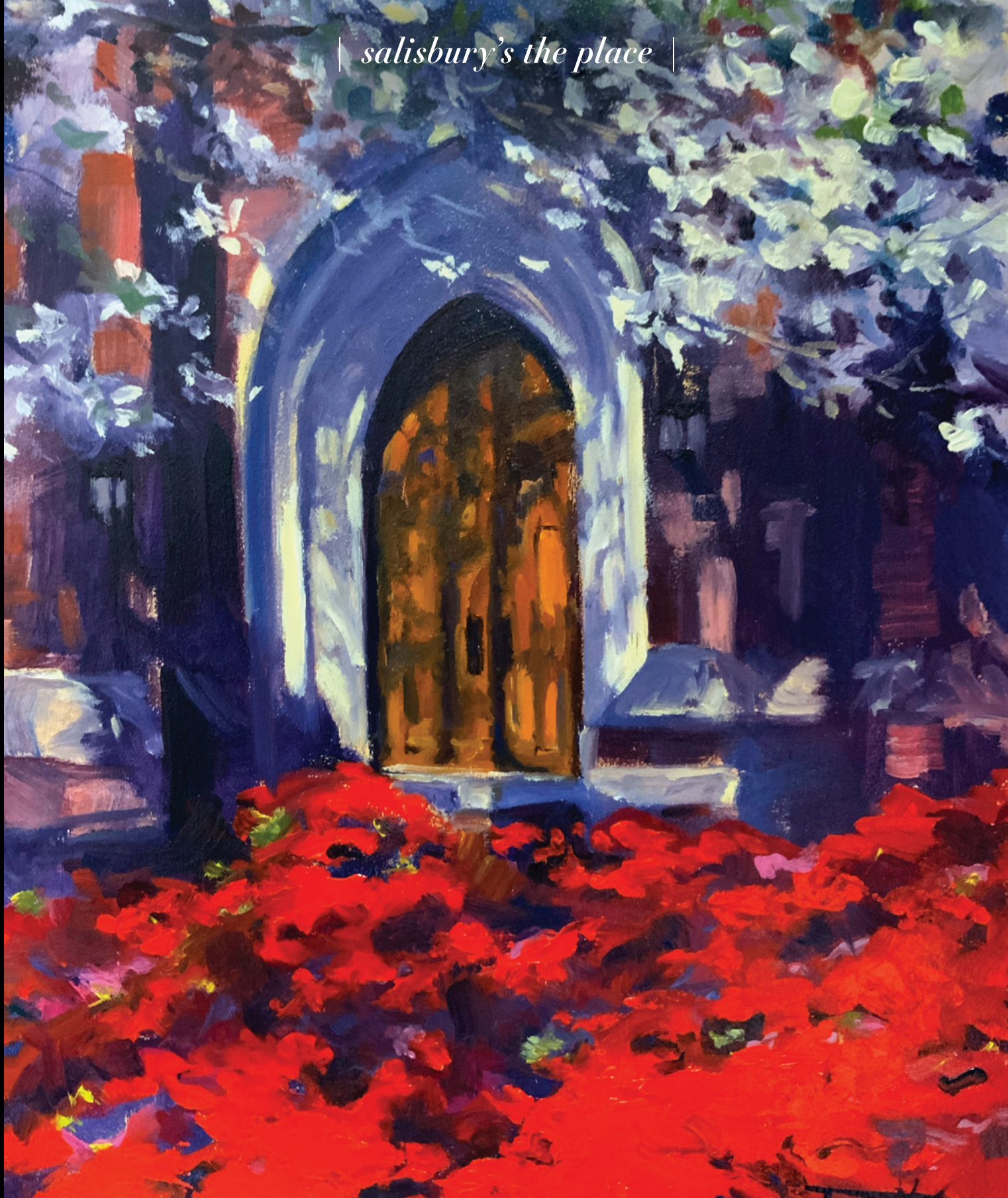
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