

WINTER 2025

SALISBURY

the magazine



ROCKIN' ON

*Painted stones spread
art and good vibes*

• CHRIS GILBERT
METICULOUSLY CRAFTS
LIFELIKE SCULPTURES

• CATAWBA COLLEGE
CELEBRATES
100 YEARS



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call 704-797-4213 or online at
salisburythemagazine.com
Salisbury the Magazine
P.O. Box 4639
Salisbury, NC 28145-4639
Published 9 times / year



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On the cover: Cleveland resident Cyndi Allison is heavily involved with the NC painted rocks art activity that has artists painting and hiding the rocks for others to easily find. (Sean Meyers photo)

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The new year begins

Happy New Year!
 Most of us have heard the ending quote from Mary Oliver's poem, *The Summer Day*:
 "Tell me, what is it you plan to do

With your one wild and precious life?"

There are tons of quotes out there to inspire us to live our best lives but for me, this captures the wonder and magic of having my life to live in my own way — unlike anyone else's.

The rest of her poem is equally lovely and I'd hate for you to miss it. Here are more lines to give some context.

"I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down

into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,

how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,

which is what I have been doing all day.

Tell me, what is it you plan to do

With your one wild and precious life?"

I'm adding the spirit of this poem to my resolutions this year: To do something, anything really, on a daily basis, that brings me face-to-face with the miracle and enchantment of our world.

In that spirit, we are bringing you three stories of people and places discovering new facets of themselves.



Chris Gilbert is a retired Lt. Colonel in the U.S. Army who sculpts lifelike figures and has them cast in bronze. His hobby grew from a simple on-base class in sculpture. The repositioning of Salisbury's Fame statue decades later prompted him to try to create a smaller one on his own. So, he did! Since that time, he has created other works, all equally beautiful, detailed and realistic. Ben White brings you the story of Gilbert and his talent.

Cyndi Allison in Cleveland has begun painting rocks and hiding them for others to find. Finders may keep them or re-hide them for others to enjoy. The Facebook page, "Painted Rocks in NC" provides a place to log rocks you find and/or hide yourself. Read about Cyndi and her newfound hobby in Sydney Smith Hamrick's story.

Catawba is turning 100! The school was founded in 1851 in Newton, N.C., and struggled for existence until the early 20th century, when Salisbury offered to bring it here. The anniversary celebrates the Salisbury portion of Ca-

tawba's life and growth, 1925-2025. We interviewed a number of longtime professors, current and retired, to understand the evolution of the school into the gem it is today.

Our Rowan Original is brought to us by guest writer Suzanne Casey, who shares the story of her book club, *The Peripatetic Reviewers*. They have celebrated their 50th anniversary, earning them the title of Rowan Original.

The Bookish this month is for those of you who aspire to read more in 2025. Local reading legend John Basinger explains to us how he finds the best books before they become common knowledge — those books that will make it to the *New York Times* Bestseller List or win literary prizes. Thanks to John for sharing your wealth of knowledge with us.

As we promised, we have featured one of the masterpieces in Waterworks Visual Arts Center current exhibition, on loan from the Robertson Foundation. The lovely piece is "Roses" (1886) by Henri Fantin-Latour. The story of the painting was sent to us by Anna Sido, Collections Manager at Ruth|Catone|Goulding, an art curation firm in New York.

I sincerely hope the New Year brings you the magic and wonder of your own life: happiness, health and a flourishing curiosity!

Maggie

— Maggie Blackwell
 Editor, *Salisbury the Magazine*

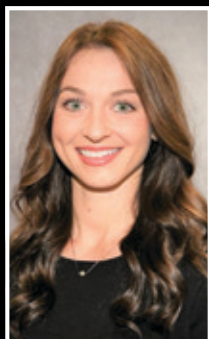
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YEAR AND RING IN THE NEW,
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New Year



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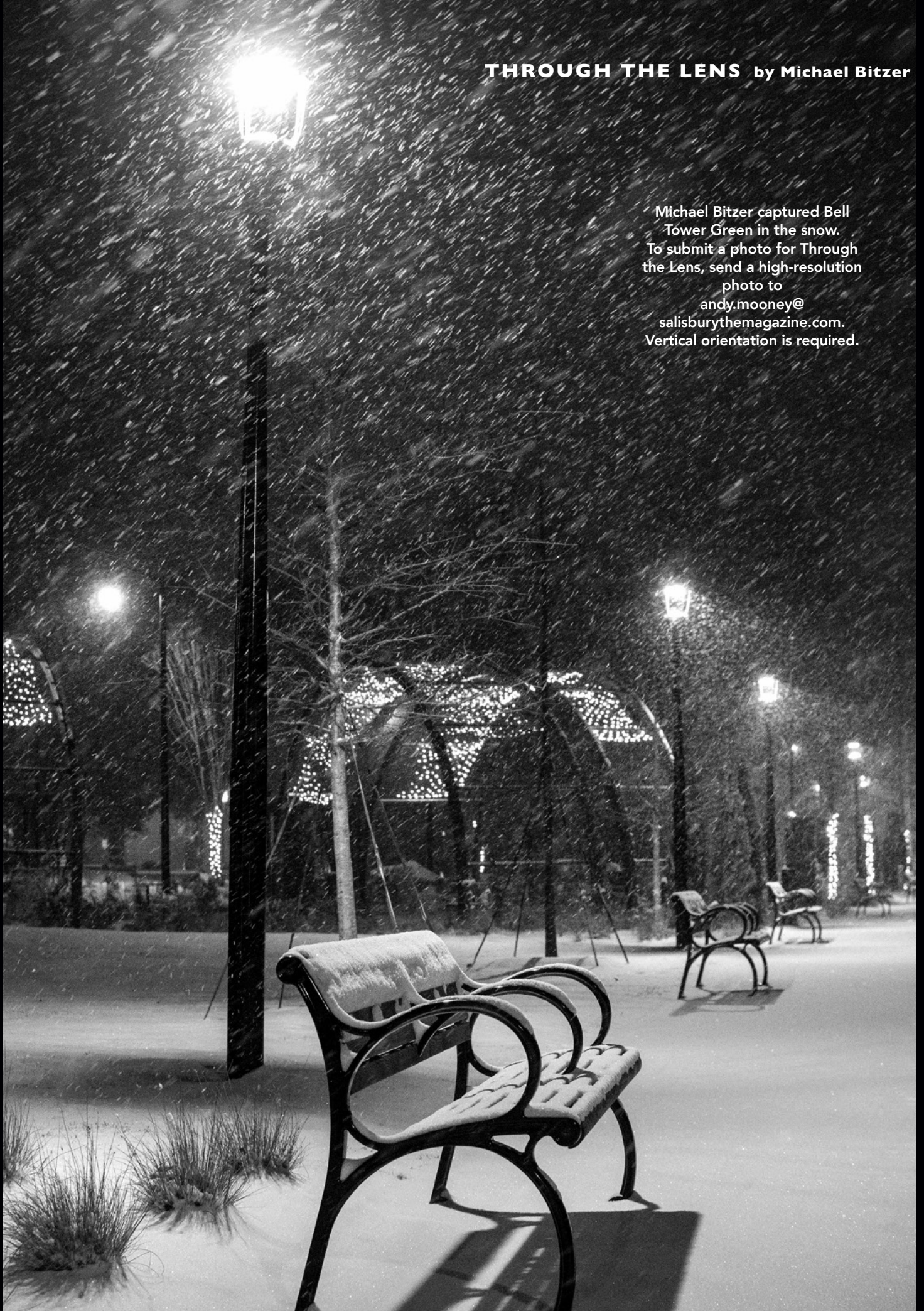
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THROUGH THE LENS by Michael Bitzer

Michael Bitzer captured Bell Tower Green in the snow. To submit a photo for Through the Lens, send a high-resolution photo to andy.mooney@salisburythemagazine.com. Vertical orientation is required.





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From left, Trudy Thompson, Susan Ketner, Jane Riley, Libby Gish, Babe Nobles, Mimi Carlton, Nancy Holshouser, Suzanne Casey, Margaret Kluttz, Carol Sayers (not pictured, Bev Mitchell). The Peripatetic Reviewers Book Club recently gathered for a meeting at the home of Suzanne Casey.

Peripatetic Reviewers’ 50th anniversary

Sharing books and life’s adventures

BY SUZANNE CASEY | PHOTOGRAPHY : SEAN MEYERS

The first question everyone asks is, “How did you arrive at the name for your book club?”

The idea was suggested by a faithful member, Jane Riley, who told us Peripatetic means traveling from place to place. A synonym is “wanderer.” This describes us perfectly as we have taken many trips together for five decades and of course, we love to review books. Well-chosen!

In addition to reading, our group became a family of friends, sharing every life event. Being together contributed to a sense of well-being in life.

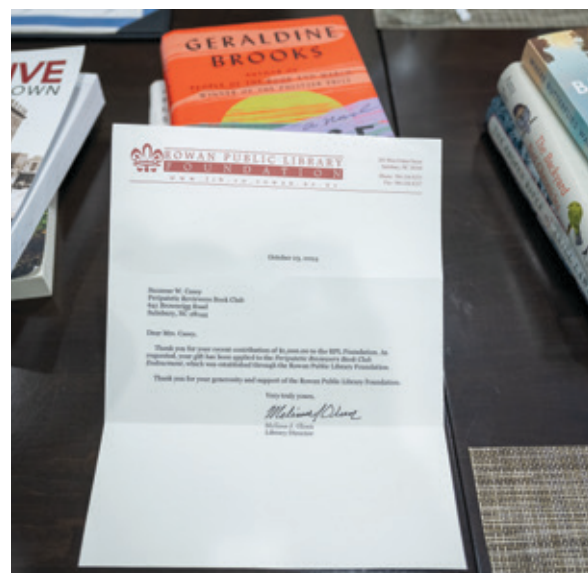
We have had exceptional participation, meeting in our homes or the Salisbury Country Club for wine, luncheon, book discussions and camaraderie. We have shared life’s challenges and possibilities. We often choose best sellers to read. When we talk about books together, our understanding of each other grows. It is amazing how the different experiences people bring to a discussion can get you thinking about the book in new and interesting ways: good or not so good.



The Peripatetic Reviewers Book Club gathers at Salisbury Country Club for a lunch meeting.



Suzanne Casey is all smiles during a recent meeting.



The club was able to contribute \$1,000 to the Rowan Public Library Foundation.



Our most important project was providing additional funding for the Brady Author's Symposium Endowment at Catawba College. Spearheaded in 1994 by Libby Gish, Mimi Carlton and Anne Crawford, "Campaign: Authors of Excellence" kicked off to raise \$50,000 to supplement the incredible generosity of the Brady family. A few of the most memorable to grace Catawba's stage were Reynolds Price, Kate Gibbons, Josephine Humphreys, Anne Rivers Siddons, Doris Betts, Fred Chappell, Lee Smith, Angela Davis Gardner, Susan Vreeland, Jodi Picoult, Pat Conroy and Gish Jen. Mimi Carlton was treasurer of our successful effort, keeping track of all contributions; Libby Gish was liaison with Catawba College.

During the 1990s, Juanita Bouser at Catawba encouraged our effort. The Symposium includes the lecture and a luncheon with the unique opportunity for an intimate discussion with the author. The Symposium has brought authors of various backgrounds to present fascinating lectures on their books, their lives and their writing methods. It's been an enriching experience for the community at large as well as the student body of Catawba.

During our 50-year run, we have shared similar interests. The years constituted a story. The plot is well-written with joy and sadness. Saying goodbye forever to three of our members, Jean Jordan, Dottie Goodnight and Nancy Dunham, struck a deep chord. The storyline also included joy with 50 Christmas parties that welcomed our husbands and oftentimes, guests. Mimi Carlton, Trudy Thompson, Nancy Holshouser and Carol Sayers often decorated the tables for these parties. A theme was planned and they thoughtfully assigned tables with place cards. In the early years, we had a group picture taken by a photographer. Every Christmas, we donated to the Salisbury Post's Christmas Happiness Fund.

MORE JOY TO OUR STORY: TRAVELING

New York City was our destination on two occasions. The Hotel Elysée at 60 E. 54th Street between Madison and Park Avenues in Midtown Manhattan was the perfect location. It's a 1920s



Babe Nobles shares a laugh with Susan Ketner during a recent meeting.

European-style hotel, a genuine New York landmark. We enjoyed the famous Monkey Bar! — and the furnishings were elegant. The short, easy walk to Central Park, Times Square, Rockefeller Plaza, Broadway theater district kept us fully entertained. Our group went in different directions and always met back for our dinner reservations. At the time, "knockoff pocketbooks" were easy to purchase and we filled our luggage with numerous "designer bags." One of our members lost her car keys in a knockoff purse she didn't keep. She was trying to determine if all her purse items would fit properly; by accident, she didn't retrieve her car keys when she decided not to buy the purse. She had been one of our two drivers to and from the airport, so eight women had to pile into Jean Jordan's Jeep for the ride from the airport back to Salisbury with tons of luggage! — designer bags and all. It was an experience we remember vividly.

Savannah lured us after reading, "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil." We took the tour, which included Bonaventure Cemetery. The movie was being filmed at that time, so we hoped for a "sighting" of director Clint Eastwood. The book by John Berendt is a captivat-

ing non-fiction read that delves into the eccentricities and scandals of Savannah. We enjoyed Home and Garden tours on another Savannah adventure, as well as the exceptional restaurants, a culinary lover's dream. The signature Southern Low Country dining was a favorite.

We heard the call of Charleston several times. The Garden Tour led us to Emily Whaley's private garden at 58 Church Street. We entered through a handsome wrought-iron gate with the sign, "Mrs. Whaley's Garden: Invite your soul to visit." It is an oasis with a stone maiden looking down at a reflecting pool. Her book, "Mrs. Whaley and Her Charleston Garden," made the New York Times bestseller list and graces my bookshelf.

BACK AT HOME

We took turns hosting events in our homes. Nancy Holshouser's husband John traditional entertained us with a poem or meaningful story. Libby Gish hosted us at Old Salem Tavern and the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts. Susan Ketner's lovely fall meeting took us in a chauffeur-driven stretch limousine to

Shelton Vineyards for sipping and touring. Thank you, Libby and Susan! Babe Nobles always hosted an unbelievable home-cooked luncheon in her large dining room. Special memory: her homemade layered coconut cake. Babe always had strong and interesting points of view that encouraged us to read particular books. Carol Sayers, with her interior designer skills and wonderful luncheons prepared skillfully by her late husband, Don, always inspired us. Bev Mitchell, former camp counselor and advocate of sisterhood, always submitted motivational books for our enrichment. Trudy Thompson managed to host us in her lovely home while she was sick and remained in bed upstairs — quite an accomplishment! Member extraordinaire Margaret Klutz has had a full schedule as mayor in 1991-1997, campaign chair for Elizabeth Dole, director of NCDOT etc., not to mention her role as lady comedian with her hilarious stories. Providing us with “Camp Peripatetic” T-shirts, she planned several sleepover events at her Lake Norman house. Suzanne Wallace

Casey’s slumber parties at her home in Lake Norman helped with the overflow at Margaret’s house. Suzanne is a published author of short stories. Her favorite contribution was always putting a book marker with a different quote from an author or famous person at each place setting when it was her turn to be hostess. Some of her bookmark quotes have been saved for years by members.

At this stage, we had discontinued serving as club officers alphabetically. Susan Ketner, with her extra-sharp memory and eye for detail, now serves as perpetual madam president. Each year, Susan makes a folder for us. We always look forward to the new year’s humorous and appropriate front cover. Anne Crawford served as treasurer until turning over permanent duties to Suzanne Wallace Casey.

As we celebrate our half century, we realize the importance of reflecting and enjoying the beauty of getting older.

And our story of Peripatetic Reviewers continues... **S**

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How to select great books

Editor's note: *John is widely considered one of the most best-read folks in the area. His tastes are broad ranging: one day he might read non-fiction. The next he might read a popular fiction item. He always seems to be reading the next great book we hear about tomorrow! We asked him how he consistently chooses quality reads. This was his answer.*

I was asked to talk about what reading means to me, how I find the books that I do, and what I am looking for this holiday season. Whoo! I will try to tackle this gargantuan task one at a time.

Reading, for me, is a wonderful form of escape. After a long day, there is little I look forward to more than a well-plotted book. A well-developed protagonist will stay in my conversations for a long time! In a way, my love of books is hereditary; my grandfather Banks was an Arts and Entertainment critic for the Charlotte Observer who read voraciously and was tasked with commenting on strengths and weaknesses of writers. My grandmother Basinger had an atlas that I flocked to every afternoon after school, where I learned about the world. My grandmother Banks was a renowned reader and critic who had quite a following in the Charlotte Observer, where she would list what she was looking forward to (some of you may remember her famous book talks)! My parents are both retired educators for whom reading is an integral part of daily life.



by
**JOHN
BASINGER**

So how do I pick what I read? I have cultivated my own method, relying on others who get to read these books before I do. This is a summary of what I look for:

- Magazines and weekly publications. I have found some of these to be more reliable than others. I look forward weekly to The New York Times literary review. It is a little pricey but the reviews are well explained. One that is free is The Guardian; this British post online focuses on British and Commonwealth writers, but when they say something is good, you can usually believe it. Amazon releases a weekly blog of what their reviewers are reading. They are the best at finding thrillers and new writers. Used less often include: The Economist, Time magazine, and The New Yorker. These are good but not always great sources, in my opinion.

- Award winners. I find the Booker prize and the National Book longlist to be a great source of writings I have not heard of. The Edgar award is good for finding mysteries and thrillers. These are reliably good even if not every one is my cup of tea.

- Word of mouth and repeat writers. Once I have read an author, I tend to buy their follow-up works even if they are clunkers. Just as often, these authors have written a hidden gem that has flown under the radar. Talking to my reader friends is another great source of finding something that I did not detect.

With the holiday season coming up, here

is a short list of what I am looking forward to:

FICTION:

- *Intermezzo* by Sally Rooney. Being hailed as the best contemporary writer, I have found her prior works *Normal People* and *Beautiful World, Where are You?* to be great comfort reads. She is a master of the dynamics of relationships and I look forward to this one.

- *Playground* by Richard Powers. Author of *The Overstory* and *Bewilderment*, I find Powers to be the most powerful environmental author out there. Look forward to this exploration of the sea.

- *James* by Percival Everett. This adaptation of *Huckleberry Finn* by the author of *The Trees* is favored to win multiple awards this year.

- *Creation Lake* by Rachel Kushner.
- *The Morningside* by Tea Obreht.
- *There are Rivers in the Sky* by Elif Shafak.

NONFICTION:

- *The Revenge of the Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell. Good writer on how American society has become so polarized.

- *New Cold Wars: China's Rise, Russia's Invasion, and America's Struggle to Defend the West* by David Sanger. I have long admired this New York Times reporter and look forward to this one.

- *The Siege: A Six-Day Hostage Crisis and the Daring Special Forces Operation that Shocked the World* by Ben MacIntyre. Great historical writer.

- *Fi: The Memoir of My Son* by Alexandra Fuller. A mother's grief over losing her son.

Happy reading this year! **S**

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Retired Army Lt. Col. Christopher Gilbert, an architect by trade, with his sculpture that was included in this year's Salisbury Sculpture Show. Chris is also a collector of American Revolution and Civil War items.





BRONZE METTLE

Chris Gilbert meticulously crafts lifelike sculptures

STORY : BEN WHITE | PHOTOGRAPHY : SEAN MEYERS



Gilbert works on the varying stages of the process from clay to bronze.

It's often said that some people choose to live in the past. Chris Gilbert, military historian and architect, has no problem with that. That's exactly where he wants to be.

Gilbert has surrounded himself with an impressive arsenal of relics and artifacts from the Revolutionary War with England that concluded in 1776 and the American Civil War that spanned from 1861 to 1865.

Gilbert has created other interesting pieces of the collection and has another in construction. Gilbert and his wife Raffaella purchased their 1869 home in 2020, the year they were married. Its historic rooms make the perfect backdrop to display their very rare Civil War pistols, muskets, bayonets and swords.

Gilbert's story began some 425 miles from Salisbury when he was a child. His talent as a sculptor came to light many decades into his future.



Gilbert has sculpted several pieces, including the statue, "Comedy and Tragedy," a bronze and silver piece.



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“I was born in Huntsville, Alabama,” Gilbert said. “My father worked for IBM on the space program. He worked on the Apollo and Saturn 5 missions as an IBM contractor. When the space program went down a bit in the 1970s, I moved up to New York where I lost my accent. My Dad worked on bank machines. When I was in the sixth grade, we moved down to Charlotte as part of a big exodus.”

Gilbert went into the U.S. Army in 1986 at the age of 17 after he graduated high school. Two years later, he was part of the 9 Kelo M1 tank crew. Being a part of that team began a rewarding career of proudly serving his country.

In 1988, he was honorably discharged and began his college career at UNC Charlotte in architecture while in the ROTC program (Reserve Officers’ Training Corps), which teaches valuable skills while covering college education expenses. In 1992, Gilbert was commissioned into the Corps of Engineers through the 505th Engineering Battalion National Guard in Gastonia.

Gilbert matriculated up the ranks and was stationed in Iraq in 2005 and 2006 for 15 months, starting as a company commander before becoming battalion operations officer. He was also battalion commander of the 505th in 2012 and 2013 and went to Kuwait and Afghanistan and served three tours of duty. He ended his career in 2019 as a lieutenant colonel and deputy brigade commander in the 98th division.

“I’m an architect licensed in North Carolina,” Gilbert said. “When I





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was part of the corps of engineers, we went to Alaska and the Marshal Islands, Central and South America and Europe. My units worked on projects all over North Carolina and the United States and the Middle East and Africa. I was able to utilize my skills as an architect.”

While stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, in 1986 and 1987, a craft center was created for soldiers on the base. That’s where he met a gentleman who was training anyone who wanted to try to sculpt.

After that, his sculpting hobby took a long hiatus.

“I did a sculpture with his assistance,” Gilbert said. “From there, I didn’t do anything as far as sculptures for 35 years.

“You can be creative in writing; you can be creative in drawing and creative in producing buildings. I think I was naïve, but naïveté is good.

You don't know you can't do it or how hard it will be when you start. I'm no great artist. Each of them took a while and I got them done."

Then in 2020, there were demonstrations and statues were taken down. Gilbert was vehemently against moving "Fame," a statue that had been on Salisbury's square for 129 years. The bronze statue was created by Frederick Wellington Ruckstull and cast in Brussels, Belgium, in 1891. The monument was removed from prominent display in Salisbury on July 6, 2020. It is now located at the Old Lutheran Cemetery on North Lee Street and has been there since July 23, 2021.

"For about a year and a half, we didn't know where Fame was," Gilbert said. "It turned out to be in a warehouse waiting to be moved to another location. I looked for a replica and couldn't find one. Then I said to myself, 'Heck, I'm just going to make one myself.'"

Gilbert sculpted a much smaller version of "Fame" in 2021.

At that time, Gilbert was working at the Salisbury V.A. (United States Department of Veteran Affairs) as supervisor of plans and projects. He was introduced to a gentleman by the name of Ray Moose of Mt. Pleasant.

Moose inquired about artwork or a sculpture at the Salisbury location. Ponderous government bureaucracy put the potential art projects in jeopardy and put on hold indefinitely.

"I love public art. It sets us apart," Gilbert said. "I tried to get the V.A. to recognize the project. While doing that, I became friends with Mr. Moose. I told him that I really wanted to do a sculpture or small version of Fame. He told me later that he was surprised that I could do it."

The sculpture entitled "War Trace" was inspired by the sacrifices made by soldiers over the 20 years of deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. It depicts an officer and a non-commissioned officer poring over a map. The body armor, weapons and accouterments are accurately represented.

"That took about two years to do," Gilbert said. "Adam Kennedy works at Carolina Bronze in Randleman, N.C. If I hadn't had Ray Moose and Adam Kennedy, I couldn't have done it. The soldier's sculpture was very complex and took a lot of time in all facets of producing it."

As a description at The Rowan County Visitor Center reads, "The sculpture represents 505th Engineer Battalion Soldiers of the North Carolina Army National Guard on deployment to Iraq in 2005-2006. Their patches indicate being from the 505th Engineer Battalion under the 101st Airborne Division.

"War Trace" is a term given to a unit's chain of command in time of war (which often differs from their peace time chain of command). Here, it also applies to two soldiers looking at a map. The upper soldier is the leader, giving his subordinate directions.

The process is as time-consuming as the work on the initial clay structure itself. Clay is disassembled for each mold to be able to have a positive and negative side. The first mold is rubber reinforced on the outside with plaster and used for wax. Wax is removed from the mold. There are 21 molds for the War Trace sculpture. Once cleaned, the piece is reassembled.



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Again, separated for the final mold, vents and sprues are added for the metal to enter the voids once the wax is gone. The wax is submerged into ceramic, layered to create the final mold.

Molds are placed in a furnace to rapidly and completely melt the wax, hence the term, “lost wax process.” Molds are cast in bronze. The pieces are used in the final assembly and sandblasted to add patina.

“You have to heat the bronze to 2,200 degrees,” Gilbert said. “The lengthiest part of the process is doing the sculpture in clay. That takes forever.

“The hardest part is sculpting in clay and then have someone to put it into bronze and work through that. That’s why it’s called lost wax processing. They go from clay, make a mold, get rid of the wax and put it into bronze.”

Gilbert says sculpting requires patience and just as the foundation of the military, careful planning and preparation.

“I think the question would be what inspires you to spend two years working on something,” Gilbert said. “It’s like writing a book.

If you’re inspired to write a book about X, it would be easier to have the discipline to write it. If someone asked me to sculpt a parakeet, I wouldn’t want to do that, and it might never get done. My rhythm is pretty slow, about two years. The old term about starving artist — you’re never going to make a million dollars at it but it’s a creative outlet and something neat to do.

The next sculpture is a tribute to Gilbert’s dog Cooper.

“He’s a great friend. I’m calling it, ‘The Rescue.’ Gilbert said. “My dog is a rescue pit bull. I’ve always been intimidated by pit bulls, but we’ve had him about eight years.

“I thought sculpting a dog would be easy. I didn’t know canine anatomy very well. Once again, I was naïve. It probably took me a year to do. I’m sure Cooper thought I was insane because I was following him around the house taking pictures of him.”

Possibly more sculptures will be produced by Gilbert in the years to come.

You can see Gilbert’s work on display in the lobby at the Rowan Visitors’ Center, 204 East Innes Street. [S](#)



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Cleveland resident Cyndi Allison is heavily involved with the NC painted rocks art activity that has artists painting and hiding the rocks for others to easily find.

ROCKIN' ON

Painted stones spread art and good vibes

STORY : SYDNEY SMITH HAMRICK

PHOTOGRAPHY : SEAN MEYERS



*Cyndi and her dog,
Ruby, hide a few rocks
at the Cleveland City
park.*



If you're walking through Cleveland and notice any interesting, brightly painted stones along your path, there's a good chance that Cyndi Allison and her miniature poodle, Ruby, have been there recently. Many know Cyndi for her career in writing, grilling and teaching, but lately, she's been exploring the arts.

In her retirement, Cyndi wanted to find a new creative hobby. She ended up trying all sorts of different artistic outlets, but none of them seemed quite right. As a cat and dog owner, she also wanted to find a new hobby that was more pet-friendly and less likely to end in

a frustrating heap of tangled yarns and spilled supplies.

Eventually, Cyndi stumbled upon rock painting and discovered a big community of creative minds along with it. Rock painting is the art of taking stones and painting their surfaces with unique designs and pictures. After the rocks are painted, they are hidden around public areas for other people to find. Some people opt to leave the rocks where they are for others to enjoy but taking the rocks to keep or re-hide in a new spot is highly encouraged. One of the most exciting aspects of this art form is seeing how far some of the rocks end up traveling. So far, Cyndi has painted around two hundred rocks, most



of them given away or hidden for others to find and enjoy.

While there are a variety of social media groups and apps dedicated to sharing painted rock art, Cyndi prefers to share her work and explore other artists' creations on the Painted Rocks NC Facebook group. On the page, there are daily posts detailing finished works of rock art, interesting finds by others in North Carolina, and updates about painted rocks that have traveled to places near and far. Not only is the group a great place to source inspiration and ideas for creating new rock art, but it's also excellent for meeting different artists and learning more tips and tricks to make your own painted

rock art shine.

Cyndi has been painting rocks for a little over a year now and credits the hobby as something fun and active to do with Ruby. "It's an easy hobby to do with Ruby because we take a lot of walks together and hide rocks along the way," explained Cyndi. While creating new painted rocks serves as a creative outlet, it can also become a physical one — Cyndi and Ruby have spent the last few weeks engaged in the K-9 Adventure Challenge, a fitness activity that challenges participants to walk 60 miles with their dogs over the course of two months. On the walks, Cyndi and Ruby enjoy ex-



exercising in nature and hide painted rocks for other explorers to find.

Deciding where certain rocks should be placed is part of the fun. Cyndi tries to hide themed rocks in locations that would likely appeal to the other people also visiting there. For example, she recently completed one with a rendering of children's author and illustrator Eric Carle's famous "hungry caterpillar," which she plans to hide near Rowan Public Library West Branch next time she visits. She also enjoys painting rocks to give to friends and family members as special keepsakes that are related to their interests and passions. Her eldest son is a beekeeper, so she designed a few painted rocks featuring bees to give him.

For others interested in exploring painting, starting with rock painting is an excellent way to dive into the medium. Rocks and stones for this art form can be purchased cheaply from home improvement stores or sourced directly from nature. All sorts of rocks are suitable for painting, whether they are large or small, rough or smooth, light or dark. Figuring out how to incorporate a rock's natural appearance and texture into the design often proves to be a fun challenge when creating a piece.

Cyndi started rock painting with acrylic paints and paint pens, but she quickly learned that there are many options available for expanding her painted rock repertoire. Over time, she's tried techniques with decoupage, natural flowers, newsprint and nail polish, just to name a few of the options, and the finished pieces have all been unique. For folks interested in making sure their artwork stays put once it is dry, Cyndi also recommends spraying the final prod-



uct with a coat of Rustoleum Clear Acrylic spray paint to keep the designs from weathering away outdoors. She also credits Facebook groups dedicated to painted rocks for supply suggestions, as many of the other artists posting there offer recommendations for different paint brands. As far as art-centric hobbies go, rock painting is relatively inexpensive to try, and the materials can be sourced from most local stores, popular retail websites, and, of course, nature.

While rock painting is an excellent creative hobby that encourages participants to spend more time outdoors, Cyndi reminds interested rock painters and hikers to be mindful of where they are placing their creations. She cites a common rule upheld in state and national parks, “leave no trace,” and opts out of hiding her rocks when she and Ruby are hiking in them. However, there are many other locations that are fair game for painted rock





hiding.

Cyndi makes a point to “hide” the rocks where people are likely to spot them, such as around local parks, outdoor benches, the doctor’s office and stores. The last time she left a painted rock at her doctor’s office, she discovered that another painter left one of their own creations alongside it during her next visit. Another reason why Cyndi enjoys the hobby so much is that she either hides or gives away every rock she designs, so her home doesn’t feel like it’s being crowded with finished projects. She gets to be creative and explore the arts without worrying about clutter accumulating.

“One of my favorite parts of rock painting is seeing one of my rocks get found and posted,” explains Cyndi. The Painted Rocks NC Facebook group sees dozens of new posts per day, many of which are people sharing photos of painted rock art they stumbled upon out in the world. The group estimates that only around ten percent of the painted rocks hidden get found and posted on the page, Cyndi adds a message to the bottom of each rock encouraging the finders to

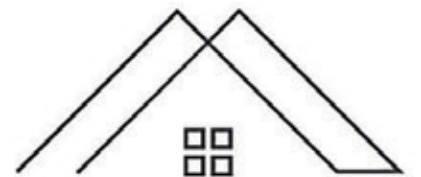


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snap a photo and share to the Painted Rocks NC Facebook page before keeping or re-hiding it. Getting to see her creations travel and bring a little brightness into someone's day is exciting – to date, the farthest one of her painted rocks traveled was to Kentucky. Other artists' rocks have ended up traveling farther, and seeing different posts and updates is a big part of the fun.

One of the best reasons to try rock painting is the ease of getting started. "If you make a mistake when you're painting, it's easy to either cover it up or simply work the mistake into your design," says Cyndi. Rock painting is a forgiving artistic process that welcomes creativity, exploration and mistakes, making it an ideal activity for novice artists who may feel intimidated by the idea of trying other crafts and art forms.

For anyone interested in exploring the art of rock painting, Cyndi encourages them to find some stones, grab some basic supplies, and get started. Not only is it a great way to explore artistic creativity, but it's also a great way to get moving and connect with new people, especially in the age of social media. Besides the Painted Rocks NC Facebook group, there are dozens of other pages dedicated to painted rock art. Getting inspired and sharing art with the world — whether it's on a public social media page or along your neighborhood sidewalk — spreads positivity outwardly and inwardly. **S**





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100 YEARS

Catawba celebrates milestone anniversary

STORY BY MAGGIE BLACKWELL







Catawba College in Salisbury is 100 years old! The picturesque dark buildings, meticulously kept lawns and mature trees make Catawba the very picture of a small American college.

Catawba first became a college in Newton, N.C., which is near the Catawba River and the original lands of the indigenous people. According to Dr. Gary Freeze, retired history professor, Catawba in Newton was a first grade-through-college school with maybe 50 college students. It drew much of its revenue from support for the high school. Around World War I, schools were made public, and the school lost its revenue.

Meanwhile, Salisbury had built a military academy way out of town to train young men for service in the armed forces. Alas, the timing was unfortunate as World War I happened and took all the young men with it. Salisbury, left with an empty building, offered a partially constructed dormitory-administration building and several acres of land in Salisbury. The trustees, college and church officials closed

the campus in Newton in 1923 and re-opened in Salisbury in 1925. Student population is thought to have been several hundred.

Freeze says many offices in what we now know as the Herdick Building had restroom facilities as they were initially dorm rooms for men (south end of the building) and quarters for professors (central tower). Those facilities have since been removed from the building. In the 1960s, the school built newer dormitories for housing.

Overview. Dr. Jesse McCartney gave us a perfect introduction to the school.

"I joined the administrative team led by Dr. Stephen Wurster in 1982. I would describe his presidency as the renaissance of the college. His vision for the college inspired trustees, led by the powerful hand of Jimmy Hurley, to expand and renew the physical plant. The Commerce Building went away; Ketner Hall was built. Dormitories were renovated. Athletic facilities were expanded. The grounds were enhanced and made more attractive. Simultaneously, gener-

ous gifts from graduates and trustees allowed the college to fund First Family Scholarships which were used to recruit more talented and more able students. Leading citizens of Salisbury and Rowan were greatly involved in making this renewal possible.

At the same time, with the aid of a grant from the National Council for the Humanities, we were able to recruit a group of dynamic young faculty members, most of whom are now retired. Together with some devoted and seasoned faculty members, they created a required freshman program called Educaré which focused on questions essential to the liberal arts: What is a good person? What is a good society?

It was my honor and joy to serve the college in a variety of administrative roles and to do some occasional teaching. After 25 years, I retired as provost and professor emeritus of English. Now I observe with interest from across Grant's Creek as the college continues to work to make sure that 'good goes far.'

Jean Wurster, widow of President Steve Wurster, says, "Steve would come home and say, "I love this school!" His board was amazing: Glenn Ketner, Ralph Ketner, Jimmy Hurley, Enoch Goodman, Adrian Schuman. He just had a wonderful board. The school didn't have a big endowment but with the help of his board members, they got things done. Fred Stanback helped many, many times.

"He often said, 'You can't give your heart to everything but you can give it to a small college.'"

School culture. Dr. McCartney gave us a glimpse of the culture in referring to the Educaré program. Freeze adds, "It's a college that focuses on the personal — the idea that we are growing a person as well as teaching the student. One of the things that distinguishes us is our keeping up with alums. It's not unusual for us to attend funerals or weddings of alums or their families. Often if weddings are at the chapel, they invite us to come. It's a close-knit community who take care of each other and keep up with each other the best we can."

Joyce Caddell, retired professor emeritus of math, remembers the Educaré program well.



New library in 1954.

"Initially, the freshmen would say, 'this is too much!' But after a year or two, they came back and thanked us. They studied what makes a good person and what makes a good society."

Juanita Bouser, who served in public relations in the 1990s, organized several mission trips for the students. Caddell went on five.

"The location," she says, "always required physical labor but the actual motivator was to expose students to different cultures so they

could realize how privileged we all are."

"It was an extraordinary privilege for me to teach at Catawba and live that life," Caddell says.

Ken Clapp, emeritus chaplain, has met with two groups of men who graduated from Catawba over the years. Many are now in their 50s! Clapp served at Catawba for 35 years and says seeing the students grow, mature and realize their goals has been a source of tremendous joy for him.



Miss Natalyn Archer, Queen

HOME COMING

1951 Homecoming Queen

The men tell Clapp that Catawba has meant much to them: friendships, spouses met at college and having been prepared well for their lives in the workplace. They say that Catawba helped them develop a value system that has served them well throughout their lives.

Dr. Barry Sang, professor emeritus of religion, says, "In talking with my colleagues, I'm able to brag on our students who in the vast majority, are very nice people. They care about each other; they care about their professors and staff members. From what I've heard, that might not be as common in other places. One of the more concrete manifestations has been the Center for the Environment and the nursing program; they attract people who are by nature, caring people."

The environment. Dr. Steve Coggin, professor emeritus of biology, saw the Nature Preserve develop from farmland to what it is today.

"When I arrived in 1985, if you stood behind the chapel and looked out, it was farm fields. The farmers grew millet, turnips and sorghum. Today, it's the Fred Stanback Jr. Ecological Preserve. It runs from Grants Creek on the north side to Horizons Unlimited on the south side. It's the floodplain of Grants Creek. The college once leased the land to farmers. Shortly before I arrived here, there was a conflict over the land. The city wanted to build a soccer complex. College people and residents were concerned so they put an ease-

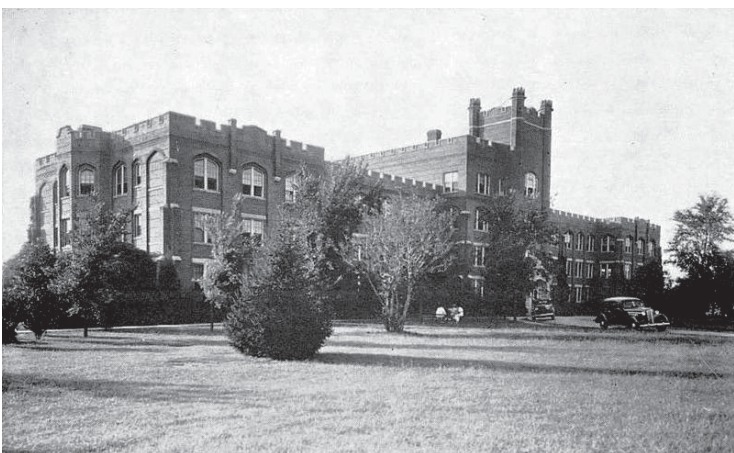




Original Catawba Building in 1851, in Newton, NC

In 2025, Catawba College marks 100 years in Salisbury and Rowan County. Since its founding in 1851, our college has aspired to live out the Catawba Ideal: Scholarship with Character and Culture for Service. This community is our home. It's where students learn not only to make a good living, but to live a good life. Catawba, like our surrounding community, is a place where good people do good work, and then carry that good wherever they go. And we know from experience that good goes far! We look forward to celebrating our 100th anniversary in Salisbury with the entire community.

— **Dr. David P. Nelson,**
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ment on the land so it cannot be developed. Then the school developed artificial wetlands. They dug ponds. It was all planned to include water features of all sizes and depths. Trails were added somewhere in the 1990s.

The idea was to have the preserve as a natural laboratory. Students are constantly doing research out there: plants, animals, mosquitoes. Classes go out there and make observations.

I spent many hundreds of hours out there, watching birds and recording them. I developed the first bird list for the preserve and it's always being added to.

If you look out the windows of the Center for the Environment, you'll see some of the best views on campus."

Dr. John Wear, professor emeritus for the environment, started Center for Environment in 1996. The college hosted a land conservation conference at Catawba, held with support of the Land Trusts of North Carolina.

"I remember distinctly as they were serving lunch at the Stanback Plaza right in the middle of campus, I looked up and saw the coal-black smoke pouring out of the smokestack. What do you say? That smoke was the byproduct of sending steam through lines running all through the campus. Today we're using geothermal ... when you look how far we've gone, it's huge.

"About the same time, the first cohort of Environmental Science we had, there were two girls who started a campus environmental club. They asked me to be their advisor. They took it upon themselves to start a recycling program on campus. It was a huge endeavor. It was hard work, not glamorous at all. But they stuck with it. The progress over the years is astounding."

Finance. Sang says until the recent \$200 million gift, the school has been supported by some very dedicated trustees.

"That the college has held on while other small schools have closed their doors, is







The first graduating class in Salisbury, 1925

something to be proud of. The new gift is pretty special and has allowed the college to dream.

“President Nelson wants to ensure that what we do, we do well. He is clear that the additional money does not change the character of the school.”

•••

Ryan Dayvault, a 2008 graduate, works today as associate director of operations for UNC Chapel Hill Nutrition Research Institute. He has served on Kannapolis City Council since 2011. He reflected on what Catawba has meant to him.

“Catawba was an absolutely perfect place for me. It’s small

enough so you know your professors and classmates and build relationships with them all. I could not have done that at a larger school. I was very proud to be there as a Ralph Ketner Scholar and a Tom Smith Scholar. I was a political science major and business administration minor. From Dr. Bitzer to Dr. Slate to Dr. Freeze — so many people had a profound impact on my life. And Dr. Clapp — an institution. The care all those individuals have for their students is incredible. My giving back to the school post-graduation is important as well. I served on the alumni board for six years. I always want to give back to the school that gave me so much. It surely prepared me to be a public servant for my community.” **S**

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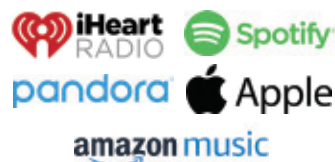
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MODERN MASTERPIECES

Now on display at Waterworks

“Roses” Henri Fantin-Latour



Henri Fantin-Latour
(1836–1904)

“Roses,” 1886
Oil on canvas
17 3/4 × 20 7/8 inches

*Courtesy the Robertson
Foundation*

Photo: Kent Pell

The paintings of Henri Fantin-Latour were favorites of Josie Robertson, a talented painter in her own right who also loved arranging bouquets of flowers. Linger- ing with *Roses* (1886), one of the 34 canvases currently on view at the Waterworks Visual Arts Center, it’s easy to see why. With richly layered brushwork, the French artist expertly captured the softness and delicacy of a bouquet in full bloom. A close observer of nature, Fantin-Latour would spend hours studying each flower he planned to paint before he even reached for a brush, noticing “its grain, its tissue, as if it were a human face.” His roses are truly individuals, rendered with close attention to their structure, weight, and color. The flowers are so vivid, it’s

easy to imagine reaching out and touching their petals.

Born in eastern France in 1836, Fantin-Latour spent his student years in Paris studying the work of his Renaissance heroes, Titian and Veronese, at the Louvre. He was close friends with many of the artists developing the movement later known as Impressionism, and he supported their experiments in his own quiet way. Although his paintings of flowers might not look revolutionary by today’s standards, these canvases were part of a radical art historical shift. Cutting-edge painters were finding new inspiration in familiar household objects during this time. To paint a bowl of apples or bouquet of flowers instead of an idealized public figure or grand mythological scene was quite innovative. This new freedom to por-

tray the elements of modern life directly shaped the rise of Impressionism.

As a mature artist, Fantin-Latour made regular visits to England, where gardening was (and remains) a beloved national pastime. British audiences adored his bouquets, and one horticultur- alist even named a pink variety of rose after him, which is still grown today. In 1876, Fantin-La- tour married the painter Victoria Dubourg, and the couple began to spend summers at a country estate belonging to her family in Normandy. The house was humble, but it had an overflowing garden where Fantin-Latour found constant in- spiration. It was there that the artist passed away. He was eating lunch on the terrace one August when he fell ill and walked into the garden. He died among the roses he loved. **S**

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