

# First African Baptist Church



*Inside this issue:*

Historically, the Black church has been one of the most important institutions in the Black community. The Black church offered a reprieve from the segregated world of the past, creating a place for African Americans to come together in community to advance their dreams and celebrate their faith and culture.

Black churches were the first institutions built by Black people and run independent of White society in the United States. The Black Church functions on several levels, as a social and spiritual center, a place of worship and fellowship, and the epicenter of a shared history and cultural traditions. The church is the heart of the community and has played a pivotal role in Black History, from aiding in the Underground Railroad and abolitionist movement to the Civil Rights and Black Lives Matter Movements.

First African Baptist Church (FAB) was founded in 1864. The congregation had formerly belonged to the segregated First Baptist Church, where they were isolated in the balcony of the church, as was the custom at that time. The Black congregation began raising funds in order to build their own separate church, in which they could worship, sing, and gather in a manner that they chose for themselves. The original FAB church was a very modest wood-frame building, located on Pine Street in the "Little Washington" neighborhood. It was the very first Black church in Goldsboro at that time.

First African Baptist Church holds a pivotal place in history as the spot for the first meeting of the first General Baptist Convention in 1867. This gathering was important in the organization and empowerment of Black Baptists in North Carolina, marking a new era of religious and community leadership in the post-Civil War period.

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# First African Baptist Church (cont.)

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The humble original church building on Pine Street was eventually replaced to make more room for the growing congregation by a newer, larger brick version in 1924. The church burned down in 1973, and once again the determined congregation started saving money for a new church. The congregation ultimately raised the funds to build the large, modern, new building on Harris St. that was dedicated in 1978.

This year marks the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of First African Baptist Church. The First African Baptist Church family is a vibrant, committed and long-standing congregation that remains a vital, spiritual pillar in the local Black community. The church takes pride in still upholding their mission statement of "Encouraging Hearts, Changing Lives, and Saving Souls."

The 2024 Black History exhibit is entitled "Rooted in Faith" and will celebrate all aspects of this remarkable, historic church. The exhibit will open on Saturday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, and run until May 25<sup>th</sup>.



# 160 Years Anniversary

# Remembering Mary Ernestine Whitted Wooten

By Anetta Reid

Cities large and small produce iconic citizens that impact those that reside there. Goldsboro/Wayne County is no different. Mrs. Mary Ernestine Whitted Wooten was one of those icons. She was a hard-working humanitarian with a strong passion for making her community a better place. As a result, countless people were positively impacted.

Mrs. Wooten was a lifetime member of the Wayne County Museum; therefore, it is imperative that we share her amazing and impactful life with this community. She was an ardent supporter of the museum. She had an incredible memory, and as a result, served as a consultant for all of the Black History exhibits. She believed in the importance of sharing the history of African Americans, especially of those in Wayne County.

Mrs. Wooten was one of eleven children, born on March 10, 1925, to Earl and Mable Whitted. She was reared in an area of Goldsboro that is referred to as "Little Washington." She was educated in the Goldsboro City School System and ultimately graduated as an honor student from what is affectionately referred to as "Good Old Dillard" High School. She furthered her education by attending Winston Salem Teacher's College. Mrs. Wooten continued to advance her knowledge by obtaining her Master of Science Degree in Education from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.

Mrs. Wooten began her teaching career in the Goldsboro City School System. Throughout her



career as an educator, she was always investing in her professional development. As a result, Mrs. Wooten became an advisor and the state coordinator for the Follow Through Program (the most extensive educational experiment ever conducted to determine the best way to teach at-risk children from kindergarten through third grade). She also served as an educational consultant for several programs on both the local and state levels. Her most prominent role was that of being a consultant for the Division of Communication Skills for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in Raleigh, North Carolina. Mrs. Wooten loved children and she loved to teach. This was always evidenced

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# Remembering Mary Ernestine Whitted Wooten (cont.)

*(Continued from page 3)*

by her display of energy and enthusiasm in and out of the classroom. She was always eager to educate, empower, and inspire her students. As I pen this article, I am reminded, as a fifth grader, of how much I looked forward to going to her weekly accelerated reading class. I was privileged to be under her tutelage and I continue to be a benefactor of her support and encouragement. There are so many students who could echo those same sentiments.

Mrs. Wooten was a member of the historic First African Baptist Church for 88 years. Her love for children was further evidenced by the fact that she directed “The Sunshine Choir” for thirty years. She served on the Deaconess Board, taught Sunday School, and served in many other capacities too numerous to mention in this article. Her devotion to her beloved church was way above par. Her Christian tenets were displayed by the fact that up until recently, she and her daughter Nancy would pick up meals from the Community Crisis Center and deliver them to people in the Community.

Mrs. Wooten was a member of numerous organizations. She was a lifetime member of the NAACP, the NEA, the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and the Wayne County Museum, to name a few. She served on the Foundation

Board of Wayne Community College and the Boards of the Arts Council of Wayne County, the Wayne Opportunity Center, and Wayne County Social Services. All of these involvements certainly made a significant impact on our community.

Mrs. Wooten’s political engagement was nearly unmatched, as far as this community is concerned. She was the first African American female to serve as Chairman of the Wayne County Democratic Party. She was a member and past President of the Wayne County Democratic Women, a member of the Democratic Women of North Carolina, and a member of the Wayne County Board of Elections. Additionally, Mrs. Wooten served on the Committees to elect /re-elect Governor Mike Easley, Governor James Hunt, and President William Clinton. Ultimately, she was named North Carolina Democratic Woman of the Year in 1976.

Mrs. Wooten was married to John Henry Wooten, Sr.(deceased), who was also a great humanitarian, for more than sixty years. She leaves her legacy to a son, John Henry Wooten, Jr., a daughter, Nancy Wooten Coor, and to one grandchild and two great-grandchildren.

Mrs. Mary Ernestine Whitted Wooten left us on January 5, 2024. Needless to say, Mrs. Wooten made an impression on this community and the state of North Carolina. She left a void that is unlikely to be filled. She was always “up and doing”, leaving footprints worthy to be followed. Upon the knowledge of her death, Governor Roy Cooper, Retired Congressman G. K. Butterfield, and representative Phil Baddour sent letters of condolence to her family. Most importantly, the Goldsboro City Council, along with Mayor Charles Gaylor, proclaimed January 20, 2024, as a day of remembrance and recognition for her many contributions to our city. We, the members of the Wayne County Historical Association/Wayne County Museum, are surely all the better for having known her.



# Black History Building on Tour

The building pictured here housed the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, one of the Black-owned businesses in downtown Goldsboro. It is located at the corner of James and Spruce Streets.

North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company was founded in 1898 by African-American business leaders to fill the need for an insurance association to serve black communities. Its headquarters were in Durham in an area that became known as Black Wall Street. It acquired this name because of the thriving African-American businesses there during the late 1800's and early 1900's. North Carolina Mutual was the nation's oldest and largest black-owned insurance company.

North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company was liquidated in 2022.

This building is featured in the monthly Black History Walks by Executive Director Jennifer Kuykendall.



# February Events at the Wayne County Museum



**February 3**  
**Saturday** – **10am– Opening day of the 2024 Black History Exhibit, “Rooted in Faith:”** the 160-year history of First African Baptist Church. The exhibit will go on **until May 25th**. Open to the public and free to all.

**February 3**  
**Saturday** – **10:30am-12pm – Free Downtown History Walking Tour** – The free walking tour meets in the lobby of the Museum **at 10:30am** and lasts about 1.5 hours. The tour will cover the history of Goldsboro and various downtown’s historic sites and buildings downtown. Please wear comfy shoes.

\*Weather permitting – if rain is imminent, or temps are below 55°, we will reschedule.

**February 10**  
**Saturday** – **1pm** – A very special showing of the iconic film "Black Panther" in the Museum's spacious USO ballroom. Tickets will be **\$10 each** and available for sale online, or in person at the museum. Concessions will be available for purchase. Proceeds to benefit the Museum. \*This event has been generously sponsored by the Dillard/Goldsboro Alumni & Friends, Inc.

**February 23-25 – Center Stage Theatre** will be performing the riveting play, "**One Flew Over the Cuckoos Nest**" at the Museum.

*\*Tickets available on CST's website or at the Paramount Theater.*

**Showtimes:** **Friday/Saturday** – 7:30pm  
**Sunday Matinee** – 3pm

**February 24**  
**Saturday** – **10:30am-12pm – Free Downtown Black History Walking Tour** – The free walking tour meets in the lobby of the Museum **at 10:30am** and lasts about 1.5 hours. The tour will cover some of the Black History of Downtown, the James Street Black business district, and the historic “Little Washington” neighborhood. Please wear comfy shoes.

\*Weather permitting – if rain is imminent, or temps are below 55°, we will reschedule.

**February 24**  
**Saturday** – **2-5pm** – The annual **Jack & Jill Club's Black History** program. Students from the Eastern NC Chapter of Jack & Jill of America Club will be presenting their annual educational history event at the Museum. The National Black History month theme for this year is "Blacks in the Arts" and the kids will be exploring and speaking on that topic. **Free and open to the public.**

## February Happenings in the Community

**February 14 – 12:00pm – Golden Ages (50+) – Goldsboro Event Center** – Bring **Wednesday** a dessert, lunch will be provided – Come and see what they are all about.



# *Rent This Space!*



⇨ Rent this lovely space! The upstairs ballroom of the museum is a fitting venue for many occasions – birthday parties, as decorated here by Jones Girls Decor of Goldsboro, wedding receptions, baby showers, family reunions, and more. With a \$100 (non-refundable) booking fee, and a \$125 p/h rental rate with a minimum of two hours of use on an hourly basis only, you can have access to the entire second floor of the museum. For more information or to make a reservation, call (919) 734-5023. Members of the Wayne County Historical Association receive a 20 percent discount.

# *Becoming A Member*

If you're receiving this newsletter, you're likely already a member of the Wayne County Historical Association and Museum. If not, that means someone has thought enough of you to share it and include you in the experience. To receive the newsletter directly to your email the first of each month, join online at [waynemuseum.org/membership](http://waynemuseum.org/membership) or go to the museum in person and Assistant Director Jeff Westbrook will assist you. Membership has its privileges!

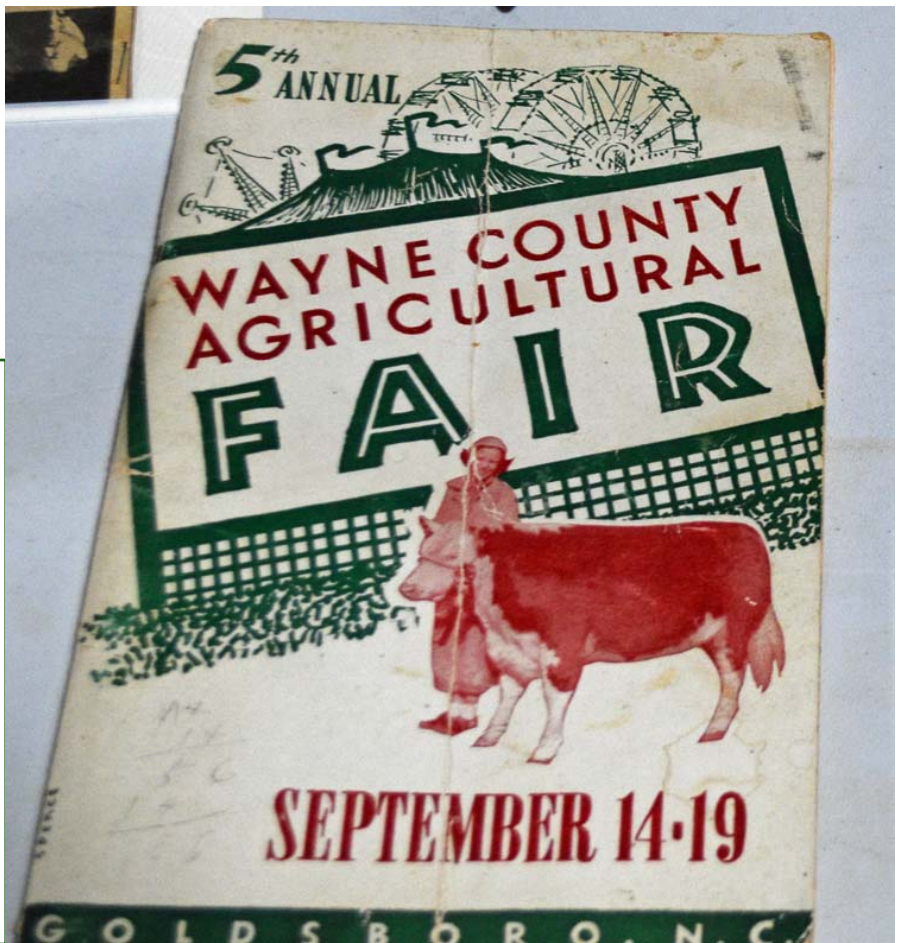
In addition to receiving the monthly newsletter by email, you will receive discounts on ticketed events, a 10% discount in the museum gift shop, a 20% discount on Ballroom rentals, invitations to special Members-Only Events, and voting privileges at Wayne County Historical Association meetings. We appreciate your support to preserve our local history.





# Gregory Peele

On Saturday, January 27, Gregory Peele spoke to a large audience at the Wayne County Museum. Mr. Peele's family has lived and farmed in the Nahunta community for more than 200 years. He entertained and enlightened his audience with his stories of growing up on a farm and his family's involvement in 4-H, the Grange, Extension Homemakers, and the Wayne County Fair. He also brought memorabilia for the audience to view.



Mr. Peele holds up the snap beans that his mother canned and won first prize in the Wayne County Fair in 1927.



# The World Beyond

There was a great turnout at the Wayne County Museum on January 5 for the documentary, "The World Beyond". Hunter Wilson, a longtime native of Goldsboro, created a documentary during his time at East Carolina University in the study abroad program. After spending his entire upbringing in Goldsboro, he went to Germany, along with other countries, on a six-month long journey to explore the differences and similarities between the cultures. After viewing the documentary, Mr. Wilson, along with the event attendees, had a great question and answer portion of the program, where viewers could ask questions regarding the content and themes in the documentary. Some great discussions were had, and it was great to hear Mr. Wilson's story.



Hunter Wilson (L) answering questions and Heath Radford is the one who arranged for the event (R).



# World War II Liberty Ship – *SS Matthew T. Goldsboro*

*By Jeff Westbrook*

The City of Goldsboro is named in honor of Matthew T. Goldsborough (1812-1861), an assistant chief engineer in charge of building the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad, completed in 1840. It was the longest (161.5 miles) railroad in the world and led to the growth of the City of Goldsboro. A World War II Liberty ship was also named in honor of Matthew T. Goldsborough. Liberty ships were considered emergency construction vessels by the United States Maritime Commission, built to transport 9,000 tons of cargo or ammunition, plus jeeps, airplanes, tanks, and locomotives strapped to the deck. They also transported thousands of troops during the allied war effort. Costing less than 2-million dollars, Liberty ships were mass-produced in record time, around 30-70 days using prefabricated materials welded together. A total of 2,711 Liberty ships were built by men and women at 18 East, West, and Gulf Coast ports. The *SS Matthew T. Goldsboro* was launched March 15, 1943, one of 125 Liberty ships built at the port of Wilmington, NC, from 1941-46. Liberty ships were named for prominent deceased Americans and 18 were named for outstanding African Americans. Liberty ships were 441 feet long and 56 feet wide. They were powered by a 2,500 horsepower oil fired steam engine with a speed of 11 knots (12.7 mph). Liberty ships had a crew of 44 and up to 25 Naval Armed Guards. The *SS Matthew T. Goldsboro* participated in the D-Day invasion of Normandy, France, and carried soldiers and equipment from the United Kingdom ahead of the land invasion. The *SS Matthew T. Goldsboro* carried 480 soldiers and 120 army vehicles into battle and was slightly damaged in the Dover Straits by German coastal batteries on June 25, 1944. Of the 2,711 Liberty ships built during World War II, 200 were destroyed by torpedos, mines, and aircraft attacks with loss of life at 6,795. After the war, many Liberty ships were docked for future use or sold for scrap. The *SS Matthew T. Goldsboro* was dismantled for scrap in Kearney, New Jersey, in 1969. Only two Liberty ships remain today as floating museums.





# Children's Programming at the Wayne County Museum: Learning and Literacy

By Mary Susan Heath

A study lasting two decades has found that simply having books in the home increases children's academic success, attention span, vocabulary development, and job attainment. (Social Science Research, Volume 77, January 2019, Pages 1-15). Children who own their own books experience these benefits and more by becoming vested in their own learning and literacy.

The study also found that having a 500-book library in the home has the same long-term benefits as having university-educated parents. Even if the parents are barely literate (3 years of education), having a 500-book library is just as effective in propelling a child along in his/her future education as having highly educated parents. The average for either is 3.2 years further in education.

Owning 500 books may seem an impossible goal. However, the study also found that having even 20 books in their home would have a significant impact on children's future education, as well.

We, at the Wayne County Museum, are attempting to help meet this need by offering children's programming that includes free books, Readers' Theatre performances by children, lessons in history or science, and themed arts and crafts. Parts in the Children's Readers' Theatre programs are open to any child who wants to participate at no charge. Parents whose children would like to read on stage may contact Crystal Hodges, Education Committee Chair, at [crystalhodges@wcps.org](mailto:crystalhodges@wcps.org) or Mary Susan Heath at [heathtomcat@yahoo.com](mailto:heathtomcat@yahoo.com).

## Programs and dates for Children's Programming

**Fairy Tale Festival, 1-3pm, Saturday, March 9, featuring *The Three Bears* and related STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Activities, beginning with a Readers' Theatre performance at 1.**

**May Day Festival, 1-3pm, Saturday, April 27, featuring a performance of the Readers' Theatre, *May Day! May Day!* at 1pm., followed by a dance around the May Pole, arts and crafts, face painting, and a scavenger hunt.**

**Stars and Stripes, 1-3pm, Saturday, June 29, featuring a performance of the Reader' Theatre, *Lady Liberty for Kids*, at 1pm, followed by arts and crafts, face painting, and a scavenger hunt.**

**Back to School Celebration, 1-3pm, Saturday, August 10, featuring a performance of the Readers' Theater, *First Day Back to School Jitters*, at 1pm, followed by arts and crafts, face painting, and a scavenger hunt.**

Thanks to funding by Doricia and Ben Benton, personally, and their family business, Benton and Sons Fabrication, free new children's books will be given out at each program. Selections are based on the theme of each individual program. This generous donation by the Benton family is given in honor of David and Emily Weil and their service to Wayne County. All children's programs are provided for the community at no charge by the Wayne County Museum.

Statistics reported from the NC Department of Public Instruction reveal that "Every Wayne County elementary school but one, Grantham Elementary, has a reading proficiency of less than 50 percent" (Renee Carey, Wayne Week, December 31, 2023). One wonders how many books Wayne County's elementary age student have in their homes and what impact having more might have had on their reading levels.

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## Children's Programming at the Wayne County Museum: Learning and Literacy (cont.)



Story Time with Ms. Frizzle at the Back to School Bash



Guest Appearances of Lady Liberty (Emma Padgett) and Uncle Sam (Niko Martin) at the Stars and Stripes Children's Celebration



STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Activity at the Fairy Tale Festival

Readers' Theatre Interactive Performance of "May Day! May Day!"



Readers' Theatre Production of "The Three Little Pigs"





# Anne of Green Gables



## Cast with Technicians (T)

**Top Row (L-R):** Emma Carlyle (T), Valerie Keefer, Dawn Amory, Venessa Therrien, Sue Nobers, Dahlia Portela, Sophia Saldivar, Ron Sutton, Nathan Gardner, Frank Mandeville, and Merritt Gower (T).

**Middle Row (L-R):** Tom Anderson (T), Linda Sampson, Banks Peacock, Martin Mejia, Gregory Brown, Jordan Therrien, David White, Nikolaus Martin, Haley Short, Jennifer Fontine (T), and Michael Daye (T).

**Bottom Row (L-R):** Bruce Mahlstadt (T), Rosanna Anderson (Asst. Dir.), and Heath Radford (Director).



David White (Narrator) has been a regular Museum Player and a staple of the Reader's Theatre Radio Dramas at the Wayne County Museum.



Sue Nobers (Marilla) and Gregory Brown (Matthew) brought such emotion and chemistry to the stage.



# Anne of Green Gables (cont.)



As Sue Nobers (Marilla) looks on, Jordan Therrien (Anne) is quite anguished over the results of her recent choice to dye her hair.



"If you want my opinion, **which I'm sure you don't**" became an audience favorite of the lines delivered by Venessa Therrien (Rachel).



Bosom friends Anne and Diana, portrayed by Jordan Therrien and Dahlia Portela, have a luncheon where Diana mistakenly drinks Marilla's currant wine instead of the intended raspberry cordial.



Sophia Saldivar (Josie), Dahlia Portela (Diana), Haley Short (Ruby), Niko Martin (Gilbert), Frank Mandeville (Moody) and Nathan Gardner (Charlie) brought great energy and life to Anne's classmates and friends.



"Mrs. Lynde says – Play-acting is abominably wicked!"



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# LOCAL HISTORY PROGRAMS

## FEBRUARY 2024



### **An Evening with the AKAs**

**FEBRUARY 7**

Local History Room | Goldsboro

**4:00 PM**

Join us for an evening of celebration with our local Alpha Kappa Alpha ladies. This will be an evening of learning the history and contributions of the AKAs in Wayne County. For more information, contact [library.localhistory@waynegov.com](mailto:library.localhistory@waynegov.com) or call 919-735-1824 ext 1830.

### **Oral History Introduction**

**FEBRUARY 13**

Local History Room | Goldsboro

**6:00 PM**

Join us for an informational session about oral histories. Keep hearing that term but unsure what it really means? This is the session for you. We will discuss the purpose and importance of oral histories in local history work as well as our current projects. Registration required. Please call 919-735-1824 ext. 1830 to register.

### **Using Our Collections**

**FEBRUARY 20**

Local History Room | Goldsboro

**6:00 PM**

Want to learn how to utilize all the fancy tools in Local History? Join us for an informational session about using our collection, including our microfilm machine and scanner! Registration required.

### **History Documentary Night**

**FEBRUARY 29**

Local History Room | Goldsboro

**6:00 PM**

*Black is the Color* tells the history of how African American artists uplift their community through their artwork and reclaim their image from the racist stereotypes present in society. 52-minute runtime. Space is limited for this program. To register call 919.735.1824 ext 1830!



Due to limited space, we ask that you call or email to register for Local History events. For more information about any of our Local History programming, please contact us!

919.735.1824 EXT 1830

[LIBRARY.LOCALHISTORY@WAYNEGOV.COM](mailto:LIBRARY.LOCALHISTORY@WAYNEGOV.COM)



# WCHA and Museum Sponsors

The Wayne County Historical Association Board of Directors would like to thank the following sponsors for their contribution to the museum's mission, which is "to discover, preserve, document, display, and disseminate historical knowledge and artifacts of Wayne County and the State of North Carolina. We also seek to increase public awareness of the heritage of Wayne County and its environs through exhibits, events, and traditional and digital information sources."

**Platinum Sponsors have donated \$1,000 or more to the museum.**

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Rental Discount: Receive a discount on ballroom rental for event.	25% discount*	30% discount*	35% discount*	40% discount*
Movie Tickets: Complimentary tickets to all Museum Movie Events* *	(2 tickets)	(2 tickets)	(4 tickets)	(4 tickets)
Event Tickets: Complimentary tickets to featured ticketed events* *	(2 tickets)	(2 tickets)	(4 tickets)	(4 tickets)
*Rental discount not to exceed \$500 during the 12-month period of sponsorship. After reaching \$500, sponsor will continue to receive a 20% discount on future rentals during the 12-month period.				
**Tickets are subject to availability and are only held if requested by the sponsor.				

## WAYNE COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM

116 N. William Street  
Goldsboro, NC 25730  
(919) 734-5023

[www.waynemuseum.org](http://www.waynemuseum.org)

Financial information about this organization and a copy of its license are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at 919-814-5400. The license is not an endorsement by the State.

# RECIPE

## Hummingbird Cake

*Shirley Graves*

*This recipe was taken from "A Taste of First African: First African Baptist Church 146th Anniversary Cookbook."*

### Ingredients:

- 3 c. self-rising flour
- 2 c. sugar
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 1 ½ c. oil
- 1 ½ tsp. vanilla
- 1 (8-oz.) can crushed pineapple, undrained
- 2 c. pecans, chopped
- 1 c. bananas, mashed

### Icing:

- 1 (8-oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened
- ½ c. margarine
- 1 box powdered sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla

### Instructions:

Combine flour, sugar, and cinnamon together. Add eggs and oil. Do not beat. Stir in vanilla, pineapple, 1 cup pecans and the bananas. Bake in layered pans for 25-30 minutes at 350°.

**Icing:** Frost with icing and sprinkle with remaining 1 cup nuts. Icing may be doubled as it will cover layers and sides of cake.



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