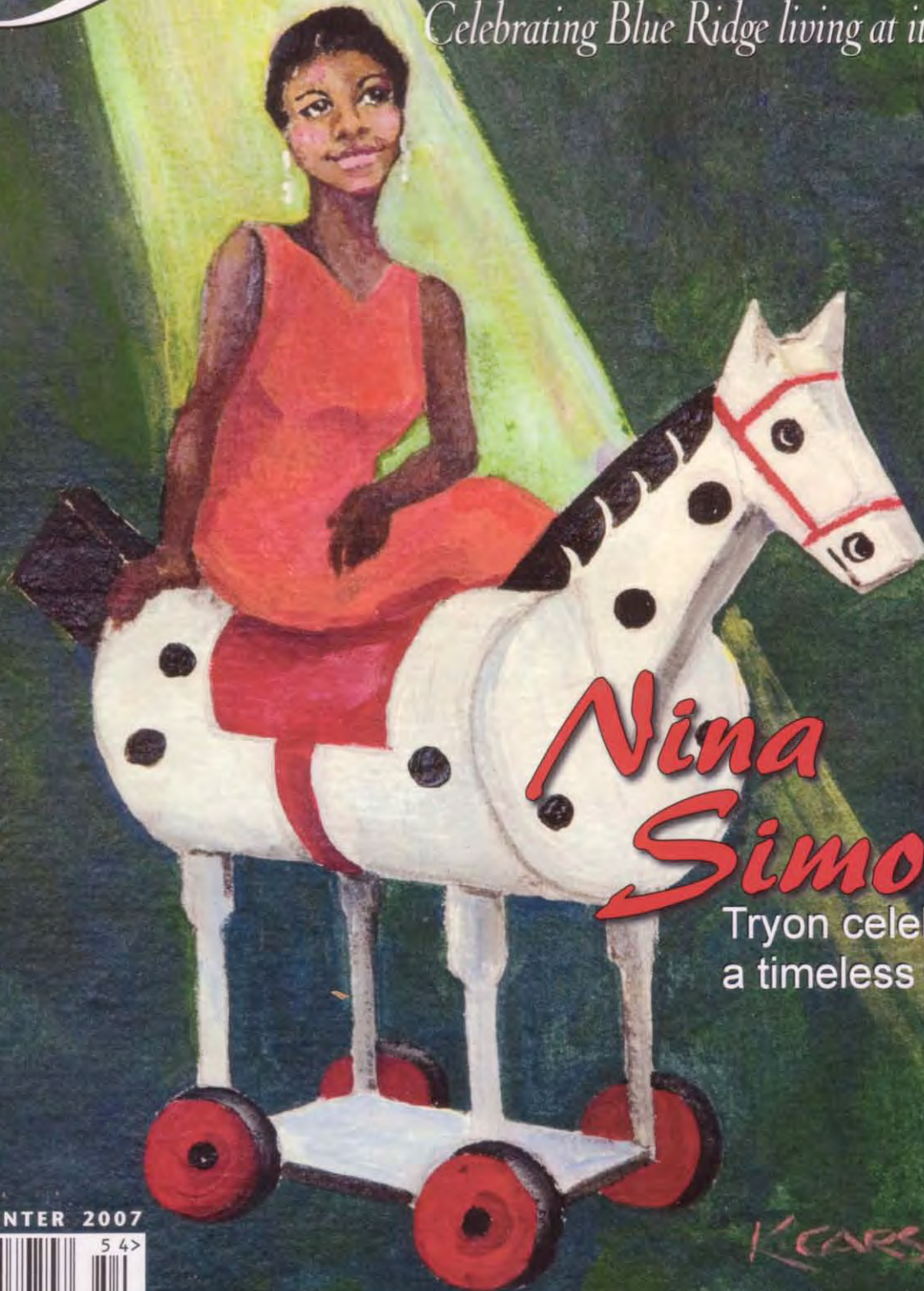


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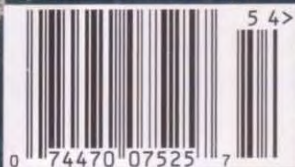
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*Crys Armbrust
is the executive
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Memorial Project
in Tryon*

NINA

Tryon celebrates a timeless talent

Story by **SUSAN CARROLL GALLAGHER**

Photographs by **MICHAEL JUSTUS**
and courtesy the
Eunice Waymon-Nina Simone
Memorial Project

As a child growing up in the small town of Tryon, during the Great Depression, Nina Simone had big dreams. Music moved her heart and soul and she had a natural gift for playing the piano. She could just see herself becoming a famous musician, maybe even the first black, female concert pianist in America.

A large part of that dream came true, thanks to Simone's relentless passion for music. Her deep, sultry vocals and classical piano playing reached across a broad range of music, blending jazz, gospel, soul, pop, folk, rock and blues.

By 1959, when this photo was taken, Tryon-born Eunice Waymon was known as Nina Simone.

SIMONE

'She was a powerful voice for a segment of American society and culture who felt that the separation of individuals into hierarchical structures is inherently wrong and inherently damaging to the well-being of the culture in general.'

Crys Armbrust

Executive director of the Eunice Waymon-Nina Simone Memorial Project

Another side of her legacy is laced with politics and controversy. Deeply touched by the civil rights movement of the 1960s, Simone wrote and performed protest songs.

Six years before she died in the South of France, Simone offered this reflection on her life, published in *Details* magazine: "I want to be remembered as a diva from beginning to end who never compromised in what she felt about racism and how the world should be, and who to the end of her days consistently stayed the same."

Simone fans around the world would agree that she fulfilled that mission.

"She was a powerful voice for a segment of American society and culture who felt that the separation of individuals into hierarchical structures is inherently wrong and inherently damaging to the well-being of the culture in general," says Crys Armbrust, a Tryon musician.

Armbrust is heading up the Eunice Waymon-Nina Simone Memorial Project to memorialize Simone in her hometown. The memorial project plans to commemorate Simone through an annu-



THE EUNICE WAYMON NINA SIMONE MEMORIAL PROJECT

al music festival, scholarships and a life-size sculpture. In an unrelated effort, a local couple is working hard on their own to restore Simone's childhood home. (See story on Page 81.)

Simone's contributions to the world transcend music, says Armbrust, a former organist and master of the choristers for Tryon's Episcopal Church of the Holy Cross. He organized the memorial project to help showcase and preserve Simone's music and her Tryon roots.

"I have for a long while had a great

love of her music," Armbrust says. "I think she is quite an extraordinary musician and accomplished in any number of modes."

And, naturally, the Waymon family is thrilled with the Tryon efforts to honor Simone.

"It's the greatest thing in the world," says Simone's brother Dr. Carrol Waymon, 82, from his home in San Diego. "It's part of building the Eunice Waymon/Nina Simone legacy."

Waymon and two other close family members — Simone's daughter, Lisa Celeste Kelly, and Simone's youngest sister, Frances

Waymon-Fox, of Atlanta — are working with the memorial project's committee. Following in her mother's footsteps, Simone's daughter is a musician and has starred in Broadway shows. She's known by her stage name: Simone.

Growing up

Simone was the sixth of eight children born to John D. and Mary Kate Waymon, an ordained Methodist minister. They lived in a cozy, white clapboard house next to a tennis court.

Young Eunice began playing piano at the age of 4 and organ by 7. She frequently performed at her family's church, St. Luke CME Church on Markham Road, where her mama preached.

"Everything that happened to me as a child involved music," Simone later wrote in her autobiography. "It was part of everyday life, as automatic as breathing."

Despite the joy she derived from music, Simone's childhood included some deep-seated hurts. She details some cruel stings of prejudice in her autobiography, *I Put a Spell on You*, written with Stephen Cleary.

At her first public piano recital, her parents gave up their front row seats to allow a white family to sit in them. Eunice wouldn't stand for that. She insisted that her parents return to the front row.

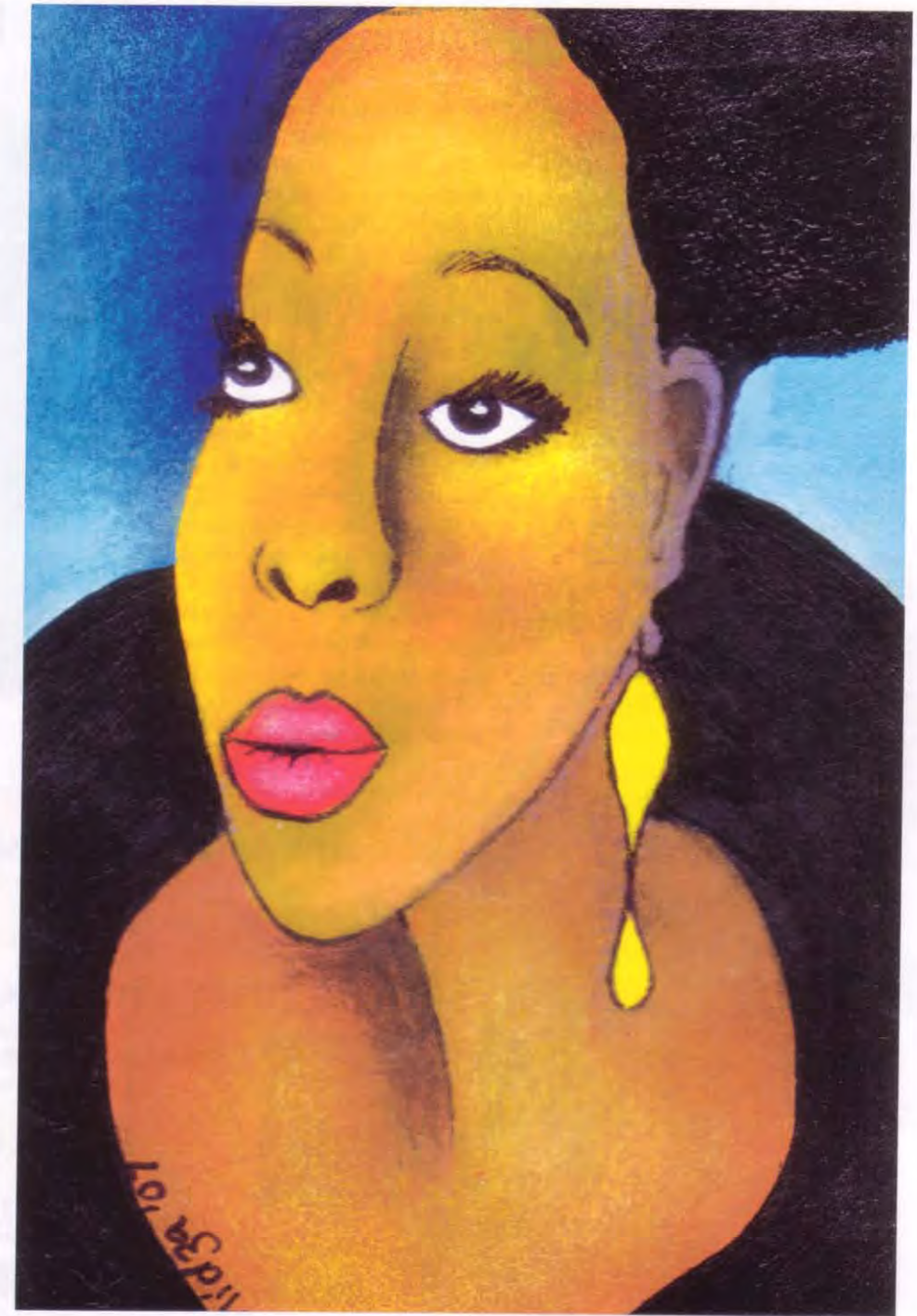
Another injustice occurred at Owens Pharmacy, where Eunice purchased her lunch but wasn't permitted to eat it inside with white residents.

In other ways, though, Simone wrote in her book, the resort town of Tryon was more integrated in its daily life than many other Southern towns of that era. Both blacks and whites owned businesses. John Waymon, Simone's father, operated a barbershop and dry cleaning business.

The Waymons struggled during and after the Great Depression, however. To help support the growing family, Simone's mother took a job in the late 1930s as a maid for a white woman, Mrs. George Miller, who lived in a neighborhood across town.

Fortunately for Simone, Miller was impressed with the girl's piano talent. When the Waymons could not afford lessons, Miller offered to pay for Simone to study classical piano for a year with Muriel Mazzanovich, a piano teacher who lived across the street. Simone and others in Tryon affectionately referred to the piano teacher as Miz or Mrs. Mazzy.

Miller helped establish a music fund for young Eunice, supported by donations from the Tryon community. "Fund



An oil painting of Nina Simone by Zimbabwe-born artist Mucha Kachidza, who now lives in Durham. The artist was inspired by Simone's album cover 'A Single Woman' (1993).

money paid for my tuition each week, and any extra was put away for the future," Simone wrote.

The effort had a lasting influence on Simone.

"Once I understood Bach's music I

never wanted to be anything other than a concert pianist," Simone wrote. "Bach made me dedicate my life to music, and it was Mrs. Mazzy who introduced me to

Continued on Page 71

Cover art is original painting by Tryon artist Kathleen Carson

The “Nina and Morris, the Tryon Horse” cover art is by Kathleen Carson, owner of Simply Irresistible Gallery in downtown Tryon. She studied at Ringling School of Art in Sarasota, Fla., and paints primarily on tile, but says she enjoys creating art on any medium, from metal to paper or wood.

Crys Armbrust, executive director of the Eunice Waymon-Nina Simone Memorial Project, commissioned the artwork for his private collection.

“The Carson piece had a rather metaphysical start,” Armbrust explains.

“I had done an informal program on Nina Simone for the third-, fourth- and fifth-graders at Tryon Elementary,” he says. “They, in turn, performed one of Simone’s

songs in their annual end-of-the-year music program.”

The students sang Simone’s cover of Rudy Stevenson’s *I’m Going Back Home*, the official lyric of the Waymon-Simone project since the lyrics could so easily be construed to be about Tryon itself, Armbrust says.

As the children began to sing, a prop of Morris, as the Tryon Horse is now called, was rolled out on-stage. “And voila! The idea came together,” Armbrust says. “The only detail left was to select the artist, and Kathleen seemed the ideal choice.”

The “Nina and the Tryon Horse” painting will be on display at the Tryon House on Trade Street in Tryon, which specializes in Morris memorabilia.



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Continued from Page 69

his world.”

With the help of her mother, Miller and the community, and Mazzanovich, Simone later attended Allen High School in Asheville, a private Methodist school for girls, founded in 1887 as a boarding and training school for young black women.

After finishing high school in 1950, Simone studied in a summer program with Carl Friedberg at the Juilliard



Above: A 12-year-old Eunice Waymon, who would later come to be known as Nina Simone. Below: She graduated in 1950 from Allen High School in Asheville.

School of Music in New York. Simone hoped to continue her classical piano studies with a scholarship from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where her family had resettled. She auditioned at Curtis but wasn't accepted as a student. Simone believed the rejection occurred because she was black, even though several black musicians including classical composer



and pianist George Walker had previously graduated from Curtis. Shortly before her death in 2003, Simone learned that Curtis had awarded her an honorary degree.

The Curtis rejection became a turning point for Simone. She modified her dream of becoming a classical pianist and began teaching private music lessons. To help support her family, she

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Julie M. Demain



Photo from a Nina Simone album. For a discography, see Pages 74 and 75.

also started performing in Northeastern clubs, using the stage name of Nina Simone. She chose Nina, meaning little one, and Simone after the French actress Simone Signoret. The singer adopted the stage name to keep her religious mother from knowing she was performing in bars.

Her first job was in an Irish bar in Atlantic City, N.J., in 1957. In addition to playing piano she began singing at the bar owner's request and was well received by audiences, especially the college crowd. They loved her eclectic style and vocal range, from deep and passionate to soft and tender. She moved on to clubs in Greenwich Village and launched her recording career in New York in the late 1950s.

'High Priestess of Soul'

Simone got married and recorded her first album in 1958. It featured a version of George Gershwin's *I Loves You, Porgy* from the musical *Porgy and Bess* and became one of Simone's most famous recordings. Audiences loved her songs like *Plain Gold Ring*, *Don't Smoke in Bed* and *Little Girl Blue*. She went on to record dozens of albums in the United States and abroad and earned the monikers "High Priestess of Soul" and "Queen of African Rooted Classical Music."

After a brief marriage, Simone and her first husband, Don Ross, divorced. In 1961, she married former police detective Andy Stroud, who became her recording agent. Their daughter, Lisa

Celeste, was born in 1962. Torn by Simone's career, Stroud and Simone split up in 1970.

During the 1960s, Simone joined the civil rights movement. She wrote songs about prejudice, including the controversial *Mississippi Goddam* following two violent events — the June 1963 assassination of activist Medgar Evers in Mississippi and the bombing of a Birmingham, Ala., church three months later that killed four young black girls.

Disillusioned by the turbulent era and a tax evasion battle with the Internal Revenue Service that led to Simone's losing her home and moving between different foreign countries during the 1970s, she spent most of the last 30 years of her life in Europe and African countries — Liberia, Switzerland, Paris, the Netherlands and the South of France.

All told, Simone's repertoire included more than 500 songs and some 60 albums.

Consider this description of Simone by Village Voice reporter Don Shewey in 1993: "She's not a pop singer, she's a diva, a hopeless eccentric... who has so thoroughly co-mingled her odd talent and brooding temperament that she has turned herself into a force of nature, an exotic creature spied so infrequently that every appearance is legendary."

The memorial project

Awarding scholarships in the musician's honor was a natural direction for the Simone memorial project. It follows the tradition of the community fund that paid for Simone's training as a musician.

So far, the memorial project offers two scholarships: a \$500 stipend open to Junior Scholars, rising sixth-graders through rising 11th-graders, and a \$1,000 stipend open to Senior Scholars, rising 12th-graders and older. The scholarships, Armbrust says, are not limited to aspiring musicians and are accepted from applicants worldwide.

"The scholarship committee looks for that individual who best demonstrates an attempt to strive for excellence" in his or her academic pursuits,



During the 1960s, Nina Simone joined the civil rights movement and wrote songs about prejudice.

says Armbrust. The panel also looks for candidates whose records suggest they might make some significant contribution to their own local communities.

The scholarship arm of the memorial project kicked off a year ahead of schedule, thanks to some private donations. More recently, a local plastics recycler based in Forest City, EcoResin, seeded the scholarship fund with a \$25,000 donation. The project hopes to ultimately endow the fund with \$125,000, Armbrust says.

Toni Keyonna Wilkins, a ninth-grader at Polk County High School, won the junior scholar award. The stipend enabled Wilkins to attend a summer program at the Lake Logan Episcopal Center in Canton that offers music, hiking, canoeing and more.

Wilkins plays first clarinet in her school band, is a cheerleader, participates in track and serves as a junior missionary for her church, visiting the sick and elderly. She and her mother sing at St. Luke CME Church, where

ARTS: Nina Simone

Nina Simone played piano as a child. The teenager has other interests, as well, including track and field.

"The scholarship meant a lot to me," says Wilkins. "It inspired me because



Wilkins

Nina Simone was a person who was raised in my area and was involved like I am."

Meanwhile, Megan Elizabeth Miller, a senior majoring in the classics at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, won the senior scholar award. Miller, who has a 3.9 grade point average, is using her stipend to help pay for books and tuition.

Although Miller is white and grew up in a different era, she sees parallels between her life and Simone's. Her college study in the field of the classics, she says, is traditionally male dominated, mostly "a boys' club."



Miller

"I felt I was a bit like Nina Simone," Miller says. "She didn't

stay in a place where she was expected to stay."

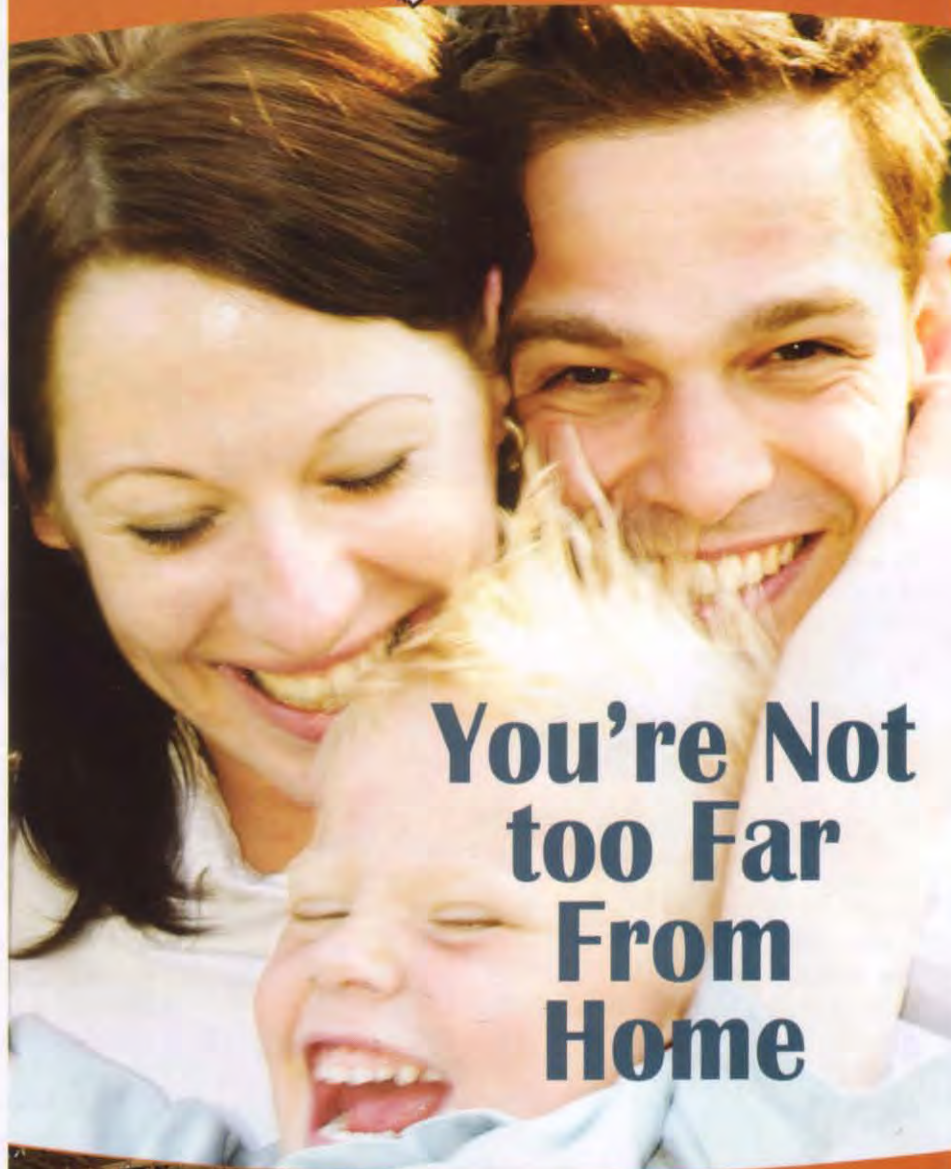
A student of paleography, early writing, Miller spent five weeks at Georgetown University in Washington last summer studying medieval manuscripts that record the philosophies of John Pecham and Henry of Ghent. She hopes to pursue graduate studies in the Classics at Oxford University in Great Britain.

Simone's brother Carrol Waymon, a retired psychology professor, predicts the scholarships will "open vistas for kids who want to go to those places they only dreamed of. The program is going to take these kids' dreams and make them come true."

The scholarship program can also become a way, Armbrust says, to educate public school students about Nina Simone. Maybe even nationwide.

Continued on Page 76

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A DISCOGRAPHY

Nina Simone was a prolific songwriter and performer. Not only did she write many of her own songs, she also performed works by a range of other musicians, including Bob Dylan, Duke Ellington and the Beatles. Following are some of her many albums, as well as compilations of earlier works. This list is compiled from discographies on two fan club Web sites.

Jazz as Played in an Exclusive Side Street Club — 1958, also known as "Little Girl Blue"

Nina Simone and Her Friends — 1959

The Amazing Nina Simone — 1959

Nina Simone at Town Hall — 1959

Nina Simone at Newport — 1960

Forbidden Fruit — 1961

Nina Simone at the Village Gate — 1962

Nina Simone Sings Ellington — 1962

Nina Simone at Carnegie Hall — 1963

Folksy Nina — 1964

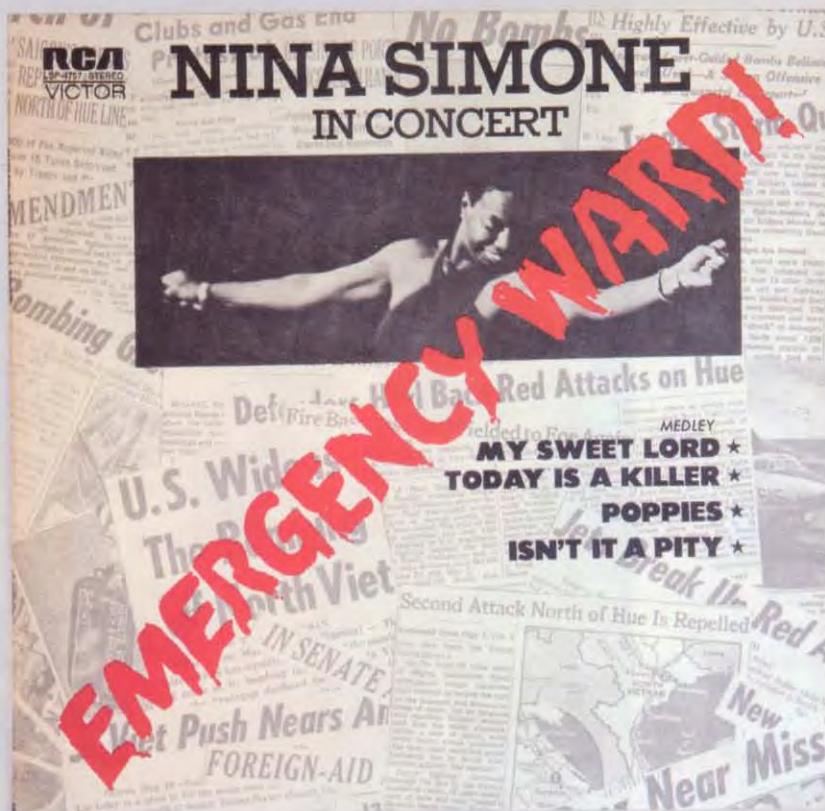
Nina Simone in Concert — 1964

Broadway. Blues. Ballads. — 1964

I Put a Spell on You — 1965

Pastel Blues — 1965

Nina Simone with



Strings — 1966

Let It All Out — 1966

Wild Is the Wind —

1966

High Priestess of Soul —

1967

Nina Simone Sings the Blues — 1967

Silk & Soul — 1967

'Nuff Said! — 1968

Nina Simone and Piano! — 1969

To Love Somebody —

1969

Black Gold — 1970

Here Comes the Sun —

1971

Emergency Ward! —

1972

It Is Finished — 1974

Baltimore — 1978

Fodder on My Wings —

1982

Nina's Back — 1985

Live & Kickin' — 1987

Let It Be Me — 1987

Live at Ronnie Scott's —

1987

The Blues — 1991

Compact Jazz — 1991

A Single Woman —

1993

Best of: The Colpix Years

— 1993

The Rising Sun Collection: Nina Simone —

1994

Forever Classic — 1994

Jazz Masters Vol. 17:

Nina Simone — 1994

Little Girl Blue — (different from 1958 version)

1994

Nina Simone — 1995

Porgy — 1995

Jazz Masters Vol. 58: Nina Simone Sings Nina — 1996

In Concert — 1996

Ultimate Nina Simone — 1997

Released — 1997

Wonderful Music of Nina Simone — 1998

Collection — 1998

Great Nina Simone — 1998

My Baby Just Cares for Me — 1998

Here Comes the Sun and Other Great Hits — 1998

The Collection — 1999

Ain't Go No / I Got Life — 1999

Most Famous Hits — 2000

Legend at Her Best — 2000

The Other Woman — 2000

Misunderstood — 2000

Quiet Now: Night Song — 2000

Platinum — 2000

Legendary — 2001

Live and Kickin' in New York and London — 2001

Midnite Collection: I

Loves You, Porgy — 2001

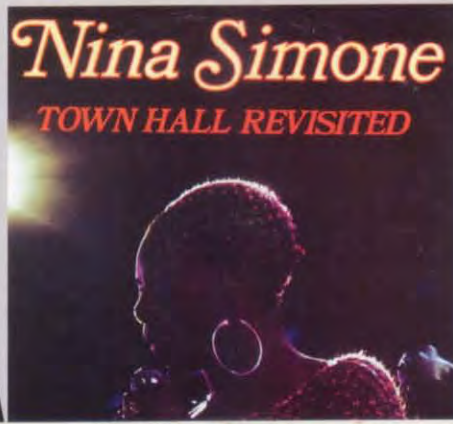
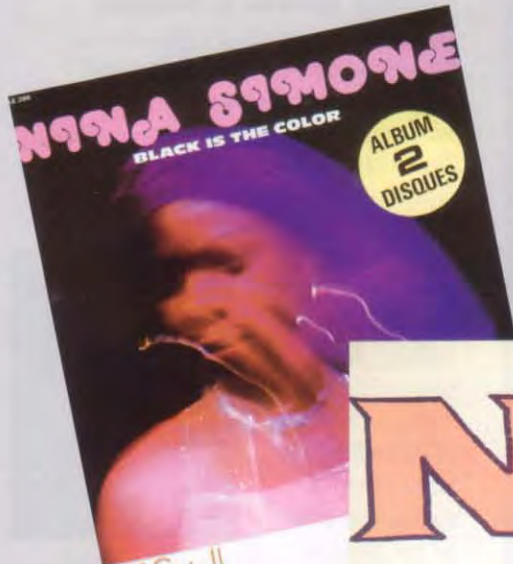
Amazing — 2002

Anthology — 2003

Essential — 2003

Eclectic Collection — 2003

SOURCES: Roger Nupie, president of the International Dr. Nina Simone Fan Club, www.ninasimone.com; www.high-priestess.com



Continued from Page 73

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Casting Simone in bronze

The project includes plans for a bronze sculpture of Nina Simone. Project organizers initially hoped that nationally recognized sculptor and Tryon resident William Behrends would create the sculpture, but he withdrew in late August. He will continue with the project as a consultant, Armbrust says.



A self-portrait by artist Zenos Frudakis

Zenos Frudakis of Philadelphia was named in early September as the project sculptor. Frudakis studied at the Pennsylvania

Academy of the Fine Arts, completing his formal education with a master's degree in fine art at the University of Pennsylvania. His works of art are in public and private collections throughout the United States and abroad.

"I am delighted to share in the creation of a lasting tribute to jazz legend Nina Simone," Frudakis says. "In addition to being a fan of her work, as an artist, it is especially pleasing for me to be given this opportunity to honor another artist. With this statue, her hometown will claim its own and inspire children, who like her were born and raised in Tryon, to realize their potential."

Armbrust hopes the sculpture will be located in downtown Tryon at the site of the old train depot because "it is the most central of locations, most appropriate to recognizing a star of Simone's international caliber and the most accessible of the locations."

Andrew Foster, president of the Tryon Downtown Development Association, would like to see the sculpture as close to downtown as possible. Ideally, Foster says, the statue could be just off U.S. 176, which goes right through the center of town. Historic markers could draw people

ARTS: Nina Simone

from the highway to the site.

In May, Armbrust announced a fund-raising effort called the Club of 200. It seeks 200 donors at the \$500 and/or above level to raise \$106,000 for the sculpture. Donors at the \$500 level or above will have their names inscribed on granite panels that will be incorporated into the sculpture's structural surround.

Music fest

October 2009 is the date set for the first Nina Simone music festival. Armbrust envisions a festival that covers many genres of music. Just like Nina Simone did.

"It is not a music festival wherein only Nina Simone's music will be played," Armbrust says. "It is a trans world music fest in the name of Nina Simone. 'Trans world' because that umbrella incorporates all forms of music, replicating her own performing career."

The festival also will highlight North Carolina's emerging wine industry and



Artist Zenos Frudakis displays what he calls a 'rough start' on the Nina Simone sculpture at his studio in early September.

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local crafts. Tryon is in Polk County, home to some of the state's wineries.

David Nathan, known as the "British Ambassador of Soul," has signed on to help with the music festival. Nathan, with his sister, Sylvia Hampton, founded the first Nina Simone Appreciation Society in the 1960s in Britain and wrote the biography *Nina Simone: Break Down and Let It All Out*, with a foreword by Simone's daughter, Lisa. Nathan also wrote *The Soulful Divas* and is a member of the Executive Committee of the Rhythm and Blues Foundation, which bestows the Pioneer Awards.

"His background and experience in the music industry will be invaluable to us as we formalize plans for the 2009 Music Festival in the name of Nina Simone," Armbrust says.

He also hopes Simone's daughter might perform or participate in the festival. She starred on Broadway in the musical *Aida*, appeared on Broadway in *Rent* and was lead singer for the acid jazz band Liquid Soul.

Ideally, Armbrust says, the festival will spread beyond Tryon, taking place in an arc of performance venues including nearby cities such as Asheville, Hendersonville or Saluda to recognize the magnitude of Simone's talents.

Memorial project organizers are seeking corporate sponsors and local government support for the festival. Armbrust estimates about 35 percent of funding will come from ticket sales.

Tryon government and business leaders are enthusiastic about the festival and hope it might boost the local economy. Tryon's Downtown Development Authority is already signed on.

"I think it is going to be a wonderful, well-attended event," says Town Manager Fatland. "Imagine a Nina Simone jazz fest. There are no others like it in Western North Carolina. There is the uniqueness of this type of festival. It could be a big event in all of

Continued on Page 80

ARTS: **Nina Simone**

'I want to be remembered as a diva from beginning to end who never compromised in what she felt about racism and how the world should be, and who to the end of her days consistently stayed the same.'

Nina Simone

a reflection on her life, published in Details magazine

NINA SIMONE

AUSTRALIA · NEW ZEALAND · 92



Continued from Page 78

the Southeast.”

And the Nina Simone festival will provide positive publicity for Tryon.

“Any time you can bring people into our community is a good thing,” says Bill Hillhouse, chairman of the downtown development association’s board of directors. “Tryon is a neat place and when people come here, they enjoy it. Also, they spend money here, and that’s good for our downtown merchants.”

He hopes the festival also will foster the community’s sense of place.

“Tryon prides itself on arts,” Hillhouse says. “We are a large fine arts center for such a small town. With our history of authors and poets, the project fits in well with that image.”

Looking ahead

Four years after her death at the age of 70 at her home in the South of France, Simone’s fame continues.

Her voice has been heard in TV commercials, on movie soundtracks and chronicled in books. There’s even buzz on the Internet that singer and actress Mary L. Blige will star in a movie about Simone, according to the movie database IMDb.com.

As the memorial project gains momentum, Tryon’s role in sustaining Simone’s legacy is growing. People are turning to Tryon for information about the music legend. In fact, Armbrust says a writer is coming to town to research a biography about Simone.

And Town Manager Fatland says he’s even received a call from a man in France who wants to help preserve Simone’s legacy. Says Fatland, “If there is going to be a place for people to come to, it should be Tryon.”

Susan Carroll Gallagher lives in Spartanburg, S.C.

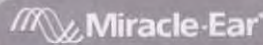
For more information on the Eunice Waymon-Nina Simone Project, go online to www.ninasimoneproject.org.

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‘My family lived in a big house then — it had a slide in the yard, a swing and a basketball hoop, and we were one of only two black families in town with a tennis court next to the house, so other kids were always going to and fro. By 1930 my father was a respected member of the town’s business community, Momma had made a good home and my brothers and sisters had settled in school and were doing well.’

— Nina Simone in her autobiography,
I Put a Spell on You, written with Stephen Cleary

Restoration *of a* birthplace

Story by SUSAN CARROLL GALLAGHER

Photographs by MICHAEL JUSTUS

HERITAGE: Waymon home



The Waymon home in Tryon is being restored to how it was in the 1930s when Eunice Waymon lived there with her family. Before she became known to the world as Nina Simone, Eunice was a musical talent first recognized and nurtured in her small hometown.



The modest frame building on East Livingston Street in Tryon is being restored. Eunice Waymon, known to the world as the legendary musician Nina Simone, was born in Tryon in 1933.



Kipp and Julie McIntyre are working to preserve the birthplace of Eunice Waymon.

Preservation project to offer a peek into the past

Kipp and Julie McIntyre want to preserve the story of the modest frame house at 30 E. Livingston St. in Tryon, where Eunice Waymon, known to the world as the legendary musician Nina Simone, was born in 1933.

The Waymon home, built in the mid- to late 1920s, stood at the center of a vibrant African-American community. The McIntyres want to bring that history to life by restoring the house and grounds to the way they were when Eunice Waymon, her parents and five older siblings lived there.

“There are people out there who will want to see, look into the windows and peer into the past, and we’re going to provide that,” says Kipp McIntyre.

McIntyre, who has an art degree and works as Polk County’s economic development director, and his wife, Julie, an architect, bought the house two years ago and are financing its restoration themselves. They call their private endeavor the Eunice Waymon Birthplace and Garden. (It has no connection to the Eunice Waymon-Nina Simone Memorial Project.)

“My wife and I own the birthplace and are slowly

documenting it,” McIntyre says. “We have three goals: that it never be thought of as anything other than the birthplace of Eunice Waymon, that it be protected and preserved in perpetuity and that it appear on the inside and out as close to as it did in 1933 when Eunice was born.”

McIntyre hopes the house will be ready by February 2008. “The house will be restored within reason — no plumbing, no electricity,” he says. “It will remain as an exhibit.”

At the time of publication, he wasn’t sure how the exhibit would be operated or under what auspices.

“We don’t want to partner with any organization yet that would in any way put those three goals in jeopardy,” McIntyre says.

It would be fantastic if the project could lead to economic development and job creation on Tryon’s east side, he says.

“I don’t see it as a museum,” McIntyre says, “but as a physical connection to our past, Tryon’s past, specifically the African-American community’s past.”

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HERITAGE: Waymon home

A historical journey

McIntyre offers a vivid glimpse of that past during a recent walk through the site.

The Waymons' neighborhood echoed with the sounds of children playing and their elders tending to busy lives. In her autobiography, Simone recalls spending winter days with her mother in the kitchen, where the stove kept her warm while her mother prepared food and sang to her.

"All the kids would play on that side," says McIntyre as he looks east across the yard and beyond. "Down in that kudzu swale, there was a baseball field and a larger playground where they would have community gatherings and such."

Eunice Waymon's older brother Dr. Carrol Waymon, 82, remembers it well.

"Our house was a gathering place for our community," says the retired psychology professor during a telephone interview from his home in San Diego. "Everybody went to Mrs. Waymon's home."

The Waymon home was center of all kinds of kid-related activities, with a tennis court next door that attracted high school and college-aged kids, he says.

Carrol Waymon can still remember how the playground across the street, now all grown over, looked in their childhood. "It was cleared then. All the kids came to play horseshoe and ball and go barefoot in the summer."

"Daddy built a kind of merry-go-round for us to play on," he says. "We would go 'round and 'round on it."

They called it a "whirly horse." It looked a bit like a seesaw, with a plank of wood that swung and twirled from a pipe in the ground.

The children also played a kind of basketball using tennis balls and a cylindrical oatmeal box that the kids would affix to the Waymon house with a nail.

Just up the road to the west stood the family's church, St. Luke CME (since replaced by a newer building), where Eunice played piano. Her mother, Mary Kate, played the organ and served as an elder and minister. As in



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HERITAGE: Waymon home



Kipp and Julie McIntyre talk about their work to preserve the birthplace of Eunice Waymon on East Livingston Street in Tryon. In the background is St. Luke CME Church.

many other Southern towns, church was a focal point for the community's social life in Tryon.

Eunice's father, John, worked as a barber and ran a dry cleaning business, or "pressing club." His father used a garage on the home's property as his barbershop and the pressing club after he closed his downtown shop, Carrol Waymon recalls.

McIntyre calls John Waymon the "classic entrepreneur." In addition to cutting hair and pressing, he also delivered goods by truck, sold box lunches to job sites, traded vegetables from the family garden for other staples and cooked at Lake Lanier and Chimney Rock.

Next door was the Lyles house, a centerpiece for the community that included a library. A library for African-Americans was important to the community at a time when institutional



Dr. Carrol Waymon, an older brother of Nina Simone's, visited his old home in Tryon and offered historic details about the house, garden and other structures on the site.

PHOTO BY JEFF BYRD/TRYON DAILY BULLETIN

segregation existed, McIntyre notes. And Fred Lyles, who owned the home, enjoyed pulling people together.

The demolition of the Lyles home a

few years ago prompted the McIntyres to buy and preserve the Eunice Waymon/Nina Simone birthplace.

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HERITAGE: Waymon home

looking for this house. They come here looking for the birthplace of Nina Simone," McIntyre says. "We want them to be satisfied when they get here."

The McIntyres have conducted their own extensive research to guide them in the restoration. The couple is using oral histories obtained from Waymon relatives and friends and research compiled by environmental designer Richard Westmacott in his 1992 book, *African-American Gardens and Yards in the Rural South*.

Carrol Waymon has visited Tryon to provide the McIntyres with details about the home, garden and other structures on the site. The McIntyres recorded his visits through pictures and text at www.eunicewaymonbirthplace.blogspot.com on the Internet, along with pictures of the home's early stages of renovation.

The McIntyres' research also has led them down N.C. 108 and Fox Mountain Road to the site of an ex-slave's home and to a Stony Knoll library built in the 1930s to serve African-Americans. There they have found a playground ride similar to the "whirly horse" Carrol Waymon recalls as well as a garage and other structural features like ones at the family's home.

On their historical journey, the McIntyres have discovered a larger story about the fabric of African-American communities in the rural South.

"The African-American history in North and South Carolina is a very rich history," McIntyre says. "It is a history that is retold from community to community. For example, architecture is similar, that is well documented. So what we have here is a physical example of that, and that intrigues me, and it intrigues my wife as an architect."

House of memories

By August, the McIntyres had spent a year and a half getting the house to the point of exposed exterior clapboards, interior bead board walls and wood floors. Gone are 70 years of modernization — dropped ceilings, linoleum



"It was not easy leaving our home where we raised our children, but we decided to find our own special place here at Pine Park."

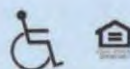
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HERITAGE: Waymon home



The McIntyres plan to replicate the home's original clapboard with lumber from a local mill. They will then paint the house to match its 1930s appearance.

flooring, tiny replacement windows, a bathroom on the porch and exterior siding.

The yard outside has been cleared to restore a large vegetable garden that grew on the eastern side of the house. When finished, the home will have its original outhouse, a replica of the seesaw and, perhaps, a garage quite similar to the one John Waymon used as a barbershop. The house will have no furnace or plumbing.

"The outhouse was right here and there was an old driveway that came up right here," McIntyre says as he surveys the site.

A street divides the Waymon home on the west side from what had been the neighboring Lyles house. "There was a bank of trees right here. It was

beautiful."

He walks over to the Waymon house. "There was a little back porch that came off the house," McIntyre says. "We took all the siding away and found that the original platform was there. ... It would have been just a small, very simple type porch."

The Waymon home's foundation originally had no cement blocks, just wooden posts. After many decades, the chimney of the home, its main support, remains erect, but the rest of the house sags.

The McIntyres are having the house lifted and set on new posts to make it level. New windows and doors will follow.

Another part of the plan is to replicate the home's original clapboard.

Some sections still exist, but other areas were replaced over the years.

The McIntyres are milling their own clapboard at a local lumber company where they have found wood that they can cut to the correct width. After they restore the clapboard, they will paint the house to replicate its 1930s appearance.

McIntyre points to a bright white section of the home's original clapboard. "This is a whitewash test that we put on a year ago. This is simply lime, water and salt. ... It lasts about a year before you repaint it. This is how they would have done it in 1933, because the house gleamed white."

Although the McIntyres have no pictures of the Waymon house from that time, they do have descriptions from

HERITAGE: Waymon home



Kipp McIntyre talks about work to preserve the Waymon home.

neighbors and the Waymon siblings who grew up there.

For instance, they know the windows had four panes, two in each half. They have found similar replacement windows through a company in Rhode Island.

The floors and walls are stripped to the original bare wood.

“When we got in here, there was plywood on the floor and linoleum on top of the plywood. And then they put it on top of the raw floor,” McIntyre recalls. The ceilings were hidden above much lower drop ceilings that the McIntyres have removed.

Larger than life

The 540-square-foot, front-gabled house consists of three rooms: a bedroom in the front, a living room running from front to back and a kitchen

Continued on Page 90



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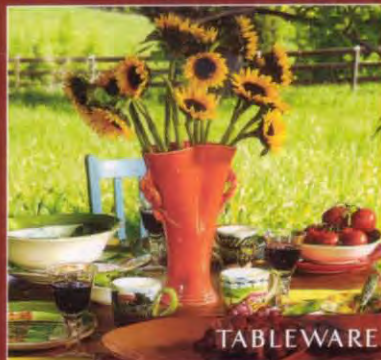
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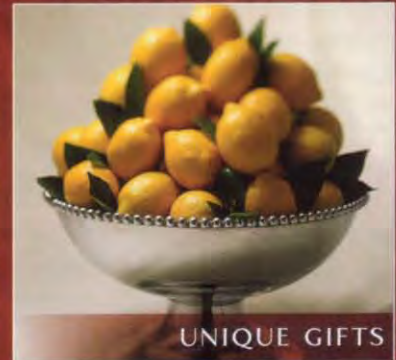
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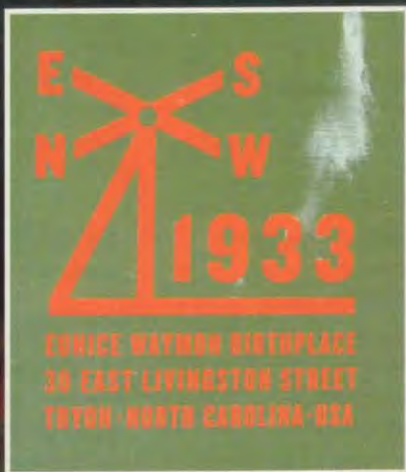
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During restoration of the old Waymon homeplace, the McIntyres are keeping an eye out for hidden treasures. Artifacts include a cedar post, a paint can, a canning jar lid and some old dishes. At right, a marker notes the date Eunice Waymon was born.



HERITAGE: Waymon home

Continued from Page 88

off the living room. The house seemed big to small children, Carrol Waymon remembers.

"When I went back a couple of years ago to see the house, I said, 'Where's the house? That is the house?' As a little boy, it was a big house. I couldn't believe six of us children lived there. ... All of my greatest memories are of there."

There is a small inset porch on the front that used to have a swing. He recalls, "We would go up and down."

The master bedroom contained two beds, a bureau, a mirror, a small cot where Eunice slept and perhaps a wardrobe because there were no closets, Waymon says.

In Eunice's bedroom, where she was born, the original bead board walls now are exposed. McIntyre pauses to examine a loose wall board that separates the bedroom from the kitchen and finds a

canning jar lid behind it. He has proceeded slowly and meticulously in the restoration, always keeping an eye out for this kind of hidden treasure.

"We don't want to go in and just pull stuff out between walls, because there are clues as to what kind of activity went on," he says.

A potbellied stove sat in the living room against the interior wall. A crank telephone hung on the wall nearest the front door.

The beloved pump organ sat across from the potbellied stove. The family called it the Music Corner.

"There was music all the time. Everybody sang and played the organ," Carrol Waymon recalls.

Eunice's two older sisters slept in a double bed in the opposite corner of the living room. Her three older brothers slept on cots in the kitchen, which also contained the main cook stove and a large food-preparation table.

An original lighting fixture hangs

down from the center of the kitchen ceiling. The family also used oil lanterns to light the home at night.

Artifacts found at the site lie on the floor: a cedar post, an old metal bicycle horn, a paint can, some old dishes. McIntyre adds the jar lid to the collection.

He points to bits of coal that lie on the ground just beyond the kitchen. He found the coal when they removed the back porch.

"The Waymons would follow the rail line and pick up bits of coal in a bucket" to use at their home, he says.

The garden

John Waymon moved to Tryon from Inman, S.C., in the 1920s to open his own barbershop and dry cleaners. He also operated a truck hauling business on the side. But when the Depression hit in the 1930s and business fell off, the family garden became increasingly important.

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HERITAGE: Waymon home

Eunice's father got a job in the early 1930s with the federal relief agency to pick up food at the Tryon rail depot and deliver it in the area. In her autobiography, the musician writes about her father and other drivers receiving some food to take home. Soon a network of people traded food and the Waymon garden became her parents' pride as her father exchanged leftover vegetables and eggs for other families' extra food-stuffs. Rows and rows of corn, squash, collard greens, string beans and tomatoes filled the garden, Simone writes, and helped the family get through the Depression.

McIntyre is re-creating that sustainable garden that became so important to the Waymons and the community.

"The garden is pretty much in the same area," he says. "We planted it last year. ... We had some vines, re-created the birdhouse."

They even planted a peach tree where Carrol Waymon recalled that one had grown.

"And it is hard work!" McIntyre says. "We laid it out according to Mr. Waymon's design. We had the lettuce in the front here. We had the potatoes over in the corner — the potatoes like the poorer soil."

John Waymon would have used lime to adjust the pH balance and manure to make the soil as rich as possible, so that's what the McIntyres have done.

The garden is another happy memory for Carrol Waymon. "I liked flowers and nature, lizards and everything. Mom loved plants. My job before school was to water the plants," he says.

As the Depression deepened, the Waymons had to leave the house on East Livingston because they could no longer afford to live there. They moved in 1935.

Simone notes how hard it must have been for her parents during the Depression, but, she writes, "I never knew anything of their troubles; at home we were happy." ▲▲

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