

For the ninth year in a row, local students brought home awards from the state Tar Heel Junior Historians Conference in Raleigh.

The Jesse Franklin Pioneers Tar Heel Junior Historians Club at the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History traveled to the North Carolina State Museum of History recently for the competition. They participated in workshops on topics from the Freedom Riders to quilt-making and learned the outcome of the state-wide competitions.

In the end, Alexavier Pell, Walker York, and Kieran Slate, all sixth graders, and Brooks Harold, James Caudill and Tucker Keck, seventh graders, won the Group Exhibit Contest for their age division. Ava Thomason, sixth grade, Cora Branch, Ellie Edwards, and Savannah Allan, all seventh graders, took second place for Group Literary Contest for their division as well.

Individual awards were won by Ryan Harris, Evan Boyd, Ava Thomason, Cora Branch, James Caudill, and Savannah Allen.

Eighteen students, fourth- seventh grade, dug into various aspects of North Carolina History for the past eight months and created literary, artwork, scrapbook, video, or photographic entries with well-documented research on topics ranging from family links to the Surry tradition of "Breaking Up Christmas," to the mystery of the Roanoke Colony to the colorful artistry of North Carolina painter Minnie Evans.

The winning entries will be on display in the state museum for the next year.

The club, begun in 2006, is part of the state-wide organization created by the state legislature in 1953 to promote youth interest and involvement in state and local history. Thousands of fourth-twelfth graders participate in nearly 200 clubs in 65 counties. The program is run by the state history museum which hosts about 350 students at the conference each year.

The local club has won multiple awards in its 14-year existence including chapter of the year,

advisor of the year, and many group and individual accolades. The Mount Airy franchise of Chick-fil-A has been the club's business sponsor for several years.

The club will spend the summer working on service projects and teaching visitors old-time games. They'll begin meeting again in September. Call Kate Rauhauser-Smith, Guest Services Manager at the museum for information. (336) 786-4478.

Winning Entries

Jesse Franklin Pioneers, Intermediate (grades 6-8) Division boys, Alex Pell and Walker York, both sixth grade, Brooks Harold, seventh grade all at Millennium Charter Academy, and James Caudill and Tucker Keck, seventh grade homeschool students. First Place, Exhibit Contest – "Music Goes Civil: The 26th NC Regimental Band"

The group created a museum-style exhibit exploring the many ways music was used by Civil War infantry units and the specific involvement of the Moravian men from Salem's brass band who became the regimental band for the NC 26th.

The band's music books, filled with standards of the day as well as original compositions, are the only complete collection of any Confederate unit's music. It is held by the Moravian Archives in Old Salem. The boys were struck by the use of popular music in the war but came to the conclusion that "hearing music from home might make them feel close to family, even while they were far away."

Group Intermediate Division girls, Ava Thomason, sixth grade, and Cora Branch, Ellie Edwards, and Savannah Allen, seventh grade all from Millennium Charter Academy. Second Place, Literary Contest – "The Great War"

The girls researched different aspects of World War I and put together a magazine with advertisements, pictures and articles. From the light-hearted zig-zag "Bedazzled" camouflage on battleships to the disturbing effects of trench foot, they brought information together about the war that brought America to the international stage.

Cora Branch, seventh grade, Millennium Charter Academy – First Place, Video Documentary Contest, Intermediate Division – “A Salem Girl”

Written, filmed, produced, and performed by Cora, the 4-minute video shows her packing to go to Salem College in 1913 as we hear the voice-over of a letter she’s written to her dear friend, Bessie Smith. She discusses not only the history of the school, which was the first educational institution for women in America, but the costs and challenges she’d face once there.

This is the fourth year in a row Cora has won first-place with her entry.

Ryan Harris, fifth grade, Franklin Elementary – First Place, Exhibit/Art Context, Elementary Division (grades 4-5) – “Scottish Highlander”

Ryan crafted an 18-inch-tall clay-on-wire sculpture of a man dressed in traditional Scots Highland garb, a léine shirt and great kilt. As detailed in his research, Highland Scots made up a significant portion of early North Carolina immigrants settling in the Cape Fear region and filling in the mountain regions after the failed Scottish uprising.

The other four winners were in the Artifact Search category which asks students to choose any item, photograph it, and research its history, composition, use, and significance. As with all entries, it must include an annotated bibliography.

Ava Thomason, sixth grade, Millennium Charter Academy – Family Geography Text Book, 1835

The small geography text has been in her family 185 years and belonged to her great-great-grandfather, Robert Joshua Morris. “My ancestors believed in having a good education ...I will pass that belief to future generations.”

Evan Boyd, fourth grade, Jones Elementary – Dale Earnhardt Autograph for Car #15, 1982

This cherished family treasure belongs to Evan's grandmother, Kaye Davis, matriarch of a family of NASCAR fans. Earnhardt is generally known for his association with the #3 Goodwrench car but this artifact came "during the 2 seasons he drove the #15 Wrangler Jeans car."

Evan's entry was chosen by the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame organization for the special Sports History Award.

James Caudill, seventh grade, homeschool – Biltmore Dairy Porch Milk Box

The squat, insulated metal box held home-delivered bottles of milk for his father grandparents, the Andrews of Sparta, North Carolina. His research involved not only his own family's memories but the closing of the Biltmore Dairy which is now the estate winery.

Savannah Allen, seventh grade, Millennium Charter Academy – Harris Wrench by the Mount Airy Wrench Company, circa 1935

Patented by Mount Airy native Jason Harris in 1932, the adjustable pipe wrench was sold in Ohio and Canada at least. Savannah researched the business' correspondence in the museum archives. Few are known to exist. The museum has one in collections. She and her family value it for its connection to Mount Airy.