

The Pride of Clyde: Preserving the Historic Shook-Smathers House
By Eireann Marcus

As you drive into Clyde, North Carolina, the devastation left from Hurricane Helene is apparent. Yet, the beautiful mid-19th century Georgian-style Shook-Smathers House stands tall amid the destruction, its beauty allowing the small town of Clyde to shine. Many drive past the house without realizing the building's historical significance or the valuable artifacts inside that preserve Haywood County's rich history. As one of the oldest homes in Western North Carolina, the Shook-Smathers House is listed on the National Register of Historical Places. This house deserves to be preserved so that future generations can appreciate and learn from its historical and cultural contributions to Western North Carolina.

Built in 1795 by Jacob Shook, the house is the oldest standing frame-built house in Western North Carolina.¹ Originally from Burke County, Jacob Shook and his brother Andrew joined General Griffith Rutherford's troops during the Revolutionary War.² In September 1776, General Rutherford led his troops through Western North Carolina seeking to suppress the Cherokee, who had sided with the British and begun attacking white settlements across the region. This expedition later became known as the Rutherford Trace.³ The Shook brothers marched throughout Western North Carolina and reached a two-week camping spot in present-day Clyde. After the war, Jacob Shook returned to Western North Carolina and moved his family to Clyde to settle. There, he built what later became known as the Shook House.⁴

¹"Step Back in Time: Shook-Smathers House (1795)," posted October 10, 2023, by PBS North Carolina, YouTube, 4 min., 49 sec., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHCzSzm3LSE>.

²"Shook-Smathers House Timeline," *The Mountaineer*, October 14, 2020, https://www.themountaineer.com/news/shook-smathers-house-timeline/article_152df220-0d56-11eb-80bb-1f11c922a50.html

³Beadle, Michael. "Rutherford Trace: Local Historians Examine the Legacy of a Show-and-Awe Revolutionary War Campaign Against the Cherokee." *Smoky Mountain News*. August 22, 2006. <https://smokymountainnews.com/archives/item/13169-rutherford-trace-local-historians-examine-the-legacy-of-a-shock-and-awe-revolutionary-war-campaign-against-the-choerokee>.

⁴Neufeld, Rob. "Visiting Our Past: Odyssey of Clyde Pioneer Jacob Shook," *The Asheville Citizen Times*. February 12, 2017. <https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2017/02/12/visiting-our-past-odyssey-clyde-pioneer-jacob-shook/97763680/>.

On November 30, 1810, Jacob Shook provided overnight accommodations to Methodist Bishop Francis Asbury, who later became known as the Father of American Methodism. It was here at the Shook House that one of the earliest Methodist congregations in the United States was believed to have been organized.⁵ People traveled up to eight miles to hear pioneer preachers deliver sermons in the chapel of the Shook home, which became a focal point of the Methodist movement in Haywood County. Jacob Shook welcomed other pioneer preachers in his home and on his land.⁶

The House has a long and interesting history that saw the property change hands between various members of the Shook family and eventually the Smathers family.⁷ It is estimated that the house was built over three periods of construction: circa 1810-1820, 1840-1860, and 1890-1900. The house sat empty after Shook's death in the 1830s. Levi Smathers purchased, enlarged the home, and brought slaves to the property in 1851. The last Smathers descendant died in the 1980s. The house sat empty until 2003, when Dr. Joseph Shook Hall, a direct descendant of Jacob Shook, purchased it and undertook an extensive renovation project to preserve the historic fabric of the house. The house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2008.⁸ Currently, the Haywood County Historical and Genealogical Society owns the house, which is home to the Museum of Haywood County History. It features exhibits and artifacts including the history of military service in Haywood County, the evolution of culture in the region, and the

⁵ "Historic Events and the Shook-Smathers House," Haywood County Historical and Genealogical Society, accessed February 1, 2025, <https://www.nchcgs.org/mhch/historic-events-and-the-shook-smathers-house/#:~:text=The%20Shook%20home%20earned%20an,l%20walked%20over%20a%20log>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Neufeld, Rob. "Visiting Our Past: Odyssey of Clyde Pioneer Jacob Shook," *The Asheville Citizen Times*. February 12, 2017. <https://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2017/02/12/visiting-our-past-odyssey-clyde-pioneer-jacob-shook/97763680/>.

⁸ The National Register of Historic Places, North Carolina State Historic Preservation office, Office of Archives and History, Department of Cultural Resources, Shook-Smathers House. Accessed January 25, 2025. <https://www.hpo.nc.gov/survey-and-national-register/national-register-historic-places>.

region's industrial history. Additionally, the history of enslaved people is part of this home, and their contributions are recognized in the museum. (PBS video)⁹

The Shook-Smathers house survived as Hurricane Helene moved into Western North Carolina on September 27, 2024. However, the next-door visitor center did not. The visitor center was flooded, with water levels reaching between 14 and 20 inches of water. The water destroyed many documents, books, and newsletters. However, the visitor center and museum house hope to reopen in March or April.¹⁰

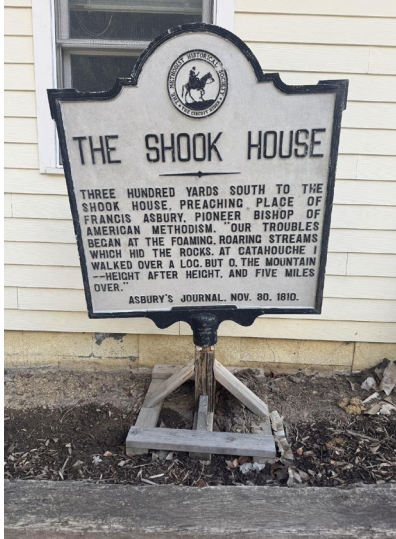
Known affectionately as the "Pride of Clyde," the Shook-Smathers house connects the people of Western North Carolina to their history, traditions, and ancestors. The house serves as a real-world classroom that offers insights into our past. From being a site of early Methodism to serving as a place that enslaved people, it serves as a place to protect Western North Carolina's history that ensures future generations can learn from and appreciate the past.

⁹"Step Back in Time: Shook-Smathers House (1795)," posted October 10, 2023, by PBS North Carolina, YouTube, 4 min., 49 sec., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHCzSzm3LSE>.

¹⁰"Historic Haywood County Records Devastated by Helene's Floodwaters," [Rex Hodge], WLOS, November 8, 2024. <https://wlos.com/news/local/historic-haywood-county-records-devastated-helenes-floodwaters>.

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This Shook House marker was originally placed in front of the house. However, after Hurricane Helene, it was relocated behind the visitor's center.





This is a side view of the Shook Smathers House, with the front entrance situated to the left.





This is the front entrance of the Shook-Smathers House. The house has been closed since Hurricane Helene passed through Western North Carolina, but it is expected to reopen in the next few months.





This is the sign located in front of the Shook-Smathers House on Morgan Street in Clyde, NC.



This marker is positioned beside the front door of the Shook-Smathers House.