Rich in tradition with no shortage of interesting characters, the history of Tryon and the Tryon Riding & Hunt Club are intricately woven together. A culture of sportsmanship and preservation of heritage exists here that continues to be passed down through generations since the first day Carter Brown set foot on Tryon soil.

Carter Brown

Credited as the man who put Tryon on the map, Carter Brown first came to the area in 1917. Splitting his time between Tryon and his northern home, he was one of the first members of Tryon's Winter Colony. He purchased a former tuberculosis sanitarium high in the hills of Tryon in 1918 and the Pine Crest Inn was born. A genuine sportsman and horseman, no idea was too great for him to tackle. It was his ownership of the Pine Crest that facilitated much of the population growth in the equestrian segment of Tryon in that time. Many a famous name passed through Tryon and quite a few, after spending a night at the Pine Crest enjoying Brown's hospitality, would find themselves wishing for a second home or a permanent move.

Carter was always quite happy to oblige. His knack for finding the perfect property and his amateur architect skills were valuable resources for those new to the area. Brown's buildings emanate the rustic style of old-time mountain Carolina and his designs frequently incorporated materials from existing structures. He was well known for returning from a wander or ride with some treasure from an abandoned cabin in the woods. He built a stable at the Pine Crest and rented out horses to guests and locals, taking them far up in the mountains to enjoy the stunning views from the peaks. Sons Carter Wilkie and Austin were active riders, winning ribbons at the Tryon Horse Show and competing in races at the steeplechase.

Brown founded the Tryon Riding & Hunt Club in 1925 to foster the growth of the equestrian population in Tryon and also created the Tryon Hounds that same year. Though the Tryon Hounds become a totally separate organization only one year later, Carter served as huntsman for their first five years. In 1926 Carter decided that the town needed a horse show, so he promptly found some land to lease and convinced the Chamber of Commerce to host it. When that first show lost $275 the Chamber refused to gamble again and Carter convinced the

Tryon Country Club to sponsor the event. Though exhibitors came from as far away as Asheville and Augusta it was still a risky financial venture. The Tryon Riding and Hunt Club officially took over the show in 1929 after the Country Club declined to host again.
The Tryon Horse Show hosted a bench show for hounds up until the mid-70s. Beginning as a chance for locals to bring their best Walker and July night hounds to compete for the judge's top pick, in later years it was a more formal show for foxhounds.

The Tryon Horse Show grew to be the biggest social event in the town as well. Businesses closed their doors on Wednesday afternoon and donned their Sunday best to watch the horses and hounds. Everyone in the town was invited to enjoy the complimentary barbecue lunch provided by the Club.

The show progressively changed from a simple afternoon event to its current form as a nationally sanctioned multi-day competition. Linda Lee Reynolds, former show chair, and Helen Louise Frolich, "Weezie", were the driving force behind the addition of a second show in 2003 to mark the 75th Anniversary of the event.

**The Block House**

Designated a National Landmark, the Block House was built as a defensive outpost during the French and Indian War. Later used as a tavern and gambling house, its convenient location being split by the state line allowed patrons to escape the law by merely stepping to the other side of the room. A 1942 visit to the area brought Alfred Plamondon Jr. from Indiana together with Carter Brown. Upon mentioning he might like to have a home in the area, Carter wasted no time in purchasing the Block House for the family. A house was built in typical Carter style, with pieces of the original building combined with materials scavenged from other structures. It was only a few years later that Plamondon, having heard the tales of the first ill-fated steeplechase races in Tryon, suggested that his Block House be used as a race meet. Carter was happy to oblige and despite public dissent, he constructed a half mile course of natural obstacles traversing the terrain of the property. The Block House Steeplechase ran here from 1947 until the construction of the Sandlin Track at the Foothills Equestrian Nature Center in 1988.

**Morris the Horse**

It's hard to miss the 22 hand horse standing in the center of downtown Tryon. The first Morris the Horse was created in 1928 by the Tryon Toy Makers to serve as a billboard for the Tryon Riding & Hunt Club's events. Built completely out of wood, he often carried a rider on his travels around town, head and tail bobbing just like a toy horse when the rider pulled the reins. The original Morris came complete with functional wheels and could be hitched to a team of horses. Each year he was pulled down Trade Street to sit ringside at the horse show at Harmon Field, join the festivities at the steeplechase, and participate in local parades. Those functional wheels would be the downfall of the second version of the mascot when he became part of an ill-fated prank instigated by some teens from nearby Landrum. Morris was donated by the Tryon Riding & Hunt Club to the Town of Tryon in 2011 and he entered into his sixth incarnation in the summer of 2012. Morris endures to this day as the most well-known and treasured icon of the area.

**George Morris**

Another famous Morris with a tie to Tryon, George Morris was part of the US Equestrian Team group that trained here in 1956. A disciple of Gordon Wright, George Morris has followed in his mentor's footsteps to become one of the most well respected instructors of all time. He is returning to Tryon this year as the judge for the equitation classes at the 85th TR&HC Charity Horse Show, and will hold a clinic at FENCE following the show.
Show hunters and jumpers have held to the same basic principles since the first organized horse shows were held in this country. As you watch our exhibitors compete this year, we'd like to give you some insight into what the judges were basing their decisions on back in 1946 and what attributes are rewarded today.

**Rules & Regulations as they appeared in the 1946 Horse Show Program**

**Hunters and Jumpers**
No. 14 - Hunters and Jumpers will be shown over natural fences without wings. Hunter classes are for working Hunters that are hunted regularly and not for show type hunters. Scars are not scored against horse. In case of refusal at any one fence, a horse shall be allowed two more trials at the same fence; should it then refuse, it shall be disqualified from further competition in the class in which it is competing. Horse or rider falling disqualifies both from the class. No schooling in the ring or over outside course will be permitted before or during the Show.

**Rules for Scoring Jumpers**
For the information of the spectators the following is the scoring rule for Jumpers:

- Ticking a barrier with hind foot ........... ½ fault
- Ticking a barrier with front foot ........... 1 fault
- Knocking down part of a barrier with hind foot ...... 2 faults
- Knocking down part of a barrier with front foot ...... 4 faults
- Refusal to jump barrier or run out – first, 1 fault; second, 2 faults; third, disqualified.

**NOTE** – Get clearly the distinction between classes for “Jumpers” and classes for “Hunters”.

“Jumpers” are only required to clear obstacles; they may be hunters, but need not be. The most brilliant jumpers are often unsatisfactory hunters. Thus it is comparatively easy to judge a class of jumpers. They are rewarded only for the cleanliness with which they clear fences, with some attention to the style of jumping; the bolder and more brilliant, the better. A hunter may often win a jumping class, but no mere jumper should win a hunter class, no matter how sensational his performance unless capable of cross-country galloping.

**Notice**
All entries must be saddled, mounted and in Paddock not less than 15 minutes before class is called to enter the Show Ring. Failure to observe rule will bar entry.

**Excerpt from the 2013 USEF Rule Book regarding Judging Hunters**

**HU134 Performance**
1. An even hunting pace, manners, jumping style together with faults and way of moving over the course. Manners to be emphasized in Ladies and Amateur classes; brilliance in Corinthian and Formal Hunting Attire classes.

**Modern Day Scoring System for Jumpers**
Knockdown of any part of an obstacle or course marker ...... 4 faults
First refusal, 4 faults; Second refusal, elimination
Exceeding time allowed ................. 1 fault per second

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*Picture taken at the Tryon Horse Show (1939) Harmon Field.*

*Course map for ‘Working Hunters’ from the 1941 Tryon Horse Show Program*
Other TR&HC Events

Block House Steeplechase

Running each year in late April, the Block House Steeplechase ran for the 67th time in 2013. The races began at the property of the Plamondon family, known as the Block House. Famed for being the race run “in three counties and two states,” it was a difficult track that traversed the whole property, complete with timber fences, stone walls, and a water jump. The race meet moved to the track constructed by the Tryon Riding and Hunt Club at the newly founded Foothills Equestrian Nature Center in 1987. Unlike the flat tracks of Camden and other Southern meets, the hills and sharp turns of the Sandlin track at FENCE are unique and more similar to the undulating point to point fields of Virginia and Maryland. Sanctioned by the National Steeplechase Association for several decades, the meet currently offers four national hurdle races and one amateur flat race. The prize for the feature race, which was a mere tin cup the first year the race was held, has grown to a $25,000 purse, with over $60,000 in total purse money awarded during the one day meet. Keeping with the traditions of steeplechasing, parking passes are sold by the carload, and most spectators tailgate and wear their Sunday finest.

Tryon Horse Trials

The Tryon Horse Trials will produce its 38th edition in 2013 at FENCE. The USEA recognized horse trial has served as host to The Chronicle of the Horse’s Adult Team Challenge twice, most recently in 2011. In addition to the rated trial, TR&HC has run a one day schooling trial for just under ten years, taking place for the last few years at Alicia Henderson’s Windridge Farm in Mooreseboro, NC.

Any & All Dog Show

The Any & All Dog Show has been a tradition for local residents for 80 years. Any dog is eligible to enter in a variety of classes, which include Best Trick, Best Tail Wag, So Ugly It’s Cute, Best Adopted Dog, and Dog who Would Rather be at Home. With a family class and a costume class, you’re likely to see whole families (two and four footed) in attendance. All proceeds from the event go directly to the Foothills Humane Society to help support their efforts.
Other TR&HC Events (continued)

**Junior Show**

Due in large part to sponsors such as the Kuhn and Mahler families, junior riders have always had a large role in the equestrian events in Tryon. The Tryon Riding and Hunt Club held an annual Junior Show in March and also had a junior group focused on equitation, which included such riders as Betty Reynolds (O'are).

Exhibitors at the 1956 Tryon Riding and Hunt Club Junior Show held at Carter Brown's "Old River House" had the special honor of being judged by Capt. de Nemethy, Bill Steinkraus, William Haggard, and George Morris. Riders did have extra challenges in the courses, however, competing over some of the same obstacles constructed for the USET teams. The 'Hunters Over Outside Course' class took a steep descent and forded the Pacolet River and had to clear a chicken coop filled with live chickens!

**Lancing Tournament & Gymkhana**

The short lived Lancing Tournament took place at Harmon Field in early October alongside a full medieval fair and gave local riders the chance to partake in an authentic jousting tournament. Though the event was a crowd pleaser, it only lasted a few years in the mid 1970s.

The annual Gymkhana enjoyed a longer life and was another staple event offered by the Club. Riders both young and old enjoyed a relaxed, fun-filled day of mounted games.
ne of the pivotal years in the equestrian history of Tryon was 1956, when the USEF brought the Olympic Show Jumping and Three Day teams to Tryon to train before the Stockholm Olympics. Special courses were built at the Kuhn’s Cotton Patch Farm and Harmon Field for the selectors to evaluate the prospective team members.

Equestrians from the Tryon area, grateful to host the Olympic hopefuls in both 1956 and 1958, provided generous financial support to the team for many years after the trials. The following narrative excerpted from the 50th Anniversary Tryon Horse Show Program (1978) recounts the tale of Tryon and the Team.

**Tryon and the Team**

There has always been a close relationship between the Tryon horse world and the United States Equestrian Team, dating back to the era of the Army teams and that first, struggling “civilian” team which represented America in the 1952 Olympic Games.

However, since 1956, the year the USEF trained in Tryon, this warm feeling has spread far beyond the horse-types and into our entire community. You don’t have to tell a Tryonite, even a relative newcomer, that the Team trained here. He’ll tell you. And if an oldtimer, he’ll add a personal recollection. This feeling is mutual. Tell a longtime Team member that you’re from Tryon and you’ve got an instant friend. He’ll say “oh yes, my horse was stabled at DuCharme’s”, or “I remember well the trials at the Cotton Patch”. And then he’ll tell you how much he enjoyed his stay in Tryon and how well he still appreciates the hospitality he received from everyone.

One member of that ‘56 Team was a young Army major named Jack Burton. Today he is more formally known as Major General Jonathan R. Burton, US Army (Retd), Executive Vice President USET. He is a busy man, but when we asked for help, he was back in a flash with a history of the Team at Tryon. Here is Jack’s accounting:

**Training At Tryon**

“The Jumping and Three-Day Teams assembled in Tryon in January, 1956. Gen. Tupper Cole was Chef de Mission and had his headquarters at the Pine Crest Inn. The Three-Day Team was stabled at the Pine Crest Inn and was coached by Maj. Robert Borg who was also working dressage horses for the Games. The team worked cross country all around Tryon and set up several difficult cross country fences such as slides into the river, broad ditches and drops at the Block House. The three-day dressage was done in the little schooling area below the Pine Crest Inn. The stadium jumping was practiced at the Kuhn’s Cotton Patch.

The members of the three-day team in training were: Walter Staley, Warren Wofford, Jack Burton, Frank Duffy, and Billy Haggard. Warren also was trying out for the jumping team.

The Jumping was located at Mrs. DuCharme’s Stables. The coach was Bert de Nemethy. Training was done at Harmon Field and three trials were held at the Cotton Patch. Elaborate gymnastic combinations were used by Bert de Nemethy. Some of the members who trained at Tryon were Bill Steinkraus, Frank Chapot, Chuck Denneweg, Warren Wofford, George Morris and Hugh Wiley. The training session at Tryon was arranged by Ernst Mahler and the people of Tryon under his leadership provided the Team with all the necessities to properly prepare for the Stockholm Games. It was a friendly, active environment which made it possible to prepare the Teams in the most efficient manner.

The horses were shipped to Sweden on a PAA charter loaded at Greenville AFB. A ramp was used to lead the horses on to the DC7 prop plane. The horses went to New York to pick up Shirley Watts dressage stallion Connecticut Yankee, and then flew without mishap to Prestwick, Scotland and onto Stockholm. Many Tryon friends attended the loading.

The tour at Tryon is remembered by all team members as a pleasant, delightful experience made so by the friendly thoughtfulness of the Tryon community.

**The 1956 Stockholm Games**

Insofar as gold medals are concerned, the USEF did not exactly cover itself with glory at the 1956 Olympic Games at Stockholm. Our Jumping Team was 5th, and the best individual effort was Hugh Wiley’s 11th place. But, from the overall viewpoint, this was relatively unimportant. No longer supported by the US Army, the “new” USET was building – training riders, acquiring better horses – gaining invaluable experience that would result in bigger and better days.

**Onward and Upward**

The training at Tryon, and all the hard work before and after, finally paid off. The Team dominated the 1959 Pan American Games and that summer, Hugh Wiley and Nautical, the famous “horse with the flying tail”, won the coveted George V Cup at London.

This was but a beginning. Our riders have done – and will continue to do – their part. Won’t you? International competition not only takes time and effort, it takes money. Unlike many of our government-supported rivals from other nations, the USET depends entirely on individual contributions.

We are proud to dedicate our 50th Tryon Horse Show to the USET. We are also making a substantial contribution. Won’t you join ranks with us? You’ll be glad you did!

- Chuck Ross
The most famous horseman to be associated with the Tryon, NC area was Gordon Wright. Though the town can't claim him as its own, he did winter here for several decades and lived here full time from 1971 until his passing in 1990.

Known as the teacher of teachers, he valued his worth as an instructor by the number of professionals he mentored in the industry. In that sense he was immeasurably valuable, having mentored nationally and internationally successful riders such as Bill Steomlraus, George Morris and Victor Hugo-Vidal, who also continued his teaching methods. Gerald Pack and Jeanne Smith were among his students and continue to train in the Tryon area to this day. The riders he trained proudly refer to themselves as his "disciples," and those lucky enough to learn his system have also been instilled with the desire to teach others to become professionals in the industry.

His book, Learning to Ride, Hunt, and Show, though written decades ago, is still widely considered one of the most informative and relevant texts ever written about training horses and riders. His systematic method is simply presented and is a veritable textbook for those who want to learn how to ride, especially for those who aspire to become professionals.

Initially a self-taught rider, he worked primarily at Saxon Woods Farm in White Plains, NY with Mrs. Jarrett Schmidt before becoming the oldest person to enlist in the cavalry (he was in his late 30s at the time) at Fort Riley during World War II. While enlisted he gained the majority of his formal training, and, after the cavalry was disbanded, he adapted their manual on riding for civilians. In addition to showing the hunters and jumpers of Saxon Woods, he also actively fox hunted with Golden's Bridge and Fairfield in New York.

It was a foxhunting trip with some friends and clients from the North that happened to bring Gordon to Tryon. They had originally intended to hunt in Southern Pines, but, after an in hospitable welcome, he made a phone call to his acquaintance Carter Brown, and the group rerouted to Tryon. Many of that first group returned for the winter for years to come, and many of the famous farms in Tryon shared their names with a Northern counterpart. Some of the most influential people in the equestrian history of the area were here due to Gordon Wright. Eventually, Gordon started his own hunt, the Greenville County Hounds, which shared the colors of Golden's Bridge and Fairfield, with the intent of being the Southern branch of both of those hunts. He wrote his last book, The Riding Instructor's Manual, while living in Tryon.

An interesting man with a long-lasting national impact, the Tryon area is fortunate to share a small part of his legacy.
In 1939 J. Arthur Reynolds answered an ad for ‘Huntsman Wanted’ and went to work as the first professional huntsman of the Tryon Hounds. He left for the Metamora Hunt outside of Detroit in 1946, but after the first frigid winter he returned to Tryon with his family. He built his own farm, J. Arthur Reynolds Stables, across the street from the Block House and hung his shingle as a professional trainer. When the Carmichael family bought the Block House in 1956, J. Arthur worked with their horses alongside farm manager Red Frazier. J. Arthur trained numerous champions during his time in Tryon, though his most famous pupils were his own children J. Arthur, II (“Bucky”) and Betty. When the Carmichael family decided to move back to the mid-west in the early ‘60s the Reynolds family went as well. J. Arthur, Bucky, and Betty all worked out of the Carmichael’s Laughin’ Place Farm in Niles, Michigan. The Laughin’ Place Farm trophy was donated to the club in 1962 and was repurposed as the award for the Grand Champion Amateur Owner Hunter at the July horse show in 2003.

Destined to follow in his father’s footsteps, Bucky spent his youth in Tryon foxhunting and showing horses for the family’s farm. Among his accomplishments include riding his father’s horse, Steve’s Poppet, to the win in the Grand Prix at Madison Square Garden in 1969. He has had tremendous success training hunters as well. One of his most famous, Gozzi, was found as a yearling at the racetrack and has been inducted into the National Show Hunter Hall of Fame. Having a natural eye for picking a winning horse has helped him create great pairings of horse and rider, and served him well in his current occupation as a USEF judge. His junior career frequently pitted him against his younger sister Betty and though there was a little friendly sibling rivalry the pair always supported each other, with Bucky training Betty for many years.

Betty Reynolds Oare

Betty Reynolds Oare won her first blue ribbon at the National Horse Show in 1957 in the Junior Hunt Team class, representing the Tryon Hounds alongside her brother Bucky and Alice Slaughter (Frazier). Well known for her bold galloping approach to fences which was developed in the hunt field, Betty’s name appears on trophies across the country tracking her tremendously successful riding career. She also piloted Colonymas, a horse which belonged to Converse College, to the Junior Hunter Championship at the 1959 Washington International Horse Show. Navy Commander, purchased from Fairview Farm by the Carmichael family, was named Horse of the Year in the Regular Working Hunter division in 1962 and was a frequent champion throughout the ‘60s with Betty aboard. Now a highly respected USEF judge and owner of EMO Stables with husband Ernie Oare, Betty still actively competes on the show circuit in the Amateur Owner Hunter division. The newest addition to Betty’s show string is a grey mare raised and trained in Tryon who now carries the appropriate moniker “Tryonite”. Betty is an inductee of the National Show Hunter Hall of Fame, as is her father J. Arthur. She was the recipient of the Distinguished Alumnae Award from her alma mater Converse College in 2013.

Tony Wallace

Anthony “Tony” Wallace, a native of Dublin, Ireland, came to Landrum in 1956 with the relocation of Fairview Farms from Greenwich, CT. Tony served as Vice-President and General Manager of Fairview Farms, breeding and training hunters, jumpers and thoroughbreds for more than sixty years. He had a reputation among top trainers around the world for giving young horses a complete education with a patient but firm hand. Over the course of his career his talent and passionate dedication produced some of the top horses in the industry, including three time AHSA Conformation Horse of the year Golden Hill in 1947, 48 and 49 and Eclipse Award champions Chris Evert and Turkoman in the 70’s and 80’s. ~Submitted by Madelon Wallace

Jarrett Schmid

Jarrett Schmid and her Saxons Woods Farm arrived in Tryon from Mamaroneck, New York in 1958, drawn by the presence of the United States Equestrian Team then training at Cotton Patch Farm. Mrs. Schmid’s famed working hunter Naute Mia traveled south with her, occupying pride of place in one of the two barns on the property adjacent to the original Block House steeplechase course. Before his retirement during a formal ceremony at the Washington International in 1962, Naute Mia had accumulated 43 championships and 222 blue ribbons, including all four major championships of the day in one year at Harrisburg, Washington, Madison Square Garden, and Toronto. Because of his spirit and drive, he earned the nickname “The Magnificent Outlaw.” During her nearly fifty years at Saxon Woods, Mrs. Schmid not only raised and trained horses for the show ring and the race course, but also served as Joint Master of the Greenville County Hounds, occasionally mounted on Naute Mia in the hunt field. She served as chairman of the Block House Steeplechase for twelve years for the Tryon Riding & Hunt Club, increasing purses exponentially by attracting national sponsors to the races. She died in 1992. ~Submitted by Norm Powers
Most famously the host for the first training sessions of the civilian US Equestrian Teams, the Cotton Patch’s bottoms were used as a horse show venue for many years after the training sessions were complete. Mr. and Mrs. Willis Kuhn were among the mid-Westerners who relocated to Tryon and their dedication to creating a top-class facility is a big part of what put the town on the national map. Staunch supporters of young people, Mr. Kuhn was very involved with the Boys Club and YMCA in Indianapolis, and Mrs. Kuhn worked tirelessly to promote junior riders in Tryon. Prior to the days of formal Pony Club, Mrs. Kuhn established a Junior Equitation Association in 1954 which at its peak had over 40 members. The goal of the group was to help develop the youngsters’ riding and horse care skills with a heavy emphasis on the traits of good sportsmanship and responsibility. Unfailing patrons of horse sports, the Kuhns hosted the annual Junior Horse Show, opened their farm to the riders of Converse College, and served as a hunt fixture of the Tryon Hounds, all while running a top-class breeding and training operation of their own. Both Mr. and Mrs. Kuhn served as President of the Tryon Riding and Hunt Club, Mrs. Kuhn being the first female President. The property transferred to Converse College as a bequest when Mrs. Kuhn passed away in 1985 and the College owned it until 1989. Though the grand field of jumps constructed for the USEF has been gone for many years, the Cotton Patch remains on Hunting Country Road and many of the original buildings still stand today.

Eligio Del Guercio made the move to Tryon from Greenwich, Connecticut in 1956 when much of the Northeast began to feel the squeeze of urban sprawl. He took the opportunity to move his family’s successful show horse barn to the land of the Emerald Bar S Hereford cattle farm. The land was renamed Fairview Farms and with the purchase of additional contiguous property, the 3,500 acre farm was home to a large herd of Hereford cattle along with some of the top show hunters in the country. Anthony Wallace served as trainer and rider for the farm’s show horses and had great success with hunters such as Golden Hill, Bronze Wing, and Eastmas, and jumpers General and Ping Pong. Fairview developed a very well respected breeding program which produced a number of top show and racing horses. One of the farm’s stallions, Night Lark, was a son of Bonne Nuit whose descendant Gem Twist became one of the most famous show jumpers of all time. By the early 70s the decision was made to shift the focus to the facility to training young racehorses. A track was constructed, still standing today on Racetrack Road, and Wallace got to work with the Thoroughbreds, producing over 500 stakes winners before his retirement in 1995.

Born in 1956, the plain bay Thoroughbred Navy Commander was one of the most successful Working Hunters of his time. Bred at Fairview Farm, his mother was the Del Guercio’s tremendously successful mare Eastmas, Navy Commander was purchased for the Carmichael family by Red Frazier in 1960. Betty Reynolds (Oare) campaigned him to many successes in the Regular Working Hunter division including the AHS National Horse of the Year title in 1962 and the reserve in 1963. The pair swept the indoor circuit in 1963, receiving the championships title at the Pennsylvania National, Washington International, and the National Horse Show as Madison Square Garden. In 1964 Betty married Mrs. Carmichael’s nephew, Ernest Oare, and two months later the horse was presented to Betty at the Warrenton Horse Show as a belated wedding present.

Mr. Ernst Mahler, Sr was a product developer for Kimberly, Clark and Co. After a 1935 visit to Jack Kimberly’s estate, which now serves as FENCE’s main office, the Mahlers made the move to Tryon. The family commissioned Carter Brown to build the main house at their newly purchased Chinquapin Farm. The entire Mahler family competed in TR&HC’s horse shows and fox hunted regularly. Son Pete Mahler, Jr qualified for the Maclay finals twice while his sister Polly was also one of the area’s most talented junior riders. The Mahlers were significant contributors to the development of Tryon, taking part in the promotion of junior horsemanship, and in more recent years playing a pivotal role in the creation of the Foothills Equestrian Nature Center.

Tryon Hounds Huntsman George Webster was hired as trainer of Chinquapin’s young horses, the most successful of which was a grey gelding named Silverminner. George hunted hounds off him as a three year old, and while Jack Payne had the ride on him for several years, Nancy Laird (Crosswell) can be credited with most of his national championships. The Mahler family, recognizing the special bond between their famous horse and Nancy, gifted Silverminner to her for his retirement.
When Carter Brown envisioned a horse show grounds being built in Tryon, he leased the land surrounding a run down baseball diamond alongside the Pacolet River for three years. In true Carter style and despite public disapproval, a small barn with eight stalls was built using the boards from the diamond's fence, and local sponsors were found for the first Tryon Horse Show.

Luckily for the show, when the lease expired on the land in 1928, the Town of Tryon received a grant from the Harmon Foundation to turn the property into a public playground. The land was purchased by the Harmon Foundation and deeded to the Town of Tryon which also purchased some additional acreage for the facility. Unfortunately, while the Harmon Foundation helped with funds to purchase the land it provided no funds for maintenance and the Town began to struggle to make payments on its mortgage.

The Tryon Riding & Hunt Club stepped in to raise the funds needed to fully settle the debt for the land and deeded it to the Town for the community's use. Because the Club was the primary group running events at the facility they continued to provide funds for the further development of the show grounds, as well as paying for maintenance of the playground and ball fields to assist the community. Over time more stables were built, hedges were planted around the arena, roadside boxes with canopies were constructed and the Tryon Horse Show had a stunning show grounds to host its event.

Harmon Field is still a community haven, with a large playground, soccer and baseball fields, tennis courts, and a running track situated adjacent to the show grounds. The Harmon Hopefules schooling show series and locally rated shows put on by the Blue Ridge Hunter Jumper Association and Harmon Classics keep the calendar full.

Part of the property that now makes up Harmon Field was formerly a racehorse training facility owned by Jack McKnight. A native of Ireland who came to Tryon in 1928, two of his horses Agrarian-U and Blenwood achieved the notable status of 50 wins in their careers - a feat nearly unheard of in that time. The lawn jockey situated near the current tennis courts marks the grave of Mr. McKnight who wished to be buried on his land. Agrarian-U rests next to his devoted owner and trainer.

FENCE (Foothills Equestrian Nature Center) came into being in 1985 as a non-profit nature education and outdoor recreation center, built around an original land grant of 112 acres generously contributed to FENCE by the Mr. & Mrs. Ernst Mahler family. The Mahler family interest in FENCE has allowed continued growth and improvement to FENCE and more importantly a permanent green space for the community.

The original donation of land enabled a permanent race course named after Dave Sandlin to house the Block House steeplechase and an equestrian center to house horse shows and community events run by local organizations. Since inception the facility has grown to 384 acres through the support support and contributions of the Tryon Riding and Hunt Club and individual supporters.

FENCE has been the site of the TRHC series of A rated hunter/jumper shows, as well as other equestrian disciplines. In addition FENCE is home to TROT (Therapeutic Riding of Tryon), an integral part of FETA (Foothills Equestrian Trail Association), nature education to approximately 8000 school children per year, dog shows and daily a host of hikers and dog walkers.

For more information on Foothills Equestrian Nature Center or for the events calendar, visit online at: fence.org.
Foxhunting is the basis of modern show hunter competition, and has been a mainstay of equestrian activities in Tryon from the first days of Carter Brown. The town and surrounding area has been home to three different packs of hounds over the years, two of which remain to this day.

**Tryon Hounds**

The Tryon Hounds began as a drag hunting pack in the 1920s when Carter P. Brown recognized that Polk County countryside, ideal for pleasure and trail riding, had a potential for riding to hounds when the sport was curtailed by the severe weather in the north and mid-west. The Tryon Riding & Hunt Club and the Tryon Hounds actually began as one organization but were separated in 1926 so that each group could focus on its own interests.

The Tryon Hounds has been recognized by the Masters of Foxhounds Association since 1935 and hunts Wednesdays and Saturdays from early September until mid-March. The start of the formal season is Thanksgiving morning, when visitors are invited to attend the Blessing of the Hounds. The main hunt country lies between 1-26 in Landrum and Highway 9 in Green Creek, as well as the former Greenville County Hounds country in Gowensville, SC. Prior to the construction of the highway, hounds had free rein throughout the land surrounding Tryon, giving birth to the moniker Hunting Country Road.

Current huntsman Jordan Hicks, whose career started with Gerald Pack at Greenville County, is entering his seventh season with the club. Jordan is continuing the legacy of his predecessors, some of which include George Webster, J. Arthur Reynolds, and Bobby Ashcom. The pack is made up of primarily American fox-hounds, containing bloodlines that can be traced back through the Greenville County Hounds and the famed Bywater line.

Enthusiastic members, riding and non-riding, spend many hours as volunteers in the Hunt’s various projects such as pace events, puppy auctions, social events and country work, including the maintenance of trails and jumps.

The Tryon Horse Show held a bench show for hounds for several decades and also held an annual picnic to thank landowners. The Tryon Hounds held their own horse show for many years and for the past three have worked with Equus Events to provide the hospitality at the Tryon Summer Classic.

**Greenville County Hounds**

Gordon Wright famously started the Greenville County Hounds in 1962 after an expired passport resulted in a failed attempt to travel to Ireland with a group of foxhunters. Gordon’s solution was to simply start his own hunt, taking hounds out twice a week on the properties surrounding his Gowensville, SC farm. He hunted the hounds himself for the first year and then turned huntsman duties over to Gerald Pack, who would remain in that position until the hunt merged with the Green Creek Hounds in 2005. Many of the original members were Gordon’s disciples who would travel South to train with him in the winter.

**Green Creek Hounds**

The Green Creek Hounds was founded in 1988 by Margaret "Peg" Secor. As an inadvertent tie to Gordon Wright, the Secor family originally farmed the land in White Plains, NY which Gordon later did a majority of his training out of. Peg’s intention was to get back to the grass roots of foxhunting, providing good sport as a natural part of the rural environment. Their current hunt country covers approximately 8,000 acres of territory on the east side of Highway 9.

Tot Goodwin has served as huntsman since 1990, hunting a primarily cross-bred pack on Thursdays and Sundays from mid-July through March. Members actively participate in organized trail rides, hunter paces, and hound shows.