

A Walk Through Time -
Tours Shed Light On Rich History Of New Market
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NEWMARKET - A woman in a full-length, Civil War-era dress, parasol in hand, regularly walks the streets of **New Market**.

While she may look like a ghost from the 19th century, the woman is very much alive and, in fact, has become a familiar figure this summer in the town's historic district.

Her name is Betty Karol Wilson, who along with Susan Smith, a local librarian, leads **walking tours** of downtown **New Market**.

Wilson said that **New Market** has contributed to America's history at every stage and has a "story to tell."

Since May 5, when Wilson started the **tours**, 125 people have toured the town. Guests of the Apple Blossom Inn, which Wilson runs with her husband Charles, and **New Market** residents and school groups are among her regular patrons. But Wilson said she has had many visitors come to **New Market** specifically for the **tours**.

How It Happened

Wilson, 53, is originally from Richmond, but she lived in Texas for 25 years before moving to **New Market** in June 2004.

Last October, representatives from the **New Market** Chamber of Commerce approached Wilson about starting a **walking tour**.

"**New Market** has a printed brochure describing historic homes in the area," Wilson said. "[But] visitors to **New Market** had asked the chamber if there was someone who could tell them what was in the brochure."

She agreed and was introduced to Smith, as well as a host of other local historians.

Wilson's next step was to gather the information. Wilson, who before moving to **New Market** was a music teacher with a degree in music history, put her talents to use.

"The library was a great resource," Wilson said.

In the library, she found archived newspaper articles. She read books and other accounts of the Shenandoah Valley's history.

Wilson also searched family genealogies online. She even discovered diaries and letters about the **New Market** Battle and other Civil War-era information at the Notre Dame University Library in South Bend, Ind.

Through her research, Wilson has learned many things that even the town's lifelong residents may not know. She said many residents who have taken the **tours** commented that they learned something **new**.

Since starting the **walking tours**, Wilson says, residents have also been helpful in her search. She said she's gotten a lot more "first-hand, family information."

The Rest Of The Story

Dan Miller, a teacher from Middleburg, visited the Apple Blossom Inn recently. He and his mother, Dotti Mitchell, of Fallsington, Pa., took the **tour** Tuesday at the end of their trip.

"We just couldn't leave without hearing the rest of the story," Miller said.

Miller and Mitchell chose **New Market** for its central location to historical sites, but Miller said he wanted to hear the town's story as much as those of the other attractions.

"This was quite fascinating," Miller said. "I remember hearing about all this in our history and social studies classes, but to see it ... wow."

The **tours**, Wilson says, are personal because neither she nor Smith uses a script. Each tells the story of **New Market** in her own way. That also allows the **tours** to be individualized. If someone shows a particular interest in architecture or education, the guides can cater to that interest.

Wilson offers two **tours**.

"Boys, Bugles and Skirts: The Civil War in a Small Town," which focuses on civilian life during the Civil War, is at 10:30 a.m. Tuesdays and Fridays and 5:30 p.m. Sundays.

"**New Market: An All-American Town**," which is an overview of **New Market** from colonial times to the present, is at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Saturdays and 2:30 p.m. Sundays.

Wilson offers the **tours** free to **New Market** residents and \$10 for adults, \$5 for children who are not town residents.