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Early Beginnings of the NC Museum of History

by Eloise Jackson*
From *Tar Heel Junior Historian*. Fall 2006.
The following is excerpted from an article in the first issue of the North Carolina Museum of History's newsletter "Cornerstone" in February 1993.

The North Carolina Museum of History [2] has had [five] homes, beginning with a single gallery and progressing to its newest impressive structure, which Administrator John D. Ellington says will house the finest museum in the South. It is interesting to recall those early days of the museum's history. Around 1850 the state established the State Museum (of Natural Sciences) in the old Agriculture Building. Because there was no history museum, historical items were occasionally stored there. The name "Hall of History" began evolving around 1898 when the State Museum exhibited a collection of Spanish-American War [3] artifacts in one of the halls.

Samuel A'Court Ashe, publisher of the Raleigh*News and Observer*, used an editorial campaign to encourage the collecting of memorabilia that would record and preserve the history of the state.

City Editor Fred A. Olds [4], "The Father of the North Carolina Museum of History," already had a sizable private collection. Olds suggested that his collection and the historical materials in the State Museum be combined to establish the state's historical museum. On December 5, 1902, the Hall of History was born. Olds described the first home of the Hall of History as "a noble room in the State Museum, 100-by-40 feet and 40 feet high" and wrote that "there are thirty-seven [cases] which to be sure are very completely filled while much of the space on the walls is occupied by pictures." The cases were mothproof, dustproof, and had double safety locks.

The museum's current building opened in 1994.

**In February 1993, Eloise Jackson worked in the staff library at the North Carolina Museum of History.*

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