

Ruby Bastin Donaldson

A Remarkable Woman in Bath History

Ruby Bastin Donaldson was 90 years old when she died in 1993. She was born in October 1902, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Alex and Fannie Bastin. She was married to Samuel Mack Donaldson with whom she had one son Samuel M. Donaldson Jr.

This was a remarkable woman who survived by her wits and unusual entrepreneurial skills. She operated several restaurants in the area as well as the halfway houses on the Homestead's golf courses. Mrs. Donaldson was a spectacular hit with guests, especially the golfers for many years.

“Miss Ruby” as she was affectionately known, operated one of her more successful endeavors, known locally as the Hot Springs Tea Room. This “Tea Room” gained its reputation during Prohibition when the country was supposedly dry. Not so Ms. Ruby’s Tea Room! Beverages were served to guests in very delicate teacups! During the War years restaurant service for the most part was still segregated, but, as we read in Phillip Hirsch’s *Voices from the Hollow* (p. 93), “there was an added twist at the Tea Room, a second floor dining room and dance hall catering to the more daring late night Homestead crowd.” The party lasted well into the night and the sounds... “there was jazz, swing and the jitterbug at the Tea Room played by local, mostly black (but not always) musicians.”

Ms. Donaldson worked hard for her money and she generally spent it in her community. She initiated the Missionary Society and was instrumental in putting electricity and adequate lighting in the Pinehurst Heights High School – Bath County’s only black high school.

“Miss Ruby” was a real character and a real player in Bath County history.