

## Museum History Timeline

Follow along the detailed timeline of how the Ava Gardner Museum evolved from its early days in the Teacherage to the professionally designed museum now found in Downtown Smithfield.

- 3/14/78 Doris Cannon, Smithfield Herald reporter writes column, "*Isn't It Time That Smithfield Saluted Ava?*" Three days later, the Herald receives letter from Dr. Banks, asking for photos of Ava.
- 8/16/79 Dr. Banks and his wife Lorraine hold the first Ava Gardner Exhibit at the former J.E. Wilson Furniture Store on North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street in Smithfield.
- 8/5/80 Dr. and Mrs. Banks hold the second Gardner Exhibit on the second floor of the Public Library of Johnston County and Smithfield. Ms. Cannon arranges entertainment for "Ava Gardner Day" and holds a statewide "Beautiful Baby" Photo Contest.
- 8/80 Dr. Banks learns the old Brogden "teacherage", Ava's childhood home, is to be burned to make space for a new Brogden fire station. Dr. Banks quickly negotiates and saves the building by providing another parcel of land for the new station.
- 7/81 After renovations to the 80-year-old building (a former boarding house for teachers), Dr. and Mrs. Banks open the first Ava Gardner Museum. There is no admission fee.
- 1981-1989 Dr. and Mrs. Banks open the museum each summer, traveling from Florida, where they worked for Broward County Florida Schools, he as a psychologist and she as a librarian. Ms Cannon assists each summer and gives tours in the off-season by appointment.
- 1985 Ava visits the museum in Brogden. Finding the museum locked, Ava declines to have someone bring a key, saying, "I know what's in there. I lived it."
- 8/89 Dr. Banks suffers a heart attack at the Museum, and nine days later dies at Duke University Hospital in Durham, NC.
- 7/90 Lorraine Banks opens the museum one last summer in the Teacherage, but without Tom's presence and enthusiasm for the project, it is a sad undertaking for the new widow. She proceeds with her husband's original plan to donate the museum collection to a public institution.
- 8/1990 Virginia Mayo, film star of the 40's, visits the museum.
- 8/1990 After discussion with Town Councilman Frank Creech, Mrs. Banks donates the collection to the Town of Smithfield with the understanding that a permanent location will be provided within three years. Mayor Norwood Worley and Councilman Creech accept on behalf of the town.

- 6/14/91 The Ava Gardner Museum opens in the old Austin Store on Third Street. The management of the collection is taken over by the Johnston County Arts Council, and an Ava Gardner Museum Steering Committee is formed.
- 1992 Frank Creech and the Johnston County Arts Council formulate plans to renovate the Smithfield Water Treatment Plant to become the permanent home to the Ava Gardner Museum and the Neuse Arts Center.
- 9/9/1992 A fundraising event is hosted by the New York Museum of Radio and Television, showing *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman* in 35mm. The event raises \$10,000 for the project back home in Smithfield.
- 1992 Gregory Peck, film legend and lifelong friend of Ava's, visits the museum during a break while filming a television movie in Raleigh.
- 9/18/93 Loonis McGlohon, renowned composer and jazz pianist, and his trio give a benefit concert for the Ava Gardner Museum at the Paul A. Johnston Auditorium.
- 1993 The Museum is forced to move to another location, the old Denning Furniture Store, farther down Third Street.
- 1995 Under the leadership of Town Manager, Ron Owens, the Ava Gardner Museum incorporates and forms an operating board.
- 1997 The Board hosts the first movie gala fundraiser at the Howell Theatre, showing the film, *The Hucksters*.
- 1998 The Denning Building is sold and later donated to Smithfield's First Baptist Church, which allows the museum to stay until another location can be found to house the collection.
- 4/1998 The second movie gala event is held at The Howell Theatre in Smithfield, featuring *The Barefoot Contessa*.
- 8/1999 The Ava Gardner Museum Board purchases the Holbrook Karate Studio building at 325 E. Market Street, to become the permanent home for the collection. Hurricane Floyd, the most devastating storm to ever hit North Carolina, hinders the renovations.
- 11/99 The third movie gala event is held at the Paul A. Johnston Auditorium, raising \$5,000, for building renovations. The film is *Mogambo*, for which Ava received a "Best-Actress" Oscar nomination.
- 10/1/2000 The new Ava Gardner Museum opens in its permanent location. The Museum's journey from 1978 to 2000 is filled with thousands of volunteer hours, many dedicated fans and a wealth of love, sweat and tears to make this dream come true.