

**EPIC Award**  
**- Chronicle Millworks / John & Jennifer Church**  
**and Brian Hackett –**

*Sponsored by: Duke Energy*  
*Presented by: Martha W. Wegner*



Seven years ago John and Jennifer Church were busy operating their commercial real estate asset management firm in Charlotte and spending zero time thinking about abandoned textile mills and 400-year-old long leaf yellow pine.

Their world took an abrupt turn on Aug. 1, 2013, when they closed on the purchase of the Chronicle Mill property, just two blocks from Main Street in downtown Belmont. The Chronicle, named for Major William Chronicle of Belmont, who died in the Revolutionary War battle of Kings Mountain, was Belmont's first mill, built in 1901. After 108 years of providing jobs for local residents, it closed forever in 2009.

Cramerton residents, John and Jennifer were involved in commercial real estate in Gaston County through their ownership of Chyrch Realty. When they bought the Chronicle, their plan was to branch out into real-estate development by demolishing the building and constructing apartments on the site.

Those plans quickly changed when they looked deeply into the old mill structure, saw the beautiful wood floors and beams, and began to dream of saving the building and salvaging and repurposing some of the wood and other materials.

Fast forward seven years, through multiple attempts to find the right development partner and plan, and things have changed dramatically. The Chronicle Mill redevelopment is on track with a Virginia Beach developer who will save most of the original mill and build 240 apartments plus several thousand feet of commercial and retail space.

The Churches no longer commute to Charlotte, but work a couple of miles from their home. John has gone from working at a desk to working at building desks, tables and many other custom products, from recycled old-mill wood in his shop called Chronicle Millworks.

For their vision, entrepreneurship and contribution to the community, John and Jennifer Church and their Chronicle Millworks business were named 2019 recipients of the Montcross Area Chamber's EPIC Award, recognizing a Chamber member who demonstrates they are Entrepreneurial, Progressive, Innovative and Collaborative.

Laurel Morris, Gaston County Public Library director, nominated the Churches for the award, noting that they "embody the spirit and application of the EPIC Award." She added, "I am appreciative of their collaborative spirit, and I am overwhelmed by John's entrepreneurial prowess. I am particularly speaking of the Chronicle Millworks vision of reclaiming wood from the 1901 Chronicle Mill in Belmont into elegant furnishings for home, office, church, and even library."

The Belmont Branch of the Gaston County Public Library system now has a beautiful service desk and study tables made at Chronicle Millworks from long leaf yellow pine salvaged from the Chronicle Mill.

Custom products designed at Chronicle Millworks by graphics artist and designer Brian Hackett and crafted by Hackett and John Church are also in the Warlick Family YMCA in Gastonia, in the conference room at the City of Gastonia administrative offices and the New Hope Business Center.

When worshippers soon enter the new Queen of Apostles Church in Belmont, they will pass through massive entry doors and see beautiful altar furniture all made at Chronicle Millworks from Chronicle Mill wood.

“The progressive idea of reclaiming the historic wood not only decreased the amount of construction and demolition waste going into the landfill, but it allowed the Chronicle Mill to live on and thrive, said Laurel Morris. “Each time a table, chair, desk, door, stool or cabinet is sold, a piece of the heart and soul of the Chronicle Mill is being shared with another generation.”

She also cites the Churches for their collaborative spirit in partnering with Friends of the Library to raise several hundred dollars at a Montcross Area Chamber Network After Work event and to sponsor the Maurice Sendak exhibition at the library.

Devoting seven years of hard work and an untold amount of financial resources to the fight to save the Chronicle Mill and bring it back to life as an economic asset for Belmont, and the entrepreneurial vision to recycle old mill wood from the Chronicle and other mills make John and Jennifer Church and Chronicle Millworks most deserving recipients of the Chamber’s EPIC Award for 2019.

**EPIC AWARD:** *A representative, or representatives, of a Montcross Area Chamber member business, or an individual member, or members, of the Montcross Area Chamber, who has demonstrated in business operations, management and dealings that they are “Entrepreneurial, Progressive, Innovative and Collaborative.”*



John Church (center) at Belmont Library service desk made from Chronicle Mill wood, with (from left) Brian Hackett, Gaston County Library Director Lauren Morris and Assistant Director Paul Ward.



An artist’s rendering of how a portion of the redeveloped Chronicle Mill will look.