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DECK THE HALLS

Seniors recall
Christmas
traditions of
bygone days

with boughs of memories

By NANCY SORRELLS

There was a time in the Shenandoah Valley when Christmas was a bit simpler, but no less enjoyable than it is for families today. Old *Santa Claus* visited the children even back then, and Christmas trees with strings of popcorn marked the place for presents. But there were some big differences according to three lifelong residents of Augusta and Rockingham counties. The three, all in their 80s, recall plenty of eating and visiting as well as some raucous belsnickeling and shanghaiing.

Huh? Bel-snickeling? Shanghaiing? Most people of the area have never heard of the

terms, much less participated in such weird-sounding activities.

But seven or eight decades ago, the week between Christmas and New Year's was filled with loud visitors who traveled around the rural countryside dressed in ugly disguises.

"Shanghaiing was kinda like at Halloween where you dressed up and went to people's houses," explained Allene Arehart who was born and raised in McKinley in southern Augusta County. The difference, she explained, between today's trick or treating and early 20th century shanghaiing was that the disguised visitors she remembered were invited inside, and the people living in the house tried to guess who was hiding behind the mask.

"If they guessed, you had to take your mask off, and they gave you cider and cookies," explained Granny Archart. The costumes, she went on to tell, were simple. A pillowcase or stocking cap served as a mask, and a sheet could be the clothing. "Sometimes people exchanged clothes, anything to keep the people from guessing who you were."

Hank and Bee Arey describe similar experiences, although they knew the costumed visitors as bel-snickelers. Hank was born and raised in the Bridgewater area, and Bee grew up around Elkton. Today they



Allene Arehart shows a quilt she made. "Granny" Arehart, who moved to Staunton from McKinley two years ago, recalls days when Christmas celebrations were a bit simpler than modern day ones. Photo by Nancy Sorrells

reside in Waynesboro.

"Belsnickeling was pretty strong in the early 1900s up until 1920 or 1925," remembers Hank. "The costumes were simple and homemade. A stocking cap pulled down over the face with the cut-out eyes was used for a mask."

"There were big farms and big families and belsnickeling was like a community get-together," explained Bee. "Everything (about the costumes) was home-made. They were big and fluffy with extra layers. The men would put on extra clothes and disguise themselves with masks. The worse they looked, the better they liked it. They would string cowbells down the side of their pants. I can see them yet," she said.

All three remembered that the main object of the visiting was to make the people in the house

guess who the visitors were. "They'd walk from house to house, go to several a night and didn't stay too long," remembers Granny Archart. She recalled that the shanghaiers would not unmask unless their identity was discovered, but once the guessing was over a snack was served. "My mother would boil the cider, so it would stay sweet," recalled the McKinley native. "There could be just any kind of cookies, but my mother made molasses and also raisin cookies with a raisin pressed between two pieces of dough."

Bee, too, recalls that belsnickelers expected snacks, and that there were "plenty of cakes, cookies, cider and gingerbread cookies." Sometimes the visitors would linger to "play music, dance and carry on."

See COVER STORY, page 4





Outstanding Augusta 4-Hers

Hugh Westfall of the Augusta County Cooperative Council congratulates outstanding Augusta County 4-Hers for 1996 Ellen Murray, Jonathan Coleman, Stephani Massie, and William Woods. The youth were recognized during 4-H Achievement Night held Nov. 17 at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Waynesboro. Ellen, 12, is the daughter of Ann and Allen Murray of New Hope. Jonathan,

13, is the son of Betty and J.R. Coleman of Arbor Hill. Stephani, 15, is the daughter of Sandra Sprouse of Staunton and Tom Massie of Staunton. William, 15, is the son of Linda and William Woods of Swoope. Ellen and Stephani are members of the Galloping 4-H Club, and Jonathan and William are members of the Middlebrook 4-H Livestock Club.

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Greenville woman shares garden beauty through dried arrangements

By NANCY SORRELLS

GREENVILLE — A gardener is just an artist with dirt under the fingernails instead of paint spattered on the hands. Using plants as her media, Greenville's Libby Smith has turned her artwork into a year-round expression of beauty.

In the summer, the canvas is her yard — a pattern of color and form that winds around her house, across her porch, along the sparkling brook, beyond the wooden footbridge and then up and down the far bank. Even as that picture

der the loving care of at least 20 hours of toil a week, Libby is snipping, drying and storing for the second part of her artwork — preparing dried flower arrangements.

"I started gardening 25 years ago, and each year the gardens have a tendency to come out in the yard a little further," she explained of her ever-expanding flower beds. "There's not a flower I don't like. If it's got a flower, I appreciate it. Even if it only has foliage, there are so many nice variances of foliage. I just appreciate beautiful things,"

she added as she walked around her garden pointing out particular varieties, gently breaking off a flower here or a leaf there to smell it or admire its uniqueness.

The extension into dried flower arrangements was only natural, she added.

"I got interested in that through gardening and wanting to keep plant material for winter arrangements. I have been making arrangements for 20 years, and it is so rewarding, because it gives you something to share with other people."

Today there are literally thousands of varieties of plants in her gardens, many of which she dries for her arrangements. With the exception of a few mosses, eucalyptus leaves and the containers themselves, everything in her work has been grown and dried from her gardens. Many va-

specifically because of their characteristics in dried arrangements.

Preparation for the dried arrangements gets under way for Libby in early July. Depending on the flower, she uses either silica gel or air drying for her plants.

"Between July 4 and mid-July statis has to be picked. Also, when the yarrow is ready to pick is when I get into gear and start to think about air drying," she said.

In order to create the best product, a lot of care has to go into drying the flowers.

"You have to condition the flowers by putting them into warm water. The quicker you get them from the garden, the better product you'll have," she explained.

Although most plants can be dried, over the years Libby has learned that some just aren't worth the effort. Tulips and daffodils, for instance, become very transparent. On the other hand, plants like yarrow (*Achillea*), lady's mantle (*Alchemilla*), lavender, Scabiosa and goatsbeard (*Aruncus*) do very well. Other plants, like butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), cone-flower (*Echinacea*), blackberry lily (*Belamcanda*), and balloon flower (*Platycodon*) produce interesting seedpods.

"Most of the plants that you hang (to air dry) will hold color very well and dry a shade darker than they are fresh. Most things also shrink one third to one half size when dry. Over the years, I've learned what to expect and what not to expect when drying," she said.

As with most people, she does have a favorite flower — roses — which she dries in silica gel.

"I like drying roses, both the floribundas and the hybrid teas. Roses hold their color and texture and hold together well. Their color



Although cold weather puts an end to the blooming colors around Libby Smith's house, the beauty of the flowers is carried inside throughout the winter in dried flower arrangements or wreaths.

lasts as well as anything," she explained of her choice.

Through the summer and early fall the dried plants are stored in a smokehouse that has been revamped as a drying house. Then in the fall, after the heat has come on in the house and purged the summer humidity, she sets to work making arrangements, wreaths and wall hangings. Although she likes arrangements better than wreaths, imagination is really the only limit when her creative juices start flowing.

"I can make things formal or informal. I guess my style is more Victorian or Williamsburg. I try to watch all the current magazines to see what the current trends are. For a while it was mauve. Everything had to be mauve. Now it seems that the trend is toward a more natural look. A lot of arrangements include twigs and mosses and pods, and there are groupings of colors."

For this work, her studio moves from the yard to the kitchen where she is a one-woman assembly line.

"I am fairly fast, and I do five or six projects at a time. Once I pick up a flower, I never put it down. It goes into one of the arrangements I am working on," she said.

When complete, her projects work their way into a variety of lives through many avenues.

"A friend's son got married, and I did dried flower arrangements to decorate the church. That was a lot of fun and very enjoyable, but also quite a challenge," Libby said. Other arrangements, she adds, wind up in the hospital as gifts of cheer. "It's like giving away a little

piece of my garden, and maybe with that I can make someone smile."

Some of the arrangements are sold at the two craft shows she attends each season. There, they are snapped up by customers in the know — at the Waynesboro Fall Foliage show she arrived with 75 arrangements and came home with just 10! Once she runs out of dried flowers, however, that's it for the season. She never compromises the quality of her artwork by carrying plant material over to the next season. Although dried flowers will last much longer than freshly cut arrangements, Libby emphasizes that they will not last forever.

"In a climate-controlled home they might last two or three years, but in an average home I don't like to tell people that they will last more than one season," she explained. Some people like to compare her arrangements to silk flowers, but she is quick to point out that dried arrangements are BETTER than silk, because they are natural. "Silk in my way of thinking is like using substitute sugar for real sugar or like eating fat-free ice cream. It's not the same!" she said with a smile.

The beauty of what she creates, both in the yard and through her arrangements, has attracted a lot of people who look and learn from what she has done. Her arrangements have brightened church sanctuaries and brought smiles to the faces of shut-ins and hospital patients. And that, to Libby Smith, is the real reason for what she does.

"The most fun of all is the sharing," she said. —



Libby Smith of Rt. 2 Staunton, shows some of the arrangements she makes with dried flowers from her gardens.

Photos by Nancy Sorrells

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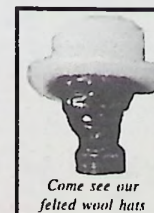
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HANK AREY

COVER STORY

Continued from page 1

"But the main purpose was for people to guess who you were," added Hank.

"Yeah, usually you would take off your face, have a conversation, and move on to the next house," Bee said, adding that the belsnicklers she knew usually went by horse and buggy rather than walking like they did in the McKinley area.

"As soon as a few took off their masks, then the others took theirs off until everybody was unmasked," Hank explained. In all three places, McKinley, Bridgewater, and Elkton, the costumed visitors appeared to have limited their nocturnal carousing to the

week between Christmas and New Years, what they all referred to as Christmas Week.

"New Year's was the end of the celebrations," Hank said. "After that it was back to school."

To the trio, the Christmases of their youth meant other things as well. "Christmas in that day and time meant that there was somebody there (in your house) visiting every day for a week. Visiting was the main thing at Christmas. There would be someone there to eat dinner with you and someone else at supper. And on Christmas day they would play cards through the whole day," Granny Arehart noted, adding that Rook was an all-time favorite card game

of the community.

"We would spend the whole week eating and stuffing ourselves," said Bee of the Elkton community. "Everybody baked coconut cake." Hank agreed with his wife, remembering "a big dinner on Christmas Day."

"We always had a turkey that we had raised," said Granny Arehart. "And my mother would boil a big ham. And cakes! Land I don't know how many cakes my mother would bake!"

A couple of traditions that remain from those earlier times are Christmas trees and a visit from Santa Claus. But, like the times, the trees were simpler as well.

"We had a cedar tree cut out of the back yard. It was decorated with strings of popcorn on thread and artificial balls," said Hank, indicating that he never remembers any artificial lighting on the family tree.

Granny Arehart, too, recalls a tree. "We made popcorn and strung the popcorn around the tree. And we had Christmas balls that were my mother's. But we never had lights. When I lived at home we didn't even have electricity," she said.

Neither Granny Arehart nor Hank recall ever seeing stockings at Christmas time, but Bee recalls "real stockings" which were hung up for Santa. The jolly old elf certainly made his appearance at all three households, and in McKinley that meant delivering the presents under the tree.

"I was 13 years old when I found out about Santy Claus," says Granny Arehart with a laugh. "I saw Daddy put the sleds on the porch which Santy brought." She added that the presents were very simple, like sleds and dollbabies.

"We didn't go out and spend a lot. I remember the very last present my Aunt Kate gave my mother for



BEE AREY

Christmas. It was a 5-pound sack of sugar," she recalled.

In Bee's family, everybody got a box, and their simple presents were placed in the box by Santy Claus. "We would get an orange in the box and gum and candy. It was great. There were five boys and five girls in my family, so that was a big deal to get your own box."

Hank remembers that Santa marked their presents individually. He also recalls the kids lighting sparklers on Christmas day.

No matter how they celebrated the Christmas season, whether Shanghaiers or Belsnicklers stopped by, or whether Santy left the presents in a box or under a tree, all three agree that Christmas has changed since they were children.

"Oh mercy. Them was really good times," exclaims Granny Arehart of a time when a 5-pound sack of sugar was a special gift, and a raisin cookie was a treat to be savored. —



Strings of popcorn were used to decorate Christmas trees used in the Arehart household from Allene Arehart's childhood. Gifts might have included a sack of sugar or a raisin cookie.



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Belsnickeling, shanghaiing are deep-rooted Valley customs

By NANCY SORRELLS

The visits of disguised nocturnal visitors at Christmas time appear to be deep-rooted traditions for residents of the Shenandoah Valley.

No matter the area, the idea of a

costume, noise making, and visiting were once common in most of the communities settled by non-English groups (German and Scotch-Irish) with slightly different twists put to the tradition in each region.

In an area settled largely by the

Germans, the tradition is usually called belsnickeling. The same tradition is found in Pennsylvania and parts of Maryland and West Virginia where there are large German groups. The word "belsnickel" is not as strange as it first sounds. More than likely the term is a corruption of the German words pelz and snickel which together mean fur-clad St. Nicholas. St. Nicholas, of course, is the ancestor of Santa Claus.

In parts of Germany, a scary belsnickel or pelzsnickel once appeared in homes either as St. Nicholas or, more often, as an ugly, slightly evil helper to St. Nicholas. In the past, the belsnickel would visit homes looking for naughty children. Once in a house, he would toss nuts and sweets to the children, tempting them. If they made a move

for the candy, they were met with switches for their trouble.


Somehow the tradition in America captured the word and the disguise of the ugly visitor but turned the practice into just a series of nocturnal visits at Christmas time. Santa Claus (St. Nicholas) took over the job of checking on naughty children and delivering either sweets or switches.

Perhaps the oddest twist to the whole practice is that the same traditions are found in Scotch-Irish communities under the name shanghaiing. Unfortunately, the derivation of the word "shanghai" for this Christmas practice is unknown and how the practice crossed cultural lines is still a mystery.

No matter the name for these

rowdy groups of visitors, some old-timers in the Shenandoah Valley recall that their visits were not always welcome. Many strict denominations, like Brethren, Mennonite and Lutheran, thought the practice was too worldly, and the groups were not allowed in the house.

Others remember a different tact taken by those who frowned upon their activities. The group, dressed in many layers of outlandish clothing, would be invited in and the woodstove stoked up to high heat. A few minutes in the warm environment, and the visitors would be ready to move on to the next house! Today, however, except among the oldest Valley residents, the whole idea of belsnickeling or shanghaiing is a lost practice. —




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Ceramic tiles bring beauty to ordinary spots

By PENNY PLEMMONS

STAUNTON — From the hilltops to the seashore, the splendor and charm of Virginia's landscapes are the blueprints for Staunton artist Elizabeth Karaffa's porcelain painted tiles.



Staunton artist Elizabeth Karaffa adds a few touches to a bouquet of flowers she is painting on ceramic tiles.

"I love the natural beauty of Virginia," stated Elizabeth. "and I attempt to re-create it in the painted tiles."

Adding beauty and art to a functional space describes Elizabeth's home-based business, appropri-

ately named "Virginia Beauty."

Elizabeth's artistic thought and skill can transform ordinary kitchen areas behind sinks and stoves into herbal gardens of marjoram, basil, rosemary and thyme.

She can transform a plain wall, using painted tiles that fit together like pieces of a puzzle, into a wild-flower garden or a nautical scene from the Chesapeake Bay.

Patterns and designs can be lifted from wallpaper and curtains to create matching decor on counters, walls, table tops and trivets. Elizabeth paints single tiles and tile murals that accent home interior themes, such as chickens, cows, hummingbirds, etc.

According to Elizabeth, painted tiles are ideal for the home. They are durable, require little maintenance and have a wide range of uses. Grease splattered on painted tiles can be easily cleaned. Hot pots or pans won't damage a tile trivet and vegetable garden markers can actually be placed in the soil.

"The possibilities with tiles are endless," remarked Elizabeth. "Their greatest appeal is that they make a homemaker's work area beautiful and yet functional."

Planning is an important first step in creating a customized tile project. Since each project is as unique and different as customers themselves, Elizabeth visits their home and surveys the area where the tiles will be placed. "A framed tile picture or a wall mural is an extension of a person's personality. I enjoy spending time with my customers and getting a feel for what they really want," she commented.

Porcelain painting is a labor and time intensive building-up of colors on a glazed surface. Elizabeth uses a broad palette of overglazes to paint the tiles. Firing the painted pieces in a kiln intensifies the color and makes a permanent finish. Some tiles must be fired up to five times in order to achieve the correct color.

"Opening the kiln is suspenseful," Elizabeth said. "I never know exactly how things will turn out."

Elizabeth has always had a penchant for fine arts. She graduated



Elizabeth Karaffa's "Country Bouquet" painted on ceramic brightens a kitchen corner.

from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond with a bachelor of fine arts in painting and printmaking. After college, Elizabeth married Tom Karaffa and for the next 17 years being a wife and mother of six took precedence over painting. As the children got older, Elizabeth began seeking God's direction for an opportunity to supplement her husband's income and still remain at home. And in 1994, Elizabeth turned her talent into a vocation.

She began her cottage industry by exhibiting miniature paintings on wood and tin at various Augusta County arts and crafts fairs. Her detailed work caught the eye of local artist, Sara Dietrick. Mrs. Dietrick encouraged Elizabeth to try her hand at porcelain painting. Elizabeth took the advice and with the help of books and a great deal of experimentation taught herself the art.

She added porcelain painted necklaces, earrings, brooches, rings, and a variety of tile pieces to her craft wares. Although the jewelry sold well, it was the tiles that created a niche for Elizabeth in the art arena.

"Virginia Beauty" became a family affair in 1995 when Elizabeth's husband, Tom, became her business manager. Elizabeth readily

admits that it "was a leap of faith" for Tom to quit his job as a home remodeling foreman. Tom's mastery of wood working and experience in laying tile expanded the business to include tile furniture and framed tile pictures.

Elizabeth and Tom already have plans to help Augusta County residents decoratively comply with the 911 house numbering ordinance. Elizabeth will paint and personalize the numbers onto tiles and Tom will frame and make them ready to hang. This project is a perfect blend of art and function. It gives homeowners a practical but attractive way to identify their house.

Recently, Tom and Elizabeth copyrighted several tile designs that will be marketed through a Richmond based tile company. However, Elizabeth prefers to keep most of her work local. Elizabeth is also the artist-in-residence at Beverley Manor Elementary School for the 1996-97 school year and will be teaching a basic drawing class to third, fourth, and fifth grade students. ---

Porcelain painting one of oldest arts in world

By PENNY PLEMMONS

Porcelain painting, also called china painting, originated in China and is one of the oldest arts in the world. China paints are actually overglaze colors applied to white porcelain pottery. The glazes must be heated to 1,300-1,500 degrees Fahrenheit to meld with the piece and become permanent. The first known overglazes used to adorn porcelain pieces date back over 2,000 years to the Sung Dynasty (A.D. 960-1279). The Europeans picked up the art style in the 1700s, and in 1873 china painting made its debut in Victorian America.

Ben Pitman, an instructor at the Cincinnati School of Design, encouraged a Miss Eggins to teach a class of young women the art of china painting. Miss Eggins, already familiar with the technique, taught the class. In 1875, her students exhibited the first American hand-painted chinaware. One of

her students, Louise McLaughlin, went on to publish a "how-to" book on the subject which became a cornerstone of other china painting classes. The art form gained in popularity around the world when the lightweight electric kiln was invented in the late 1940s.

Today, each porcelain painter develops a technique for creating the overglazes. Novice china painters use standard methods of mixing the powdered overglazes with copal oil, a resin obtained from South American trees. Experienced porcelain painters shroud the kind and quantity of the oil in secrecy. To reveal the "special recipe" would be to give away their success.

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Irish thatcher brings his skills to Frontier Museum

By NANCY SORRELLS

STAUNTON — Some people have jobs that give them a different view on the world. Like Ashley Powell, master thatcher. Powell spends a great deal of his time on top of people's houses, capping off their buildings with neatly made thatch roofs.

"You can see an awful lot from your roof," the 37-year-old Irish native explains. "One project I really liked was a house right over a bay in Ireland. We had the chance there to change an ugly house into a spectacular house, and the views were wonderful."

The most recent project on Powell's schedule has been putting a new roof on the Scotch-Irish farmhouse in Staunton at the Museum of American Frontier Culture. The farm, from County Tyrone in Northern Ireland, was in need of a new straw roof, and Powell, who now lives in Pennsylvania, was called in to do the job. He was joined in the early stages of the project by his brother, Mark, who still lives in County Cork in the Republic of Ireland from where Powell hails.

The job at the Frontier Museum called upon Powell's 16 years of thatching skills to work around some of the special problems involved in historic houses. But such adaptations are not new to Powell who estimates that he spends a little more than half of his time on

thatch projects and the other half on restoration carpentry. Of the thatch projects, half are brand-new roofs, and the others involve repair or replacement work like that being done at the museum.

In an odd way, the thatching takes him closer to his original college training in agriculture. After college and a short time managing nursery stock, he went off to England for two years and worked for a thatcher. Upon his return, he "worked here and there with other thatchers picking up stuff," he says.

Now he applies his agricultural background to his thatching materials. "I advertise for standing crops so that I can look them over," he explains of the grain straw he uses in thatching. He relies on an old horse drawn binder (now hooked to a tractor) for harvest, because a modern combine would destroy the stalks of straw in the threshing process. For threshing, he has built a single drum thrasher which takes just one man to operate and threshes the grain in the sheaf.

One important factor in choosing straw is finding organically grown fields. "Organically grown crops have very little nitrogen in the soil. Nitrogen bolts out the stalk and makes it weaker," he said in explaining that nitrogen rich stalks will deteriorate faster on the roof and will have to be replaced in a shorter period of time.

Thatch can be made from a variety of materials that vary according to tradition in a particular locality and according to availability of materials. Oats, rye, wheat, water reed, flax and rushes can all be used to make thatch, and Powell has worked with all but the last.

"One will work better than the others in a particular style of building. Straw works well for smaller garden pieces like tea houses. It is pliable and more easily shaped. You can do more crazy stuff with straw. Reed is good for larger structures. You can put it down quicker, because it slides and blends quicker. Reed has silicon, and the natural elements help make it water-proof."

The roofs on the Frontier Museum's farm buildings are rye straw, a traditional material used in County Tyrone. According to Powell, a rye straw roof like the one he is putting on at the museum should last 15 years with occasional repair work. Rye, he explained, is softer than some other materials and does not have quite the life expectancy of, say, reed roofs which have been known to last 100 years.

"Thatch roofs can last anywhere from 1 year to 100 depending on style, method and material. Most people try to achieve around 25 years," Powell said.

Another factor that determines the life of the roof is whether the straw bundles are put down as a long straw roof or a combed straw roof. "Combed straw is kept in form as a bundle and sheaf. It stays in one direction and is dressed (pushed into place) with a leggett (wooden mallet with a uneven surface like a giant comb). Long straw goes in every which way. Combed straw exposes less of the straw stalk and has a longer life, because water stays on each piece a shorter amount of time, and the roof maintains its shape better," Powell said



Mark Powell of County Cork, Ireland, combs and straightens rye straw for placement on the thatched roof of a farmhouse at the Museum of American Frontier Culture.

Photos by Nancy Sorrells

of the roof he is putting on the museum's Scotch-Irish farmhouse.

Unlike many of his modern projects, the County Tyrone house has to fit into a certain traditional model. He has to create a thatch roof similar to what 19th century farmers in Ulster would have used. That means that even before the first bundle of straw goes on the roof, layers of sod (called scraws in Ireland, because they were cut and rolled up in giant dirt and grass rolls resembling scrolls) must be placed on the wooden roof framework.

"Sod is very local in Ireland and a little in Scotland. In a new structure I would use wood (not sod) as the base," Powell said, noting some of the unique aspects of the historic farmhouse.

There are some parts of a thatch job, however, which are constant

whether the structure is several hundred years old or brand new. "You have to establish good firm eaves, and prep the roof to get it in stable condition. If the thatch goes onto something soft, it will never get firm. Get the eaves tight, and then everything else is tight," he said.

The eave bundles go on first, and then the courses start across the roof. Bundles are 24 inches in circumference and cover a square foot. When finished, one of Powell's roofs is at least 12 inches thick, although he likes to go a little thicker than that when he can. Bundles of straw are pinned down with scollops, flexible pieces of wood shaped like giant hairpins. Because of the way the courses are laid, scollops never show on a combed straw roof except along the top of the roofline.

With the scollops and most of the straw's length hidden, the roof will weather better. There are, he said, some weather conditions which are good for a thatch roof

See **THATCH**, page 28

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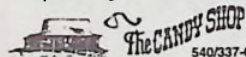
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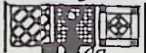


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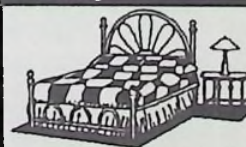
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Afton's Cookie Lady has family of thousands

By NANCY SORRELLS

AFTON — Nestled high on a hillside in the heart of Virginia's Blue Ridge mountains is the village of Afton. Once the railroad town prospered, but as interstates grabbed most Americans off the smaller, country roads, and modern progress took a different course, Afton slowed down and remained frozen in time.

But then serendipity took over and created a legend. Back in the 1970s, as the nation neared its bicentennial, and bicycling in America neared its 100th birthday, an amazing idea was born. A group of cyclists from Montana came up with the idea of BikeCentennial, a bike route from one end of the continent to the other, all on back roads, so that cyclists could see the real America.

The idea was that in a one-year burst of patriotism and cycling enthusiasm, bicyclists would ride this transamerican route and see the country celebrate its birthday. By sheer chance the route, which crossed through Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky, North Carolina and Virginia, passed through Afton.

Although happenstance put the route along June Curry's front door, it was the personalities of June Curry, her father Harold Haven, her uncle Benny Haven, and Aunt Agnes Baber that created the legend of the Cookie Lady. In the cycling grapevine, stories of the Cookie Lady abound. Those who haven't met the Cookie Lady aspire to meet her one day. Even cyclists on the West Coast have heard of her.

In this case, the legend is not larger than life. What the Cookie Lady of Afton — June Curry — and her family have done is treat more than 10,000 cyclists and hikers to gentle country hospitality and create a biking family that spans the globe. For two decades since the inception of BikeCentennial, the hospitality has not only continued, but has grown. A pilgrimage up the mountain on a sunny summer day in 1996 was organized by some recipients of that hospitality and intended to honor June and to pay back, in a small way, all the kindnesses she has shown to weary strangers who pedaled past her doorstep. In the midst of the celebration, in which she is still running around handing out cookies and tending to the needs of others, June explains, in her own humble way, how the whole the legend of the Cookie Lady started.

To place things in proper perspective, June goes back to the VERY beginning. "I was born right in this house. Been her 75 years. That's a long time to be in one house," she says by way of explanation while sitting for a moment in the cottage known as the Bike House. June's cousin, Bev Haven,

is sitting next to her. Bev has written a book on the Cookie Lady of Afton and elaborates on June's explanation: "She has never been away from Afton more than three or four months in her whole life."

And so it was in 1976 that June, in her mid 50s had settled down to a sedate life in Afton where her father ran a small garage. A homebody who had no desire to travel, had never learned to ride a bike and who professed a distaste for cooking, was soon to stumble into her life's mission.

"In the summer of 1976 when they first started coming through on bicycles I was amazed. I had never seen bicycles all loaded down. The first one stopped at the garage and my uncle said, 'go get her some water.' You see, when the trail was laid off there was a grocery in Afton, but it closed," she said while pointing to a ramshackle building down the hill that now houses a junk store. "These people were coming into Afton and there was no store."

They were so hungry and so tired I began to feed them. Then I began making cookies, and it just grew."

Aunt Agnes, who is 93 now, also remembers that first summer and the weary bicyclists struggling up the mountain: "It was hot in the afternoon. One biker came along, and he looked terrible. I told June he would never make it to the top of the mountain. I had just taken 24 rolls out of the oven and I said, 'Butter some of those rolls, and put some homemade jelly on them and take them out.' He ate some and then eight or nine more bikers showed up, and they ate all our supper. But we didn't mind. We ate cold bread that night."

When the family living in those neat little brick houses clustered together on the Afton mountainside saw the sojourners struggling up the mountain, they opened themselves to them. Soon a hand-lettered sign offering WATER FOR BIKERS hung next to a hose on the side of the road. And June, seeing the need to re-energize those cyclists heading up the mountain, began handing out snacks.

"I began fixing cheese, crackers, peanut butter and jam sandwiches and anything else I could spare. Then I began to bake cookies. From that time on, I have been known as The Cookie Lady of Afton, Va. I sometimes wonder how I got myself into this, as I could never ride a bicycle and I hate to cook!" June says.

The entire family enjoyed meeting the cyclists that first summer. June's father would often lend a

hand with mechanical problems or drive stranded cyclists somewhere in his 1933 Ford pickup truck. The family enjoyed talking to the travelers and listening to their stories.

"Every rider had a story to tell, a particular reason why he or she was making this long, arduous trip. Each

June began keeping a log of the visitors and encouraged all the riders to sign and add comments.

Initially, June's reasoning was to keep the log so that she could mail forgotten belongings back home to them. But soon, the log became a record of her "Bike family." It wasn't long before she also began taking a Polaroid snapshot of every cyclist who rode through.

Sadly, Uncle Benny passed away in the spring of 1977, but because the family knew how much he enjoyed that first season of BikeCentennial riders, June and her father decided to turn Uncle Benny's little brick house located next to the garage and water hose, into a Bike House, open to cyclists and the occasional Appalachian Trail hikers who passed through. Riders were encouraged to spend the night at the house free of charge, and soon June began cooking full meals and carrying them down the hill into the house.

"In 1977 is when I really got organized," she says. "I didn't get all the names in 1976, and I didn't start the book until 1977, and the pictures were only taken at random in 1976. This whole thing has grown just a little bit at a time."

The cyclists who became a part of her family never forgot their time in Afton, and June never forgets them. Through the years the log book and photo albums, carefully labeled "My Bike Family," have stacked up in the little brick house. And that's not all. So touched were many of the visitors that they often left something of themselves behind as a memento. The walls and ceilings are filled with autographed T-shirts, socks, water bottles, safety flags, helmets, gloves and even scraps of poetry and impromptu artwork. Carefully organized by year on very large bulletin boards are also hundreds of newspaper articles about June or the riders who came through with a special story to tell. Riders who were testing their inner strength

because of some terrible disease or heartache, riders who were learning about America, visitors from abroad who were finding out about the country for the first time... the stories have never ceased to amaze June. In the 21 summers since the first thirsty rider cycled up Afton Mountain, more than 10,000 cyclists have stopped at the Bike House, signed the log book, and joined the family. Every state is represented as well as 31 foreign countries. Many of the riders keep in touch, sending postcards, letters, wedding invitations and baby pictures.

"I call all these people my bike family," she says with a twinkle in her eye. The postcards — more than 2,000 festoon the walls and drape the stairway — are colorful hellos from all over the world. Some cards are from hometowns, others report a successful end to the journey, while still others continue to arrive from far-flung cycling adventures. Rick, who sent a card from Katmandu, made the journey back for the Cookie Lady reunion.

"I know the routine," he jokes as he steps up for the essential hug and picture. As she gives a quick tour of the bike house, June is required to stop every minute or so, and greet new arrivals from her "family" in the same fashion. Each person gets a hug, usually recognition by name, and a photograph is made. She stops to greet another family, down from Philadelphia, and explains: "He was a leader of a BikeCentennial group, and she was a member, and they married."

For the family, this is not the first return pilgrimage, as the mother tells her youngsters: "You were just a little baby in a basket when we came to visit. We met June and came back through to visit and spend one night."

A Pennsylvanian, Max Sherman who stopped at Afton in 1978, 1979, 1980 and 1981, bends down to hug June and re-introduce his family. "I'll just hug you as I go by," he says with obvious feeling. "About every 10 minutes."

June returns the warmth noting that she had his wedding invitation up in the Bike House and had

See COOKIES, page 11



June Curry, the Cookie Lady of Afton, stands amid some of the thousands of postcards and newspaper clippings which are souvenirs of the more than 10,000 cyclists who have been treated to some of the woman's hospitality and homemade goodies.

Photo by Nancy Sorrells

group had its own personality, its own share of unique experiences along the back roads and in small towns," writes Bev in her book.

"I thought it would be a one-year thing," June recalls. "The bikers were pretty and colorful and I would never see those people again."

But then an amazing thing happened. Or perhaps not so amazing to anybody who has met June. Those people who arrived as strangers, left as family. One afternoon in the spring of 1977, 50 bikers arrived on her doorstep at once and pandemonium ruled. At the suggestion from a relative,

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Couple keeps track of hikers on Appalachian Trail

By SUE SIMMONS

IRISH GAP — Anyone looking for proof that angels are among us, need look no further than Irish Creek Road. That's where Ed and Mary Ann Williams live.

Called the "Angels of the Trail," the Williamses come to the aid of "thru" and "section" hikers on the Appalachian Trail, providing them with snacks, water, rides, and sometimes a place to sleep and shower.

Every afternoon in the summer Ed and Mary Ann hop in their van and drive either a short 48-mile loop or a longer loop of 70 miles that takes them to the various places where the AT intersects roads and highways.

From these access points they hike the trail up to a half-mile, offering food and water to any hikers they might meet and leave behind a variety of nabs, crackers, granola bars, ham and cheese sandwiches, and sausage biscuits in a cooler and gallon jugs of spring water hanging in a tree.

They also leave cards with their names and phone number that let hikers know they can call if they have any special needs.

"I've always liked the mountains," Ed explains. A native of Amherst County, his business in Key Largo, Fla., kept him away from the Blue Ridge for a number of years. "And I've been interested in the trail ever since I started hearing about it when I was a boy," he said.

Ed began his hobby, as he calls it, in 1982 after he bought some land at the foot of South Mountain near Irish Gap and began returning to the Blue Ridge for long weekends.

"I started seeing more hikers and I'd give them snacks," he said.

"It's because he likes to snack so much himself," Mary Ann, the bookkeeper at Rockbridge High School, adds.

Ed admits that his hobby has escalated over the years and especially since his retirement brought him back to Virginia permanently.

Hikers who have never heard of the Williamses, are initially suspicious.

"Mary Ann got a sign for the van so people know who we are," Ed says.

Still, most hikers wonder: "Who are these people, why are they doing this and what's in it for them?" Ed adds.

To the Williamses the answer is simple. Meeting people and making friends from all over the world is what's in it for them.

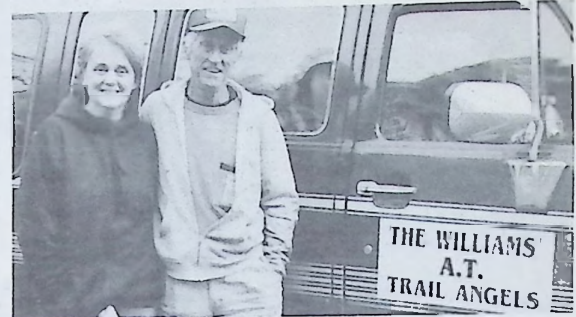
"When we get a card in the mail, it's reward enough," Mary Ann says.

Ed pulls out one of many cardboard boxes that bears the warning "Not Trash." It is filled with cards, letters, and pictures of hikers he and Mary Ann have met over the years. As a matter-of-fact, the Williamses have a photograph of nearly every hiker they have met. Accompanying the snapshots are notebooks filled with the names of and comments by AT hikers along with fistfuls of scraps of papers filled with thanks and comments left behind by hikers whom the Williamses didn't meet but who par-took of their snacks and water.

"This is Old Timer Freddie," Ed says, showing a picture of a white-haired man. "He's 82 and the oldest person I know of who has hiked the trail."

Freddie, his trail name, is a section hiker who tackled the trail after his wife's death. "He lives with his children in North Carolina, and I think the trail is a place where he can be on his own," Mary Ann adds. "Some people just find a home on the trail."

"Freddie can eat more than anyone I've ever seen," Ed laughs. He remembers that Freddie bought groceries in Buena Vista where they had shuttled him. When they dropped him off at the trailhead, he headed up the trail, pack on his



Mary Ann and Ed Williams, or Appalachian Trail Angels as they are known to many hikers, offer aid and comfort to travelers along the trail.

back, carrying two grocery bags filled with food. "We knew it wouldn't last long. He would eat it and give it away."

Freddie stays in touch with the Williamses, sending snacks to them to distribute to other hikers.

The Williamses also met two sisters in their 70s who were hiking the trail this summer.

They produce letters from two hikers in Kiwi and New Zealand. "This was their first visit in the states, and they spent it hiking the AT," noted Ed.

Another photograph is of two young women dressed in outlandishly flowered outfits, fists raised in a victory salute, standing beside the sign that bears the name Mt. Katahdin. "These are the only two we met this summer that we know finished the trail," Ed says. He finds the picture he took of them when they passed through his area and compares the two. "I never would have guessed they'd make

The first time hikers stayed at their house, Ed was on his way back to work in Florida and was ready to close up his place up for the winter. On his way out he met two girls who were in need of an overnight stop. Ed gave them the directions and keys to his house, instructed them how to close it up for the winter, and set off for Florida. When he returned several months later, he found the place closed up just as he had instructed, and cleaned from top to bottom.

"Those two girls have come back here two more times with friends and family," he said.

"Rockfish Gap is a big drop-out area," Ed explains. "If they make it past Rockfish, they'll probably finish."

Ed recalled one girl from Florida. "Her feet were so bad it was pitiful," he said. She spent the night at the Williamses, and the next day Ed took her to the hospital in Waynesboro. After an examination the doctor told her she could not

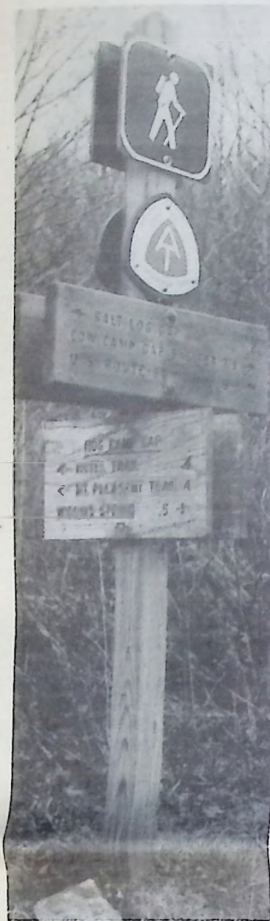
continue. Ed, of course, made sure she got the bus back to Florida.

Some people lose so much weight on the trail, they have to get off for awhile to put it back on.

And people aren't the only ones who need calories on the trail. The Williamses recently got a call about a starving dog left behind at one of the shelters on the trail. They were ready to go get the animal when a couple of hikers found the dog and took it to Montebello where it was turned over to Ed and Mary Ann's care.

One man they happened upon was almost out of food. "He was down to his last package of noodles," Mary Ann said. A card they have from the hiker says

See TRAIL, page 11



A marker along the Appalachian Trail provides information to hikers.

Photos by Claudio Simmons

Trail traces spine of Appalachia

The Appalachian Trail, "a footpath for those who seek fellowship with the wilderness," stretches 2155.1 miles between Mt. Katahdin in Maine and Springer Mountain, Ga., winding its way across the spine of the Appalachian Mountains through 14 states.

Today's trail, while different from what he first envisioned, was the brain-child of Benton MacKaye who launched the project in 1921 with an article in *The Journal of The American Institute for Architects*. Actually begun in 1925, the CCC completed the trail in 1937. A severe storm and the construction of Skyline Drive and the Blue Ridge Parkway altered the trail's path further.

The first "thru" hiker — one whose objective is to hike the whole length at one time — was Earl Shaffer, a World War II veteran who wanted to "walk the war out of my system." Viewed by many at the time as a stunt, Shaffer's walk even-

tually led to a long-distance hiking craze that spawned a number of long-distance trails, notably the Pacific Crest Trail.

Marked with white blazes on trees and rocks, the AT has since attracted legions of through and section hikers — one whose objective is to hike the trail one or more sections at a time. This is not an activity to be taken lightly. Even for those in mental and physical shape, the trail costs time and money — six months and at least a dollar a mile.

Even the most prepared do not always succeed. Numbers of trail guides, books, and videos offer advice and direction to the would-be hiker. The AT doesn't go around anything; it goes over everything.

Those who do make the trek from Maine to Georgia, either all at once or one section at a time, join an exclusive club whose mettle has been tested and not found wanting. —

Cobra, Twisted Sister, Old Timer Freddie, La Chef, Kiwi — are all handles or trail names used by Appalachian Trail hikers. Trail names allow a certain degree of anonymity among people who meet briefly yet intimately on the trail. Hikers, after all, sometimes end up sharing water, food, and sometimes shelter with total strangers.

it," he notes. The Williams are registered shuttlers with the Appalachian Trail Conference Headquarters in Harpers Ferry. Hikers coming from that direction know ahead of time that Ed and Mary Ann will shuttle them to stores, hospitals, and other places they might need to go while they are in the area.

The Williamses also bring hikers to their home to spend the night and get a shower. Mary Ann not only cooks them a meal, but she has become expert at mending and repairing backpacks.

Churchville woman's doll collection ranges from real-life to comical

By PENNY PLEMMONS

CHURCHVILLE — Superstars, Elvis, Lucy and the original cast from "Gone With the Wind" reside at Billie Rohrer's home in Churchville.

These notables are just a few of the dolls that occupy two corner cupboards, a china cabinet, a table top and even the living room floor in Billie's house. And if that's not enough, a small side room is shelved from the ceiling to the floor and is showcase to hundreds of dolls.

Eighty-one-year-old Billie can't remember just how her passion for collecting dolls began 20 years ago.

"I have always loved dolls," she said. And through gifts and purchases, one doll led to another until Billie's collection now boasts 150 large dolls and so many smaller ones that she hasn't bothered to count them.

Her dolls traverse the past eight decades with the oldest being 85-year-old Tommy, a slender porcelain-faced doll with a straw filled body called a kid body.

From the Bye-to dolls of the 1920s, to Thumbelina of the 60s, to the current Cabbage Patch of the 80s, Billie has dolls that a child of any age would recognize and fondly remember.

Many of the older dolls in the collection were the first baby dolls owned by Billie's friends. Family and friends have added dolls from other countries and dolls of all races to her shelves. She also purchases dolls from favorite doll suppliers, the Ashton-Drake Galleries and the Danbury Mint Company.

For Billie a doll represents more than a childhood toy. They are a link to memories of times past, people, places and events. Dolls that have no written history, have



Billie Rohrer of Churchville holds her favorite doll "Stella" which is one of more than 150 in her collection. To the left is Nancy Reagan in a white satin gown keeping company with the

likes of Lucy and Ricky Ricardo. The cabinet in the background to the right also is filled with dolls from Billie's collection.

Photo by Penny Plemmons

an oral one that is stored in Billie's sharp memory.

She makes sure that every doll has a name, and she furthers her attachment to them by sewing, knitting and crocheting hats, clothes, booties and blankets for dolls that need them. Her philosophy regarding discarded or yard sale dolls is that, "any doll is worth fixing."

She recalls being asked to trade her Thumbelina for an original Shirley Temple doll. "I just couldn't do it," she said. "Thumbelina did not want to leave home."

Dolls range from the glamorous Nancy Reagan replica to the downright ridiculous coconut

head doll with sea shell eyes. There are dolls that clap, cry and laugh. One set of dolls consist of the same doll dressed in costumes depicting various holiday outfits, such as Christmas, Valentine's Day and Halloween.

And then according to Billie, there's the ugliest doll. A plastic curly haired, red headed school teacher named Miss Friday.

Prince Charles and Diana are poised in a corner cupboard dressed in their wedding regalia. "Charles should have a hat," Billie quipped. "I wrote the Danbury Mint Company and requested one, but they said he didn't wear a hat

during the wedding. So there he stands, hatless!"

Out of all the antique dolls, the movie star look-a-likes, the ornately dressed dolls, the collectors' keepsakes, Billie has chosen an ordinary baby doll as her favorite.

"Stella is my favorite baby," Billie remarked. Stella is about 20 inches long and is dressed in a hand knitted white sweater and cap. She has the preferred place of resting against a pillow on Billie's bed. And why is Stella so special to Billie?

Because, the woman says, "She feels like a real baby!" —



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Trail

Continued from page 9
bluntly, "You saved my life."

While this may be something of an exaggeration, Ed and Mary Ann do take care of hikers in a far more subtle way.

They are constantly aware of just who is hiking, or in some cases, lurking, on the trail in their area. They not only have an opportunity to observe a number of hikers, they can compare what they see to what they hear from hikers walking through.

They cite the man who was supposedly running the trail last summer as an example. "We heard about him. But we never saw him, and we never met anybody who had met him," they said.

They are constantly vigilant about people whose motives are suspect. Asked how he knows the difference between a thru or section hiker and someone who is just messing around Ed says, "The smell! I carry a can of spray deodorant to disinfect them before they get in the van."

He adds that he asks hikers about their hikes and destinations and sometimes their response doesn't jibe with what he sees. "Last week we met a man who told me he'd been out for eight days. He was so white I didn't believe he had been out that long. His clothes were clean, and he smelled like he had just stepped out of a shower. It didn't add up," Ed recalled.

Another man, Ed learned from others, was hiking up and down the same section of trail, repeatedly hitching rides into town, buying food which he would ditch beside the trail or leave in shelters.

In those cases, Ed alerts the National Forest Service and the State Police. Law enforcement officials also rely on the Williamses to spread news to hikers who are out of touch with current events, in particular news about last summer's murder of two hikers along the AT in Page County.

Asked if they have seen any changes over the years, Mary Ann responds, "There are more fun hik-

ers out there now. They aren't as serious about it, so they aren't as prepared. They are doing it because it's popular."

Ed observes that weather discourages people more than anything else. "They can't find the springs for water, and they get tired of eating noodles," he adds.

Ed and Mary Ann have not attempted the AT themselves yet. Ed recently purchased a new pair of hiking boots and plans to get in some hiking this fall. The two attend Trail Days at Damascus, Va., an annual reunion of the Long Distance Hikers Association.

A man who has walked the trail three times told Ed it took him 10 years to get mentally prepared to attempt it. "You have to convince yourself that you want to spend 180 days walking. But Lord willing, I'll walk the trail one day," Ed said. In the meantime, the Williamses are planning to build a hostel on the mountain above their house. They are seriously looking at a commercially-sold domed shelter that can be put up in the spring and taken down in the fall.

Hikers along the Appalachian Trail have few opportunities to obtain assistance should they need it. "Trail Angels" like the Williamses lend a helping hand when necessary.

"We need a toilet and portable shower," Ed adds, but offers they are somewhat limited by their septic system. It is safe to assume, however, that next spring AT hikers will find a fairly commodious resting place.

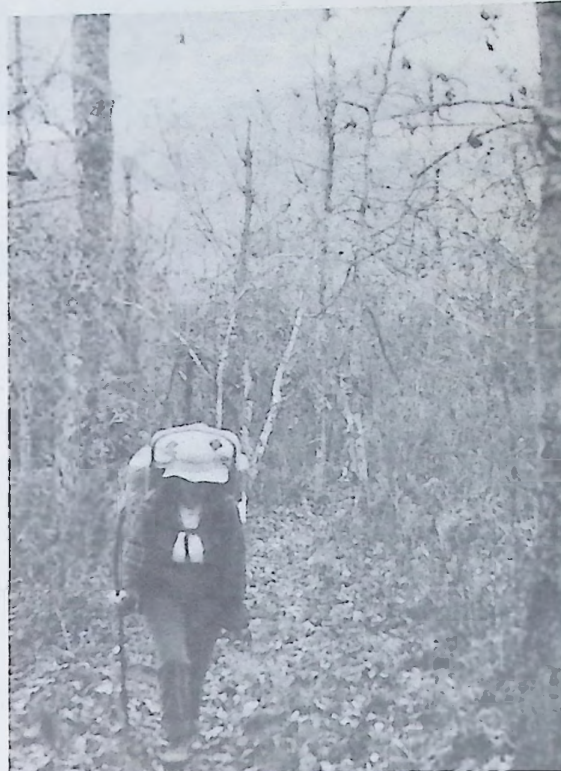
Ed and Mary Ann admit theirs is an expensive hobby, spending about \$40 a week on snacks alone. "It's the gas that really runs into money," Ed laughs. "But as long as we can do it, we don't care what it costs."

"I've given up hunting and drinking (and working on the house Mary Ann interjects) to take care of people on the trail. "But not golf on Sunday afternoon."

Ed continues, "As long as Mary Ann brings that check home. . ." and he laughs.

"I've had a lot of hobbies in my life," Ed chuckled. "Golf—that's expensive. Took up archery once—that's expensive. And horses—bought some horses once—that was real expensive."

So as hobbies go, being Angels isn't all that expensive, and some angels don't have to wait for the hereafter to find their reward. —



•Cookies

Continued from page 8

been keeping up with his children.

"I stopped here many a time," says another visitor, Barbara Sturgis from Portsmouth. "I was with the Tidewater bicycle club when I first met June, and she amazed me. The second time I saw her she remembered my name and my girl's name!"

Since that first meeting, Sturgis and her bike club have adopted the bike house, helping to paint, freshen up the house and give June a hand when they can.

"This place is a haven—a place to stop in the heat no matter how much money you have," Barbara

said in explanation of the club's work. "June always gives until her heart won't give any more. I don't care where we are, we stop in to see her. And I send her film for her Polaroid camera at Christmas and Easter and stamps too whenever I get the chance."

Although the bike house remains open to cyclists and cookies and lemonade are always handy, June no longer fixes the expansive meals she once did in the height of the BikeCentennial movement. Her father passed away in 1990 and 93-year-old Aunt Agnes can't pitch in and help like she once did.

"I do keep the kitchen stocked with whatever food is here," June said as she offered a tour of the house. "And there are first aid supplies," she added, pointing to a shelf spilling with aspirin, Band-Aids and Pepto Bismol. "There is a bathroom and a cold shower, but the bikers don't seem to mind that."

Cold showers to hot cyclists are a welcome treat, and the riders continue to make their way through

Afton although not in the numbers of the 1970s boom. Very few cyclists, whether they are cross-country riders or more leisurely day-trippers, have not heard about the Cookie Lady. She is spoken of in revered tones from coast to coast. Transamerica bikers enjoy telling the tale of hearing about her while they were still in Oregon and anticipating a meeting through their entire journey. Greg Giordana, from New Jersey, and the organizer of the 1996 reunion, tells of his introduction to June back in 1990.

"We had been hearing about June for two weeks. You have got to go visit the Cookie Lady. That was how big her legend was. We spent three hours here and had lunch and cookies. I didn't want to go, because I felt something special. I kept corresponding with her and came back to visit twice. I was so inspired by her and what she has done that I thought someone needs to do something nice for this lady who has been doing something nice for others for 21 years."

The result was the Cookie Lady Reunion, a weekend where June was the guest of honor instead of the host. More than 80 people from 18 different states signed up for the reunion, bringing their bicycles, but more importantly, their whole families.

Being the guest of honor was not an easy task for June who continued to scurry about with plates of cookies and pitchers of lemonade. "I just throw the cookies together, there is no one favorite," she said.

Stepping up to the plate full of one tasty specialty that incorporates vanilla wafers, peanut butter, chocolate and marshmallows are 10-year-old Laura Boyd and her 6-year-old brother David. The family has obviously been here before, and the kids are delighted with the cookie choice. It turns out that although they now hail from New Jersey, the Boyds once lived in Waynesboro at the western foot of Afton Mountain. For fun the youngsters' father would pedal up the steep mountain, and the legend of June drew him in for a visit. Today the entire family has returned to join in June's celebration.

Stepping back and watching June and her global bike family interact, it's easy to see why so many people made the return pilgrimage to see her or continue to keep in contact through mail. The water hose and the tasty cookies and even the bike house have all been nice, but these people were all touched by the person who is June Curry, The Cookie Lady of Afton, Va.

"She's infectious," explains Greg as he searches for an explanation of her legend. "It's hard leaving here, and that's not just because you have to ride up a big hill!" —



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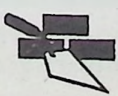
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Yesterday once more

Irishman's links to Augusta County span the centuries

EDITOR'S NOTE: Augusta Country staff and contributing writers Nancy Sorrells and Katharine Brown visited Northern Ireland in July. These articles are a continuation of their travelogue which began in the November issue of *Augusta Country*.

By NANCY SORRELLS

MAGHERA, Northern Ireland—Who would believe that a farmer who has lived all his life on the outskirts of the tiny village of Maghera in County Londonderry, Northern Ireland, would have a triple connection to the Augusta County area? But such is the case with Sam Shiels.

The retired farmer makes his home in a whitewashed cottage surrounded by outbuildings that were once an integral part of a thriving farm. Today the farm is empty except for the slightly stooped figure of Samuel A. Shiels, putting around the houseyard in his brown tweed jacket.

We had stopped by to visit this Ulsterman for several reasons. A life-long farmer, Sam was born and reared in the same place where he now has reached nearly his 90th year. And yet, he has a sense of history and heritage

that reaches far beyond the rural land which has supported his ancestors in County Londonderry since at least the 1730s.

His farm is just outside the village of Maghera, (pronounced Ma-ha-ra) in the townland of Mullagh. It is an area with ancient ghosts that still whisper in the cold, damp winds of Ireland. Despite the fact that our visit was on an August day, the gusty winds and spitting rain forced us to pull our wraps tight and stuff our hands deep in our pockets.

Sam first became connected with Augusta County about a decade ago when the Museum of American Frontier Culture in Staunton was preparing to move a farm from Northern Ireland to Staunton and interpret the culture of earlier generations of Ulster families who settled the Valley. In the north of Ireland, a sister museum, the Ulster-American Folk Park, was searching for artifacts to use in the stone farm house being sent to America.

Sam knew of the Folk Park and the search, so after looking around his own farm, he decided to donate items that spoke of his rural heritage. Many of the items he donated were shipped to America as furnishings for the

stone farmhouse that was disassembled, moved to Virginia, and is today open to the public.

"Yes, I have been the donor of all those small tools and pots, pans and crocks together with the potato digger (and) the turnip sower," he wrote in a letter to America. "I was very pleased to donate these items and help to allow your visitors to savour a 'wee bit of the old country.'"

"These objects have all been donated from the family farm some of which have belonged to my Father and possible maybe a few to my Granfather and were worked on the family farm which grew from a small beginning to a much Larger Farm."

In his correspondence, Sam also piqued a historian's curiosity with a few other connections between the Maghera area and Augusta County. He is, for instance, the founding member of the Charles Thomson Society. Thomson, who was born in Maghera and attended the same Presbyterian church which Sam attends today, emigrated to America and became secretary of the Continental Congress. The Pilson family of Augusta County, which played a prominent role in Bethel Presbyterian Church, is related by marriage to Charles Thomson.

The mention of Bethel Presbyterian Church brings to mind the third Augusta connection revealed to us in one of Sam's letters. The Ulsterman wrote of "A Presbyterian Minister The Rev. Glendye who emigrated to America in 1798 became a Minister in a church in Staunton, Virginia." With that short sentence, Sam sent us scrambling to the history books to learn more about the mysterious "Rev. Glendye." What we learned, thanks to Sam, astounded us: he was minister at Bethel and preached in Staunton.

It was with these connections in mind that we determined to drop by and pay our respects to Sam while we were visiting in the north of Ireland. Sam has no phone, so we relied on Lady Luck to get us together. Our first try was unsuccessful — seems the 89-year-old Sam was driving around — but the second attempt hit pay dirt, and we were able to spend an enjoyable hour or so in his parlor visiting.

The long single-story farmhouse where the lifelong bachelor continues to keep house was clearly the result of many generations of homelife. At one time the long, one-room deep house was two separate buildings, according to

Sam, but his father combined the pair under one thatch roof. Today the thatch has been replaced with a long tin roof.

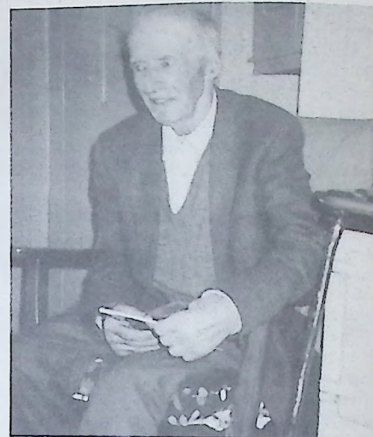
A grandfather clock, which Sam winds once a week, and a Royal Rayburn cooker stand in contrast to each other in the central room. The cooker is what Americans would call a wood cookstove. Sam explained that he cuts down one or two trees every year and that supplies enough wood for the stove that has a firebox, a grill (called a hotplate in Ireland), a hot water heater and an oven.

"The cooker is in front of what was once a hearth," he explained. "There were two cranes in the hearth, one on each side. There was a potato saw on one side and a griddle on the other."

Back around the turn of the century, Sam's father ran the 90-acre farm and used some of the most up-to-date agricultural methods. The potato digger, for instance, represented cutting-edge technology when his dad purchased it in 1892. "For a long time it was the only potato digger in Maghera," Sam noted, adding that other farmers would borrow the horse-drawn implement.

The farm prospered in those years, supporting Sam and his six siblings. Sam's oldest brother was killed in World War I. Of the other siblings, two remain — Sam who still lives on the family farm, and his 96-year-old sister who moved to Philadelphia in 1927. Sam and his sister have seen each other only once since her emigration, in 1965 when she returned to Maghera for a visit.

As he thinks back over the nine decades of his own life as well as the lives of those who have gone before him in Maghera, the past



Sam Shiels of Maghera in County Londonderry, Northern Ireland

Photos by Nancy Sorrells

remains very vibrant. While talking about his ancestors, he pauses and shuffles out of the room only to return with a handful of letters from family members who have gone to America. These were not people who had moved to the new world via airplane travel.

The oldest letter is dated 1866, 130 years ago! In it the writer, who wound up in Memphis, Tenn., years for news from the "old country." Other letters are from little Nannie Shiels, living in America, and writing back to her "granda," (also Sam's grandfather) still living in Ireland. The letters come up to the present and serve to bridge the generations. Although he has no children of his own, Sam remains in contact with nieces and nephews and cousins both in the vicinity of Maghera and on the other side of the Atlantic. For them, Samuel A. Shiels is a link across time and geography. For *Augusta Country* readers, Sam proves that Augusta connections stretch far beyond present-day boundaries. —



Maghera Presbyterian Church, of which Sam Shiels is a member, in County Londonderry, Northern Ireland,



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History of Maghera linked to ancient Christianity

By NANCY SORRELLS

MAGHERA, Northern Ireland—British military men who surveyed Sam Shiels' parish more than 150 years ago met with the same fierce weather that we encountered on our summer visit. "The scenery in the parish itself is cold and dreary," wrote the 1830s surveyor. "The features of the country are not sufficiently bold to please or compensate for the deficiency of high cultivation or of wood, which, if judiciously disposed even in small portions on a surface so varied by abrupt hills, would appear to great advantage. The eye therefore turns with eagerness to the magnificent chain of mountains that bounds the view to the westward and by a low connecting neck guides it more towards the south, where it rests upon Slieve Gullion, which appears more picturesque from its being almost isolated."

Balancing the less-than-perfect weather, however, was the chance to meet Sam Shiels, learn about some Augusta County history, and wander through two separate ruins from Christianity's infancy in Ireland. And, contrary to what the British thought, the green countryside is beautiful if only in a rather wild sort of way.

In the center of Maghera village and just a stone's throw from today's Presbyterian, Anglican and Roman Catholic churches is the ruins of the ancient parish church built long before the Reformation that created so many different Christian denominations.

Even the name Maghera (pronounced Ma-ha-ra) recalls this association with early Christianity. According to folklore, the ancient Celtic name for this place was Maghera Entriagh or "the plain of seasons" in reference to a tract of land in the area used by monks and nuns as a spot for their morning and evening "seasons" or times of meditation.

This old church was once an abbey supposedly founded by Saint Columba in the 6th century. The oldest part of the Gothic ruin is supposed to date to the 6th century but the doorway was

constructed later, perhaps in the 9th or 10th century. The tower was added at a later date as well and included a priest's residence. The church was raided by Norsemen in the year 831.

According to the 1830s report, the church ceased to function as a house of worship in 1819, at which time some of the stone walls were dismantled and used in the current parish church.

Today, one can borrow a key from the Maghera recreation center, open the gated enclosure around the property, and then wander around the crumbling walls of the church. The churchyard is filled to capacity with several hundred years worth of graves which tradition says go back as early as the 6th and 7th centuries. Several of Sam Shiels' siblings were buried here in the late 20th century.

Modern times have come to Maghera, which can even be found mentioned on the Internet, but the village of a few hundred souls remains agriculturally oriented. Sheep dot the hedge enclosed fields just past the main street and high above the town on a knoll that looks down upon Sam's farm is

another ancient ruin, Mullagh Church. Services ceased here apparently even before they ended at the old parish church in 1819.

One can visit the ruins by climbing over the stone stile, parting a flock of sheep grazing comfortably in the lush, damp grass, and climbing another stile. There on top of the hill, in the middle of crumbling gray walls, undulating mounds of green gravesites, and lichen covered headstones, the past becomes the present. The grassy graves have names like Glendyes and McDowells and dozens of other Irishmen whose lives and deaths have faded from memory but clearly bridge to the present remains.

One of the last graves is that of a young Ulster soldier who perished in the Battle of the Somme in World War I. That same war took Sam Shiels' oldest brother. Many of the other graves certainly mark ancestors of people who left the rugged countryside of Maghera and traveled to America where they left an imprint of their culture in places like Bethel Church and Augusta County. People with names like Glendy, McDowell and Shields. —



Old Parish Church, Maghera, Northern Ireland
August 1996

Charles Thomson: From Irish immigrant to American patriot

By NANCY SORRELLS

Like Sam Shiels, American patriot Charles Thomson has ties to both Maghera, Northern Ireland and Augusta County.

Thomson was born in 1729 in Maghera and belonged to the same Maghera Presbyterian Church led by John Glendy in the 1790s and attended by Sam Shiels today in the 1990s.

When Thomson was 10, his father decided to emigrate to America and took Charles and his five siblings on board a ship bound for the New World. Charles' mother had died while the family was still in Ireland. Tragically, his father passed away onboard ship but within sight of the American shores. The six children arrived in America as orphans.

In Pennsylvania, Charles was able to attend school and began a career as an educator well versed in the ancient languages. In 1760

he left that field and took up business as a merchant trader where he established a reputation of honesty and fairness, particularly among Native Americans. He was chosen to help negotiate Indian treaties, and in 1758 he was officially adopted into the Delaware tribe where he was known by an Indian name that translates as "man who tells the truth."

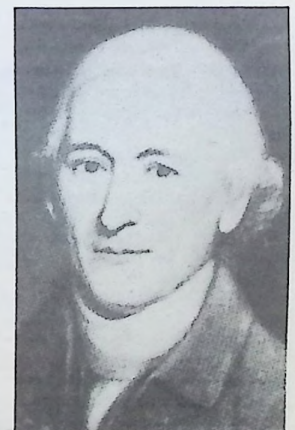
By the time the American Revolution rolled around, Thomson was well-versed in politics and worked hard for the American cause. John Adams wrote that Thomson was "the life of the cause of liberty," in Philadelphia. It was only natural, then, that he be chosen as secretary of the Continental Congress. He remained as secretary for 15 years. Thomson was also selected in 1789 as the person to ride 250 miles to Mt. Vernon and issue the invitation to George Washington to become the nation's first president.

This political change marked his retirement from public office. He spent the remainder of his life at his estate near Philadelphia where he returned to early training in ancient languages. He translated the Septuagint and the New Testament. The translations were published in four volumes in 1808. Thomson died in 1824.

Thomson's connections to Augusta County are through the Pilson family. This Scotch-Irish family traces its Augusta ancestry back to Pilsons who were here as early as 1747 when Richard Pilson's son, also Richard, was baptized in the Tinkling Spring congregation.

All of the remaining Augusta County Pilsons are descended from Richard Pilson and then eventually through his great-grandson, George. George married Elizabeth Thomson whose uncle happened to be Charles Thomson, American patriot.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Sam Shiels and some of his friends have recently started the Charles Thomson Presbyterian Historical Society "to foster an interest in the life of Charles Thomson, the Presbyterian history and the general history and culture of the Maghera area. Coupled with these aims the society would also encourage an interest in the his-



CHARLES THOMSON

tory of the 'New World.'"

Through the society, Sam Shiels hopes to "cultivate friendship in America to the mutual benefit of us all." The president of the society is always the incumbent minister of the Maghera Presbyterian Church. Membership in the society is only 5 pounds per year (Americans should probably send \$12 which will cover the exchange rate and air mail costs). Anyone interested in joining should write: Sam A. Shiels, 60 Mullagh Road, Co. Londonderry, Northern Ireland. —

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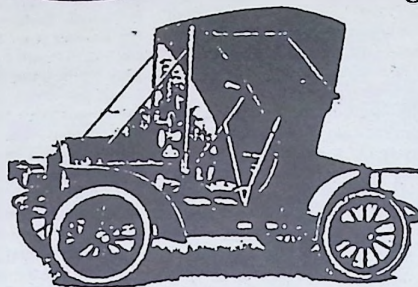
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1896

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Thomas Edison, 1895



*Augusta Country's journey
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1896 continues in this issue
with a look at the dawn of a
new age in transportation...
the invention of the
horseless carriage.*

Remaining Orients reflect early days of auto industry

By NANCY SORRELLS

MOSCOW — The horseless carriage age was here, but just barely, when Rollin Harshbarger's 1906 Orient Buckboard rolled off the assembly line in Waltham, Massachusetts. After all, the United States automobile industry was just a decade old, and Americans were still unused to seeing motor vehicles sputtering and chugging their way across the countryside.

Today, people stop and stare in the same way when a horse-drawn vehicle clips by, but when Rollin takes his horseless carriage out for a spin in a local parade or to a car show, he is cer-

tain to draw a few puzzled stares and then leave with "oldest car in show award."

"If I don't get the trophy for that, then someone cheated," says the antique car buff with a laugh.

Although there may be a few older automobiles remaining, the odds are that they aren't in perfect running order like Rollin's vehicle. And the odds are that they aren't an Orient either. Waltham Manufacturing Company produced the Orient buckboard from 1903 until 1908 when the company name was changed to that of the chief engineer, Charles Metz. In 1916 the Metz company sold out to the Erskine auto company. What that boils down to is that very few Orients were ever manufactured.

Rollin's has number 3,690 stamped on the engine. A worldwide survey completed this year by a Canadian antique lover turned up only 55 Orients and not all of those in running order. But when Rollin ferreted out his 1906 antique in 1978, only about six were known to exist.

"I found it at an auction near Harrisburg, Pa.," he explained. "There was a fellow named Zimmerman who built a big motel — 450 rooms — but it was a dry county and nobody would stay there, so he decided to turn the whole building into a museum with an antique automobile collection. That didn't work either, so he had a sale and sold 200 of his 300 automobiles. I bought my 1906 Orient and a 1911 Buick."

Under Rollin's tender care, the vehicle, which is little more than a buggy seat and engine mounted on a board with four wheels, has remained in mint condition. The maroon paint of the metal shines, and the wooden oak parts are polished and buffed.

"The car is all original except these two boards," he says, pointing to a pair of boards. "And I got those in Massachusetts, so they would match. I did some work on the motor, but I didn't have to do much."

A quick glance at the buckboard reveals just how far the automobile has evolved since 1906. It takes a real expert to even start the Orient, much less drive it.

"It's not started like today's automobiles, I can tell you that!" exclaims Rollin of his classic.

Under the seat he car has a drycell battery and a generator which have to be connected. Then the driver has to go to the back and crank, and then go up to the left side throttle where there are two handles, one for the gas and one to advance and retire the spark.

"Someone said to me one time, 'What in the world does a crank and a spark have to do with starting a car?'" he said in pointing out how much we take for granted today when we get in a car and turn the key.

A turn-of-the-century driver had

to be a backyard mechanic with a thorough understanding of the gasoline powered engine. Those who paid the \$400 for an Orient Buckboard were no exception. In the first place, the auto was shipped in a crate to the home with "some assembly" required to put the wheels and seat back in place.

Actually driving the contraption was even more complicated and the directions handbook that accompanied the Orient recommended "every user of a motor vehicle to provide himself with a pocket ammeter, as well as a hydrometer for testing gasoline: — both are invaluable in the intelligent handling of a motor."

The book also warned against frustration that sometimes occurred when driving the new-fangled contraption. "If for any reason you cannot get your motor to start, do not lose patience and condemn it. Just remember that it has run right and will do it again."

Once the 4 horsepower, 1 spark-plug engine is fired (and it kicks sometimes Rollin warned), the operator has to know about the floor pedals with the left pedal being the brake and the right pedal making the car go forward.

The car is also equipped with an innovation that was new in 1906 — the friction transmission. The transmission consists of two wheels (a friction wheel and a disk) sitting perpendicular to each other. When the red-handled side lever on the car is moved, it pushes the friction wheel across the face of the disk.

As the one wheel moves back and forth across the other, different speeds are achieved. When the friction wheel crosses the center point of the disk, the car goes in reverse.

"If you moved it (the friction wheel) an eighth-of-an-inch at a time, you could have 100 different forward gears," Rollin said of his car which he estimates hits top speeds of 15-20 mph. An advertisement for the 1906 Orient touted the advantages of a friction transmission. "A benefit claimed for the present friction transmission is the fact that speed can be varied to as low a point as is required to meet road conditions."

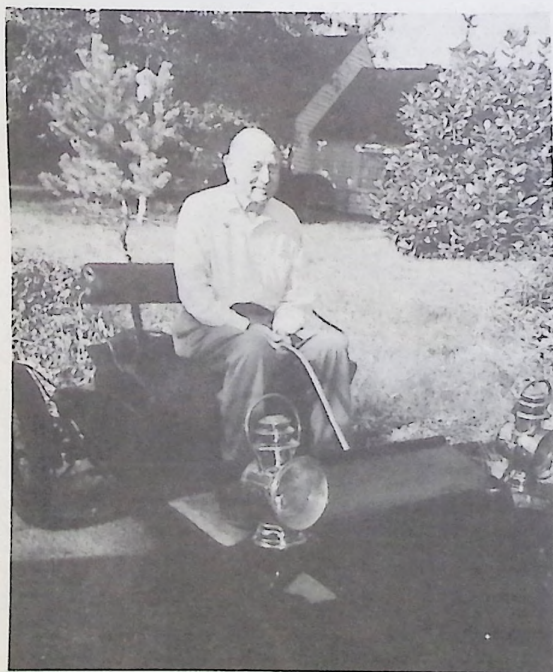
Even the steering mechanism is different from today's cars. To steer his Orient, Rollin uses a tiller, a long stick that turns the wheels in the correct direction much like a tiller on a boat.

Despite what seems to us in 1996 to be very primitive driving conditions, the "1906 Orient Friction Drive Buckboard" was considered a classy, yet affordable, automobile. The car also held its own in tests against other vehicles according to advertisements.

"In a recent endurance test this car made 121 miles in 6 3/4 hours on four gallons of gasoline and 1 1/3 pints of oil. The following day, in the same test, it made 93 miles in 5 1/4 hours on three gallons of gasoline and one pint of oil."

For his part, Rollin fills up his cylinder-shaped gas tank once a year and that amount, which is just over three gallons, takes him through

See ORIENT, page 15



Rollin Harshbarger of Moscow prepares to take a spin in his 1906 Orient. The machine represents one of the first "horseless" carriages ever made. Photo by Nancy Sorrells

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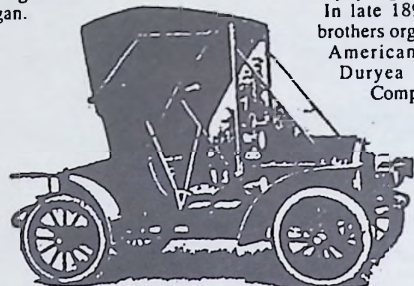
American car industry celebrates 100 years

By NANCY SORRELLS

On the surface, transportation in the year 1896 appeared little different than from previous years for residents of Augusta County, Staunton and Waynesboro. Wagons and buggies dominated the roads, and trains dominated the rails. Little did folks know that events were unfolding in other parts of the country which would change forever the way people moved from place to place.

One hundred years ago, the American automobile industry was born. For the first time, horseless carriages were manufactured and sold in quantities greater than one.

In the same year the French word "automobile" was born. It was in 1896 that Ransom Eli Olds drove his gas-powered automobile and sold his horseless carriages in Lansing, Michigan.



The first Oldsmobile was a single-cylinder, six-horsepower vehicle, but it was popular enough that Olds founded Olds Motor Works in 1897. The Olds family was not the only family eyeing the future.

In late 1895 the Duryea brothers organized the first American company, Duryea Motor Wagon Company, to produce gasoline-powered vehicles. Thirteen cars with exchangeable parts rolled off their assembly line

in 1896. Also in 1896 Henry Ford built his first car, and the first car was built in Detroit, a city soon to become linked with the automobile industry.

Not all of these early horseless carriages were gasoline powered. In fact, most early bets were on steam and electric cars as the wave of the future, with gasoline running a distant third. Olds actually built a steam-powered car a decade before his gasoline-powered Oldsmobile. In 1897 Francis and Freelan Stanley built a popular lightweight steam automobile. The Stanley Steamer was produced until 1925 and once set a

world speed record of 128 mph.

Electric automobiles were especially popular among women drivers who disliked the awkward and backbreaking cranking required to start a gasoline engine. It was Charles Kettering's 1912 invention of the electric starter that doomed both the electric and the steam automobile and made the gas car easier to use.

But the electric starter and even the Model T were still far in the future for Americans in 1896. Nobody, not even backyard tinkers and inventors, could have imagined what the next century would hold in the annals of American transportation. —

Waynesboro: Near miss of being the Detroit of Virginia

By NANCY SORRELLS

WAYNESBORO—Within a few years of 1896, the horseless carriage craze spread across the country. George Dawson of Waynesboro evidently caught the inventing bug and set up a small shop in the corner of the Basic City Car Works. Basic City, which is part of Waynesboro today, was a rail-

road town and the car works manufactured train cars, not automobiles.

Nonetheless, Dawson was enamored with the automobile, and in 1901 he turned out a prototype steam-powered vehicle, the Dawson Steam Auto-Mobile. Dawson's car had a two-cylinder engine, held a 25-gallon water tank and an 8-gallon gas tank. The car

weighed 1,100 pounds and could approach speeds of 30 mph. According to an article in the Spring 1975 *Augusta Historical Bulletin*, Dawson said that "a brass burner of new design produces a blue flame to make the steam."

The Dawson Steam Auto-Mobile could hold three people on a wooden wagon bench and was steered by a tiller, like the Orient.

Unfortunately the prototype never made it to the assembly line. Dawson searched for financial backing in order to undertake large-scale production, but there were apparently no takers. Dawson sold his prototype to a couple of men who drove the car around area

roads as a novelty for a few years.

Within a short time, however, the car faded into oblivion, and the factory returned to exclusive train car production. Today, very few people are aware how close Waynesboro came to being the Detroit of Virginia. —



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How many modern drivers could follow these directions??

From the "Directions for Operating the Orient Motor Buckboard Built by Waltham Mfg. Co., Waltham, Mass. U.S.A."

DON'TS

- Don't forget to oil your motor
- Don't use any oil in your motor but the special high test air cooled cylinder oil which we furnish, or something equally as good.
- Don't try to start your motor when hot without opening the relief cock.
- Don't advance your spark enough to cause your motor to pound.
- Don't ride fast over rough roads.
- Don't use your brake without first pulling out the clutch.
- Don't forget to put in your switch plug and set your levers right before you try to start your motor.
- Don't forget to flood your carburetor before trying to start the motor.
- Don't use your foot throttle when it is not necessary.
- Don't think the machine is no good because you do not know how to run it. Hundreds of others are running them successfully. The fault may be with yourself.

•Orient

Continued from page 14
three or four parades a season.

The Orient was such a rugged car that it was chosen for use in an Arctic expedition as the vehicle to pull the supply sleds. Such durability made it ideal for the tough driving jobs of the time. "The Buckboard is especially adapted to the rough and ready requirements of the rural Mail Service, the trouble men of the Telephone, Telegraph and Electric Lighting Companies, the City Street Cleaning Departments and for Parcel Deliveries," proclaimed one ad.

For Rollin, the Orient is just the

crown jewel in a collection of several nice antique cars, including a 1929 Rio, a 1911 Buick, an old Mustang and a Rolls Royce. He enjoys restoring the vehicles and attending the antique car shows to trade stories with other car buffs.

As for the Orient, he's done a little bit of research on the company and the car, and has been able to solve one small mystery.

"Why did they call it an Orient? It was made in America, not the Orient. That bothered me for years, then I went to a car museum and did some research. The name is because it was the 'best oriented car in the world; a well-oriented automobile.'" —

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Old barn begins second life in Burnsville



Timothy Shell of Burnsville tells about the process of dismantling a barn and moving it piece by piece to a new location then reassembling it. Photo by Jeff Ishee

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the Summer 1996 edition of *Augusta County*, we visited the Shell family of Burnsville as they disassembled an old barn that was given to them by Ben and Bernice Alred of McDowell. Answering a classified ad in a regional newsletter for a "free barn," the Shells took one look at the structure and knew that it would fit perfectly into the plan for their 40-acre farmstead. The only problem was moving the barn, which would require an immense amount of labor. That didn't bother the industrious Shell family, however. Back in July, oldest son Timothy said "What we are aiming for is to complete the project with majority labor, minority capital." Their aim came true.

By JEFF ISHEE

BURNSVILLE — Solid as a rock, an old barn built in the 1920s has found a new home on a new farm.

Built by William "Rich" Hicklin as a part of his cow/calf and sheep farm near McDowell, the barn had withstood the rigors of time well and had many more serviceable years left in its life expectancy. Yet, Ben and Bernice Alred (Bernice is Hicklin's daughter) elected to give up the old barn and offered it to the Shell family, which consists of matriarch Fannie and her 12 children. The Shell family farmstead is 16 miles away in Burnsville.

Eldest son Timothy said "We boys (there are still 7 at home) started taking the barn down in July, and we had everything completely dismantled and brought home at the end of the month. Along with our pick-up truck, we borrowed a trailer, and I guess it took a dozen or so loads to get all the materials back here to the farm. Then in August, we took the materials from an awning on the back of the barn that we weren't going to use and built a porch on our house," said Timothy, the eldest of the Shell brothers.

Once all the materials were on site, a friend of the family from near Spring Hill loaned them a back hoe, which was transported to the site by yet another friend in Spring Hill.

"We had unlimited use of the back hoe for about a month," Timothy said. "We dug the footers and laid the foundation, along with surface grading and backfilling. Then our friend took the equipment back, and we were ready to lay con-

crete block. We used over a thousand blocks which were salvaged from an old turkey operation near Mustoe. Another friend let me use all his masonry tools, and yet another farmer loaned us his cement mixer. The foundation work took a whole month."

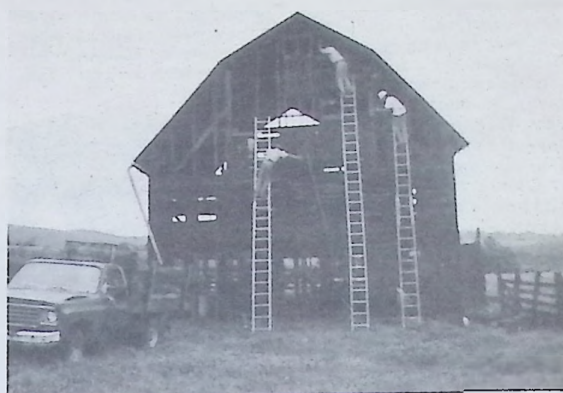
The limitless energy and close circle of friends this family has was

evident when Timothy continued, "In September, while the foundation work was going on, we continued to tend to our sheep, broilers, turkeys, cattle and other livestock. You know work never ends on a farm. Then in October, we spent the first couple of weeks getting ready for the barn raising. On the 18th and 19th, we had over 30 people here at the farm for an old-fashioned barn raising. There was a group from our church, a man and his two sons from Richmond, another fellow who farms in the Dayton area, and a van load of Amish friends from Ohio."

Under one end of the barn is a new workshop, and the center of the barn drops four feet to allow for deep bedding and over wintering sheep.

"The primary uses for the barn will include control of manure in the winter. With the facility that we had before, we were able to control 50 percent of our manure output, which also means that we were losing the other 50 percent which is our wintertime fertility. With the new barn and the structure set up the way it is, we will be able to properly manage 100 percent of our manure, which is the only fertility program we use on our farm. We make compost and spread it, and we also utilize intensive grazing. We don't use any chemical fertilizers on our farm," Timothy said.

"This winter we'll have one ram and nine ewes, but we anticipate getting up to around 30 or so ewes. With the Alred barn complete, there will be room for at least that many, but possibly more. We will be stor-



Three Shell brothers take weatherboarding off the barn as the disassembly process begins. Photo courtesy Shell family

ing hay in the barn in square bales," he continued. "I hope to get into draft power for our farm using oxen soon. There is room for a stall under the one side of the barn, and then there is also room for a granary and storage of feed stuffs. We have two milk cows also, which we will house in a pole barn that we built earlier this summer. It adjoins the new barn on the back, where our main hay storage and cattle facility is."

The family has not figured out how many man-hours they have invested into the disassembly, transportation, and reassembly of the Alred barn, but intend to figure it up one snowy January day when there is time to catch up.

"It would be interesting to know," Timothy said.

Undertaking such a large construction project is not without its hazards, however. Only one accident has occurred during the project, and it proved the importance of following proper safety procedures. While most of the Shell boys were up on top of the barn dismantling the roof panels, teenager Michael was climbing up the ladder when a circular saw on the roof slipped and fell, plummeting straight toward his head. Looking down, he didn't see the saw coming, and it hit him full force on top of the head.

Fortunately, Michael happened to be the only member of the family that day wearing a hard hat. Even though the impact of the saw broke its handle and cracked the

See BARN, page 17



The barn at its original site on the Alred farm in McDowell before the Shell family began "de-struction."

Photo courtesy Shell family

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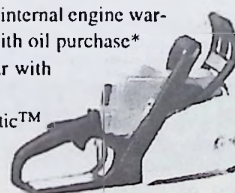
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•Barn

Continued from page 16

hard hat, young Michael was not injured. The next day, a friend of the family brought them all hard hats, and they have worn them every day since.

"The Lord had His hand in that," says mother Fannie. "It would have killed him if he hadn't had that hard hat on."

When asked what the best part of the barn moving project was, one boy answered, "It hasn't come yet, because it will be the day we get it [the barn] finished."

"The most fun part was learning



Reassembly of the barn was accomplished with the help of more than 30 friends and neighbors who pooled their efforts in an old-fashioned barn raising.



Photos courtesy Sholl family



With reassembly of the barn's frame complete, six of the Shell brothers pause to evaluate their progress with the project.

Photo by Timothy Sholl

how to operate a back hoe," said one Shell brother.

Another answered that it was when so many friends came to their farm in mid-October to help them in raising the barn.

"I had 11 men in this back room, and everybody else was just spread out all over the place," Fannie said.

"The toughest part, when we really wondered if this was going to work out, was when the concrete trucks were on their way (a very long way) to pour the footers for

the foundation, the back hoe was gone, and we decided to measure one last time. It was discovered that one footer was four inches off, and we had to dig the hole out by hand in a hurry before the concrete trucks arrived," Timothy said.

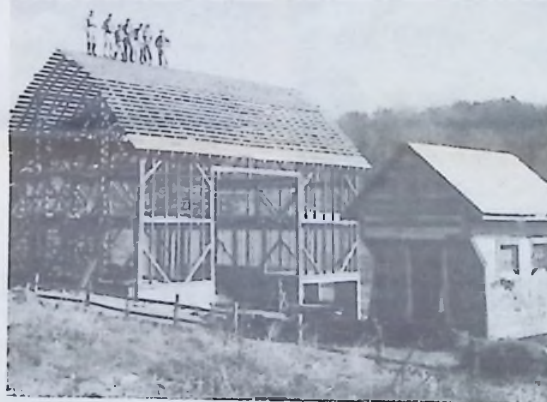
"The most challenging part was after the Amish men had left, and we still had two sections to raise. We just all got out there and pulled until it was up," said one of the Shell brothers.

Most of the original timbers in the barn were still in perfect shape.

Timothy even found some old American Chestnut timbers, which he confirmed with a local hardwood company were worth several hundred dollars each.

"The 8 by 8-inch oak beams, which were logged on the original site, are in perfect condition and should be around for a long time to come," said Timothy.

With the Shell family as its new caretakers, the restored and relocated old barn has a whole new life ahead of it. —



In photo above and to the right, one of the Shell brothers climbs among the beams of the reassembled barn. The photo above and to the left and the one below show the barn as it has been incorporated with existing buildings. Space for a workshop was made under one end of the barn, and fiberglass panels were added to the roof for lighting.

Photos above, left and right, courtesy Sholl family, photo below by Jeff Ishee



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AREC field day highlights agriculture research

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

STEELES TAVERN—Leave it to the folks at Virginia Tech and Virginia Cooperative Extension to provide an entertaining and informative afternoon at the Shenandoah Valley Agriculture Research and Extension Center.

During a field day held Sept. 12, Extension agents and Tech researchers reviewed some of the research in progress at the Steeles Tavern facility.

Perhaps one of the most entertaining demonstrations was the rainfall simulation carried out by Blake Ross, Extension specialist in biological systems engineering. For farmers still reeling from the effects of Hurricane Fran, the need to convince folks of the severity of runoff from rainfall seemed almost laughable. However, Ross persevered and made his point con-

cerning runoff amounts under different grazing situations.

Using a modified sprinkler irrigation system, Ross recreated the kind of "rainfall" which causes runoff and soil erosion. Three different plots of grass were used for the experiment with one reflecting overgrazing, one showing intensive grazing, and a third depicting moderate grazing. The ground on which the demonstration was made was angled at a 20 degree slope.

The rainfall simulator is designed to apply two inches of rainfall in an hour. Ross pointed out that the procedure calls for "rainfall" to be applied for one hour on the first day of the test, then for two 30-minute periods on the next day for a total of 3-4 inches over a two-day period. The simulation on the first day of the test would reflect the conditions of an intense storm which might be ex-

pected to occur in Virginia once every two years.

"For data collection and research purposes, we can collect as much information in two days as we can in four to five years of natural rainfall," Ross said.

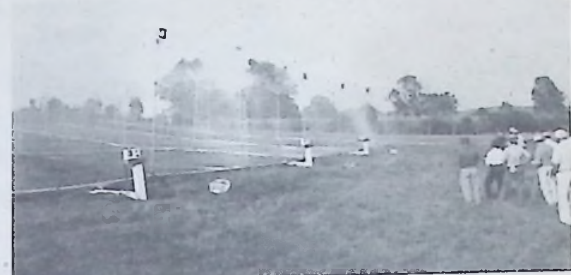
At the base of each grazing plot, a machine called a "flow hydrograph" measured runoff from the plots. The hydrographs measure the total volume of runoff, the peak flow and the flow at any point of time during runoff.

In Ross' demonstration, it took 18 minutes for runoff to begin from the overgrazed plot as compared to 36 minutes from the moderately grazed plot. By taking "grab samples," Ross can analyze the runoff to determine how much soil is being lost, as well as nitrogen, phosphorus, pesticides, and chemicals. Watching water flow out of flumes at the bottoms of the plots, field day participants got a first-hand view of how much runoff occurs during storms and how their land management practices contribute to the loss of nutrients in runoff.

Agriculture has blasted off into cyberspace, as Nick Stone, Tech's information systems program leader, and Augusta County Extension agent Rick Heidel told participants in their seminar on the use of Internet.

"More and more people are going to the Internet for information," Stone said, and a show of hands proved that farmers are among the many who are using online computer services.

"This medium is becoming more



Participants in the Shenandoah Valley Agriculture Research and Extension Center Field Day held recently observe as a rainfall simulator shows the differences in runoff on pasture under different grazing situations.

and more important to us in terms of getting information fast," Stone said.

Virginia Cooperative Extension has recently reformatted its programming emphasis. Among its goals, Stone said, are three major initiatives to provide and use online services. The first of these is "connectivity" which will allow producers to use terminals at local Extension offices in the event they do not have access to home computers. The second initiative is aimed at training agents how to use computers and upgrading equipment. The third initiative is to put information which will be of use to farmers online.

Stone and Heidel reviewed a number of Internet "sites" where agricultural information can be obtained on a variety of topics including beef, forages, fruit, insects and pest control, and sheep. Extension is

working to create the Virtual Virginia Agriculture Community which Stone said will "support the agriculture community directly." This directory will pull together all the different sites which relate to Virginia agriculture. Among this information will be up-to-the-minute market data on commodities.

"The Virtual Virginia Agriculture Community will provide more information that will be more up to date, faster and free," said Stone.

In other demonstrations at the field day, Tech researchers Joe Fontenot, Martha Wright, and Terry Swecker reviewed information gathered from ongoing studies of cows fed broiler litter for winter feed. Fontenot also reviewed the construction process of a cattle handling facility. —



Joe Fontenot, center, of Virginia Tech, explains construction of a cattle working facility during a field day held recently at Steeles Tavern.

Photos by Betty Jo Hamilton

Feeding poultry litter to cattle encouraged by Virginia Tech

By JEFFISHEE

HARRISONBURG—Several dozen cattlemen from across the Commonwealth gathered recently at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds to learn more about the process of feeding animal manures to their livestock. In the Shenandoah Valley, the practice has been utilized for over 30 years, and now more cattlemen are wanting to learn exactly how it is done.

"We have used litter in our stocker cattle rations for a number of years," said Earl Reeves of Augusta County. "We think it is the most economical ration we can use. We use corn silage with the litter added at the time we chop the silage."

Estimates vary concerning the amounts of poultry manure produced annually, but the amount is substantial, especially in the Valley. Animal wastes were regarded as valuable sources of plant nutrients in the early part of this century, and were used extensively as fertilizer.

"Following the introduction of the intensive confinement systems during the past 40 to 50 years," said Joe Fontenot of Virginia Tech, "the wastes became a liability rather than an asset. The change was due

primarily to the availability of low-cost commercial fertilizers and the high cost of handling and transporting the animal wastes." Fontenot has been at Virginia Tech for 40 years, and has worked with the concept of feeding poultry litter to cattle since its inception in 1961.

Rick Heidel, Extension agent for animal science in the central Shenandoah Valley said, "Thirty years of research have proven that feeding poultry litter to cattle is safe and has no effect on the carcass or the flavor of the meat." He also related that broiler litter is much more acceptable for feed than turkey litter by telling the

audience: "Turkey litter and cage layer waste have different properties which make them less palatable to cattle and more difficult to handle. However, turkey litter is being used successfully in cattle rations and may be preferred in certain circumstances where you are trying to limit intake."

Dee Whittier of Virginia Tech told the group: "Because the concept of poultry litter feeding has some obvious aspects which lead to questions, health issues are nearly always raised by those who are new to the idea of feeding poultry litter." Whittier is Extension veterinarian for beef cattle at Tech. He

said: "Nearly any substance can cause poisonings in animals if present in high enough amounts. There are no substances present in litter which are commonly thought of as toxins or poisons."

"Poultry litter from finishing houses makes excellent and valuable feed," said Mark Wahlberg, Extension animal scientist. "It is a low-cost feed resource that is worth far more than it costs." —

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Conference addresses sustainable agriculture

By JEFFISHEE

MONTEBELLO — Over 100 Virginia farmers gathered in early November at Camp Blue Ridge in Montebello for a three-day convocation. It was the 10th annual Virginia Sustainable Agriculture Conference. The theme of the meeting was "Appropriate Technology — Old and New: Tools and Techniques for Sustainable, Biological Agriculture."

The group met for the first day at the Cyrus McCormick Farm in Steeles Tavern for a wide array of practical demonstrations, which included: Sprayer Calibration with Randy Shank of the division of soil and water conservation; Creating Soil Blocks with Vicki Dunaway of Chestnut Creek Farm; and a Construction Demo of In-garden Movable Greenhouses with Donna Marquisee of Bath County.

The second day offered farmers a wide selection of exciting presentations. Tom Trantham, a South Carolina dairyman, opened the session energetically by talking about how he converted his conventional dairy operation to a more sustainable one and not only cut his costs, but increased his herd's milk production. Trantham has de-

veloped a system of rotational grazing he calls "Twelve Aprils," which he says is like letting his cows onto a "fresh field of salad just like most farmers have every April." Trantham is also chairman of the Southern Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Administrative Council.

George Merz, market manager for the Harrisonburg Farmers' Market, discussed the growing popularity of farmers' markets and what every vendor should know. Intrigued farmers heard about profitable products to grow for the market, increasing public demand for fresh and local produce, and concepts on market formation policies.

Augusta County farmer Joel Salatin addressed the group with the topic "On-Farm Direct Marketing of Fresh and Value-Added Products." Salatin told the audience how his family direct markets beef, broilers, eggs, turkeys, pork, and rabbit.

"There are three things you, as the farmer and marketer, have to do: You have to diversify your pitch, diversify your patron, and diversify your product," he said.

Salatin then told numerous anecdotes of how he has gotten his eggs into famous "white-tablecloth" Washington restaurants, his

beef and pork into the local farmers' market, and built a customer clientele that now numbers over 400, some of whom will drive over 200 miles to buy his chickens.

After dinner, the conference participants enjoyed an interactive theater presented by Matthew Arnsberger of the Twin Oaks Community, and then most unwound by indulging in an old fashioned square dance.

The conference concluded the next day with several more presentations including: Andy Hankins, alternative crops specialist at Virginia State University, discussing new markets for the small farmer; Michael LaChance, Nelson County Extension agent, discussing integrated pest management and using the Mid-Atlantic Apple Monitoring Guide. The conference's keynote address was made by John Cairns, university distinguished professor emeritus of environmental biology at Virginia Tech, who spoke about "Eco-Societal Restoration: Re-examining Human Society's Relationship with Natural Systems."

It was evident that the inspiring talk caused most farmers to leave the gathering with renewed determination to use conservation practices on their farms. —



Conservation awards

Charles Horn of the Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District presented conservation awards to two area farm families at a banquet held recently. In the photo above, R.G. and Robert Heizer of Middlebrook receive an award for conservation practices used on their farm. In the photo below, Bo and Ernie Reeves receive the Virginia Clean Water Farm Award for stream protection and nutrient management efforts.



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Seed corn meeting

Simon Kinsinger, right, a Stuarts Draft Stine seed corn dealer, talks with Bud Martin of Fairfield at a seed corn meeting held recently in Stuarts Draft.



FFA Leadership Conference

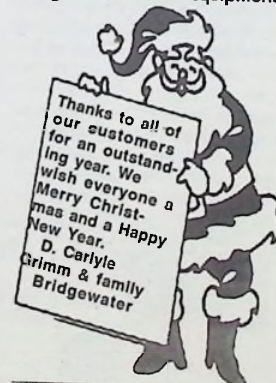
Kristl Avoli, president of the Augusta FFA Federation, talks with Gary Minnish, head of the Virginia Tech's department of poultry and animal science, at the FFA Leadership Conference held recently at Fort Defiance High School.

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Staunton Woodmen honor area residents

AC staff report

LAUREL HILL — Area residents were honored when the Staunton Woodmen of the World, Camp 167, Court 401, held its annual awards banquet recently.

Beth Gardner of Staunton was presented with the Woodmen's Life Saver Award. The 15-year-old daughter of Fonda and William Gardner received the award for the part she played in assisting a swimmer at Atlantic Beach, N.C., in Augusta 1995.

Ironically, Miss Gardner had just completed a Red Cross Life Saving Class in order to be a lifeguard at a local public pool. During her family's vacation stay at the beach, Hurricane Felix swept up the East Coast causing strong tides and unusual undertows along beaches.

Miss Gardner and her mother were on an inflated raft in the surf

when the teen spotted a man about 30-40 yards from shore who seemed to be in distress. Miss Gardner left the raft, swam toward the man, and asked him if he needed assistance. As it turned out, the man was having cramps which made it difficult for him to breathe.

The Red Cross course she had taken helped Miss Gardner in the incident, because she said she had learned "ways to pull people out" of water and "things to be cautious for" when attempting water rescues. She noted that she told the swimmer — a Maryland man in his mid-40s — what she was going to



GARDNER

do. She then put his arm around her shoulder and swam to the point where the two could stand.

"Then I walked him in as much as I could," she recalled.

Woodmen recognized Miss Gardner for her "courage and determination" in "answering the call for help in a time of need."

Woodmen's Outstanding Citizen Honor Award was presented to Baldwin Jennings of Staunton. Jennings has served on numerous city committees and is an Air Force veteran having served in active duty on six continents. He retired from the military and most recently retired from the Virginia Department of Corrections as superintendent of food service at Staunton Correctional Center.

Yulee Larner of Staunton earned Woodmen's Conservationist of the Year Award for her work in the area of wildlife preservation and specifi-

cally in ornithology. Mrs. Larner writes a weekly column on birds for a local newspaper and is a charter member of the Augusta Bird Club. She was instrumental in establishing a bluebird trail to help create habitats to encourage the proliferation of Eastern bluebirds. She is also co-author of a book detailing the bird population of Augusta County.

A bus driver safety award was presented by Woodmen to Stanley Wine of Mt. Sidney. Wine has driven school buses for 34 years. His current route is in the Fort Defiance area. In an earlier ceremony, Christine Puffenbarger, a 20-year school bus driving veteran, also received a bus driver safety award.

In camp and court awards, Woodmen Lynwood Lam was recognized with a 50-year service pin for his long-time membership in Woodmen. The Fraternal Spirit Award was pre-



JENNINGS



LARNER



WINE



PUFFENBARGER

sent to Mildred Hendricks of Rt. 5, Staunton, for her work promoting Woodmen activities. —

VFW honors law, rescue officials

AC staff report

STAUNTON — The Augusta-Staunton Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 2216, honored local rescue workers and law enforcement officials when it held its annual awards banquet recently.

Outstanding Firefighters for 1996 were Larry Rodzinka of Swoope and a volunteer member of the Augusta County Fire Department, and Malcolm Tenney of Staunton and a volunteer member of the Staunton Fire Department.

Recognized by the VFW as Outstanding Police Officer for 1996 for 28 years of service with the Staunton Police Department was Sgt. Danny Rexrode. The Outstanding Law Enforcement award also went to Sgt. D. Bruce Cole of the Augusta County Sheriff's Department who has 20 years of service with that agency.

Mac McCauley of the Staunton-Augusta Rescue Squad accepted the Outstanding Rescue Worker of the Year Award on behalf of all squad members. Rather than single out one individual for service, the



RODZINKA

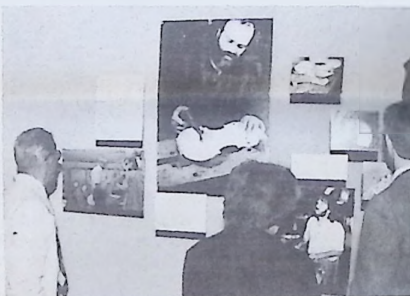


REXRODE

VFW post opted to recognize all rescue workers for their lifesaving efforts during the past year.

The VFW also recognized area law enforcement officials "who were instrumental" in implementing the post's Bicycle Rodeo and "Drive to Survive" program.

Recognized from the Virginia State Police were troopers Frank Pyanoe, Bob Henderson, and A.J. Thompson. Staunton Police Officers honored were Capt. Richard Dickerson and officers Tom Larner, Scott Bird, John Craft, Mark Wade, George Wade, Sam Zimmerman, Sarah Blackwell, Shayne Ayers, and Doug Fry. —



Featured among photos on display in the exhibit "Fine Tuned Folks" at the Shenandoah Valley Folk Art and Heritage Center in Dayton is one of George Jarvis, far left in photo above left, of Middlebrook, and a 1910 photo of the Lucas family of Dutch Hollow, photo above right.

AC staff photos

Exhibit features Middlebrook families

AC staff report

DAYTON — Middlebrook area families are represented in an exhibit currently on display at the Shenandoah Valley Folk Art & Heritage Center.

The exhibit, "Fine Tuned Folks — The Culture of String Music in the Shenandoah Valley," is a compilation of research done by the center into the history of "bluegrass" music in the area.

Included among items on display are photographs of the "Lucas family of Dutch Hollow near

Middlebrook" taken in 1910 which shows family members with string instruments. Another photograph shows Middlebrook resident and

modern-day musicmaker George Jarvis showing one of his handmade flat top fiddles to another

See MUSIC, page 21

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See page 2 for details.

Guide to Endangered Species condenses original volume

By MARK GATEWOOD

Maybe you've always wanted to know more about the endangered species of plants and animals in Virginia. Maybe you've wanted to get a copy of the authoritative work on the subject, *Virginia's Endangered Species*, but the hefty volume and the hefty price changed your mind. Well, here's some good news, and just in time for Christmas.

McDonald & Woodward, the Blacksburg publishing company which produced that book, has come out with a condensed version titled *A Guide to Endangered and Threatened Species in Virginia*, a 220-page paperback at an approachable \$14.95.

In the preface, the publisher states that this is an abridgment and an update of the original work and that the present volume is "designed to make information on endangered and threatened species more readily available to all citizens of the Commonwealth by using non-technical language whenever possible, by using English units of measurement instead of metric, by eliminating many of the scientific details of species identification, by focusing only on Virginia distribution areas and habitats, and by significantly reducing the purchase price of the book." Fair enough. Have they accomplished all this? I think they have, and very nicely.

Starting at the beginning, they set the stage with "The Nature of Virginia," a chapter describing the natural setting of the state, its five landform regions (can you name them?), and the drainage systems of Virginia's major rivers.

Then the book goes through the plant and animal groups which contain endangered or threatened species in Virginia. First come vas-

cular plants — what we might call the "higher" plants with specialized tissues capable of transporting nutrients. On, then to arthropods, the crunchy-bodied, jointed-legged insects, spiders, crayfish and company. Then mollusks — the mussels and snails, fishes, reptiles and amphibians, birds and mammals.

The Guide even covers the marine mammals — manatees and whales — and differs from its parent volume in that marine mammals are given individual species descriptions rather than a collective treatment.

If your first surprise was that Virginia even has mollusks, you'll find this to be a most revealing little book. For my part, I went directly to the chapter on vascular plants, where I found this arresting little declaration: "Augusta County has far more rare plants than any other county or city in Virginia." Are they saying we live in a county so environmentally degraded that its plant life is being destroyed? Hardly. Consider this: not all endangered and threatened listings are the result of man's detrimental activities.

Many of Virginia's native plants are more common to the north or to the south; they are at the edge of their range here and are therefore uncommon or rare. Other species require a habitat type which is not widespread, such as a shale barren or a sinkhole pond. These plants will be uncommon or rare, because the places which support them are uncommon or rare. It's the

county's wide range of habitat types which supports a large number of rare species, rather than any activity of man which has made them rare. The warm, rosy glow from this chapter fades pretty quickly, though, when you turn to the chapter on mollusks.

I haven't thought about this for a while, but I have a unique personal relationship with freshwater mussels. The engagement ring which sealed the deal with My Wife the Biology Teacher was purchased with money I earned during a wayward summer of dredging freshwater mussels from a river in the Ohio River drainage.

We're still married and she still has the ring, so there's no problem there, but I know that there aren't as many "clams" in the river, due to some combination of our dredging and siltation from farming and development along the river. Now, freshwater mussels are showing up on endangered lists throughout the eastern United States, and I feel a twinge of responsibility.

Virginia's freshwater mussels are pretty much restricted to the Tennessee River drainage of the southwestern part of the state. There are some 73 species there, and their names are the inadvertent poetry of common language: Tennessee heelsplitter, spectaclecase, birdwing pearlymussel. Adult mussels feed by filtering fine organic particles from the water. They are thus very vulnerable to pollutants and sedimentation from the landside, and these are the things which threaten them today. Granted, it's not an Augusta County problem, but you've got to believe that dirty water is everybody's problem, and these quiet creatures — indeed, all the endangered and threatened species — are indicators of a problem that needs to be addressed.

The Guide has beautiful color photographs of most of the plants and animals. The descriptive texts, in my opinion, lack nothing in detail and information. Each entry provides a description of the plant or animal, its distribution within the state, its habitat and life history and the threats which it faces. Taken all together, this is a very nicely done book and well worth the price for the information it holds. —



Isabel Brown, left, and Edna Caron, both of Staunton, show the coverlet and quilt which they displayed at a quilt show held recently at Hebron Presbyterian Church. Antique toys also were on exhibit during the event.

Photo by Betty Jo Hamilton

Quilts portray life and history

By BETTY JO HAMILTON

HEBRON — Pieces of history were patched together among quilts on display at an exhibit hosted by Hebron Presbyterian Church Oct. 19.

Some 80 quilts were on display in the church's social hall during an event which was part of Hebron's year-long sesquicentennial celebration. In addition to the quilts, hooked rugs, afghans, hand-loomed coverlets, crocheted bedspreads, and antique toys were on display. The show was the brainchild of Isabel Brown of Staunton.

"We had never done it before,"

she said. "I'm so pleased with the response." Items on display came solely from collections of members of the Hebron congregation.

Like any quilt show, this one featured cloth and thread brought together by hands telling a story.

A crazy quilt belonging to Lucille Trimble of Rockbridge Baths and made in 1877 recorded the names of all the members of the King's Daughters Society of that era. Names were embroidered on practically every square-inch of the quilt.

Another crazy quilt belonging to Pat Trippel of Staunton was one made by her great grandmother. In addition to piecing together a work

See QUILTS; page 28

Music

Continued from page 20

musician, Jarvis, who was featured in the Summer 1995 issue of *Augusta Country*, makes string instruments of his own design.

"I figured if I could get a few instruments scattered out in

people's hands that really wanted them, without raising up the price, that would be one of the best things I could do," the exhibit quotes Jarvis. "Like the Bible says, 'Make a joyful noise unto the Lord.' Well I don't know how, but I'm going to make instruments so that everybody else can!"

Among instruments on display in the exhibit are a five-string banjo and psaltery made by Jarvis.

The Shenandoah Valley Folk Art & Heritage Center is operated by the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society. It is located on the corner of Bowman Road and High Street in Dayton. For information about hours of operation or the string music exhibit call 540/879-2681. "Fine Tuned Folks" will be on display at the center through April 6, 1997. —

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Schoolhouse News

RHS Academics Team puts in strong showing

By HEATHER CALDWELL

GREENVILLE -- Question: "What President of the United States took office in 1849 on March 4?" Answer: "Zachary Taylor" -- correct Elijah Ward for 10 points.

The average everyday person would most likely not know the answer to that question, but the average person is not accepted to be on the Academics Team at Riverheads High School. Eight students made the team after auditions took place with the help of adviser and U.S. history/government teacher Julia Wilkerson. Those students are Elijah Ward, Micah Ward, Morgan Pitkin, David Archart, Matt Caldwell, Jonathan Pollock, Virginia Strickler, and Kori Valz.

Practices are held after school until about 4 p.m. The students are asked general trivia questions. The team travels around to approximately four to five area high schools in order to participate in invitational

meets. They experiment with buzzers in preparation for the team's debut on "Pop Quiz" which is featured locally on WVPT TV.

Team captain, Elijah Ward along with teammates Micah Ward, Morgan Pitkin, and Jonathan Pollock traveled to Harrisonburg for the intense match up between Riverheads and John Handley High School from Winchester. The Gladiator natives were ranked fifth out of a total of 32 teams, and the team was up for the challenge.

On the other hand, John Handley was ranked 12th with only the top 16 making it on "Pop Quiz." Riverheads High School was the only area high school to make it on the show.

The set up of the show consisted of three rounds. The first round consisted of toss-up questions worth 10 points each and four 5-point bonus questions. Round 2, the category round, involved contestants picking from the follow-

ing categories: Literature/Fine Arts, Math/Science, History/Geography, and Current Events.

Riverheads trailed in the first round and came back to close the gap to a small margin in the second. The third and final round, deemed the Lightning Round, was a random asking of questions each worth 10 points. Victory for the Gladiators slipped away with a final score of 250-175.

Although disappointed, the team

returned to RHS with high hopes for the coming season. "The television experience was overwhelming at first but gradually one forgets the cameras and lights," Elijah said.

Last year, prior to the Spotswood High School Tourney, Elijah wagered RHS teacher Ron Wilkerson that the team would place third or higher or he would let Mr. Wilkerson shave his head. Fortunately, the team placed second out

of 28 schools.

The team's performance against John Handley was broadcast Nov. 9. Many public television viewers supported the team's outstanding accomplishment. In our minds, they are, indeed, winners.

The entire Academics Team would like to thank Mrs. Wilkerson for all her time after school and support. The team wants her to know it doesn't go unnoticed. ---

RHS group hosts ghoulish gathering

By JAIME BROWN

GREENVILLE -- On the ghostly night of Oct. 30, the Riverheads High School driveway gave way to a caravan of bright lights piercing the darkness.

Out of the many minivans and sports cars emerged a flock of anxious ghouls, goblins, and even a

few beasts. "Who were these strange beings?" "Where did they come from?" one might ask.

Well they were not aliens from another planet or demons coming to take over the world, but were instead, local school children. They were on an important mission, however. A mission to obtain as much candy as tiny hands

can hold and join in the fun of many games in about an hour's time.

There was a turnout of about 100 people to the Halloween Night sponsored by the Work and Studies Class for children ages 3-8 years. From about 6:30 to 7:30 the school cafeteria was decorated in festive attire. Pictures of ghosts

See GHOSTS, page 25

BME student finds diamond amid the dust

By SUE SIMMONS

CEDAR GREEN -- Many folks have heard about the proverbial "needle in a haystack," although they have never really had to go look for one. But Brett Puffenbarger has. Except Brett found a diamond instead of a needle, and he found it, not in a haystack, but on his school's gymnasium floor following a Halloween carnival held recently at Beverley Manor Elementary School.

During the evening's festivities, Pam Poole of Staunton noticed the diamond missing from her ring, according to Brett.

"At first everyone thought the lady had lost her ring, but it was just the diamond fell out," the fourth grader recalls. "People said she gasped when she noticed it was gone."

Activities at the carnival were split between the school's cafeteria and gymnasium.

"I thought I must have hit it on something," said Mrs. Poole, who missed the stone from her ring when she was in the cafeteria that night.

Brett, however, had not heard the news about the lost gem while he celebrated at the carnival in the school's gymnasium. Later, while cleanup was beginning, Brett was called upon to put his young eyes to work.

"A lady asked me to look through a pile of dust on the floor while they were moving tables," Brett explained. "I could only use one arm, because my other arm was full of prizes and stuff."

But Brett got down on the floor and started sifting through the dust.

"At first I mistook it for some gum wrapper," Brett said, but there was the stone, lying in "about one inch of dust. I yelled, 'Hey I found the diamond,' and everyone said 'It can't be the diamond,' the youngster said.

Most people assumed the diamond had gotten caught in a broom or carried off on the bottom of someone's shoe.

Mrs. Poole had left the school by the time the diamond was found "probably because she was really worried," Brett offered. She had

called the school after arriving home to ask that clean-up crews be on the lookout for her lost diamond which was a stone from a ring she's had for 11 years.

"It was pretty big," Brett commented, adding that he knew what a diamond looked like from seeing his mom's and grandma's.

"I felt really good about

finding it," he said.

Brett is the 9-year-old son of Earl and Teresa Puffenbarger of Rt. 5, Staunton.

Mrs. Poole gave Brett a cash reward for his part in finding the diamond and had the chance to thank him personally when the two met recently for the first time at the school.

"I have some insurance on it, but not enough to cover it all if I lose it," Mrs. Poole said. The stone had just been reset in August. When Mrs. Poole returned to the jeweler to have the stone set yet again, the man said what most have about the diamond's disappearance and recovery.

"He said, 'You're lucky,'" Mrs. Poole said. "And I told him I know it." ---



The odds of winning the BIG jackpot are 1 in 53 million. But what are the odds of finding a lost diamond -- not the whole ring, just the stone? Brett Puffenbarger, right, a Beverley Manor Elementary School student defied the odds and found the diamond belonging to Pam Poole of Staunton. The stone fell out of its mount during the school's Halloween carnival.

AC staff photo

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National Honor Society at RHS inducts 24 members

RHS staff report

GREENVILLE — The Riverheads High School chapter of the National Honor Society inducted 24 new members for the 96-97 school year on Nov. 12.

This is the largest number of students Riverheads has ever inducted in the school's history. The National Honor Society is a group of students who have a cumulative grade point average of 3.3 or above over the entire year. Students are chosen by five faculty members who vote on each student.

There are also four main requirements in order for a student to be a member. Students must display scholarship, leadership in the school and/or community, service to the school and/or community, and character, which means setting a good example for other students. This program is open to juniors and seniors only and gives the under-

classmen something to aim for as they go through high school.

Every year members of the NHS complete service projects for the community. This year the service project is to do a highway cleanup. Members can also vote on any other service projects they wish to do to help the area.

This year there are five officers who have displayed all of the four requirements exceptionally well. Officers are Shane Finnegan, president; Elijah Ward, vice president; Sara Chiaramonte, secretary; Heather Caldwell, treasurer, and Cynthia Seay, reporter. Officers were elected last spring and inducted in a ceremony held recently.

NHS chapter sponsors Rick Heatley and Nancy Brown worked very hard to make the ceremony possible.

"I am very proud of our president, Shane Finnegan, for the competent leadership which he exhib-

ited leading this ceremony," said Ms. Brown.

The NHS is a great opportunity for everyone. It is great to have on college applications, and in some cases, can help students obtain scholarships.

"It's an honor to be in NHS, because that means you met all the requirements you've worked so hard to get," said Meghan Carty, a new NHS member.

RHS students inducted include Julie Arehart, Abigail Barker, Ethan Barr, David Bolin, Lori Bosserman, Meghan Carty, Tatum Cox, Stephanie Cutlip, Jared Drummond, Brandon Flint, Katy Gallegly, Christopher Gilliam, Erin Goslin, Elizabeth Harris, Valerie Lamb, Emma Beth Law, Katherine Manley, Megan McIlwee, Jaclyn Horris, Michael Payne, Sarah Regi, John Sproul, Micah Ward, and Laura Wilkerson. ---



Officers inducted in a recent National Honor Society ceremony at Riverheads High School are, from left, Shane Finnegan, president; Elijah Ward, vice president; Sara Chiaramonte, secretary; Heather Caldwell, treasurer; Cynthia Seay, reporter. RHS staff photo

Gap science club discovers formula for success

By LAURYN PLEMMONS

SWOOP — The Science Club is one of the most active clubs at Buffalo Gap High School.

The 90-member club meets every activity day to discuss future plans and fund raising projects. The purpose of the Science Club is to make science as intriguing and as fun as possible.

Sponsors Elaine McDorman and Jenny Groh plan to do this by brewing up as many hikes, field trips, and guest speakers as they can.

In order to keep students involved, the club has come up with a system which requires each student to have at least 25 points by Christmas. Students can obtain points by attending the meetings and the planned activities. If stu-

dents fail to do, so they will be dismissed from the club. "Science Club is fun, but serious. They won't permit you to slack off," commented Junior Marcie Atkins.

The club got in the homecoming spirit by creating a banner, which tied for first place in the banner contest.

The week of Oct. 7-11, selected students taught elementary students about the environment at the Augusta County Wetlands. The club kicked off its second meeting on October, 14 with guest speaker Jim Payne. Payne is from Luck Stone Quarry, and he discussed the process of converting limestone to gravel. The club members traveled to the quarry on Oct. 30 to witness the process. This was followed

by a comical science movie, and chemistry experiment.

Due to the bad weather, only a few members could make it on Oct. 16 to the very stimulating and unusual business of raising fish at Casta Line Trout Farms in Craigsville.

The club also traveled to Elliot's Knob on Oct. 19 to experience a strenuous hike and an outstanding view. Members enjoyed visit-

ing the Stokesville Observatory on Nov. 7. To celebrate Christmas, the Science Club will learn how to bend glass to make ornaments to hang on their Christmas trees.

Finishing off the year the club plans to take a spring trip to visit interesting museums and the airport in Richmond. The club is also making plans for an overnight camping trip to West Virginia in the

spring. Presently, science club students are financing their many activities by selling merchandise from the Tom Wat Company.

The hard working officers of this highly active club are President Charlie Sayers, Vice President Sheila Nycum, Secretary Sarah Crummett, Treasurer Beth Sprouse, Historian Jonathan McDaniels, and Reporter Kevin Davies. ---

RHS class teaches students about the world of business

By RUTH JONES

GREENVILLE — Riverheads High School has many changes this year. One of the changes is Gary Barr's sociology class. This is a new and informative class teaching students about starting their own businesses.

"This year's class is one of the most creative that I've had. Their ideas of advertising have been particularly innovative and should make their student company successful," said Barr.

Students in his class have actually started their own business

called "Flavor Factory" through the guidelines of Junior Achievement. They keep track of bookkeeping and everything else that comes along with holding a business.

"The company is very entertaining, but the book work is very complicated," said sociology student Erica Gardner.

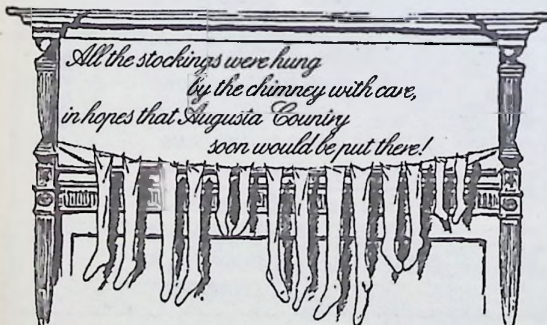
There is a management team which has been elected and each student has a special role in the company. "Flavor Factory" will operate for three months and profits from this company will be kept by the students.

This class teaches students a lot

about responsibility and the real world. They also have to be organized in order to keep track of their sales and profits.

"It's a good preparatory class to get students ready to deal with their own finances and social problems after graduation," said Senior Shelley Nuckols.

Putting it all into perspective, this class is a good opportunity for students. They get an early chance to learn about the business world, and how to operate a business themselves. Sociology student Karman Hemp said, "It's a real to life class. It prepares you for the good and bad qualities of society." ---



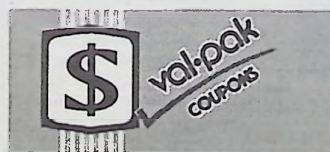
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The Hitching Post

Dulaney Vessey comes back strong after jumping accident

By CHRIS MARRS

Dulaney Vessey has ridden hunter jumpers for the past five years and has shown competitively at local shows such as Kemper Knoll, Doods, Mill Creek, Middlebrook, and Shenandoah Farms. She has also shown in Charlottesville and the former Virginia College for Women in Buena Vista and at the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington.



Dulaney Vessey puts Cocoa through his paces in the dressage ring at the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington.

While showing in Charlottesville on April 9, 1995, Dulaney suffered a fall going over a jump. It was an accident which put her in the hospital with a concussion.

"She did not recognize me for over 24 hours," Dulaney's mother, Mary Ann Vessey, explained. "But after the accident, in six weeks, she came back to win six blue ribbons and a championship that summer."

It takes a lot of fortitude and stamina to come back after an acci-

dent, and Dulaney's post accident performance proves she has both. She is active in pony club and attends rallies in horse management where she has won second place for 1994 and 1996. In 1995 she won third place overall.

This year Dulaney took a break from jumping to work in the dressage ring. For the past nine months she and her horse, Cocoa, have begun dressage training under instructor Amy Chandler at Penmerryl Farm in Greenville.

"There is a noticeable difference in her horse's carriage and behavior, and Dulaney has improved herself learning this new skill," Mary Ann said.

Cocoa is the registered Quarter horse Dulaney showed in 1995 and this year. Her past mounts have included Simon, which she showed in 1991 and 1992, and Whiz, shown in 1993 and 1994. In addition to Chandler, Dulaney has trained under instructors Jeanne Pitcher, Ann Wick, and Studley Robson. The 17-year-old holds a D-3 in the pony club organization and has ridden since she was 8 years old. Her first horse was a Shetland pony.

When asked why she likes pony club, Dulaney explains that they have "rules and standards to follow, teach how things are done, they do events, teach safety, horse care, competition care, and how to show properly."

Anyone interested in joining the Glenmore Hunt Pony Club may



Dulaney Vessey with Cocoa showing off a blue ribbon won at a Virginia Women's College horse show.

Photos courtesy Dulaney Vessey

contact Marjorie Hays of Staunton at 886-6081.

Although Dulaney is learning dressage and enjoys it, she still looks forward to jumping. She felt she needed a break to get her riding ability strengthened and her confidence restored before getting back into the hunter

juniper circuit again.

Like any sport that has its falls and spills, horseback riding takes dedication despite the risks. Dulaney has demonstrated that "getting back on the horse" after a fall, while not easy, is necessary in order to move on to the next level of achievement. —

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I.B. Hoofinit gives a conformation clinic

I think they should have conformation clinics on people who ride horses. We're always being judged on our balance, conformation, leg structure, travel, etc. Well, I think we should have a people conformation clinic. The idea is form to function. Sometimes I don't think people consider their form to function on a horse.

For example, I have a friend who is a large-boned thoroughbred. Her stride is extremely long. You could play the theme song to the movie "Jaws," and it would be in rhythm to her canter.

One day this short rider decided to try out my long-strided friend. This girl was jerked forward with each stride, because her short back couldn't stay with the horse. She needed a conformation clinic. You see, people don't realize it, but their backs have to be as long and as supple as their horse's stride. If a rider has a short back on a long-strided horse, he won't be able to

sit the canter properly. Riders need to make sure their length of back and the horse's stride match.

Another thing we need to discuss is leg. Effective leg on a horse comes partly from position and partly from length. Both are important. But the third part of effective riding is the use of the seat. The legs are the guides, but the seat is the major driving force. Riders with long legs are lucky. They can pretty much keep a horse covered. But short-legged people have to make do. And riding large horses loses some of the effectiveness. There just isn't enough leg to cover the horse.

But we have a problem here. Short-legged people often INSIST on riding big horses to be competitive. One way to handle this situation is the use of a dressage whip. The dressage whip takes up where the leg leaves off.

Another part of my conformation clinic would be to discuss right-

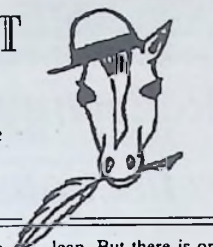
legged and left-legged people. Right-legged people always want to turn right rein circles. Left-legged people favor the left rein. But in training I need to be even on both sides.

I can always tell a right-legged person from a left-legged one. The right-legged person presses a little harder and stronger with that leg, and I end up going down the rail a little crooked. My circles are tighter to the right than the left. The right-legged person has trouble keeping a strong left leg on me, and I can push through it easily. They just don't have the staying power in the weaker leg, and I know it.

I think they should have a left-legged rider and a right-legged rider ride me. Then I would learn to balance out. But if that's not possible, left-legged riders need to do two circles to the right for every one to the left. It makes them work the weak leg a little longer and gives me more suppling exercise on a side

I.B. HOOFINIT

Horse Sense



that is probably stiff.

Now line up, people, and let me find you a horse — not too tall, not too short, not too fat, and not

too lean. But there is one just right for each and every one of you if you keep in mind your own physical "conformation." —

I.B. Hoofinit is a fictitious horse character developed by Chris Marrs as a service to teach horse care. Questions to I.B. Hoofinit may be submitted to P.O. Box 2955, Staunton, Va. 24402. Questions become the property of Chris Marrs, and answers are subject to editor

approval. Information provided in this column is meant to be taken as general advice. Each horse, rider, owner, and situation reflect different problems. I.B.'s answers are meant to be informative and enjoyable, but not binding. Common sense in any situation is a must.

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•Ghosts

Continued from page 22

and skeletons hung silently on the walls while their counterparts that strangely resembled children scurried back and forth to the many activities located throughout the room. Their earthly parents trailed them with handfuls of candy.

Among the many activities available, children were able to fish for candy with a pole while a couple of hidden teenagers grabbed the end of the string as it was thrown over a wall. When the string was brought back to the child's hands, a bag of candy was there to greet them.

There was a miniature bowling alley and a tiny racetrack for those who dared race in the broomstick relay. It was a race against the clock for those tykes who chose to put together the pumpkin puzzle and participate in the

ghost walk for prizes. Some children got to "Pin the Wart on the Witch," while others took a few minutes to make a ghostly hand from a rubber glove and popcorn.

Loud pops were heard from children who crushed balloons for the prizes inside in the balloon stomp. There were a few games for more timid players as well, like the clothes pin drop and the bean bag toss. There was one activity that only the kids with the strongest stomachs braved: The Witch's Brew.

The Witch's Brew was a concoction of many different household items mixed together in a bucket. It consisted of dead leaves, plastic fin-gernails, spinach, mushrooms, apple chips, purple paint, and many other strange things. The scent was rather lovely as one can imagine, but the kids seemed to really enjoy it.

Tots also enjoyed having their face or hands painted by a couple of talented students. They could choose from a pumpkin, a cat, a ghost, and many other frightening designs.

This FHA-sponsored activity, with the help of Nancy Harris' and Kathleen Buchanan's classes, was a great success. The students decorated and made refreshments such as punch, cupcakes, and cookies. They also distributed candy and helped clean up after the function was over.

This event put smiles on many faces. One man wrote in to say that the students interacted well with the children, and his kids had a great time. Other thank you notes came in as well. The feedback from the community says it all. There will be many more Halloween nights in the future. Come if you dare!!!!—

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Country Crossroads

Reflecting pool reflections

By Roberta Hamlin

November, 1996

Dear Maude,
What a month! I know I complain a lot of the times about how boring things can get, but that is certainly not the case since the last time I wrote. It was just after I mailed my letter to you that things started to get weird.

On Halloween, all over the business section of Washington (which, mind you, is the proper and staid part of town with lawyers in their three-piece suits, etc.) one kept seeing women in orange blouses and black skirts or slacks. Suddenly the lobbies of the better office buildings were filled with exhibits of creatively carved pumpkins -- some representing the IRS, some the homebuilders association, some various federal agencies, the Washington Opera. Some were clever, some wild and menacing, and they were all competing with one another for first prize as the building employees stood around, drank apple cider (courtesy of the management), cast their votes, and then talked about the upcoming election (of people, not pumpkins, that is.)

Out in the streets there were pedestrians wearing cut out paper masks as they sat at the tables of the sidewalk cafes (it was a nice day) and talked about the upcoming election. I saw one person, female I think, but I could have been mistaken, with wildly striped green and black hair jaywalking across one of the busy streets, followed by a witch in a shaggy skirt, carrying a witch's hat. The cars whizzed towards them, and they did not flinch. Was it that they were not afraid of any mortal danger, having been exposed to daily life in Washington? And this was all before noon!

After I got back to my desk, a little stunned, with my carry-out sandwich, I wondered if I had actually seen it or not. But no, it was not my imagination. As I headed home, there went a creature in black with long whiskers and a tail walking along with someone else in wild makeup. Strange music drifted out of the open doors of restaurants and bars as the after-work crowd sat outside in the balmy evening air, sipping their drinks and talking about the upcoming election. There was almost no one on the subway, and what few there were were using the windows of the cars as mirrors as they sat and put on more outrageous makeup and crazy hats. It was hard not to notice them, for there were absolutely no people on the trains -- did no one go home? Did they go home early? Early that morning, there were the usual number of people, and at noon the streets were filled, but why were there no returnees?

I began to ask myself was this some kind of comment on the upcoming election? Were things not scary enough for them? Were they trying to call back former legislators? Scare off the present ones, or simply didn't have any interest in the possible upcoming changes? It could be, of course, that everyone was so starved for a good, crazy party that they could not stop themselves, for I really have never seen so many people into the spirit of Halloween!

But now for the great news! Dylan will be coming back to Washington! The man on whose campaign he was working won and has asked Dylan if he wanted to come back as a staff member. Thank goodness, at last I will be able to have a little more fun. The social life of a single woman in this city can be rather limited unless she is willing to compromise herself, and I won't do that -- guess it's that good old August County blood

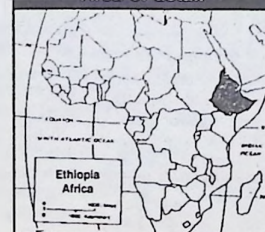
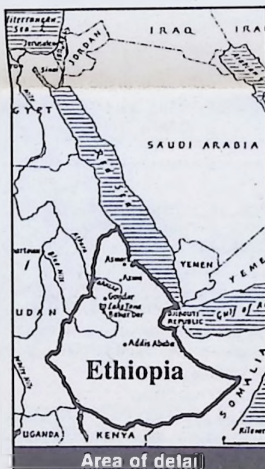
See D.C., page 27



AFRIKA

EDITOR'S NOTE: Roy Howard, pastor of Bethel Presbyterian Church near Middlebrook, is traveling in Ethiopia as a member of a mission team sponsored by Shenandoah Presbytery. The following article was edited together from two fax transmissions received from Roy, the most recent on Nov. 16. He will return to the United States Nov. 24.

We arrived in Addis Ababa after a 10-hour flight. Ato Mershe, president of Ilubabor Synod, took us to greet the students and faculty of Mekane Yesus Seminary. The dean of theology is a Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. missionary. They are doing marvelous work training local pastors in Bible and theology. Because there is such a great need for pastors the seminary is expanding.



of mud with thatch roofs, dung floors, and hand cut logs for benches. At each church, the people fill the sanctuary and the yard around it to hear the gospel -- 800 people in one worship service, 500 in another. I have never experienced a people so full of joy with such simple resources.

Everywhere we go the children come running to greet me and surround me. They enjoy my attempts to speak their language and play soccer with them. The people are embracing us with profound love.

We worshipped at the Metu Church on Sunday. Four thousand people come from the countryside for three services, each two hours long.

I can't begin to describe fully our experience with the

Bethel pastor embarks on mission trip to Ethiopia



Saying grace

By

Roy Howard

church here. At times it's as if we are living out the Book of Acts again when the church was exploding with new converts, living from day to day praying and establishing congregations as fast as possible.

The old proverb, "don't judge a book by its cover" is never more true than here. By outward appearance, the people have virtually nothing. Many are living from hand to mouth -- not hungry -- just no excess whatsoever. Primitive doesn't even begin to describe reality which is more basic than basic.

Many of the elders and evangelists who came to the four-day seminar we conducted walked from as far away as 60 miles. Some had no shoes. Few had a change of clothes, and the clothes they had were ragged. Yet, the depth of their knowledge of scripture, church history, theology and polity is astounding; the fervency of their belief and commitment is inspiring, and the passion they have for living the Christian life is quite remarkable.

There were six tribal language groups represented in our seminar. The common language is Ahmharic. I taught these subjects: 1. Making disciples after the manner of Jesus, 2. Christian Doctrine, discerning truth from heresy, and 3. Theology of baptism. The participants, whose appearance would lead you to believe otherwise, were quite challenging in their questions and deep interest in the subjects.

During a morning break each day of the seminar, I ran four miles through the village following a bicycle, so I wouldn't get lost. It was great fun; the people laughed at me, and I said, "Hello, hello, Wogonoche" [which means "We are One, in Ahmharic] to them.

We taught three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon. After classes Yedetta Kiritta took us deep into the bush to visit congregations being established in the middle of the jungle. In thatch huts, the Gospel is being lived and proclaimed. No one in any of the congregations is paid anything, because they have no money. Teachers, evangelists, pastors, and parish elders all have emerged from the calling of the church. Mekane Yesus Synod has trained them very, very well. They are also involved in development work -- health care, clean water systems, and education.

Total Christian life is here, both spiritual and social. We concluded the seminar with a service of Holy Communion. I presided at the table with an elder from the Mjange tribe which does not yet have a written language. A most holy moment in which the reality of the one Body of Christ was visibly demonstrated -- such a display of God's grace in the breaking of the bread.

The congregation hosting the meeting has an all-night prayer vigil every 15 days. Last night I went to bed listening to the beautiful soaring voices of the people singing songs

See ETHIOPIA, page 27

A gardener's testament

Nothing much happened in Middlebrook this week, except there came a sign from heaven.

1 Now the Lord hath many mountains and rivers in Augusta County, lakes and wooded paths in the Shenandoah Valley; yea, and ocean shorelines and tide pools which He hath placed upon the coast of the Commonwealth. And He hath placed them there that the men of the earth might take their wives and children fishing and camping, and spend time together relaxing in the midst of nature, and enjoying that which He hath created.

But there was a servant of the Lord who knew not of it, but thought only that the Lord had created lawns and gardens in which to labor and till. And he had a wife and three children, and they labored with him in the garden. And they wrought together throughout the spring and summer, even all day every day, six days a week.

And when the Lord looked down in late autumn and saw them laboring still within the garden, lo, he reached down and smote the tiller upon which the man was walking behind, that He might get his attention and therefore slow him down.

And He smote it so that the parts thereof to repair it were found neither

at Brubeck's Hardware, nor in Staunton, nor in Charlottesville.

2 Now the servant of the Lord knew not that it was the finger of God, but hastened only to repair it and get back in the garden. And he located the parts in Bowling Green, Kentucky, which was seven hours away.

And he spake to the wife of his youth saying, "Behold, now I've got to hurry. The man in Bowling Green will stay open for me until 8:30 tonight, but not a minute later. If I can make it, I shall return tonight and have the tiller fixed by morning; and I must make it. That shall be highly likely, because Bowling Green is two hours behind us!" And lo, he kissed her and gat himself toward Bowling Green.

And the Lord beheld him and saw him go. And lo, He sent down a great sign of the times and a great wonder out of Heaven. For when he was sure that he was going to make it to Bowling Green on time, and when he had less than an hour to go, behold, even then came the sign which the Lord had sent down.

And the sign said, "Thou art entering Central Time Zone; set thy watch back one hour!" And the man was bewildered. He spake aloud, yea, even though he was alone in the chariot, saying "Thou sign must be in error. I

calculated the time for this trip using Bowling Green being two hours behind, not one! Surely Lord, there must be some mistake!"

But alas, there was no mistake. The man had erred and allowed himself to think he had plenty of time. And the servant of the Lord was stunned, for now it was not 7:30 local time, but 8:30, and he was too late; yea, and he was astonished. And the man commanded the chariot to slow down, and he bowed his head in the presence of the Lord.

3 And the voice of the Lord came forth out of the midst of the hills of Kentucky and entered into the heart of His servant and spake unto him saying, "It is now later than you think, and it is hard to get thy attention."

"Behold, I have given thee the wife of thy youth and three children, and thou hast not yet taken pictures of them in My mountains, nor ran with them on My beaches, nor splashed thy feet with them in the waves that I have sent thee. And I have sent thee fish in abundance up My rivers in the Valley all summer long, and thou hast not reeled them in."

"Behold, I have seen thy faithfulness in teaching them of Me and of My Word, and lo, their faith is strong. But if thou thinkest the vegetable gardens of the earth grow fast, what shalt thy say of thy children in a few years?"



The Garden Path

By
Jeff Ishee

And the voice of the Lord continued to emanate from the hills of central Kentucky saying "Behold, I counsel thee to take thy sons fishing, and pick flowers with thy daughter, and court thou the wife of thy youth as in the days e're she bore thee children."

And the servant of the Lord marveled much that it was so, and lo, he rejoiced greatly in the Lord his God, and in the wife of his youth, and in the hearts and lives of his children. And, behold, the man turned his chariot back towards the Valley, not with thoughts of shopping for tiller parts, but, yea, for presents to give his family to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Lo, his garden must wait for next year.

And the Lord God was content with His servant.

From the Ishee family, we wish for all of our friends here in "Augusta County" a very Merry Christmas! —

D.C.

Continued from page 26
in me. Anyway, as soon as the new offices are ready, he will be here.

December is traditionally the change-over month when retiring and defeated members clean out their offices, and the new members arrive and get set up for the start of the next session. But right now most of the city is in limbo, as many of the people who will be leaving are taking their time getting packed and out, and their staffs are also in upheaval. Many did not expect to have to be out there looking for jobs. So far I have had no luck finding a nice apartment for Dylan, since the best ones have not been vacated, and may not be if their occupants can find other Hill jobs.

Not only are the Hill jobs in a state of flux right now, but with so many of the Cabinet members leaving, there will be a lot of changes there as well. Many people feel that those changes may have been expected by the administration, but not announced until after the election. For some, the 24-hour-a-day exposure of a job like that is more than they want to do for more than a few years. Most of the people who will be effected in the federal agencies, however, are the higher up administration people who were appointed by one of the Secretaries. The new cabinet members will certainly want their own people around them. My, this is such an unstable place!

The election scene was a little spooky -- most people here thought that many races were too close to call, and they were. The more conservative pollsters were correct when they predicted that the election

would not be like the last one but more like those of 1984 or even 1972. In those years the president was elected by a good majority, but his party did not increase their seats in the House and lost some in the Senate. It promises to be an interesting Congress. With the president being freed from the concern of having to run again, we will see how well the House and Senate will work with him, and he with them. One can only hope that those we have voted into office will realize that this will be a time to get things done. So many of the freshmen from the last election spent so much time learning the ropes and telling their constituents -- and one another -- what needed to be changed with the system, that time ran out on them, and suddenly they were running again with very little accomplished and signed into legislation that they could brag about. But until they come roaring back into

town in January full of ideas and speeches, we have at least a month to have a little fun. So far, I found three new skirts, two new pairs of shoes and a great hat, but with all the excitement of the election, my shopping was slowed down. I really have to get busy, especially now that Dylan is returning. There will be so many more places to go and things to do and, after a two-year vacation from all of it, my party wardrobe is hopelessly out of date. Because of Dylan's new job, I may even get a chance to go to the Inaugural Ball! Tomorrow I plan to start looking for a dress -- after I hit the boss for a raise, that is. With so many places to go, my budget could certainly use a little help!

Dylan and I hope to spend Thanksgiving Day together, but I will miss all of you. However, I hope that at Christmas Dylan and I can both be there for a nice long holiday visit. By then we expect to have him settled in an apartment and will be ready to celebrate a little before settling down to the hard work of the upcoming year.

Tell Mama I'm sending my love and two big boxes of my old clothes for anyone who wants them.

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Ethiopia

Continued from page 26
and praying. I awoke at 1:30: I heard again the voices of prayer and singing. Oh my, is it any wonder the church is growing here?
Tomorrow, Sunday, I will be preaching in a congregation 60 miles into the country. Mon-

day we go to Gore orphanage and then to Bedele where we will teach again for four days.

I remember you in my prayers and am so grateful for your prayers and affection. I am safe, healthy, and blessed beyond all comprehension. Thank you for your prayers.

The Lord be with you,
Roy



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°Thatch

Continued from page 7

and some which cause deterioration. "A drier roof is gonna last longer. Sunlight is what it thrives on. The south side of a house always lasts longer, because it stays drier. The northside doesn't get a chance to dry off. Frost-thaw in the same day is bad because the materials have to expand and contract, and there is also moisture in that. Breeze is good. If the materials and craftsmen are good, then wind is not a factor. In general, straw gives and can put up with weather."

He admits that thatching is fairly simple to learn, but achieving a mastery in the craft is another matter. "It's easy to do and hard to do well.

You can read about it, and see how it's done, and that's fine. But it won't work out the way you figure."

"It's learned by doing, but most people aren't any value to the thatcher the first year they are working. I worked for nothing for two years. Then the thatcher let me do the simple stuff. The best way to learn is repair work. You are working on small areas that aren't critical and you see a lot of different situations," he said.

He pointed to his brother Mark as someone learning the craft. "Mark has been working thatch three years and needs another three years to get really good," he explained.

The most important factor in be-

coming a master thatcher is simply time he noted. "It takes time. Your eye has to get in and learn to adapt to different materials, depths and designs."

It is a physically demanding job, moving up and down ladders and scrambling over roofs. He wears sturdy leather kneepads for kneeling on the roof, and his left kneepad is worn gray from the pressure of leaning on the ladder. "You have to stick at it a hard pace. You are constantly moving and stretching, so you want to be agile. The steeper the pitch of the roof, the easier it is, because you are straighter. The flatter roof requires more bending," Powell noted.

Although thatch has not caught on to any great extent in America, he said it is "flying in Europe" where "there is plenty of work for everybody."

He dismissed as "a load of baloney" the idea that thatched roofs were fire hazards. "A finished tight roof is no more flammable than a cedar roof. I could get a red-hot bucket of coals and pour it on the roof and the coals will roll right off. No fire. If you keep your chimney cleaned and well maintained and your electrical system is good there is no worry," Powell said.

He added, however, that he can put in a fire barrier for those who want it and when he builds children's playhouses he always adds fire-retardant plywood under

his layer of thatch.

If he could design a house from scratch, he would always lean toward thatch he said. "If I was to build a new house, I would style it for thatch. The overall economics would come through after about 10 years in insulation. I would have a steep roof with the upstairs inside the roof. The heat would be from the central part of the house. It's not gonna cost much to heat, and it would be cooler in the summer. A very efficient house. Plus the aesthetics of it."

For Ashley Powell, that's the sum of it really. "There's nothing nicer than looking at a nice thatch house. In standing back and looking at what you have done." —



Ashley Powell of Pennsylvania uses a leggett to dress straw bundles into place.

Photo by Nancy Sorrella

°Quilts

Continued from page 21

of art, the seamstress added both stitch and paint embroidery to tell about her life. The beginning and ending dates — 1890-96 — of when the quilt was made were plainly visible as were the names of respected people such as Henry Clay and Gen. R.E. Lee. These noteworthy historical figures shared space with some of the family's pets, Winkie the cat and Dick and Dudie, two chickens. Among the embroidered artwork on the quilt were an owl sitting in a crescent moon, a stork's nest and a spider in a web. Perhaps most fitting for the quilt was the seamstress' favorite Bible verse: "I will give rest to the weary."

One of the oldest quilts at the show belonged to Edna Caron of Staunton. The quilt was made in the 1850s and taken to Indiana when the family moved. Eventually the quilt returned to Augusta County when a family member married and returned to the area. Another among the oldest items on display was a hand-loomed cover-

let given as a wedding present in 1862 to the great-great grandparents of Mike Dundas of Staunton.

Perhaps one of the most conversational items on display was a homespun coverlet belonging to Ms. Brown who said the coverlet belonged to her grandmother Mary Borum Setszer.

According to the story which has been passed down through the years with the coverlet, a Yankee soldier was among Sheridan's troops which raided Shenandoah Valley homesteads and tried to take the coverlet from Mrs. Setszer. The

woman, who family members say "was a determined lady," refused to let go of it. The soldier succeeded only in tearing one corner loose. Ms. Brown proudly showed the edge of the coverlet which hangs in shreds from attempting to be torn from her grandmother's hands by the Yankee soldier.

With Hebron Church celebrating its 250th anniversary, the hand-made quilts and coverlets were perhaps the best way to depict the lives of individuals whose places in history are as memorable as the church's. —

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