

OLDE TOWNE PEARISBURG

REGISTER

December 2014

“In the beginning, all America was Virginia.” So wrote the colonial aristocrat William Byrd II in the early part of the eighteenth century. No one at the time thought this statement an idle boast. Educated people knew that when England laid claim to most of North America in 1500s, the colony named for “the Virgin Queen” swept grandly from the Atlantic to Pacific. Never mind that no one had any idea what lay in between these two oceans or that British possession was more wishful thinking than actuality, the fact remained that most of the United States and even portions of Canada were once considered part of Virginia. On the edge of this vast Virginia continent, in a town called Jamestown, America’s Christmas celebration began to take shape.

For the better part of two centuries, Christmas was largely a Virginia phenomenon. The holiday did not exist in New England nor was it observed with much interest in other northern colonies. But in Virginia, Christmas meant a fortnight of festivities stretching from Christmas Eve through New Year’s Day all the way to Twelfth Night, a season that was celebrated (by those who could afford it) with lavish feasts, prodigious drinking, fox hunting, dancing, games, music- both sacred and secular, and the decorating of churches and homes. As the generations passed, Virginians handed down their treasured English traditions and added a few of their own inventions: open house, Christmas gifts, Christmas guns and fireworks, and eggnog hospitality. Virginians were among the first Americans to adopt the German tradition of the decorated tree, and Virginians pioneered that naturalistic Colonial Revival Christmas decorations of the twentieth century with Williamsburg door decorations and candlelit windows.

It wasn’t long before a Virginia Christmas inspired envy. As early as 1746 a London magazine rhapsodized about the “universal hospitality” and the “full tables and open doors” strangers could expect to find across His Majesty’s largest colony. Later, visions of ante-bellum gentility would enhance the image until every holiday publication paid tribute to the old Virginia Christmas.

As Virginians moved west, they carried their Christmas customs with them to Kentucky and Ohio, to Texas and California. Explorers Lewis and Clark, with barely the means to survive, managed to put together a bit of Virginia Christmas in the wilds of the Louisiana Purchase. Ordinary men and women brought their recipes, songs, and memories of Christmas celebration with them when they packed their Conestoga wagons and faced west.

Virginia’s Christmas customs evolved from pagan, Roman, English, Dutch, and German precedents but also its own homegrown traditions developed. In a larger sense however, America started in Virginia. So did its Christmas.

As we begin the holiday season, I wanted to take a moment and share with you some history of two of the most common elements in a Virginia Christmas: bayberries and the pineapple.

Bayberries

Their dusky green color and spicy fragrance give bayberry candles a natural association with Virginia Christmas. The timing is right, as well.

Berries of the bayberry plant (also called myrtle berries or candle berries) mature in November and December, allowing those who made bayberry candles to have a supply right before the holidays.



To make candles of any sort involved a good deal of work but with bayberry candles, there was the extra chore of gathering buckets full of tiny bayberries from the native bushes. Bayberry grows wild and plentiful along the eastern coastal regions of America but its berries are small and tedious to collect.

First the berries are boiled in hot water until the oil floats to the top. This is skimmed off into another vessel and the boiling repeated. The oil hardens into a dirty green wax that can be dipped or poured into candle molds. For their trouble, the colonists had a candle with a long life, and a very pleasant scent.

Making candles from bayberries was new to the colonists. Robert Beverly, an early Virginia planter, wrote of the “very modern” discovery in 1705, sounding almost like a very modern advertisement.

“At the Mouth of their Rivers, and all along upon the Sea and Bay, and near many of their Creeks and Swamps, grows the Myrtle, bearing a Berry, of which they make a hard brittle Wax, of a curious green Colour, which by refining becomes almost transparent. Of this they make Candles, which are never greasie to the Touch, nor melt with lying in the hottest Weather: Neither does the Snuff of these ever offended to the Smell, like that of a Tallow-Candle; but instead of being disagreeable, if an Accident puts a Candle out, it yields a pleasant Fragrancy to all that are in the Room; insomuch that nice People often put them out, on purpose to have the Incense of the expiring Snuff.”

Candles of any sort were used far less than is generally thought. The cost of candles meant that most people used them infrequently or not at all. A large room in a wealthy plantation home was pronounced “luminous and splendid” when there were “four very large candles burning on the table where we supp’d three others in different parts of the Room.” Candles did not appear on dining tables unless the meal was served after dark.

The Pineapple

Europeans have been fascinated with “the mysterious pine-apple” ever since Christopher Columbus came into contact with this New World fruit in the West Indies. Early explorers to the islands praised them rapturously. “Pine-apples,” wrote one man who sampled them during a Caribbean voyage, were “neere so bigge as an Hartichoke, but the most daintiest taste of any fruit.” A ship’s captain who sailed to Barbados in 1657 came to the same conclusion but in far more words. After devoting three entire pages to his description of the pineapple, he finally summed it up as “certainly the nectar which the Gods drunke; for on earth there is none like it.”

Samples of the delectable pineapple did not arrive in England until a hundred and fifty years after Columbus’ explorations. The first one, legend has it, was presented to Oliver Cromwell during his tenure as Lord Protector. The problem was transportation. As with all fresh foods, pineapples from the New World spoiled before the ship reached its destination. The obvious solution? Bring the tropical plant to Europe and cultivate it in hot houses. The less obvious difficulty? The pineapple is hard to grow. This only added to its mystique, not to mention its cost, making the pineapple a favorite on royal dining table and the caviar of its day.”

And therein lies the link between the pineapple and hospitality; serving one’s guests this rare treat would certainly have been seen as a hospitable gesture. However, no documentation exists for the often heard assertion that the pineapple was the symbol of hospitality during the colonial period. To be sure, it did widespread duty as a decorative element- printed onto fabric and wallpaper, illustrated in botanical prints and painting, and engraved onto silver hollowware- and it does make a perfect finial for a newel post, but the pineapple did not symbolize hospitality to anyone in America until well beyond the colonial period. If anything can be said to have symbolized hospitality to colonial Virginia, it would have been the punch bowl.

We hope you will join us on Saturday, December 6th from 3PM-6PM at the Andrew Johnston House as we celebrate Christmas the old-fashioned way. The House and museum will open along with delicious sweets and savories available for tasting. And on the way out, please be sure to stop by our newly reopened Museum Shop that is filled with wonderful gifts for the history lover!

PEARISBURG TODAY

Pearisburg Has Exciting News!

The Town of Pearisburg has received a Farmer's Market Promotion Grant for \$99,897 from the United States Department of Agriculture. The award will fund development of a Farmer's Market and related services over a two year period. Lisa Dearden of ChiknEGG Productions LLC will be hired to assist in development of the market. She is an expert in how to properly develop and market a new Farmer's Market. The grant funds will also cover a Market Manager position on a part time basis to staff the market. This person will develop activities that will add to the attraction of the market as well as recruit and manage vendors.

The grant also provides funding for improving the successful Farm of Fork Cooking Classes. A series of Chef's Demonstrations will occur over the two years of the funding. This will include a demonstration kitchen that can be set up at various events such as Festival Around Town. Workshops will be developed for vendors on how to market and brand their products as well as how to take advantage of special techniques for increasing sales at the market.

The grant also provides funding for purchase of advertisement for the Cooking Classes, the Market, and special events. The program will undergo a branding campaign to make Farm to Fork an easily spotted and recognized logo. Among the logo items to be developed are aprons, bumper stickers, postcards, and flyers with the logo displayed. The planning will also focus on how to make a better connection between local producers and restaurants wanting to have a better supply of locally grown foods.

Meetings are underway this fall to prepare for implementing the Farmer's Market in 2015. The planning will emphasize the need to make the new Market self-sustaining after the initial two years of grant funding. If you are interested in helping to develop the Market or in being a vendor contact the Town Office.

To better serve the needs of the community we have a brief survey that can be found at the Pearisburg Library, the Town Office, Chamber of Commerce and also on the town's website, www.pearisburg.org. The survey is also included in this newsletter. Completing this survey will give us a better idea of the needs and wants of the community so that both buyer and producer will benefit from the Farmer's Market. Take a moment to fill it out and send it back to us.

We have developed this logo and slogan that will be tied to the Farmer's Market and cooking classes.

Pearisburg Farm to Fork

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Cooking Fresh, Going Local

DEPARTMENT NEWS

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

To the citizens of the Town of Pearisburg, some of us have received a notice in the mail over the past year or so wanting you to purchase insurance on your sewer line. I would like to inform everyone that has received this notice that the Town of Pearisburg is not involved in any way. If you find this letter in your mail, please call Rick Tawney at 921-0340 and I will be happy to discuss with you what I have found out about this matter

RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The Recreation Department is continuing to add new programs for our citizens. This fall we offered Flag Football for grades K-3. We have also added a Corn Hole league for adults.

Boy's basketball signups will be held in mid-December and Girl's signups will be held in mid-January. As always, this information can be found on the Town's website at www.pearisburg.org. Just as a reminder, you can subscribe to the calendars for reminders of sign up dates and cancellations. You may also register your child for upcoming sports on the website.

With cold weather upon us, the gym will be open on Sunday's for open gym. There is a small fee of \$1 per day. We are still working on the hours so watch the website and facebook for that information.

SAFETY TIPS FROM YOUR BUILDING INSPECTOR

Don't Let Your Gas Appliances Starve for Air!

Gas appliances, such as water heaters, furnaces and boilers, need plenty of air to operate safely. Otherwise they will produce excessive, deadly carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide is odorless, colorless and toxic, which means you can't see, taste or smell it. It causes headaches, dizziness, disorientation, nausea and fatigue. Carbon monoxide can kill, so be sure to maintain your gas appliances.

Safely Operate Your Gas-Fired Appliances:

- * Schedule an annual appliance inspection, cleaning and tune-up by a qualified specialist.
- * Have vents and chimneys inspected by a qualified expert at least once a year.
- * Have a technician check the combustion air provisions for your appliances.
- * Store combustibles and flammables far away from gas appliances.

Building safety codes require specific venting sizes and combustion provisions for gas appliances to ensure safe operation. Contact your local gas company or building safety department for more information.

LIBRARY NEWS

You will see a new face at the Library. Holly Clark has been hired in a part time position filling a vacancy after Vickie Meadows retired in October. Vickie had worked at the Library for three years and will be missed. Holly has worked and helped at Macy McLaugherty Library for many years so she is very familiar with our Follett Cataloging/Circulating system. She will definitely be an asset to our library.

Pearis Mountain Massage Therapy has a new location

Formerly located on Wenonah Avenue, Pearis Mountain Massage Therapy is now located on 116 Tazewell St. in Pearisburg. According to owner, Sierra Ferrari, "I moved to this location because It is easier for clients to find."

Ferrari graduated Summa Cum Laude from Blue Ridge School of Massage and Yoga in January of 2010, and is also certified in Reiki 2, and is a Board Certified Holistic Alternative Psychology Practitioner.

Some of the modalities she uses include Swedish Massage, Myofascial Release, Shiatsu, Neuromuscular, Deep Tissue, and Reflexology. She also use stretching and mobility in her work. "Massage sessions are a combination of what I feel will be beneficial and what the client is looking for and is comfortable with. I tailor different methods to fit each individual's needs."

According to Ferrari, "Massage can help with pain management, muscle function and alignment, improve circulation, help to lower high blood pressure, help to eliminate waste from within the muscles and improve skin health."

For further information, visit
www.pearismountain.massagetherapy.com.



Grants Is Now Open In Pearisburg

Located on Wenonah Avenue next to Dollar General, Grants opened their doors in Pearisburg to customers late this summer. "We did well in our other stores and we wanted to branch out to reach other communities," stated Store Manager, John Brewster.

When asked what Grants has to offer local residents, John was quick to answer. "Great customer service - we go above and beyond to please our customers. Our staff is happy to carry your groceries to your vehicle for you." In addition, Grants is well known for their fresh cut meat. "We cut our meat fresh and we buy our meats locally. We also buy our produce locally when we can," Brewster added.



HOLIDAYS

THANKSGIVING—NOVEMBER 26-28, 2014

CHRISTMAS—DECEMBER 24-26, 2014

NEW YEAR—JANUARY 1-2, 2015

MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY—JANUARY 19, 2015

PRESIDENTS DAY—FEBRUARY 16, 2015



Mayor's Corner

Another year is coming to a close, and I am pleased with the progress in Pearisburg. The new Carilion Medical Clinic and Grants' are just two of the many new businesses to open in town. Be sure and check out Pearis Mercantile and other businesses in town for your Christmas gift needs. Shop Pearisburg first!

The town has obtained a grant to develop a new farmers market, and I look forward to the grand opening in 2015. This will build on the Farm to Fork classes which were very successful in 2014. If you haven't tried one out, be sure and sign up soon.

The premier of Wish You Well was held in October at the Lyric in Blacksburg. Pearisburg and Giles County were stars of this movie. If you missed the premier, be sure to watch for it coming to a theatre near you in 2015. It is a great story and many locals appeared in the credits as extras.

Congratulations to the Giles Spartan football team on another fine regular season. Best of wishes as they prepare for the play offs, trying to capture another undefeated season. I hope that the end result will be another state championship.

Robert L. Dickerson

mayor@pearisburg.org

Something's Fishy at the Pearisburg Town Hall

If you have driven by the Pearisburg Town Hall recently, you may have noticed a new addition in front the building. Artist Jason Bowman was contracted this spring by the Giles Arts Council and the Pearisburg Town Hall to complete a metal sculpture using fish as the theme. The result- a new fountain complete with metal sculptured fish swimming through a fountain of water spray adorns the front lawn!

Owner of Sage Automotive in Pembroke Bowman likes working on metal fabrication projects. He stated, "I started doing metal sculpture because of the scrap metal left over from other projects we've worked on."

Some of his recent work in Pearisburg includes a dragon displayed on the rooftop of a plant potting shed, metal gates to a private home, and an owl arbor entrance to a cabin.

The Town hopes to add some landscaping around the front of the building and behind the sculpture in the near future.

For more information on Bowman's work, visit <http://www.offroadresearchgroup.com>.



The Town of Pearisburg is now offering Online Reservations to citizens

The Town has made yet more improvements to the new website and is happy to pass along new capabilities to our residents. We have placed online calendars and registration forms on the website so that anyone interested in renting any of our facilities can book them online. Once you submit the form there will be a 48 hour staff review for approval. Once staff has approved the reservation you will be notified by email or phone. **Once the rental has been approved you will have 2 weeks to make the payment in order to hold that reservation.** If payment is not received in 2 weeks the reservation will be removed from the calendar and made available for others to reserve.

To make a reservation visit www.pearisburg.org. To rent any of the rooms or picnic shelter at the Community Center you would select Pearisburg Community Center Rentals. Whitt Riverbend Park has a separate form as well as the Multi-Use Room at the Pearisburg Fire Department.

If you have any questions about renting any of these facilities you may call the Pearisburg Town Office at 921-1222 or 921-0340. You may also call Recreation Director Anthony Myers at 921-2827.

PEARISBURG FARM TO FORK

Since the launch of the Pearisburg Farm to Fork Program in April of this year, over 100 local residents have had the opportunity to sample many different classes. These classes have included cake and cupcake decorating using different methods, various bread making classes, learning how to prepare wild game, wine tasting and homemade pasta, just to list a few. We still have room in our upcoming classes which include Basic Cooking for Kids and Christmas Cupcake Decorating. Call us for details or to register.



As we are coming to an end of the second quarter of classes, we will soon be releasing the next quarter of classes. We will have pie crust /scone making and learning to make basic sauces on that schedule. We would love to hear from you about what you would like to see offered in our kitchen.



To register call 540-921-0340 or visit Farm to Fork at www.pearisburg.org for an up to date listing of classes.

Pearisburg Farm to Fork

~ COOKING FRESH, GOING LOCAL ~

U P C O M I N G E V E N T S

Festival of Trees at the Pearisburg Municipal Building	Begins December 1st
Andrew Johnston House Christmas	December 6th
PJWC Breakfast with Santa	December 6th
Annual Christmas Parade	December 7th
Holiday Baking Contest	December 7th
Lighting of the Courthouse Tree	December 7th
Pearisburg Town Council Meeting	December 9th
Christmas Family Movie Night and Children's Crafts	December 13th
PJWC Home for the Holidays	December 15th due date
Pearisburg Town Council Meeting	January 13th
Pearisburg Town Council Meeting	February 10th

