



Compass

Shavers Center at Snowshoe

Same Name, New Lodge, Page 10

■■■

Birth of an Observatory

The Origin of Green Bank Observatory, Page 12

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Entertainment aplenty at Opera House

Opry Night 2026

Saturday, February 28
7 p.m., \$10

Opry Night has grown into an annual winter tradition at the Pocahontas County Opera House, a night when the building feels less like a venue and more like a front porch for regional roots music.

On Saturday, February 28, 2026, at 7 p.m., the Opera House will host "Opry Night 2026" with a double bill featuring Emily Miller and Val Mindel alongside Becky Hill and Rachel Eddy. Each year, Opry Night brings some of the best traditional musicians from around the region to Marlinton, offering a stage where they can showcase the music they live with every day – not as nostalgia, but as part of their working lives.

Emily Miller is widely known in West Virginia traditional music circles as artistic director of the Augusta Heritage Center and string band director of the Appalachian Ensemble at Davis & Elkins College. A singer and fiddle player with deep roots in classic



Emily Miller



Becky Hill

country and old-time music, Emily Miller has toured and recorded with guitarist and singer Jesse Milnes and serves as a lead singer and twin fiddler in the country band The Sweetback Sisters. Together,



Val Mindel

er, Emily Miller and Val Mindel have released two duet albums, "In the Valley" and "Close to Home," collections of close-harmony country duets in the spirit of early family acts such as the Louvin Brothers and the Stanley Brothers. Emily Miller grew up singing classic country songs with her parents, giving her a natural, conversational way with harmony and story songs.

Val Mindel, Emily's

mother and frequent collaborator, has spent decades immersed in old-time and early country music. A longtime musician, teacher and workshop leader, Val Mindel is a founding member of the California-based Any Old Time String Band and has been



Rachel Eddy

a key voice in teaching The duet work of Emily Miller and Val Mindel has helped define a contemporary close country harmony at camps and workshops across the United States and the United Kingdom.

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Cover: On a chilly winter morning, the sun rising over the horizon, created this pastoral scene.
Photo by Laura Dean Bennett



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porary approach to the tight, “buzzy” blend at the heart of early country duets, while keeping the music firmly rooted in its Appalachian sources. On-stage, Emily Miller and Val Mindel share more than a set list; their intergenerational partnership offers a clear look at how songs move through families as well as through time.

If Emily Miller and Val Mindel embody the vocal and emotional core of old-time music, Becky Hill and Rachel Eddy bring its physical energy into focus. Becky Hill is a percussive dancer, square dance caller, choreographer and educator whose work highlights the rhythmic engine inside traditional tunes. She has performed with Footworks Percussive Dance Ensemble, Rhythm in Shoes and Good Foot Dance Company, and ap-

pears with groups such as the T-Mart Rounders and Big Family Business, connecting her dancing directly to working string bands on both festival and concert stages. Her feet function as both drum kit and storyteller, turning steps into a visible rhythm section and reminding audiences that this music was always meant to be moved to.

Rachel Eddy, a West Virginian steeped in the state’s fiddle, banjo and dance traditions, is known as both a powerful performer and a thoughtful teacher. In addition to solo work, Rachel Eddy has toured and recorded with groups such as The Early Mays and The Kolodner Quartet, experience that keeps their playing firmly planted in the center of today’s old-time scene. The multi-instrumental skills of Rachel Eddy – including fiddle, banjo, gui-

tar and mandolin – allow performances to move easily from lonesome ballads to driving dance tunes, bridging older source players and newer generations just finding their way into the music.

Together, Emily Miller, Val Mindel, Becky Hill and Rachel Eddy create the kind of mix Opry Night has become known for: tight harmony singing, powerful instrumental work, percussive dance and the kind of stage presence that makes even unfamiliar songs feel close at hand. The result is less like a packaged concert and more like an evening inside the living tradition of Appalachian music.

This year’s Opry Night will also extend beyond the evening performance. Emily Miller, Val Mindel, Becky Hill and Rachel Eddy will take part in school programs, giving local students a chance to



Minor Swing

Minor Swing
Saturday, March 14,
7 p.m., \$10

hear the music up close, ask questions and see how traditional arts can fit into a modern life. Those outreach events are a key part of the Opera House’s mission to serve as the cultural heart of the community, enriching the lives of people young and old and making sure the next generation has its own point of entry into the region’s music and stories.

The music Minor Swing plays doesn’t really belong to one place. It grew up in 1930s Paris, borrowed flavors from Roma traditions, brushed up against early American jazz and then, somehow, found a new home in the hills of West Virginia.

On Saturday, March 14, 2026, at 7 p.m., that sound will land at the Pocahontas County Opera House in Marlinton – a historic, 250-seat room that happens to be just about perfect for fast acoustic lines, tight rhythms and the kind of ensemble playing where every instrument matters.

Minor Swing leans into a style often described as Roma jazz-inspired swing: quick, percussive guitar work, flowing melodies and a rhythmic pulse that keeps the music in constant motion. Listeners can expect a mix of classic repertoire from that tradition and newer material that treats the style as a living language rather than a museum exhibit. The tunes tend to move easily between lyrical and athletic, sometimes starting with a slow, sweet melody before snapping into a gallop.

What makes a band like this especially interesting in a place like Pocahontas County is the contrast. The music was born in

See *HOUSE*, page 6



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cafés and dance halls an ocean away, yet it thrives in small Appalachian rooms where audiences sit close, listen hard and respond to dynamics – the quiet passages, the sudden bursts of speed, the way a simple chord change can shift the mood of an entire tune. The Opera House’s natural acoustics and intimate scale allow that detail to come through without amplification overwhelming the nuance.

Behind the scenes, the ongoing work of the Pocahontas County Opera House is supported by state and local partners, including the West Virginia Division of Culture and History and the West Virginia Commission on the Arts, along with community organizations and individual donors. Their support helps keep ticket prices low while bringing in artists who connect local audiences to a wider musical world.

On March 14, that connection will run through fast strings, steady rhythm and a style of jazz that has traveled a long way to feel right at home on an old wooden stage in Marlinton

Joe Stamm Band
Saturday, March 28,
7 p.m., \$10

Some music feels like it was written by someone who knows your town – the back roads, the front porches, the late-night talks you only have with people you trust. That’s the world songwriter Joe Stamm comes from, and it’s what he’ll bring to Marlinton when the Joe Stamm Band performs at the Pocahontas County Opera House at 7 p.m. Saturday, March 28, 2026.

Stamm has spent more than a decade on the road shaping a sound he calls “Black Dirt Country



Joe Stamm Band

Rock,” blending roots rock, country and plain-spoken storytelling. His recent full-length album, “Little Crosses,” leans into that mix, drawing on both Midwest and Appalachian influences. The songs live in familiar details – summer nights, winter fires, kitchen-table conversations – and treat them as moments worth paying attention to.

Onstage, Stamm is joined by longtime bandmates Bruce Moser on bass, Dave Glover on guitar and keys and Tim Kramp on drums. Their live shows favor dynamics over flash: quiet verses that feel like confidences, big choruses built for singing along and instrumental stretches that move between country swing and rock-and-roll drive. In a 250-seat room like the Opera House, the focus stays on the stories, the vocals and the way the band works together.

Tickets for all performances are available for a \$10 donation, with free admission for those 17 and younger. That structure keeps the evening within reach for families and helps introduce younger

listeners to a style of music they might not encounter elsewhere. Tickets can be obtained in advance at the 4th Avenue Gallery in Marlinton, online at pocahontasoperahouse.org or at the venue the evening of the performance.

The Opera House Performance Series is supported by grants from the West Virginia Division of

Culture and History and the West Virginia Commission on the Arts. Additional support comes from Pocahontas County Dramas, Fairs and Festivals and the Pocahontas County Convention and Visitors Bureau, reflecting a shared commitment to preserving and promoting the region’s cultural heritage.

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Thoughts on Winter

Laura Dean Bennett
Staff Writer

Invite you to pour yourself a warming cup of tea, coffee, cocoa or cider and curl up in your favorite chair.

As the cold mantle of winter wraps around us, it's time to enjoy a little winter philosophy with some famous authors.

"In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy."

~ William Blake

"I wonder if the snow loves the trees and fields, that it kisses them so gently? And then it covers them up snug with a white quilt; and perhaps it says, 'Go to sleep, darlings, till the summer comes again.'"

~ Lewis Carroll

"It is the life of the crys-

tal, the architect of the flake, the fire of the frost, the soul of the sunbeam. This crisp winter air is full of it."

~ John Burroughs

"Winter is not a season, it's an occupation."

~ Sinclair Lewis

"Nature has many scenes to exhibit, and constantly draws a curtain over this part or that. She is constantly repainting the



landscape and all surfaces, dressing up some scene for our entertainment.

Lately we had a leafy wilderness; now bare twigs begin to prevail, and soon she will surprise us with a mantle of snow. Some green she thinks so good for our eyes that, like blue, she never banishes it entirely from our eyes but has created evergreens."

~ Henry David Thoreau

"Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home."

~ Edith Sitwell

"How many lessons of faith and beauty we should lose, if there were no winter in our year."

~ Thomas Wentworth Higginson

"Kindness is like snow - it beautifies everything it covers."

~ Kahlil Gibran

"I pray this winter be

gentle and kind - a season of rest from the wheel of the mind."

~ John Geddes

"If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant: if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome."

~ Anne Bradstreet

"Friendship that flows from the heart cannot be frozen by adversity, as the water that flows from the spring cannot congeal in winter."

~ James Fenimore Cooper

"Winter is the king of showmen,

Turning tree stumps into snowmen

And houses into birthday cakes

And spreading sugar over lakes.

Smooth and clean and frosty white,

The world looks good enough to bite.

That's the season to be

young,

Catching snowflakes on your tongue.

Snow is snowy when it's snowing,

I'm sorry it's slushy when it's going."

~ Ogden Nash

"The hard soil and four months of snow make the inhabitants of the northern temperate zone wiser and abler than his fellow who enjoys the fixed smile of the tropics."

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Withstanding the cold develops vigor for the relaxing days of spring and summer. Besides, in this matter as in many others, it is evident that nature abhors a quitter."

~ Arthur C. Crandall

~ ~ ~

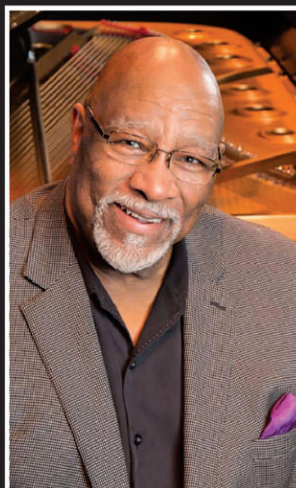
Food for thought, isn't it?

Yeah, we should probably eat.

After all, it is winter. We need to keep up our strength.

CARNEGIE HALL

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'In Loving Memory' Cemetery Books

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Jan Orndorff
Contributing Writer

Those of us who are researching our family's lineage understand the importance of visiting cemeteries. What can we learn, and why is it so fascinating for a genealogist?

Early cemeteries were usually located on a piece of high ground on the family homeplace. They could be found either on a plateau on the side of a mountain, or on the summit of a small hill and facing east and overlooking the homeplace. Locating this site gives the genealogist a more specific geographical area to research. The older cemeteries can provide names and dates of family members. Sometimes a tombstone is the only record for a family member.

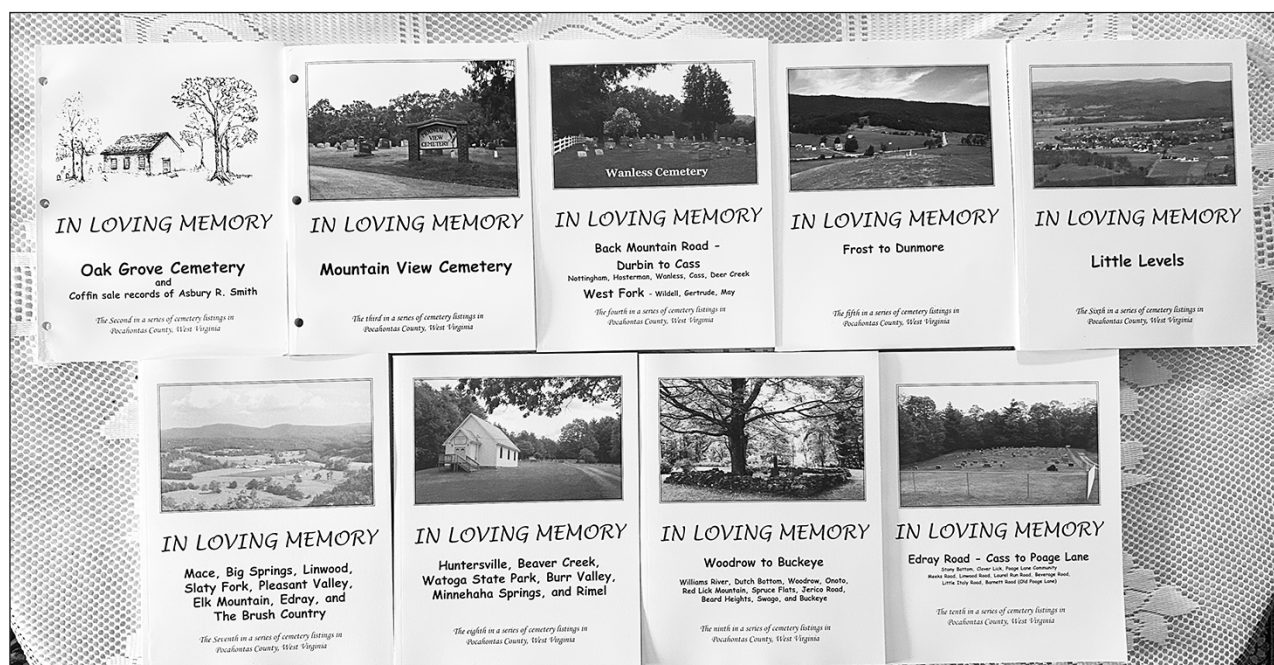
The Pocahontas County Genealogy Group began a project in 2004 to create a complete and accurate written record of all cemeteries and burial sites in Pocahontas County. The Group was concerned that many of the older, smaller cemeteries and family burial sites were being lost to the changing landscape, and loss of knowledge regarding the burial sites with the passing of the older generations.

Founding members have been and are Doug Jackson, Mary Jo Fisher, Gail Hyer, Mike Hill, Nancy Smithson, Pam Johnson Hoover, Ruth Taylor, Elma and Moffett McNeel and Allen Johnson. Later, others joined the project, including Jan and

Roger Orndorff, Ruth Wilfong Horner, Pat Gatens and Bill and Denise McNeel.

Mrs. Ruth Wilfong Horner contributed to the genealogical record of Pocahontas County by sharing the records she had compiled over many years of research, thus preserving much local genealogical information that may have otherwise been lost. Of specific importance were the cemetery records Ruth gathered over the past 40 years. Ruth compiled a detailed record of more than 175 cemeteries in central and northeastern Pocahontas County. Her research collection is housed in the Archive Room at McClintic Library in Marlinton.

The Genealogy Group inventories all known cemeteries within a geographical area, including location, photographs of the site and individual tombstones, in addition to recording all legible information on the tombstones and noting markers present on the date visited. To date, known cemeteries and burials total 370, with 268 inventoried and 230 printed in the series, "In Loving Memory." Each book includes an every



name index.

Oak Grove Cemetery and Coffin Sale Records of Asbury R. Smith – 1st printed 2007, 64 pages; updated including every name index 2012, 84 pages. \$12

Mountain View Cemetery, printed 2008, 142 pages; reprinted with every name index, 2011, 160 pages. \$20

Back Mountain Road, Durbin to Cass and West Fork, updated 2019, 126 pages. Wildell, Gertrude, May, Lee A. Galford, Kelly,

See **BOOKS**, page 9



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Frost to Dunmore, printed 2021, 108 pages. Jon Congdon, Fred Carpenter, Joseph Sharp, Taylor-Townsend, Curry, Abraham Sharp, Rachel Sharp, Austin Sharp, Mary Bowers, Gilmer Sharp, James

Gragg, Ryder Family, Banis Buzzard, Snowden Buzzard, Joseph Moore, Howard Buzzard, Warwick Shinaberry, John Lindsay, Shinaberry-Buzzard, Zane Grimes, Cornelius Buzzard, Criss Dilley, Baxter, James McLaughlin.

Little Levels, printed 2015, 200 pages. Sharp, McClintic, McNeel, Ruckman, Smith, Rosia Cole, Cook, Steele, Lewis, Pleasant Green Church, Poor Farm, Harper, Jordan, Denmar, Birchfield, Rhea-Ewing, Old Droop Church, McCarty, Confed-

erate Graves-Droop, Clifton Family, M. Sharp, Geiger, Robert Gay, Mt. Pleasant Church, McKenney, Gay at Indian Draft, Wm. Sharp, Jr. Pioneer, Brownsburg, Carpenter, Fairview, Fairview II, Rev. Harrison Francis, Neff, Bright, Gay-Gibson, Wilfong. \$20

Mace to the Brush Country, printed 2014, 168 pages. Beale, Gibson on Dry Branch Rd, Big Springs Presbyterian Church, Beckwith Family, Varner, Sharp, Civil War Gravesite on Elk, Sharps Gravesite, Hannah, Jack, Gibson, Moffett, Moore, Smith, Smith II, Edray, Julia Price Gravesite,

Grave, Pyles Family, Gaylor, Belcher, Workman, Kellison-Alderman, Burr, McComb Family, Ryder, Coulter, Alexander-Jordan, McElwee, White, Alderman-Wade, Alderman at The Docks, Alderman at North Fork of Anthony Creek, Rider at Grazing Allotment, Rider II, Cochran Creek Baptist Church, Moore, Trainer, Combs at High Top, Peter's Pinch Memorial Marker. \$20

Huntersville, Beaver Creek, Watoga State Park, Burr Valley, Minnehaha Springs, and Rimel, printed 2016, 164 pages.

Messer, Poage Monument, McLaughlin Cemetery, Civil War Cemetery, Old Huntersville (Bradshaw), Huntersville, Logan W. Dale Grave, McLaughlin, Ambassador's Camp, Esco Alderman, Ivan F. McKenney Marker, Charles N. McComb Grave, Parsons, Phillips, Keeney, Beaver Creek, Allen Hamilton Stone, Mullens, Sheets, Terry Wayne Sheets

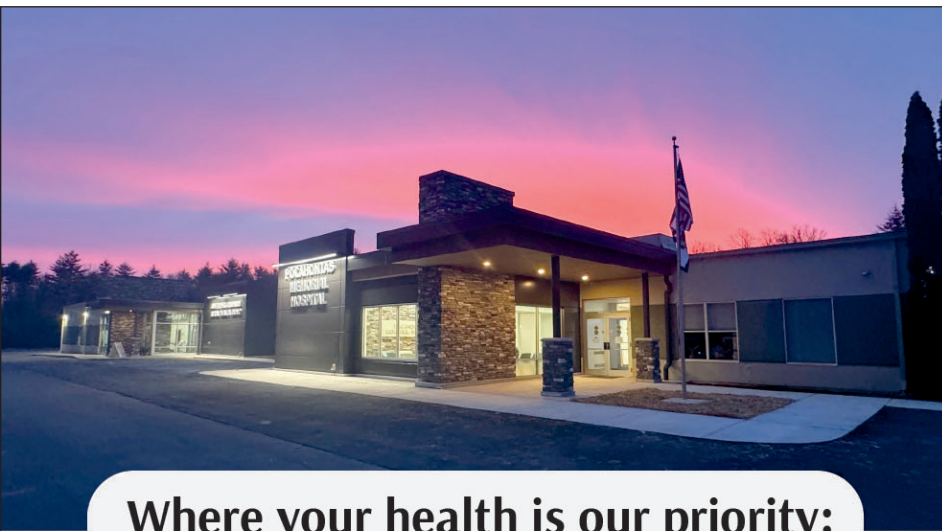
Grave, Pyles Family, Gaylor, Belcher, Workman, Kellison-Alderman, Burr, McComb Family, Ryder, Coulter, Alexander-Jordan, McElwee, White, Alderman-Wade, Alderman at The Docks, Alderman at North Fork of Anthony Creek, Rider at Grazing Allotment, Rider II, Cochran Creek Baptist Church, Moore, Trainer, Combs at High Top, Peter's Pinch Memorial Marker. \$20

Woodrow to Buckeye - Williams River, Dutch Bottom, Woodrow, Onoto, Red Lick Mountain, Spruce Flats, Jerico Road, Beard Heights, Swago and Buckeye, printed 2018, 180 pages. Barlow, Cochran, East Woodrow Branch Road, Burgess, White's Chapel, Wallace Warner Stone, Mullens, Sheets, Beverage at Stony Creek,

Civil War Union, John Moore, James Moore, William A. Ratcliff Grave, Ethel R. Sharp Grave, Sharp, Duffield, Gay, Marlin's Bottom Confederate, James A. Price, Robertson, Apperson, Rogers on Thomas Road, Fleming, Kee, Armstrong, Beverage on Dry Creek Road, Overholt, E.S. Hefner Grave, Simmons, Sheets-Carpenter, Rachel E. McCoy Grave, Burgess, Paul Hilleary Grave, Buckeye Chapel, Rogers on Rush Run, Jonathan McNeill Grave, McNeill Cemetery. \$20

Edray Road - Cass to Poage Lane, printed 2022, 118 pages. Geiger, Shinaberry, Stony Lonesome Ranch, Old Grave Yard, McCloud, Moore, Stony Bottom, Meeks, William Doyle, Peter Shinaberry, Gardner, Coyner, Friel, Daugherty, Abraham Shinaberry, Beverage, I. Walter Allen, Corso, Grimes, Runaway Mountain, Quincy W. Poage, John R. Poage Cemeteries. \$12

If the genealogist in your family is looking for relatives within these geographic areas, a cemetery book just might give them the answers. An especially great gift to study over the winter months. Currently these cemetery books are available at *The Pocahontas Times* office in Marlinton, and by contacting Jan Orndorff at rjorndorff@htcnet.org



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Shavers Center ~ same name, new lodge

Suzanne Stewart
 Staff Writer

One of the several symbols of Snowshoe Mountain Resort is the Shavers Center. It was the first lodging facility to be built on the mountain when it was transformed into a ski resort in 1974.

The lodge was a gathering place for avid outdoorsmen and women who loved gliding down the mountain on skis and snowboards. It was the beginning of something great and served the mountain for decades.

That is until the roof collapsed in the winter of 2022.

At that point, a decision needed to be made – repair or rebuild.

“The building was getting older, and it definitely had some issues here and there, but then the roof partially collapsed after a storm,” marketing director Shawn Cassell said. “They brought in an engineer to look at it. He looked at the rest of the building, and they ended up just calling it condemned.”

The structure was of historical significance for many reasons, including that it was built using wood milled in nearby Slaty Fork.

Regardless, the safety of employees and visitors was too big a risk to try to fix what was there. Instead, the building was razed, and a new lodge was designed and built in its place.

A groundbreaking for the new lodge – which would retain the name Shavers Center – was held on April Fool’s Day, but it was no joke. A new building was just over the horizon.

The center will return to its heyday, with the main floor serving as a food court and gathering site for those on day trips or those wanting a nice place to rest between slope rides.

“There will be some ticket windows for buying lift tickets or snowmobile tours,” Cassell said. “There will be some windows on the exterior of the building where you can just walk up on the patio, similar to the way it used to be.

See *LODGE*, page 11



Photo courtesy of Snowshoe Mountain Resort
 After the roof collapsed and the building was condemned in 2022, Shavers Center at Snowshoe Mountain Resort was razed. In its place, a new lodge bearing the same name has been constructed.

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with the Shavers Center.”

Inside, there will be a variety of eateries to choose from, as well as the Skidder bar for after hours. The main portion of the floor will be filled with tables and chairs, for visitors who just need a respite or designated gathering spot off the slopes.

“That’s what we’ve really been missing for the last few years without Shavers Center,” Cassell said. “If you didn’t have lodging – if you didn’t have a room

to go back to when you were taking a break – there was no place to just go hang out.”

The lower level will serve as the ski school, pre-ski daycare and adventure outpost location.

“For the last few years, we’ve been using a little prefab building between The Village and the Shavers Center as our Adventure Outpost,” Cassell said. “That’s for snowmobile tours, side-by-side, The Hut dinners. So instead of going to that little shack, it will be in the lower level of the new Shavers Center.”

The new and improved Shavers Center will open in mid-December, just in time for the rush of visitors who want to spend their winter vacation on the mountain.

It’s great news for returning families who had a difficult time adjusting to where they would drop



Photo courtesy of Snowshoe Mountain Resort
Shavers Center was the first lodge built at Snowshoe Mountain Resort when it was founded in 1974. The lodge was the hub of activity on the mountain for decades until The Village was built and lodging options expanded.

kids off for ski school or pre-ski.

“With not having the

Center for a few years, we moved a lot of our ski

school over to Mountain

Lodge and it just made for a disjointed ski school experience,” Cassell said. “I always felt so bad when they would get over here and say, ‘I have one kid in pre-ski and one in regular

lessons,’ and we’d have to tell them, ‘You’ve come to the right place for one of them.’

Now, everything is going to be back in one location, right next to the Skidder slope, so it should be smooth sailing for skiers of all ages and abilities.

Gone, along with the original building, is the confusion behind the spelling of Shavers Center.

“It will still be the Shavers Center, no apostrophe,” Cassell said. “Center is spelled normal. At one point in the history of the Shavers Center, they gave it the Old English ‘re.’ We’re keeping it simple. No Old English.

“Unless we want to call it Ye Olde Shavers Centre,” he added, laughing.

Whether it was meant to be Center or Centre, one thing is certain, the founder of Snowshoe, Dr. Thomas “Doc” Brigham, would be happy to know his vision for a southern ski resort has been kept alive for 51 years.

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Birth of an observatory

Suzanne Stewart
Staff Writer

It's hard to believe that radio astronomy began in an intrepid young man's backyard in Wheaton, Illinois. All it took was curiosity, ingenuity and gumption for Grote Reber to build the very first radio telescope in 1938.

That moment in time led to the surge of astronomers turning to radio astronomy and looking for the answer to "what is out there?" when talking about outer space.

Retired astronomer and principal scientist at the Green Bank Observatory Dr. Jay Lockman made a presentation about the history of the GBO and naturally had to start with Reber – who's original telescope is on display at the observatory.

"He heard that somebody had discovered there were radio waves coming from the universe, and he was an enterprising young guy," Lockman said. "He built this dish next to his mom's house in Wheaton, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago.

"He did it all out of his own pocket. Everything was of a size that he could buy at a hardware store. Nothing special. He had to build his own receivers and electronics. A truly remarkable guy."

Reber managed to get a signal from out in the universe. Nobody knew what it was, but it repeated and was visible on the chart recordings he made.

"When the Milky Way went by, he got a bump," Lockman explained, "and that was the start of radio astronomy."

It was quickly put on hold by the start of World War II, but by the end of the war, with all the new technology available, scientists turned their eyes, once again, to the sky.

It wasn't just American scientists either. In 1954, the Netherlands built an 85-foot telescope.



Australia built one in 1953. By 1957, England had a 210-foot telescope and in 1956, France had a telescope, as well.

"In the mid-fifties, a lot of these projects were coming to fruition, but there was nothing in the United States," Lockman said. "For various, complicated reasons, radio astronomy was born in the United States but didn't get off the ground.

"Finally, the National Science Foundation was founded," he continued. "It was the U.S. government's way to fund pure research and they said, 'we've got to get into the radio astronomy game.'"

This is when Green Bank entered the equation.

The NSF needed the perfect location for an observatory. A committee was formed to find the right place and there was a list of 10 criteria to go by.

Those included that the location should have a declining population with a projection of continued decline, no high-tension power lines, a broad valley

surrounded by mountains that are ideally owned by the forest service, at least 50 miles from a city with a population of 5,000 and not near commercial routes.

The site also should provide attributes of a university campus and access to stores, theaters and recreational areas.

While Green Bank didn't fit all the criteria, it was the closest to what they were looking for regarding remoteness.

"I talked to some of the people who were on the site selection committee maybe twenty years ago," Lockman said. "I asked them what they thought about it. They said, 'if we had to do it all over again, we would still pick Green Bank.'"

First runner up was Deerfield, Virginia, but due to its proximity to the Shenandoah Valley and Staunton, it wasn't as ideal as Green Bank.

The Green Bank site was selected in 1955 and by 1956, the National Radio Quiet Zone was established.

The Quiet Zone is a 13,000

square foot area covering West Virginia, Virginia and a portion of Maryland where all transmitters must be pointed away from Green Bank and, in the case of Green Bank itself, transmitters are not allowed at all.

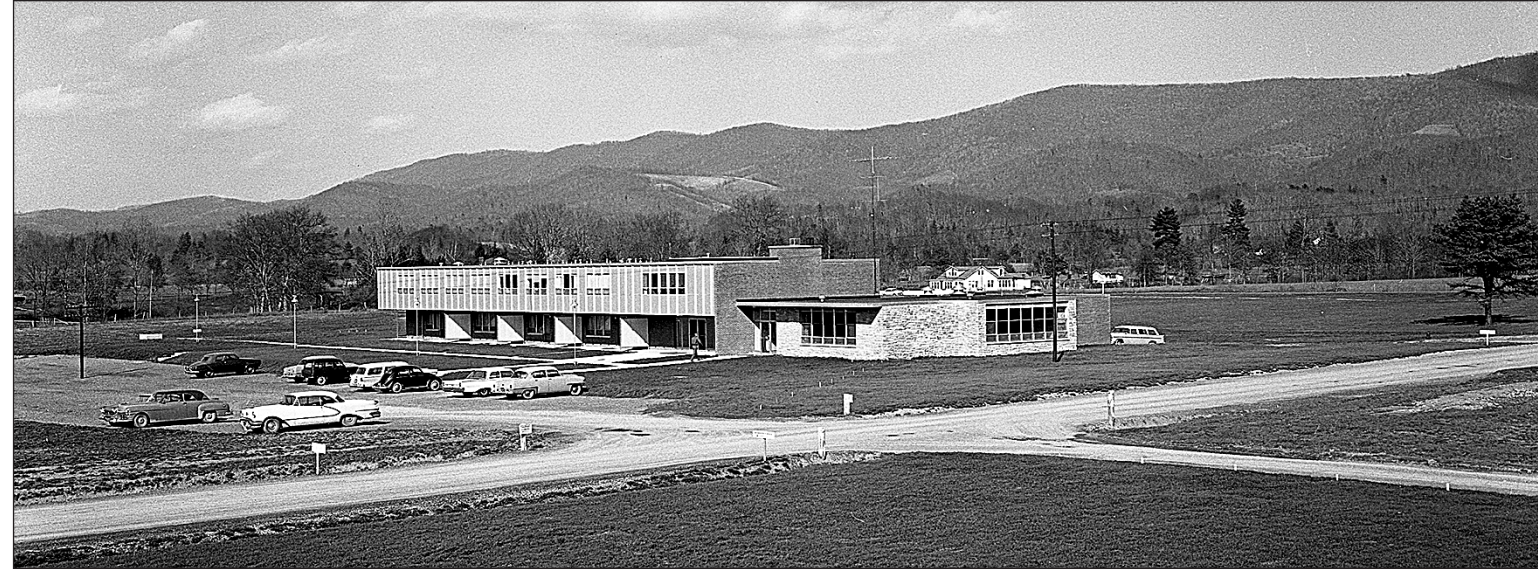
The National Radio Astronomy Observatory – NRAO – facility at Green Bank was dedicated on October 17, 1957, in an office in Washington, D.C.

"I don't think this date was an accident because just a few weeks earlier, the Russians launched Sputnik, so all of a sudden, we were in a space race – and losing a space race – and I think that was a big impetus in those days for a lot of the work done," Lockman said.

Almost a year later, October 16, 1958, the Tatel telescope, the 85-1, was dedicated at the observatory.

Some of the first science done at Green Bank, surprisingly, concerned climate change. Although the scientists didn't know that at the time.

It was believed Venus could



Photos courtesy of GBO

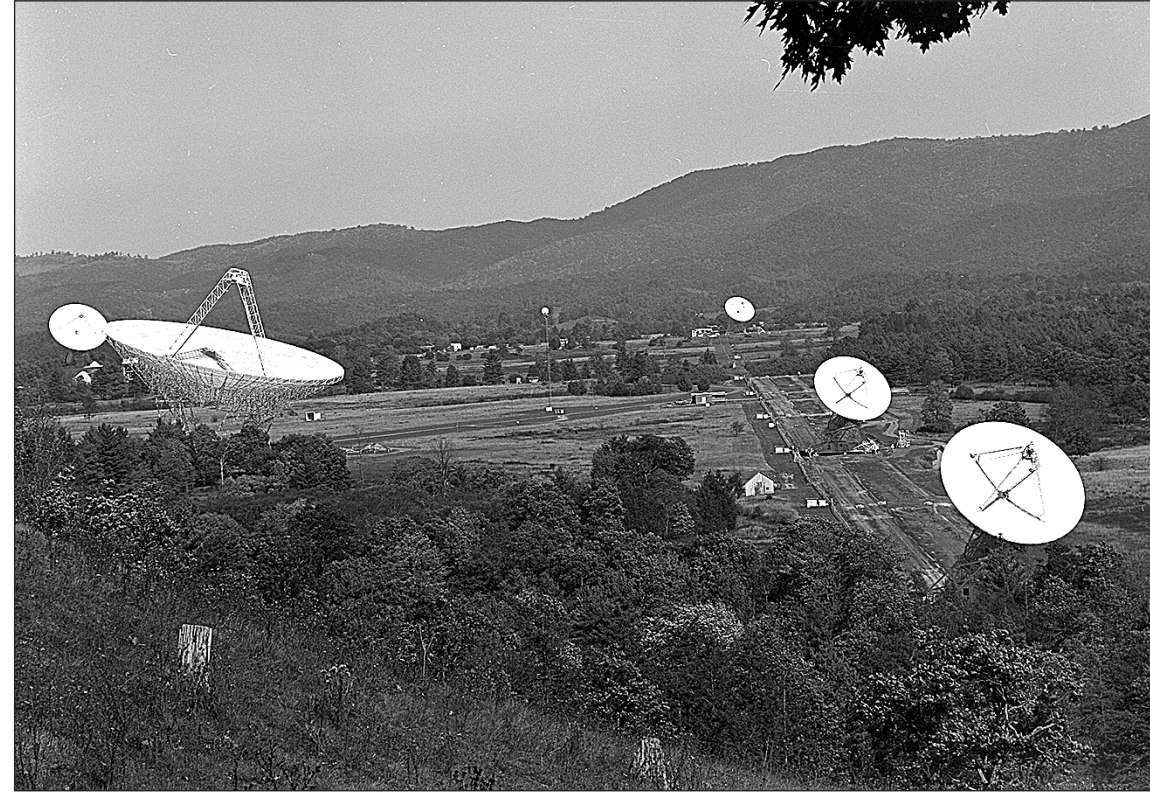
In 1957, the National Science Foundation began construction of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory – now Green Bank Observatory – in the vast valley surrounded by mountains in Green Bank. Above is a photo from 1959 of the cafeteria and dormitory. At right, a view of the valley filled with telescopes, including the interferometer, 300-foot and 140-foot. At left, the dedication of the observatory was held in Washington, D.C. with attendees, from left: Dr. Richard M. Emberson, Lloyd V. Berkner, G. A. Nay, John W. Findlay, Ned L. Ashton, David S. Heeschen and H. Hockenberry. The gentlemen are pictured with a model of the 140' Telescope.

have the same climate as the Earth because it was similar in size and, while it was closer to the sun, it had clouds.

The radio telescope was used to peer through those clouds and the scientists discovered that the temperature of Venus was far from similar to Earth. It was 870 degrees Fahrenheit on the surface.

"You could melt lead on the surface of Venus," Lockman said. "The real question became, 'hey what does this mean?' When I was in graduate school, we all had to take a course on climate change, and we were really concerned – what happened to Venus?"

"It had a runaway green-



house," he continued. "The greenhouse that we have on Earth that keeps the heat in at night somehow went crazy on Venus. So, all astronomers started getting concerned about climate change fifty years ago."

One of the most pivotal moments in radio astronomy history occurred at Green Bank in 1961.

Frank Drake, acclaimed astrophysicist and astrobiologist, devised the Drake equation, which is used in the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence – SETI.

"He used [the Tatel] telescope, looked at a couple nearby

stars to see if there was anybody out there sending radio signals and that was the start of a long effort that has continued," Lockman said. "I can give you the latest update – news as of today. Nothing.

"The search goes on." The observatory continued to grow and telescopes were added to the vast valley.

The 140-foot telescope was built to be a workhorse with a unique design. It required a large ball bearing that is 21 feet across.

The building of the telescope was met with a lot of issues.

"The contractor tried to make [the ball bearing] in a manner that resembled reassembling an orange from slices," Lockman said. "Couldn't do it.

"The polar shaft got shipped into [the county by train] in two pieces and then brought to the observatory," he continued. "It was being reassembled at the base of the 149-foot structure when they discovered the steel it was made of was prone to a brittle stress factor and under certain conditions, it could have just snapped."

The building of the telescope was met with a lot of issues.

See **BIRTH**, page 14

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The project was held up for years, but eventually a new solid ball bearing was made and was delivered by train.

“It was machined in a single piece, smaller so it could get through a tunnel,” Lockman said. “I think it was through Droop tunnel – and they did a mockup of the bearing because it had to come by train through that tunnel. They built a special railcar to move it, and it came through with a clearance on each side of about an inch.”

When the structure was lifted into place, it was lucky that a movie director was onsite and filmed the whole thing because a cable snapped and it dropped. It was a very dramatic and nerve wracking scene.

“Eventually it was done,” Lockman said. “It was dedicated October 13, 1965.”

In a complete 180 of what happened with the 140-foot, the 300-foot was designed and built swiftly, in less than two years at a cost of \$1.2 million.

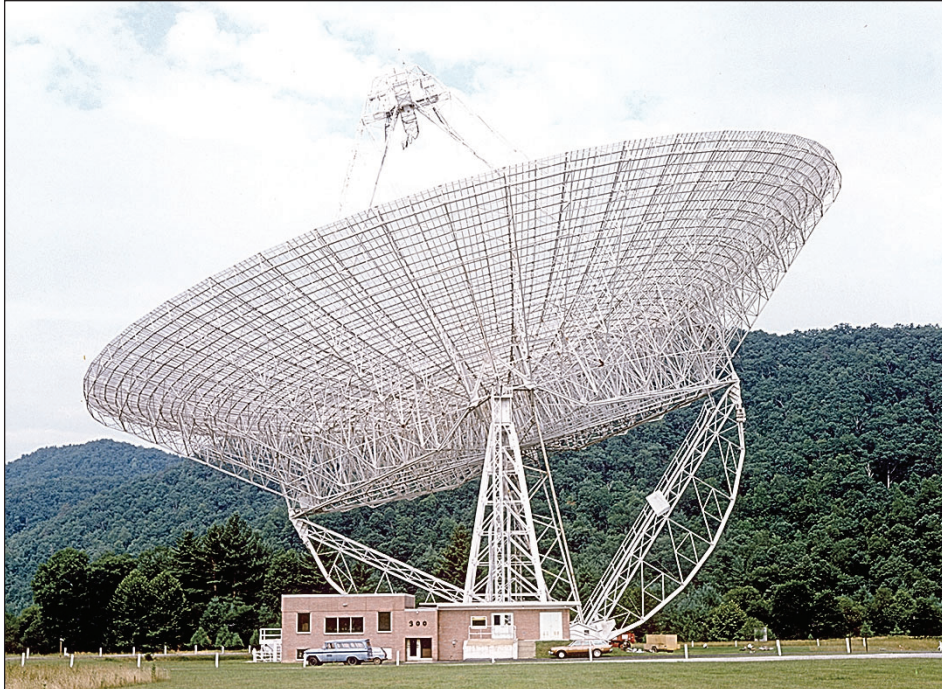
The bid was put out in March 1961, ground was broken in May 1961 and it was completed in the summer of 1962.

The telescope was different from anything else at the observatory. It was low to the ground and had a mesh-like dish.

“It was really low to the ground,” Lockman said, “They wanted to minimize the wind resistance. The higher it is, the stronger it has to be, so they made it low. There was a lot of sky it couldn’t get, so they dug a ditch so it could tip down even a little bit further.

The dish itself was kind of comical when considering how high tech the equipment is at the observatory.

“The thing about radio



Photos courtesy of GBO
The 300-foot telescope, at left, was the first world’s largest moving telescope before it collapsed on November 15, 1988. The rubble, shown above, was cleared away, but the control building remains and is used for storage.

waves is, you need a really polished surface to reflect light, but radio waves can get reflected off of a rather crude surface and, in fact, the first surface of the 300-foot was Sear’s finest chicken wire,” Lockman said.

“It was damaged during installation,” he contin-

ued. “There was an ice storm that made some big ripples in it, so they did what anybody would do – they took a piece off and ran over it with a bulldozer. That didn’t help.

Regardless, the telescope was finished and up and operating in 1962. Unfortunately, it would

not become known for the science it did, but instead for its demise.

On November 15, 1988, the 300-foot telescope collapsed in the middle of the night.

While speculation ran

rampant – one tabloid newspaper blamed aliens – the real culprit was stress factors cracked a steel connector plate that was a key piece of the support structure.

Before its collapse, the 300-foot was the world’s largest moving telescope.

Its successor, the Green

Bank Telescope, was dedicated in 2000, and is the world’s largest fully steerable radio telescope.

The historic telescopes are joined by 85-2 and 85-3 which join the 85-1 in the interferometer cluster; the 40-foot, the 20-meter and the Jansky Antenna.

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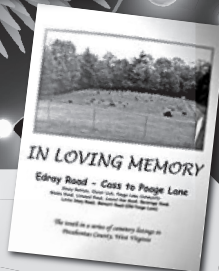
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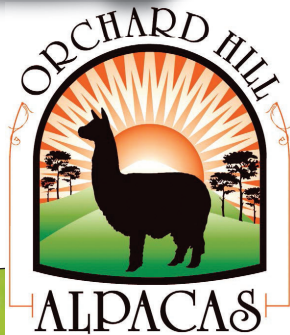


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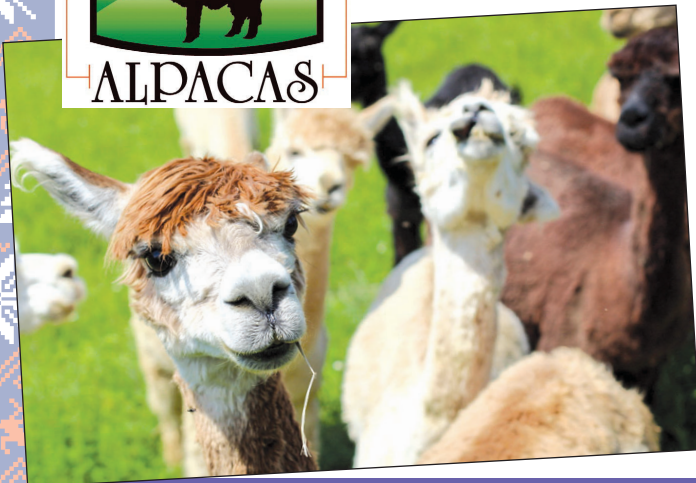
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The Joyful Blooms of Winter

Laura Dean Bennett
Staff Writer

When Christmas decorations appear in the stores, you can bet that somewhere among them will be the houseplants commonly known as “Christmas Cactus.”

Since the 1950s, these charming plants have been an integral part of America’s Christmas celebrations.

These charming tropical succulents were discovered in the mountain rainforests of Brazil in the early 19th century.

Unlike most cacti, which grow in the ground, these plants are epiphytes – which means they grow on other plants – such as orchids – on trees and even rocks.

And here’s an interesting botanical factoid:

All cacti are succulents, but not all succulents are cacti.

The original parent species, *Schlumbergera truncate*, was brought to Europe in 1818. It blooms from late October to late November, hence its common name, “Thanksgiving Cactus.”

In 1852, *Schlumbergera truncata* and another parent species, *Schlumbergera*



Photo by Laura Dean Bennett

Planting both species of holiday cacti together can produce months of blooms of different colors. This is a young Thanksgiving (in the background, at left) planted beside a young Christmas Cactus (in the foreground, at right). Note the toothy leaves of the Thanksgiving Cactus and the scalloped leaves of the Christmas Cactus.

russelliana, were hybridized to create what became known as the Christmas Cactus: *S. x buckleyi*.

Both species thrived in greenhouses during the Victorian era. Their profuse explosions of colorful blooms made them popular houseplants. They found great success in commercial markets.

By the 20th century the plants became widely avail-

able throughout Europe and the United States and their habit of blooming at the end of the year earned them a permanent place in the holiday market.

But because the stems of the Thanksgiving Cactus aren’t as easily broken as those of the Christmas Cactus, they fared better in transit, making them better suited for shipping.

This feature enabled the Thanksgiving Cactus to

dominate the market. By the middle of the 20th century, what some called the “false Christmas Cactus,” dominated the market.

Both species are available year ‘round and are especially popular with holiday shoppers. But what we typically know as “Christmas Cactus,” is more often than not, Thanksgiving Cactus.

The plants look quite

similar at first glance. But there are differences.

A Christmas cactus can be identified by its brilliant magenta or white blooms, which hang down like pendants. Its leaves are flat with smooth, scalloped edges. It blooms from early December through early February.

Thanksgiving cacti varieties bloom in an enchanting range of colors: white, cream, pink, peach, yellow, orange and various shades of red. And their blooming time frame is a bit longer than their Christmas cousins.

They usually bloom anywhere from late October and early November through December.

The easiest way to differentiate between a Christ-

mas cactus and a Thanksgiving cactus is by their leaves. Rather than a smooth leaf, Thanksgiving cacti have a “toothy” leaf with two to four pointy teeth at the end. Rather than hanging down, their stems grow upright into an arch.

The two species are often sold interchangeably, as commercial growers time their blooms precisely for sale at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Their hardiness, ease of propagation and extremely long lives – they have been known to live a hundred years – make the plants perfect for sharing with friends and passing

See **BLOOMS**, page 17

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down from one generation to another.

There's a third succulent cousin, the Easter Cactus – *Rhipsalidopsis gaertneri*.

As its name suggests, it flowers around Easter, in March or April. Its star-shaped blossoms range from pale to bright pink and feature a double row of petals. Its stems are scalloped, similar to those of the Christmas Cactus, but with tiny, serrated edges.

The Easter cactus also

originated in Brazil, but unlike its Thanksgiving and Christmas cousins, it's not a tropical native. It comes from the non-tropical forests of Brazil, which makes it more sensitive to over-watering.

All three species make wonderful houseplants – easy to care for and easy to propagate.

I can personally testify to their ability to survive periods of benign neglect. And they are resistant to many diseases and pests.

Holiday cacti are not toxic to pets or humans, so

no worries about children or pets nibbling their leaves. However, consuming large quantities of leaves could cause serious stomach upset.

Christmas cacti like well-drained soil and thrive in bright, but not direct sunlight, which can burn their leaves.

Best watering practice is to add water to the top of the pot and drain completely through the drainage hole.

Once water stops draining, set the pot in a saucer or shallow dish of water for

30 minutes. This will allow the soil to fully hydrate by absorbing water from the dish.

Remove the plant from the water basin after 30 minutes so it does not become waterlogged.

Allow soil to dry completely before watering. These plants can better tolerate being a little too dry than too wet.

If your holiday cactus is limp, it's likely getting too much water.

Feed once a month with houseplant fertilizer, diluted 50% with water.

When they blossom, they are absolute show-stoppers with gorgeous blooms that last for several weeks.

Controlling their exposure to light and temperature will enable you to regulate their blooming schedule.

Generally, these plants prefer warm temperatures—70 degrees to 75 degrees during the day, and 65 degrees at night.

Start preparing for holiday blooming about eight weeks before you want to see blossoms.

To encourage them to bud, keep them in nighttime temperatures of 50-60 degrees for at least a week. You may need to place them in a room where you can turn off the



Photo by Laura Dean Bennett

The author is the proud caretaker of what her mother called her "Christmas Cactus." It was grown from a piece of a plant which originally belonged to her grandmother. Countless clippings from it have produced many gifts over the years. But, because of its toothed leaves, it must accurately be called, a Thanksgiving Cactus.

heat at night or an unheated room and/or use a space heater.

For best results, plan to give them 12 to 14 hours of darkness a day for at least three weeks before you want them to bud.

Briefly interrupting the

darkness, for instance, flipping on a household lamp for a few minutes, will not deter bud formation.

If you can't find a suitable location for at least 12 hours of daily darkness, cover your Christmas cac-

See **BLOOMS**, page 18

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BLOOMING from pg 17
tus with a blanket for 12 hours a day.

Bear in mind that all plants require enough light to photosynthesize. A completely dark location is not an option.

Continue monthly feeding before and during blooming and if you like, you can add a sparse amount of coffee grounds to their soil to give them an added boost.

When you notice buds forming, start watering more regularly.

Buds falling off indicate too much water, drastic changes in temperature or too little or too much light.

Especially during blooming, these plants require regular watering. Just check that the top of their soil is dry between waterings.

And with Easter cactus, remember not to overwater.

Deadheading spent blooms will encourage more blooms.

After your Christmas cactus finishes flowering, it will want a little rest. Keep it in a bright room, with, as usual, no direct sun and cut back on watering slightly.

Holiday cactus plants thrive on a degree of neglect, so even if you must ignore your plant for a little while, it will usually survive just fine.

Propagating your holiday cactus is easy.

Take your cuttings from well established, healthy plants. The best time is in the spring when they're showing new growth. But you can take cuttings anytime.

That said, it's not a good time to take cuttings when the plant is blooming as they'll have less energy for developing roots.

Cuttings should include two to five leaf segments

each and be clipped off with clean scissors. Or gently break them off at the junction, or "seam" between leaf segments.

There are two ways to propagate these succulents – in soil or in water.

In Soil:

Choose a pot with drainage holes and large enough for at least half an inch of space between cuttings. Fill with well-draining potting mix intended for succulents or cacti. Plant your cuttings so that the bottom half of each is buried. You can also use coarse sand or perlite.

Place the potted cuttings in indirect but bright light, water sparingly so that soil stays moist, but not too

wet. They can't overwater. Expect the cuttings to take root in about six to eight weeks.

Cuttings may get a bit limp after a few days but should recover. Shriveling indicates a failure.

In Water:

It's actually easier to be successful propagating these succulents in a glass of water because there is less chance of root rot.

Select a clean small glass, jar, vase or bottle. Submerge cuttings (of two to five segments each) in the container, in about an inch of water.

If necessary to keep the cuttings upright, carefully add a bit of sterilized gravel or tiny stones

around the base of the cuttings.

Put the container in a bright location, but not in direct sunlight. Add water when necessary. If the water turns cloudy, replace it carefully so as not to disturb the fledgling roots.

Thread-like roots should take six to eight weeks to develop. When they're about an inch long, place cuttings in a pot with well-draining soil and press soil around each cutting to keep them upright.

Set the pot in bright, indirect sunlight.

Until they grow too large and heavy, these succulents make good hanging plants.

And, in warm summer months, they may enjoy an outdoor vacation.

They can be taken outside and hung in diffused sunlight- for instance, in the shade of trees. Take care their pots are extremely well-draining, so their roots won't rot after rain. Bring them back in when expecting heavy rain or a severe windstorm.

Many Christians see religious symbolism in the life

cycle of holiday cacti. They bloom in the darkness of December – a reminder of the Holy Child born to bring light to the world.

A holiday cactus is always a joyful symbol of the beauty of the Christmas season. A clipping from one is a wonderful gift – sure to be a long-lived reminder of the giver's affection.

It's literally, a gift that keeps on giving.

Long may these beautiful plants grace our homes – I hope, for many generations to come.



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The wonderful warmth of a wood stove

Laura Dean Bennett
Staff Writer

Often too hot to touch, but always beckoning us near, the wood stove was the heart of most homes not so long ago.

How I loved the cook stove in the kitchen of my grandparents' house.

The wood stove is a symbol of a lifestyle that most of American society has forgotten.

But not so around here. And guess what?

Old-fashioned-styled cook stoves may be back in

vogue. They are being seen again in some of the most modern kitchens.

But back in the day, they were essential to everyday life.

Not only were all meals cooked on the stove, but the stove also provided a good share of the home's heat during the cold winter months.

A wood cook stove did so much.

It was where we dried our mittens and boots.

And a box behind the stove provided a warm place for a cat to have her kittens.

And let's not forget – a hot tea kettle always sat at the ready on top of the cook stove.

And at my Granddad and Grandmom's, since we didn't have indoor plumbing, the deep water reservoir in our cook stove was a very valuable feature.

We used its hot water for cooking, washing dishes and even for baths. It just needed to be kept topped off with water carried in from the well pump.

And it also served as a dryer.

We hung a clothesline up behind it, from the cor-



Photo courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg

An original Franklin stove still in use.

ner of the kitchen cabinet to a peg on the far wall.

Clothes would be washed by hand or, on laundry day, in the wringer washer – into which we poured hot water from the cook stove's reservoir.

In the winter, we'd hang up the laundry behind the stove. We had to duck under it to go through the

kitchen door, but the clothes got dry in no time. And they were so warm to the touch!

Some cook stoves may have even saved lives.

My grandmother's best friend, Neva Wilfong (Mary Lou Dille's mother), lived on Brown's Creek in the farmhouse where her granddaughter,

Pam Sharpes, and her family now reside.

When her premature baby boy, Charles, was born, Grandmother Neva placed his cradle on the open oven door of her wood stove, where he spent his first weeks of life surrounded by its warmth.

There were three wood stoves in Granddad and Grandmom's house.

In the winter, those three stoves burned day and night.

Granddad would get up

See *STOVE*, page 20

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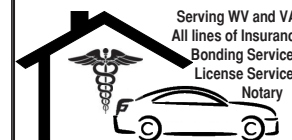
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 once or twice a night to “feed” them.

All summer long, when he wasn’t busy with a million other farm chores, he’d be cutting old trees and splitting wood.

I can remember being ever so proud when I learned how to split kindling.

In the summertime, the two stoves that were only used for heat weren’t lit, and the cook stove would be allowed to burn down at night.

But first thing in the morning, whoever was up first would put “a chunk” of wood in under some kindling and light the cook stove.

Sometimes the embers in the firebox from the previous day were still glowing hot enough to start up a small chunk of wood without having to relight a fire.

Breakfast, dinner and supper and all the baking and hot water needs in between were all served by the cook stove.

I loved watching Grandmom tending it.

Whenever she told me to, I would scurry to the woodpile to bring in more wood – and have to clean up little bits that had fallen on the linoleum floor.



Photo by the Detroit News

Before it was the “Automobile Capital of the World,” Detroit was known as the “Stove Capital of the World.” In the 19th century, Detroit’s four large stove manufacturers produced more than 10 percent of stoves sold around the globe.

When I was old enough, I savored the fact that I could be trusted to keep an eye on the fire in the wood stove and whatever was being cooked or baked that day.

The smell of wood burning always takes me back to those days.

A little bit of history

It’s thought that the word stove comes from the old English word Stofa,

meaning an enclosed space.

Humans have always needed to be close to a fire.

We lived beside and cooked over fires.

The first cooking fires were arranged on broad, flat stones on the ground.

Later, basic masonry constructions were built to hold the wood and the food.

Simple, open ovens were used in ancient Greece for baking bread and food.

By the Middle Ages, we were using tall brick and mortar hearths, which often had chimneys.

Cooking was done by placing the food in metal cauldrons and hanging it

above the fire. Historians believe that the first written record of an oven, referred to as an oven built in 1490 in Alsatia, France.

Improvements to wood burning stoves have always focused on trying to contain the smoke and provide more heat.

Wood-burning cook stove efficiency took a leap forward when they were built with holes over the fire chambers.

On top of these chambers, cook pots with flat bottoms could be placed directly upon the stove.

In the American colonies, famed inventor and founding father Benjamin Franklin patented his own stove design.

Franklin’s mind always turned on practical matters, including the problem of how to evenly and inexpensively heat a room.

See **STOVE**, page 21

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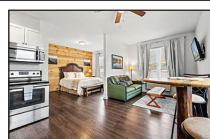
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In the 1740s, there was a wood shortage in Philadelphia.

It inspired Franklin to improve upon the existing open hearth.

His three-sided iron box, aptly named the Franklin stove, was patented in 1744.

It used only a quarter as much wood as did a fireplace and could more

quickly raise the temperature in a room.

The Franklin stoves were originally called "Pennsylvania Fire-Places."

Franklin himself wrote the first advertisement to publicize them.

In it, he claimed, "If you sit near the Fire, you have not that cold Draught of uncomfortable Air nipping your Back and Heels, as when before common

Fires...being stored before, and, as it were, froze behind."

Franklin's stove featured an ingenious recycling system that constantly forced warm air down from above and back into the room, where it was needed. He also claimed it was more efficient than other stoves and fireplaces.

It burned less wood – a great advantage for those who lived in towns, where

Photo by AntiquesStoves.com
A popular model, the Monarch Cook Stove, nickel trim, with warming oven.

wood was in short supply and cost money.

Cook stoves were also sought after because they were economical. They saved on wood and provided a convenient cook top.

Robert Bailey Thomas, founder of *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, wrote in 1823:

"So then, you have a cooking stove! This is economical, saving much wood and labour. I know it by experience. But many people are so prejudiced against them that they will scarcely look at one. Wood has become a cash article



nowadays in my neighborhood. I have procured me one of Rich's cooking stoves and think I save half my wood by it nearly."

But some cooks preferred to stay with their old fashioned hearths. They were accustomed to recipes written for open-hearth methods.

There were those who would not be convinced for more than a generation.

Harriet Beecher Stowe once said that "men would never go off to battle if all they had to return to was a

See **STOVE**, page 22

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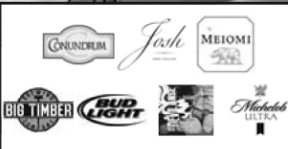


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STOVE from pg 21

big ugly piece of iron.”

In the 20th century, those in the market for a wood stove had lots of brands and designs to choose from.

It was hard to unseat the ubiquitous, “pot belly” stove which had been popular in America since the early 1800s. But when there was more money to be spent on stoves, the larger and more elaborate designs began to come into favor.

Many of these stoves were fabricated from steel, rather than cast iron.

Around the turn of the 20th century, along came stoves with a porcelain – or enamel – finish.

These beauties were an

instant sensation. The enamel came in many colors, a concept that revolutionized the kitchen.

For the first time, the focal point of the kitchen was more than just utilitarian.

But when gas and electricity became available a little behind most everywhere, wood and coal burning stoves for heating and for cooking fell quickly out of favor.

Since our neck of the woods has usually been a popular trend, wood stoves retained their value much longer here.

In fact, some families still use their old stoves.

Nothing is more homey

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you stack it, and when you

Oh yes, there’s a lot of burn it.”

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7 WV Ski Free Day

19 SILVER CREEK OPENING DAY*

20 Shred Silver Creek Rail Jam

24 Village Christmas Celebration

26 Darn Tough Scavenger Hunt

22-31 *Holiday Celebrations*

31 NYE Celebrations

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2 The North Face Scavenger Hunt

31 SARA Race *(Day 1)*

FEBRUARY

1 SARA Race *(Day 2)*

2 CUPP RUN CHALLENGE

7 WV OPEN (FREESTYLE COMPETITION)

13-14 On the Trail to **4848 Festival**

14 Smith Scavenger Hunt

21-22 USASA Boardercross & Skiercross

28 Darn Tough Banked Slalom *(Day 1)*

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